

**ТОМАС  
БАБИНГТОН  
МАКОЛЕЙ**

MISCELLANEOUS  
WRITINGS AND SPEECHES  
— VOLUME 4

**Томас Бабингтон Маколей**  
**Miscellaneous Writings**  
**and Speeches — Volume 4**

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Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches — Volume 4:*

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**Baron Thomas Babington  
Macaulay Macaulay  
Miscellaneous Writings  
and Speeches — Volume 4**

**LORD MACAULAY'S SPEECHES**

TO HENRY, MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE  
THESE SPEECHES ARE DEDICATED BY HIS  
GRATEFUL  
AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND  
*THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.*

# PREFACE

It was most reluctantly that I determined to suspend, during the last autumn, a work which is the business and the pleasure of my life, in order to prepare these Speeches for publication; and it is most reluctantly that I now give them to the world. Even if I estimated their oratorical merit much more highly than I do, I should not willingly have revived, in the quiet times in which we are so happy as to live, the memory of those fierce contentions in which too many years of my public life were passed. Many expressions which, when society was convulsed by political dissensions, and when the foundations of government were shaking, were heard by an excited audience with sympathy and applause, may, now that the passions of all parties have subsided, be thought intemperate and acrimonious. It was especially painful to me to find myself under the necessity of recalling to my own recollection, and to the recollection of others, the keen encounters which took place between the late Sir Robert Peel and myself. Some parts of the conduct of that eminent man I must always think deserving of serious blame. But, on a calm review of his long and chequered public life, I acknowledge, with sincere pleasure, that his faults were much more than redeemed by great virtues, great sacrifices, and great services. My political hostility to him was never in the smallest degree tainted by personal ill-will. After his fall from power

a cordial reconciliation took place between us: I admired the wisdom, the moderation, the disinterested patriotism, which he invariably showed during the last and best years of his life; I lamented his untimely death, as both a private and a public calamity; and I earnestly wished that the sharp words which had sometimes been exchanged between us might be forgotten.

Unhappily an act, for which the law affords no redress, but which I have no hesitation in pronouncing to be a gross injury to me and a gross fraud on the public, has compelled me to do what I should never have done willingly. A bookseller, named Vizetelly, who seems to aspire to that sort of distinction which Curll enjoyed a hundred and twenty years ago, thought fit, without asking my consent, without even giving me any notice, to announce an edition of my Speeches, and was not ashamed to tell the world in his advertisement that he published them by special license. When the book appeared, I found that it contained fifty-six speeches, said to have been delivered by me in the House of Commons. Of these speeches a few were reprinted from reports which I had corrected for the Mirror of Parliament or the Parliamentary Debates, and were therefore, with the exception of some errors of the pen and the press, correctly given. The rest bear scarcely the faintest resemblance to the speeches which I really made. The substance of what I said is perpetually misrepresented. The connection of the arguments is altogether lost. Extravagant blunders are put into my mouth in almost every page. An editor who was not grossly ignorant would

have perceived that no person to whom the House of Commons would listen could possibly have been guilty of such blunders. An editor who had the smallest regard for truth, or for the fame of the person whose speeches he had undertaken to publish, would have had recourse to the various sources of information which were readily accessible, and, by collating them, would have produced a book which would at least have contained no absolute nonsense. But I have unfortunately had an editor whose only object was to make a few pounds, and who was willing to sacrifice to that object my reputation and his own. He took the very worst report extant, compared it with no other report, removed no blemish however obvious or however ludicrous, gave to the world some hundreds of pages utterly contemptible both in matter and manner, and prefixed my name to them. The least that he should have done was to consult the files of The Times newspaper. I have frequently done so, when I have noticed in his book any passage more than ordinarily absurd; and I have almost invariably found that in The Times newspaper, my meaning had been correctly reported, though often in words different from those which I had used.

I could fill a volume with instances of the injustice with which I have been treated. But I will confine myself to a single speech, the speech on the Dissenters' Chapels Bill. I have selected that speech, not because Mr Vizetelly's version of that speech is worse than his versions of thirty or forty other speeches, but because I have before me a report of that speech which an honest

and diligent editor would have thought it his first duty to consult. The report of which I speak was published by the Unitarian Dissenters, who were naturally desirous that there should be an accurate record of what had passed in a debate deeply interesting to them. It was not corrected by me: but it generally, though not uniformly, exhibits with fidelity the substance of what I said.

Mr Vizetelly makes me say that the principle of our Statutes of Limitation was to be found in the legislation of the Mexicans and Peruvians. That is a matter about which, as I know nothing, I certainly said nothing. Neither in *The Times* nor in the Unitarian report is there anything about Mexico or Peru.

Mr Vizetelly next makes me say that the principle of limitation is found "amongst the Pandects of the Benares." Did my editor believe that I uttered these words, and that the House of Commons listened patiently to them? If he did, what must be thought of his understanding? If he did not, was it the part of an honest man to publish such gibberish as mine? The most charitable supposition, which I therefore gladly adopt, is that Mr Vizetelly saw nothing absurd in the expression which he has attributed to me. The Benares he probably supposes to be some Oriental nation. What he supposes their Pandects to be I shall not presume to guess. If he had examined *The Times*, he would have found no trace of the passage. The reporter, probably, did not catch what I said, and, being more veracious than Mr Vizetelly, did not choose to ascribe to me what I did not say. If Mr Vizetelly had consulted the Unitarian report, he would have seen that I

spoke of the Pundits of Benares; and he might, without any very long or costly research, have learned where Benares is, and what a Pundit is.

Mr Vizetelly then represents me as giving the House of Commons some very extraordinary information about both the Calvinistic and the Arminian Methodists. He makes me say that Whitfield held and taught that the connection between Church and State was sinful. Whitfield never held or taught any such thing; nor was I so grossly ignorant of the life and character of that remarkable man as to impute to him a doctrine which he would have abhorred. Here again, both in *The Times* and in the Unitarian report, the substance of what I said is correctly given.

Mr Vizetelly proceeds to put into my mouth a curious account of the polity of the Wesleyan Methodists. He makes me say that, after John Wesley's death, "the feeling in favour of the lay administration of the Sacrament became very strong and very general: a Conference was applied for, was constituted, and, after some discussion, it was determined that the request should be granted." Such folly could have been uttered only by a person profoundly ignorant of the history of Methodism. Certainly nothing of the sort was ever uttered by me; and nothing of the sort will be found either in *The Times* or in the Unitarian report.

Mr Vizetelly makes me say that the Great Charter recognises the principle of limitation, a thing which everybody who has read the Great Charter knows not to be true. He makes me

give an utterly false history of Lord Nottingham's Occasional Conformity Bill. But I will not weary my readers by proceeding further. These samples will probably be thought sufficient. They all lie within a compass of seven or eight pages. It will be observed that all the faults which I have pointed out are grave faults of substance. Slighter faults of substance are numerous. As to faults of syntax and of style, hardly one sentence in a hundred is free from them.

I cannot permit myself to be exhibited, in this ridiculous and degrading manner, for the profit of an unprincipled man. I therefore unwillingly, and in mere self-defence, give this volume to the public. I have selected, to the best of my judgment, from among my speeches, those which are the least unworthy to be preserved. Nine of them were corrected by me while they were still fresh in my memory, and appear almost word for word as they were spoken. They are the speech of the second of March 1831, the speech of the twentieth of September 1831, the speech of the tenth of October 1831, the speech of the sixteenth of December 1831, the speech on the Anatomy Bill, the speech on the India Bill, the speech on Serjeant Talfourd's Copyright Bill, the speech on the Sugar Duties, and the speech on the Irish Church. The substance of the remaining speeches I have given with perfect ingenuousness. I have not made alterations for the purpose of saving my own reputation either for consistency or for foresight. I have not softened down the strong terms in which I formerly expressed opinions which time and thought

may have modified; nor have I retouched my predictions in order to make them correspond with subsequent events. Had I represented myself as speaking in 1831, in 1840, or in 1845, as I should speak in 1853, I should have deprived my book of its chief value. This volume is now at least a strictly honest record of opinions and reasonings which were heard with favour by a large part of the Commons of England at some important conjunctures; and such a record, however low it may stand in the estimation of the literary critic, cannot but be of use to the historian.

I do not pretend to give with accuracy the diction of those speeches which I did not myself correct within a week after they were delivered. Many expressions, and a few paragraphs, linger in my memory. But the rest, including much that had been carefully premeditated, is irrecoverably lost. Nor have I, in this part of my task, derived much assistance from any report. My delivery is, I believe, too rapid. Very able shorthand writers have sometimes complained that they could not follow me, and have contented themselves with setting down the substance of what I said. As I am unable to recall the precise words which I used, I have done my best to put my meaning into words which I might have used.

I have only, in conclusion, to beg that the readers of this Preface will pardon an egotism which a great wrong has made necessary, and which is quite as disagreeable to myself as it can be to them.

# **SPEECHES, ETC**

## **PARLIAMENTARY REFORM. (MARCH 2, 1831) A SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 2D OF MARCH, 1831**

On Tuesday, the first of March, 1831, Lord John Russell moved the House of Commons for leave to bring in a bill to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales. The discussion occupied seven nights. At length, on the morning of Thursday, the tenth of March, the motion was carried without a division. The following speech was made on the second night of the debate.

It is a circumstance, Sir, of happy augury for the motion before the House, that almost all those who have opposed it have declared themselves hostile on principle to Parliamentary Reform. Two Members, I think, have confessed that, though they disapprove of the plan now submitted to us, they are forced to admit the necessity of a change in the Representative system. Yet even those gentleman have used, as far as I have

observed, no arguments which would not apply as strongly to the most moderate change as to that which has been proposed by His Majesty's Government. I say, Sir, that I consider this as a circumstance of happy augury. For what I feared was, not the opposition of those who are averse to all Reform, but the disunion of reformers. I knew that, during three months, every reformer had been employed in conjecturing what the plan of the Government would be. I knew that every reformer had imagined in his own mind a scheme differing doubtless in some points from that which my noble friend, the Paymaster of the Forces, has developed. I felt therefore great apprehension that one person would be dissatisfied with one part of the bill, that another person would be dissatisfied with another part, and that thus our whole strength would be wasted in internal dissensions. That apprehension is now at an end. I have seen with delight the perfect concord which prevails among all who deserve the name of reformers in this House; and I trust that I may consider it as an omen of the concord which will prevail among reformers throughout the country. I will not, Sir, at present express any opinion as to the details of the bill; but, having during the last twenty-four hours given the most diligent consideration to its general principles, I have no hesitation in pronouncing it a wise, noble, and comprehensive measure, skilfully framed for the healing of great distempers, for the securing at once of the public liberties, and of the public repose, and for the reconciling and knitting together of all the orders of the State.

The honourable Baronet who has just sat down (Sir John Walsh.), has told us, that the Ministers have attempted to unite two inconsistent principles in one abortive measure. Those were his very words. He thinks, if I understand him rightly, that we ought either to leave the representative system such as it is, or to make it perfectly symmetrical. I think, Sir, that the Ministers would have acted unwisely if they had taken either course. Their principle is plain, rational, and consistent. It is this, to admit the middle class to a large and direct share in the representation, without any violent shock to the institutions of our country. I understand those cheers: but surely the gentlemen who utter them will allow that the change which will be made in our institutions by this bill is far less violent than that which, according to the honourable Baronet, ought to be made if we make any Reform at all. I praise the Ministers for not attempting, at the present time, to make the representation uniform. I praise them for not effacing the old distinction between the towns and the counties, and for not assigning Members to districts, according to the American practice, by the Rule of Three. The Government has, in my opinion, done all that was necessary for the removing of a great practical evil, and no more than was necessary.

I consider this, Sir, as a practical question. I rest my opinion on no general theory of government. I distrust all general theories of government. I will not positively say, that there is any form of polity which may not, in some conceivable circumstances, be the best possible. I believe that there are societies in which

every man may safely be admitted to vote. Gentlemen may cheer, but such is my opinion. I say, Sir, that there are countries in which the condition of the labouring classes is such that they may safely be intrusted with the right of electing Members of the Legislature. If the labourers of England were in that state in which I, from my soul, wish to see them, if employment were always plentiful, wages always high, food always cheap, if a large family were considered not as an encumbrance but as a blessing, the principal objections to Universal Suffrage would, I think, be removed. Universal Suffrage exists in the United States, without producing any very frightful consequences; and I do not believe that the people of those States, or of any part of the world, are in any good quality naturally superior to our own countrymen. But, unhappily, the labouring classes in England, and in all old countries, are occasionally in a state of great distress. Some of the causes of this distress are, I fear, beyond the control of the Government. We know what effect distress produces, even on people more intelligent than the great body of the labouring classes can possibly be. We know that it makes even wise men irritable, unreasonable, credulous, eager for immediate relief, heedless of remote consequences. There is no quackery in medicine, religion, or politics, which may not impose even on a powerful mind, when that mind has been disordered by pain or fear. It is therefore no reflection on the poorer class of Englishmen, who are not, and who cannot in the nature of things be, highly educated, to say that distress produces on them

its natural effects, those effects which it would produce on the Americans, or on any other people, that it blinds their judgment, that it inflames their passions, that it makes them prone to believe those who flatter them, and to distrust those who would serve them. For the sake, therefore, of the whole society, for the sake of the labouring classes themselves, I hold it to be clearly expedient that, in a country like this, the right of suffrage should depend on a pecuniary qualification.

But, Sir, every argument which would induce me to oppose Universal Suffrage, induces me to support the plan which is now before us. I am opposed to Universal Suffrage, because I think that it would produce a destructive revolution. I support this plan, because I am sure that it is our best security against a revolution. The noble Paymaster of the Forces hinted, delicately indeed and remotely, at this subject. He spoke of the danger of disappointing the expectations of the nation; and for this he was charged with threatening the House. Sir, in the year 1817, the late Lord Londonderry proposed a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. On that occasion he told the House that, unless the measures which he recommended were adopted, the public peace could not be preserved. Was he accused of threatening the House? Again, in the year 1819, he proposed the laws known by the name of the Six Acts. He then told the House that, unless the executive power were reinforced, all the institutions of the country would be overturned by popular violence. Was he then accused of threatening the House? Will any gentleman

say that it is parliamentary and decorous to urge the danger arising from popular discontent as an argument for severity; but that it is unparliamentary and indecorous to urge that same danger as an argument for conciliation? I, Sir, do entertain great apprehension for the fate of my country. I do in my conscience believe that, unless the plan proposed, or some similar plan, be speedily adopted, great and terrible calamities will befall us. Entertaining this opinion, I think myself bound to state it, not as a threat, but as a reason. I support this bill because it will improve our institutions; but I support it also because it tends to preserve them. That we may exclude those whom it is necessary to exclude, we must admit those whom it may be safe to admit. At present we oppose the schemes of revolutionists with only one half, with only one quarter of our proper force. We say, and we say justly, that it is not by mere numbers, but by property and intelligence, that the nation ought to be governed. Yet, saying this, we exclude from all share in the government great masses of property and intelligence, great numbers of those who are most interested in preserving tranquillity, and who know best how to preserve it. We do more. We drive over to the side of revolution those whom we shut out from power. Is this a time when the cause of law and order can spare one of its natural allies?

My noble friend, the Paymaster of the Forces, happily described the effect which some parts of our representative system would produce on the mind of a foreigner, who had heard much of our freedom and greatness. If, Sir, I wished to

make such a foreigner clearly understand what I consider as the great defects of our system, I would conduct him through that immense city which lies to the north of Great Russell Street and Oxford Street, a city superior in size and in population to the capitals of many mighty kingdoms; and probably superior in opulence, intelligence, and general respectability, to any city in the world. I would conduct him through that interminable succession of streets and squares, all consisting of well built and well furnished houses. I would make him observe the brilliancy of the shops, and the crowd of well-appointed equipages. I would show him that magnificent circle of palaces which surrounds the Regent's Park. I would tell him that the rental of this district was far greater than that of the whole kingdom of Scotland, at the time of the Union. And then I would tell him that this was an unrepresented district. It is needless to give any more instances. It is needless to speak of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, with no representation, or of Edinburgh and Glasgow with a mock representation. If a property tax were now imposed on the principle that no person who had less than a hundred and fifty pounds a year should contribute, I should not be surprised to find that one half in number and value of the contributors had no votes at all; and it would, beyond all doubt, be found that one fiftieth part in number and value of the contributors had a larger share of the representation than the other forty-nine fiftieths. This is not government by property. It is government by certain detached portions and fragments of

property, selected from the rest, and preferred to the rest, on no rational principle whatever.

To say that such a system is ancient, is no defence. My honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford (Sir Robert Harry Inglis.), challenges us to show that the Constitution was ever better than it is. Sir, we are legislators, not antiquaries. The question for us is, not whether the Constitution was better formerly, but whether we can make it better now. In fact, however, the system was not in ancient times by any means so absurd as it is in our age. One noble Lord (Lord Stormont.) has to-night told us that the town of Aldborough, which he represents, was not larger in the time of Edward the First than it is at present. The line of its walls, he assures us, may still be traced. It is now built up to that line. He argues, therefore, that as the founders of our representative institutions gave members to Aldborough when it was as small as it now is, those who would disfranchise it on account of its smallness have no right to say that they are recurring to the original principle of our representative institutions. But does the noble Lord remember the change which has taken place in the country during the last five centuries? Does he remember how much England has grown in population, while Aldborough has been standing still? Does he consider, that in the time of Edward the First, the kingdom did not contain two millions of inhabitants? It now contains nearly fourteen millions. A hamlet of the present day would have been a town of some importance in the time of our early

Parliaments. Aldborough may be absolutely as considerable a place as ever. But compared with the kingdom, it is much less considerable, by the noble Lord's own showing, than when it first elected burgesses. My honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford, has collected numerous instances of the tyranny which the kings and nobles anciently exercised, both over this House and over the electors. It is not strange that, in times when nothing was held sacred, the rights of the people, and of the representatives of the people, should not have been held sacred. The proceedings which my honourable friend has mentioned, no more prove that, by the ancient constitution of the realm, this House ought to be a tool of the king and of the aristocracy, than the Benevolences and the Shipmoney prove their own legality, or than those unjustifiable arrests which took place long after the ratification of the great Charter and even after the Petition of Right, prove that the subject was not anciently entitled to his personal liberty. We talk of the wisdom of our ancestors: and in one respect at least they were wiser than we. They legislated for their own times. They looked at the England which was before them. They did not think it necessary to give twice as many Members to York as they gave to London, because York had been the capital of Britain in the time of Constantius Chlorus; and they would have been amazed indeed if they had foreseen, that a city of more than a hundred thousand inhabitants would be left without Representatives in the nineteenth century, merely because it stood on ground which in the thirteenth century had

been occupied by a few huts. They framed a representative system, which, though not without defects and irregularities, was well adapted to the state of England in their time. But a great revolution took place. The character of the old corporations changed. New forms of property came into existence. New portions of society rose into importance. There were in our rural districts rich cultivators, who were not freeholders. There were in our capital rich traders, who were not liverymen. Towns shrank into villages. Villages swelled into cities larger than the London of the Plantagenets. Unhappily while the natural growth of society went on, the artificial polity continued unchanged. The ancient form of the representation remained; and precisely because the form remained, the spirit departed. Then came that pressure almost to bursting, the new wine in the old bottles, the new society under the old institutions. It is now time for us to pay a decent, a rational, a manly reverence to our ancestors, not by superstitiously adhering to what they, in other circumstances, did, but by doing what they, in our circumstances, would have done. All history is full of revolutions, produced by causes similar to those which are now operating in England. A portion of the community which had been of no account expands and becomes strong. It demands a place in the system, suited, not to its former weakness, but to its present power. If this is granted, all is well. If this is refused, then comes the struggle between the young energy of one class and the ancient privileges of another. Such was the struggle between the Plebeians and the Patricians of Rome. Such

was the struggle of the Italian allies for admission to the full rights of Roman citizens. Such was the struggle of our North American colonies against the mother country. Such was the struggle which the Third Estate of France maintained against the aristocracy of birth. Such was the struggle which the Roman Catholics of Ireland maintained against the aristocracy of creed. Such is the struggle which the free people of colour in Jamaica are now maintaining against the aristocracy of skin. Such, finally, is the struggle which the middle classes in England are maintaining against an aristocracy of mere locality, against an aristocracy the principle of which is to invest a hundred drunken potwallopers in one place, or the owner of a ruined hovel in another, with powers which are withheld from cities renowned to the furthest ends of the earth, for the marvels of their wealth and of their industry.

But these great cities, says my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford, are virtually, though not directly, represented. Are not the wishes of Manchester, he asks, as much consulted as those of any town which sends Members to Parliament? Now, Sir, I do not understand how a power which is salutary when exercised virtually can be noxious when exercised directly. If the wishes of Manchester have as much weight with us as they would have under a system which should give Representatives to Manchester, how can there be any danger in giving Representatives to Manchester? A virtual Representative is, I presume, a man who acts as a direct Representative would act: for surely it would be absurd to say that a man virtually

represents the people of Manchester, who is in the habit of saying No, when a man directly representing the people of Manchester would say Aye. The utmost that can be expected from virtual Representation is that it may be as good as direct Representation. If so, why not grant direct Representation to places which, as everybody allows, ought, by some process or other, to be represented?

If it be said that there is an evil in change as change, I answer that there is also an evil in discontent as discontent. This, indeed, is the strongest part of our case. It is said that the system works well. I deny it. I deny that a system works well, which the people regard with aversion. We may say here, that it is a good system and a perfect system. But if any man were to say so to any six hundred and fifty-eight respectable farmers or shopkeepers, chosen by lot in any part of England, he would be hooted down, and laughed to scorn. Are these the feelings with which any part of the government ought to be regarded? Above all, are these the feelings with which the popular branch of the legislature ought to be regarded? It is almost as essential to the utility of a House of Commons, that it should possess the confidence of the people, as that it should deserve that confidence. Unfortunately, that which is in theory the popular part of our government, is in practice the unpopular part. Who wishes to dethrone the King? Who wishes to turn the Lords out of their House? Here and there a crazy radical, whom the boys in the street point at as he walks along. Who wishes to alter the constitution of this House? The

whole people. It is natural that it should be so. The House of Commons is, in the language of Mr Burke, a check, not on the people, but for the people. While that check is efficient, there is no reason to fear that the King or the nobles will oppress the people. But if the check requires checking, how is it to be checked? If the salt shall lose its savour, wherewith shall we season it? The distrust with which the nation regards this House may be unjust. But what then? Can you remove that distrust? That it exists cannot be denied. That it is an evil cannot be denied. That it is an increasing evil cannot be denied. One gentleman tells us that it has been produced by the late events in France and Belgium; another, that it is the effect of seditious works which have lately been published. If this feeling be of origin so recent, I have read history to little purpose. Sir, this alarming discontent is not the growth of a day or of a year. If there be any symptoms by which it is possible to distinguish the chronic diseases of the body politic from its passing inflammations, all those symptoms exist in the present case. The taint has been gradually becoming more extensive and more malignant, through the whole lifetime of two generations. We have tried anodynes. We have tried cruel operations. What are we to try now? Who flatters himself that he can turn this feeling back? Does there remain any argument which escaped the comprehensive intellect of Mr Burke, or the subtlety of Mr Windham? Does there remain any species of coercion which was not tried by Mr Pitt and by Lord Londonderry? We have had laws. We have had blood. New

treasons have been created. The Press has been shackled. The Habeas Corpus Act has been suspended. Public meetings have been prohibited. The event has proved that these expedients were mere palliatives. You are at the end of your palliatives. The evil remains. It is more formidable than ever. What is to be done?

Under such circumstances, a great plan of reconciliation, prepared by the Ministers of the Crown, has been brought before us in a manner which gives additional lustre to a noble name, inseparably associated during two centuries with the dearest liberties of the English people. I will not say, that this plan is in all its details precisely such as I might wish it to be; but it is founded on a great and a sound principle. It takes away a vast power from a few. It distributes that power through the great mass of the middle order. Every man, therefore, who thinks as I think is bound to stand firmly by Ministers who are resolved to stand or fall with this measure. Were I one of them, I would sooner, infinitely sooner, fall with such a measure than stand by any other means that ever supported a Cabinet.

My honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford, tells us, that if we pass this law, England will soon be a republic. The reformed House of Commons will, according to him, before it has sate ten years, depose the King, and expel the Lords from their House. Sir, if my honourable friend could prove this, he would have succeeded in bringing an argument for democracy, infinitely stronger than any that is to be found in the works of Paine. My honourable friend's proposition is in

fact this: that our monarchical and aristocratical institutions have no hold on the public mind of England; that these institutions are regarded with aversion by a decided majority of the middle class. This, Sir, I say, is plainly deducible from his proposition; for he tells us that the Representatives of the middle class will inevitably abolish royalty and nobility within ten years: and there is surely no reason to think that the Representatives of the middle class will be more inclined to a democratic revolution than their constituents. Now, Sir, if I were convinced that the great body of the middle class in England look with aversion on monarchy and aristocracy, I should be forced, much against my will, to come to this conclusion, that monarchical and aristocratical institutions are unsuited to my country. Monarchy and aristocracy, valuable and useful as I think them, are still valuable and useful as means, and not as ends. The end of government is the happiness of the people: and I do not conceive that, in a country like this, the happiness of the people can be promoted by a form of government in which the middle classes place no confidence, and which exists only because the middle classes have no organ by which to make their sentiments known. But, Sir, I am fully convinced that the middle classes sincerely wish to uphold the Royal prerogatives and the constitutional rights of the Peers. What facts does my honourable friend produce in support of his opinion? One fact only; and that a fact which has absolutely nothing to do with the question. The effect of this Reform, he tells us, would be to make the House of Commons allpowerful.

It was allpowerful once before, in the beginning of 1649. Then it cut off the head of the King, and abolished the House of Peers. Therefore, if it again has the supreme power, it will act in the same manner. Now, Sir, it was not the House of Commons that cut off the head of Charles the First; nor was the House of Commons then allpowerful. It had been greatly reduced in numbers by successive expulsions. It was under the absolute dominion of the army. A majority of the House was willing to take the terms offered by the King. The soldiers turned out the majority; and the minority, not a sixth part of the whole House, passed those votes of which my honourable friend speaks, votes of which the middle classes disapproved then, and of which they disapprove still.

My honourable friend, and almost all the gentlemen who have taken the same side with him in this Debate, have dwelt much on the utility of close and rotten boroughs. It is by means of such boroughs, they tell us, that the ablest men have been introduced into Parliament. It is true that many distinguished persons have represented places of this description. But, Sir, we must judge of a form of government by its general tendency, not by happy accidents. Every form of government has its happy accidents. Despotism has its happy accidents. Yet we are not disposed to abolish all constitutional checks, to place an absolute master over us, and to take our chance whether he may be a Caligula or a Marcus Aurelius. In whatever way the House of Commons may be chosen, some able men will be chosen in

that way who would not be chosen in any other way. If there were a law that the hundred tallest men in England should be Members of Parliament, there would probably be some able men among those who would come into the House by virtue of this law. If the hundred persons whose names stand first in the alphabetical list of the Court Guide were made Members of Parliament, there would probably be able men among them. We read in ancient history, that a very able king was elected by the neighing of his horse; but we shall scarcely, I think, adopt this mode of election. In one of the most celebrated republics of antiquity, Athens, Senators and Magistrates were chosen by lot; and sometimes the lot fell fortunately. Once, for example, Socrates was in office. A cruel and unjust proposition was made by a demagogue. Socrates resisted it at the hazard of his own life. There is no event in Grecian history more interesting than that memorable resistance. Yet who would have officers appointed by lot, because the accident of the lot may have given to a great and good man a power which he would probably never have attained in any other way? We must judge, as I said, by the general tendency of a system. No person can doubt that a House of Commons chosen freely by the middle classes, will contain many very able men. I do not say, that precisely the same able men who would find their way into the present House of Commons will find their way into the reformed House: but that is not the question. No particular man is necessary to the State. We may depend on it that, if we provide the country with popular

institutions, those institutions will provide it with great men.

There is another objection, which, I think, was first raised by the honourable and learned Member for Newport. (Mr Horace Twiss.) He tells us that the elective franchise is property; that to take it away from a man who has not been judicially convicted of malpractices is robbery; that no crime is proved against the voters in the close boroughs; that no crime is even imputed to them in the preamble of the bill; and that therefore to disfranchise them without compensation would be an act of revolutionary tyranny. The honourable and learned gentleman has compared the conduct of the present Ministers to that of those odious tools of power, who, towards the close of the reign of Charles the Second, seized the charters of the Whig corporations. Now, there was another precedent, which I wonder that he did not recollect, both because it is much more nearly in point than that to which he referred, and because my noble friend, the Paymaster of the Forces, had previously alluded to it. If the elective franchise is property, if to disfranchise voters without a crime proved, or a compensation given, be robbery, was there ever such an act of robbery as the disfranchising of the Irish forty-shilling freeholders? Was any pecuniary compensation given to them? Is it declared in the preamble of the bill which took away their franchise, that they had been convicted of any offence? Was any judicial inquiry instituted into their conduct? Were they even accused of any crime? Or if you say that it was a crime in the electors of Clare to vote for the honourable and learned

gentleman who now represents the county of Waterford, was a Protestant freeholder in Louth to be punished for the crime of a Catholic freeholder in Clare? If the principle of the honourable and learned Member for Newport be sound, the franchise of the Irish peasant was property. That franchise the Ministers under whom the honourable and learned Member held office did not scruple to take away. Will he accuse those Ministers of robbery? If not, how can he bring such an accusation against their successors?

Every gentleman, I think, who has spoken from the other side of the House, has alluded to the opinions which some of His Majesty's Ministers formerly entertained on the subject of Reform. It would be officious in me, Sir, to undertake the defence of gentlemen who are so well able to defend themselves. I will only say that, in my opinion, the country will not think worse either of their capacity or of their patriotism, because they have shown that they can profit by experience, because they have learned to see the folly of delaying inevitable changes. There are others who ought to have learned the same lesson. I say, Sir, that there are those who, I should have thought, must have had enough to last them all their lives of that humiliation which follows obstinate and boastful resistance to changes rendered necessary by the progress of society, and by the development of the human mind. Is it possible that those persons can wish again to occupy a position which can neither be defended nor surrendered with honour? I well remember, Sir, a certain evening

in the month of May, 1827. I had not then the honour of a seat in this House; but I was an attentive observer of its proceedings. The right honourable Baronet opposite (Sir Robert Peel), of whom personally I desire to speak with that high respect which I feel for his talents and his character, but of whose public conduct I must speak with the sincerity required by my public duty, was then, as he is now, out of office. He had just resigned the seals of the Home Department, because he conceived that the recent ministerial arrangements had been too favourable to the Catholic claims. He rose to ask whether it was the intention of the new Cabinet to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, and to reform the Parliament. He bound up, I well remember, those two questions together; and he declared that, if the Ministers should either attempt to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, or bring forward a measure of Parliamentary Reform, he should think it his duty to oppose them to the utmost. Since that declaration was made four years have elapsed; and what is now the state of the three questions which then chiefly agitated the minds of men? What is become of the Test and Corporation Acts? They are repealed. By whom? By the right honourable Baronet. What has become of the Catholic disabilities? They are removed. By whom? By the right honourable Baronet. The question of Parliamentary Reform is still behind. But signs, of which it is impossible to misconceive the import, do most clearly indicate that unless that question also be speedily settled, property, and order, and all the institutions of this great monarchy, will be

exposed to fearful peril. Is it possible that gentlemen long versed in high political affairs cannot read these signs? Is it possible that they can really believe that the Representative system of England, such as it now is, will last to the year 1860? If not, for what would they have us wait? Would they have us wait merely that we may show to all the world how little we have profited by our own recent experience?—Would they have us wait, that we may once again hit the exact point where we can neither refuse with authority, nor concede with grace? Would they have us wait, that the numbers of the discontented party may become larger, its demands higher, its feelings more acrimonious, its organisation more complete? Would they have us wait till the whole tragicomedy of 1827 has been acted over again? till they have been brought into office by a cry of 'No Reform,' to be reformers, as they were once before brought into office by a cry of 'No Popery,' to be emancipators? Have they obliterated from their minds—gladly, perhaps, would some among them obliterate from their minds—the transactions of that year? And have they forgotten all the transactions of the succeeding year? Have they forgotten how the spirit of liberty in Ireland, debarred from its natural outlet, found a vent by forbidden passages? Have they forgotten how we were forced to indulge the Catholics in all the license of rebels, merely because we chose to withhold from them the liberties of subjects? Do they wait for associations more formidable than that of the Corn Exchange, for contributions larger than the Rent, for agitators more violent than those who,

three years ago, divided with the King and the Parliament the sovereignty of Ireland? Do they wait for that last and most dreadful paroxysm of popular rage, for that last and most cruel test of military fidelity? Let them wait, if their past experience shall induce them to think that any high honour or any exquisite pleasure is to be obtained by a policy like this. Let them wait, if this strange and fearful infatuation be indeed upon them, that they should not see with their eyes, or hear with their ears, or understand with their heart. But let us know our interest and our duty better. Turn where we may, within, around, the voice of great events is proclaiming to us, Reform, that you may preserve. Now, therefore, while everything at home and abroad forebodes ruin to those who persist in a hopeless struggle against the spirit of the age, now, while the crash of the proudest throne of the Continent is still resounding in our ears, now, while the roof of a British palace affords an ignominious shelter to the exiled heir of forty kings, now, while we see on every side ancient institutions subverted, and great societies dissolved, now, while the heart of England is still sound, now, while old feelings and old associations retain a power and a charm which may too soon pass away, now, in this your accepted time, now, in this your day of salvation, take counsel, not of prejudice, not of party spirit, not of the ignominious pride of a fatal consistency, but of history, of reason, of the ages which are past, of the signs of this most portentous time. Pronounce in a manner worthy of the expectation with which this great debate has been anticipated,

and of the long remembrance which it will leave behind. Renew the youth of the State. Save property, divided against itself. Save the multitude, endangered by its own unpopular power. Save the greatest, and fairest, and most highly civilised community that ever existed, from calamities which may in a few days sweep away all the rich heritage of so many ages of wisdom and glory. The danger is terrible. The time is short. If this bill should be rejected, I pray to God that none of those who concur in rejecting it may ever remember their votes with unavailing remorse, amidst the wreck of laws, the confusion of ranks, the spoliation of property, and the dissolution of social order.

# **PARLIAMENTARY REFORM. (JULY 5, 1831) A SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 5TH OF JULY 1831**

On Tuesday, the fourth of July, 1831, Lord John Russell moved the second reading of the Bill to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales. Sir John Walsh, member for Sudbury, moved, as an amendment, that the bill should be read that day six months. After a discussion, which lasted three nights, the amendment was rejected by 367 votes to 231, and the original motion was carried. The following Speech was made on the second night of the debate.

Nobody, Sir, who has watched the course of the debate can have failed to observe that the gentlemen who oppose this bill have chiefly relied on a preliminary objection, which it is necessary to clear away before we proceed to examine whether the proposed changes in our representative system would or would not be improvements. The elective franchise, we are told, is private property. It belongs to this freeman, to that potwalloper, to the owner of this house, to the owner of that old wall; and you have no more right to take it away without compensation than to confiscate the dividends of a fundholder or the rents of a landholder.

Now, Sir, I admit that, if this objection be well founded, it is decisive against the plan of Reform which has been submitted to us. If the franchise be really private property, we have no more right to take members away from Gatton because Gatton is small, and to give them to Manchester because Manchester is large, than Cyrus, in the old story, had to take away the big coat from the little boy and to put it on the big boy. In no case, and under no pretext however specious, would I take away from any member of the community anything which is of the nature of property, without giving him full compensation. But I deny that the elective franchise is of the nature of property; and I believe that, on this point, I have with me all reason, all precedent, and all authority. This at least is certain, that, if disfranchisement really be robbery, the representative system which now exists is founded on robbery. How was the franchise in the English counties fixed? By the act of Henry the Sixth, which disfranchised tens of thousands of electors who had not forty shilling freeholds. Was that robbery? How was the franchise in the Irish counties fixed? By the act of George the Fourth, which disfranchised tens of thousands of electors who had not ten pound freeholds. Was that robbery? Or was the great parliamentary reform made by Oliver Cromwell ever designated as robbery, even by those who most abhorred his name? Everybody knows that the unsparing manner in which he disfranchised small boroughs was emulously applauded, by royalists, who hated him for having pulled down one dynasty,

and by republicans, who hated him for having founded another. Take Sir Harry Vane and Lord Clarendon, both wise men, both, I believe, in the main, honest men, but as much opposed to each other in politics as wise and honest men could be. Both detested Oliver; yet both approved of Oliver's plan of parliamentary reform. They grieved only that so salutary a change should have been made by an usurper. Vane wished it to have been made by the Rump; Clarendon wished it to be made by the King. Clarendon's language on this subject is most remarkable. For he was no rash innovator. The bias of his mind was altogether on the side of antiquity and prescription. Yet he describes that great disfranchisement of boroughs as an improvement fit to be made in a more warrantable method and at a better time. This is that better time. What Cromwell attempted to effect by an usurped authority, in a country which had lately been convulsed by civil war, and which was with difficulty kept in a state of sullen tranquillity by military force, it has fallen to our lot to accomplish in profound peace, and under the rule of a prince whose title is unquestioned, whose office is revered, and whose person is beloved. It is easy to conceive with what scorn and astonishment Clarendon would have heard it said that the reform which seemed to him so obviously just and reasonable that he praised it, even when made by a regicide, could not, without the grossest iniquity, be made even by a lawful King and a lawful Parliament.

Sir, in the name of the institution of property, of that great institution, for the sake of which, chiefly, all other institutions

exist, of that great institution to which we owe all knowledge, all commerce, all industry, all civilisation, all that makes us to differ from the tattooed savages of the Pacific Ocean, I protest against the pernicious practice of ascribing to that which is not property the sanctity which belongs to property alone. If, in order to save political abuses from that fate with which they are threatened by the public hatred, you claim for them the immunities of property, you must expect that property will be regarded with some portion of the hatred which is excited by political abuses. You bind up two very different things, in the hope that they may stand together. Take heed that they do not fall together. You tell the people that it is as unjust to disfranchise a great lord's nomination borough as to confiscate his estate. Take heed that you do not succeed in convincing weak and ignorant minds that there is no more injustice in confiscating his estate than in disfranchising his borough. That this is no imaginary danger, your own speeches in this debate abundantly prove. You begin by ascribing to the franchises of Old Sarum the sacredness of property; and you end, naturally enough, I must own, by treating the rights of property as lightly as I should be inclined to treat the franchises of Old Sarum. When you are reminded that you voted, only two years ago, for disfranchising great numbers of freeholders in Ireland, and when you are asked how, on the principles which you now profess, you can justify that vote, you answer very coolly, "no doubt that was confiscation. No doubt we took away from the peasants of Munster and Connaught, without giving them a

farthing of compensation, that which was as much their property as their pigs or their frieze coats. But we did it for the public good. We were pressed by a great State necessity." Sir, if that be an answer, we too may plead that we too have the public good in view, and that we are pressed by a great State necessity. But I shall resort to no such plea. It fills me with indignation and alarm to hear grave men avow what they own to be downright robbery, and justify that robbery on the ground of political convenience. No, Sir, there is one way, and only one way, in which those gentlemen who voted for the disfranchising Act of 1829 can clear their fame. Either they have no defence, or their defence must be this; that the elective franchise is not of the nature of property, and that therefore disfranchisement is not spoliation.

Having disposed, as I think, of the question of right, I come to the question of expediency. I listened, Sir, with much interest and pleasure to a noble Lord who spoke for the first time in this debate. (Lord Porchester.) But I must own that he did not succeed in convincing me that there is any real ground for the fears by which he is tormented. He gave us a history of France since the Restoration. He told us of the violent ebbs and flows of public feeling in that country. He told us that the revolutionary party was fast rising to ascendancy while M. De Cazes was minister; that then came a violent reaction in favour of the monarchy and the priesthood; that then the revolutionary party again became dominant; that there had been a change of dynasty; and that the Chamber of Peers had ceased to be a hereditary body. He then

predicted, if I understood him rightly, that, if we pass this bill, we shall suffer all that France has suffered; that we shall have violent contests between extreme parties, a revolution, and an abolition of the House of Lords. I might, perhaps, dispute the accuracy of some parts of the noble Lord's narrative. But I deny that his narrative, accurate or inaccurate, is relevant. I deny that there is any analogy between the state of France and the state of England. I deny that there is here any great party which answers either to the revolutionary or to the counter-revolutionary party in France. I most emphatically deny that there is any resemblance in the character, and that there is likely to be any resemblance in the fate, of the two Houses of Peers. I always regarded the hereditary Chamber established by Louis the Eighteenth as an institution which could not last. It was not in harmony with the state of property; it was not in harmony with the public feeling; it had neither the strength which is derived from wealth, nor the strength which is derived from prescription. It was despised as plebeian by the ancient nobility. It was hated as patrician by the democrats. It belonged neither to the old France nor to the new France. It was a mere exotic transplanted from our island. Here it had struck its roots deep, and having stood during ages, was still green and vigorous. But it languished in the foreign soil and the foreign air, and was blown down by the first storm. It will be no such easy task to uproot the aristocracy of England.

With much more force, at least with much more plausibility, the noble Lord and several other members on the other side

of the House have argued against the proposed Reform on the ground that the existing system has worked well. How great a country, they say, is ours! How eminent in wealth and knowledge, in arts and arms! How much admired! How much envied! Is it possible to believe that we have become what we are under a bad government! And, if we have a good government, why alter it? Now, Sir, I am very far from denying that England is great, and prosperous, and highly civilised. I am equally far from denying that she owes much of her greatness, of her prosperity, and of her civilisation to her form of government. But is no nation ever to reform its institutions because it has made great progress under those institutions? Why, Sir, the progress is the very thing which makes the reform absolutely necessary. The Czar Peter, we all know, did much for Russia. But for his rude genius and energy, that country might have still been utterly barbarous. Yet would it be reasonable to say that the Russian people ought always, to the end of time, to be despotically governed, because the Czar Peter was a despot? Let us remember that the government and the society act and react on each other. Sometimes the government is in advance of the society, and hurries the society forward. So urged, the society gains on the government, comes up with the government, outstrips the government, and begins to insist that the government shall make more speed. If the government is wise, it will yield to that just and natural demand. The great cause of revolutions is this, that while nations move onward, constitutions stand still. The peculiar happiness of England is

that here, through many generations, the constitution has moved onward with the nation. Gentlemen have told us, that the most illustrious foreigners have, in every age, spoken with admiration of the English constitution. Comines, they say, in the fifteenth century, extolled the English constitution as the best in the world. Montesquieu, in the eighteenth century, extolled it as the best in the world. And would it not be madness in us to throw away what such men thought the most precious of all our blessings? But was the constitution which Montesquieu praised the same with the constitution which Comines praised? No, Sir; if it had been so, Montesquieu never would have praised it. For how was it possible that a polity which exactly suited the subjects of Edward the Fourth should have exactly suited the subjects of George the Second? The English have, it is true, long been a great and a happy people. But they have been great and happy because their history has been the history of a succession of timely reforms. The Great Charter, the assembling of the first House of Commons, the Petition of Right, the Declaration of Right, the Bill which is now on our table, what are they all but steps in one great progress? To every one of those steps the same objections might have been made which we heard to-night, "You are better off than your neighbours are. You are better off than your fathers were. Why can you not leave well alone?"

How copiously might a Jacobite orator have harangued on this topic in the Convention of 1688! "Why make a change of dynasty? Why trouble ourselves to devise new securities for our

laws and liberties? See what a nation we are. See how population and wealth have increased since what you call the good old times of Queen Elizabeth. You cannot deny that the country has been more prosperous under the kings of the House of Stuart than under any of their predecessors. Keep that House, then, and be thankful." Just such is the reasoning of the opponents of this bill. They tell us that we are an ungrateful people, and that, under institutions from which we have derived inestimable benefits, we are more discontented than the slaves of the Dey of Tripoli. Sir, if we had been slaves of the Dey of Tripoli, we should have been too much sunk in intellectual and moral degradation to be capable of the rational and manly discontent of freemen. It is precisely because our institutions are so good that we are not perfectly contented with them; for they have educated us into a capacity for enjoying still better institutions. That the English Government has generally been in advance of almost all other governments is true. But it is equally true that the English nation is, and has during some time been, in advance of the English Government. One plain proof of this is, that nothing is so ill made in our island as the laws. In all those things which depend on the intelligence, the knowledge, the industry, the energy of individuals, or of voluntary combinations of individuals, this country stands pre-eminent among all the countries of the world, ancient and modern. But in those things which it belongs to the State to direct, we have no such claim to superiority. Our fields are cultivated with a skill unknown

elsewhere, with a skill which has extorted rich harvests from moors and morasses. Our houses are filled with conveniences which the kings of former times might have envied. Our bridges, our canals, our roads, our modes of communication, fill every stranger with wonder. Nowhere are manufactures carried to such perfection. Nowhere is so vast a mass of mechanical power collected. Nowhere does man exercise such a dominion over matter. These are the works of the nation. Compare them with the works of the rulers of the nation. Look at the criminal law, at the civil law, at the modes of conveying lands, at the modes of conducting actions. It is by these things that we must judge of our legislators, just as we judge of our manufacturers by the cotton goods and the cutlery which they produce, just as we judge of our engineers by the suspension bridges, the tunnels, the steam carriages which they construct. Is, then, the machinery by which justice is administered framed with the same exquisite skill which is found in other kinds of machinery? Can there be a stronger contrast than that which exists between the beauty, the completeness, the speed, the precision with which every process is performed in our factories, and the awkwardness, the rudeness, the slowness, the uncertainty of the apparatus by which offences are punished and rights vindicated? Look at the series of penal statutes, the most bloody and the most inefficient in the world, at the puerile fictions which make every declaration and every plea unintelligible both to plaintiff and defendant, at the mummery of fines and recoveries, at the chaos of precedents, at the bottomless

pit of Chancery. Surely we see the barbarism of the thirteenth century and the highest civilisation of the nineteenth century side by side; and we see that the barbarism belongs to the government, and the civilisation to the people.

This is a state of things which cannot last. If it be not terminated by wisdom, it will be terminated by violence. A time has come at which it is not merely desirable, but indispensable to the public safety, that the government should be brought into harmony with the people; and it is because this bill seems to me likely to bring the government into harmony with the people, that I feel it to be my duty to give my hearty support to His Majesty's Ministers.

We have been told, indeed, that this is not the plan of Reform which the nation asked for. Be it so. But you cannot deny that it is the plan of Reform which the nation has accepted. That, though differing in many respects from what was asked, it has been accepted with transports of joy and gratitude, is a decisive proof of the wisdom of timely concession. Never in the history of the world was there so signal an example of that true statesmanship, which, at once animating and gently curbing the honest enthusiasm of millions, guides it safely and steadily to a happy goal. It is not strange, that when men are refused what is reasonable, they should demand what is unreasonable. It is not strange that, when they find that their opinion is contemned and neglected by the Legislature, they should lend a too favourable ear to worthless agitators. We have seen how discontent may

be produced. We have seen, too, how it may be appeased. We have seen that the true source of the power of demagogues is the obstinacy of rulers, and that a liberal Government makes a conservative people. Early in the last session, the First Minister of the Crown declared that he would consent to no Reform, that he thought our representative system, just as it stood, the masterpiece of human wisdom; that, if he had to make it anew, he would make it such as it was, with all its represented ruins and all its unrepresented cities. What followed? Everything was tumult and panic. The funds fell. The streets were insecure. Men's hearts failed them for fear. We began to move our property into German investments and American investments. Such was the state of the public mind, that it was not thought safe to let the Sovereign pass from his palace to the Guildhall of his capital. What part of his kingdom is there in which His Majesty now needs any other guard than the affection of his loving subjects? There are, indeed, still malecontents; and they may be divided into two classes, the friends of corruption and the sowers of sedition. It is natural that all who directly profit by abuses, and all who profit by the disaffection which abuses excite, should be leagued together against a bill which, by making the government pure, will make the nation loyal. There is, and always has been, a real alliance between the two extreme parties in this country. They play into each other's hands. They live by each other. Neither would have any influence if the other were taken away. The demagogue would have no audience but for the indignation

excited among the multitude by the insolence of the enemies of Reform: and the last hope of the enemies of Reform is in the uneasiness excited among all who have anything to lose by the ravings of the demagogue. I see, and glad I am to see, that the nation perfectly understands and justly appreciates this coalition between those who hate all liberty and those who hate all order. England has spoken, and spoken out. From her most opulent seaports, from her manufacturing towns, from her capital and its gigantic suburbs, from almost every one of her counties, has gone forth a voice, answering in no doubtful or faltering accent to that truly royal voice which appealed on the twenty-second of last April to the sense of the nation.

So clearly, indeed, has the sense of the nation been expressed, that scarcely any person now ventures to declare himself hostile to all Reform. We are, it seems, a House of Reformers. Those very gentlemen who, a few months ago, were vehement against all change, now own that some change may be proper, may be necessary. They assure us that their opposition is directed, not against Parliamentary Reform, but against the particular plan which is now before us, and that a Tory Ministry would devise a much better plan. I cannot but think that these tactics are unskilful. I cannot but think that, when our opponents defended the existing system in every part, they occupied a stronger position than at present. As my noble friend the Paymaster-General said, they have committed an error resembling that of the Scotch army at Dunbar. They have left the high ground from

which we might have had some difficulty in dislodging them. They have come down to low ground, where they are at our mercy. Surely, as Cromwell said, surely the Lord hath delivered them into our hand.

For, Sir, it is impossible not to perceive that almost every argument which they have urged against this Reform Bill may be urged with equal force, or with greater force, against any Reform Bill which they can themselves bring in.

First take, what, indeed, are not arguments, but wretched substitutes for arguments, those vague terms of reproach, which have been so largely employed, here and elsewhere, by our opponents; revolutionary, anarchical, traitorous, and so forth. It will, I apprehend, hardly be disputed that these epithets can be just as easily applied to one Reform Bill as to another.

But, you say, intimidation has been used to promote the passing of this bill; and it would be disgraceful, and of evil example, that Parliament should yield to intimidation. But surely, if that argument be of any force against the present bill, it will be of tenfold force against any Reform Bill proposed by you. For this bill is the work of men who are Reformers from conscientious conviction, of men, some of whom were Reformers when Reformer was a name of reproach, of men, all of whom were Reformers before the nation had begun to demand Reform in imperative and menacing tones. But you are notoriously Reformers merely from fear. You are Reformers under duress. If a concession is to be made to the public

importance, you can hardly deny that it will be made with more grace and dignity by Lord Grey than by you.

Then you complain of the anomalies of the bill. One county, you say, will have twelve members; and another county, which is larger and more populous, will have only ten. Some towns, which are to have only one member, are more considerable than other towns which are to have two. Do those who make these objections, objections which by the by will be more in place when the bill is in committee, seriously mean to say that a Tory Reform Bill will leave no anomalies in the representative system? For my own part, I trouble myself not at all about anomalies, considered merely as anomalies. I would not take the trouble of lifting up my hand to get rid of an anomaly that was not also a grievance. But if gentlemen have such a horror of anomalies, it is strange that they should so long have persisted in upholding a system made up of anomalies far greater than any that can be found in this bill (a cry of "No!"). Yes; far greater. Answer me, if you can; but do not interrupt me. On this point, indeed, it is much easier to interrupt than to answer. For who can answer plain arithmetical demonstration? Under the present system, Manchester, with two hundred thousand inhabitants, has no members. Old Sarum, with no inhabitants, has two members. Find me such an anomaly in the schedules which are now on the table. But is it possible that you, that Tories, can seriously mean to adopt the only plan which can remove all anomalies from the representative system? Are you prepared to have, after every decennial census, a new distribution

of members among electoral districts? Is your plan of Reform that which Mr Canning satirised as the most crazy of all the projects of the disciples of Tom Paine? Do you really mean

"That each fair burgh, numerically free,  
Shall choose its members by the rule of three?"

If not, let us hear no more of the anomalies of the Reform Bill.

But your great objection to this bill is that it will not be final. I ask you whether you think that any Reform Bill which you can frame will be final? For my part I do believe that the settlement proposed by His Majesty's Ministers will be final, in the only sense in which a wise man ever uses that word. I believe that it will last during that time for which alone we ought at present to think of legislating. Another generation may find in the new representative system defects such as we find in the old representative system. Civilisation will proceed. Wealth will increase. Industry and trade will find out new seats. The same causes which have turned so many villages into great towns, which have turned so many thousands of square miles of fir and heath into cornfields and orchards, will continue to operate. Who can say that a hundred years hence there may not be, on the shore of some desolate and silent bay in the Hebrides, another Liverpool, with its docks and warehouses and endless forests of masts? Who can say that the huge chimneys of another Manchester may not rise in the wilds of Connemara? For our

children we do not pretend to legislate. All that we can do for them is to leave to them a memorable example of the manner in which great reforms ought to be made. In the only sense, therefore, in which a statesman ought to say that anything is final, I pronounce this bill final. But in what sense will your bill be final? Suppose that you could defeat the Ministers, that you could displace them, that you could form a Government, that you could obtain a majority in this House, what course would events take? There is no difficulty in foreseeing the stages of the rapid progress downward. First we should have a mock reform; a Bassietlaw reform; a reform worthy of those politicians who, when a delinquent borough had forfeited its franchise, and when it was necessary for them to determine what they would do with two seats in Parliament, deliberately gave those seats, not to Manchester or Birmingham or Leeds, not to Lancashire or Staffordshire or Devonshire, but to a constituent body studiously selected because it was not large and because it was not independent; a reform worthy of those politicians who, only twelve months ago, refused to give members to the three greatest manufacturing towns in the world. We should have a reform which would produce all the evils and none of the benefits of change, which would take away from the representative system the foundation of prescription, and yet would not substitute the surer foundation of reason and public good. The people would be at once emboldened and exasperated; emboldened because they would see that they had frightened the Tories into making a

pretence of reforming the Parliament; and exasperated because they would see that the Tory Reform was a mere pretence. Then would come agitation, tumult, political associations, libels, inflammatory harangues. Coercion would only aggravate the evil. This is no age, this is no country, for the war of power against opinion. Those Jacobin mountebanks, whom this bill would at once send back to their native obscurity, would rise into fearful importance. The law would be sometimes braved and sometimes evaded. In short, England would soon be what Ireland was at the beginning of 1829. Then, at length, as in 1829, would come the late and vain repentance. Then, Sir, amidst the generous cheers of the Whigs, who will be again occupying their old seats on your left hand, and amidst the indignant murmurs of those stanch Tories who are now again trusting to be again betrayed, the right honourable Baronet opposite will rise from the Treasury Bench to propose that bill on which the hearts of the people are set. But will that bill be then accepted with the delight and thankfulness with which it was received last March? Remember Ireland. Remember how, in that country, concessions too long delayed were at last received. That great boon which in 1801, in 1813, in 1825, would have won the hearts of millions, given too late, and given from fear, only produced new clamours and new dangers. Is not one such lesson enough for one generation? A noble Lord opposite told us not to expect that this bill will have a conciliatory effect. Recollect, he said, how the French aristocracy surrendered their privileges in 1789, and

how that surrender was required. Recollect that Day of Sacrifices which was afterwards called the Day of Dupes. Sir, that day was afterwards called the Day of Dupes, not because it was the Day of Sacrifices, but because it was the Day of Sacrifices too long deferred. It was because the French aristocracy resisted reform in 1783, that they were unable to resist revolution in 1789. It was because they clung too long to odious exemptions and distinctions, that they were at last unable to serve their lands, their mansions, their heads. They would not endure Turgot: and they had to endure Robespierre.

I am far indeed from wishing that the Members of this House should be influenced by fear in the bad and unworthy sense of that word. But there is an honest and honourable fear, which well becomes those who are intrusted with the dearest interests of a great community; and to that fear I am not ashamed to make an earnest appeal. It is very well to talk of confronting sedition boldly, and of enforcing the law against those who would disturb the public peace. No doubt a tumult caused by local and temporary irritation ought to be suppressed with promptitude and vigour. Such disturbances, for example, as those which Lord George Gordon raised in 1780, should be instantly put down with the strong hand. But woe to the Government which cannot distinguish between a nation and a mob! Woe to the Government which thinks that a great, a steady, a long continued movement of the public mind is to be stopped like a street riot! This error has been twice fatal to the great House of

Bourbon. God be praised, our rulers have been wiser. The golden opportunity which, if once suffered to escape, might never have been retrieved, has been seized. Nothing, I firmly believe, can now prevent the passing of this noble law, this second Bill of Rights. ["Murmurs."] Yes, I call it, and the nation calls it, and our posterity will long call it, this second Bill of Rights, this Greater Charter of the Liberties of England. The year 1831 will, I trust, exhibit the first example of the manner in which it behoves a free and enlightened people to purify their polity from old and deeply seated abuses, without bloodshed, without violence, without rapine, all points freely debated, all the forms of senatorial deliberation punctiliously observed, industry and trade not for a moment interrupted, the authority of law not for a moment suspended. These are things of which we may well be proud. These are things which swell the heart up with a good hope for the destinies of mankind. I cannot but anticipate a long series of happy years; of years during which a parental Government will be firmly supported by a grateful nation: of years during which war, if war should be inevitable, will find us an united people; of years pre-eminently distinguished by the progress of arts, by the improvement of laws, by the augmentation of the public resources, by the diminution of the public burdens, by all those victories of peace, in which, far more than in any military successes, consists the true felicity of states, and the true glory of statesmen. With such hopes, Sir, and such feelings, I give my cordial assent to the second reading of a bill which I consider as in

itself deserving of the warmest approbation, and as indispensably necessary, in the present temper of the public mind, to the repose of the country and to the stability of the throne.

**PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.  
(SEPTEMBER 20, 1831) A  
SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE  
20TH OF SEPTEMBER 1831**

On Monday, the nineteenth of September, 1831, the Bill to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales was read a third time, at an early hour and in a thin house, without any debate. But on the question whether the Bill should pass a discussion arose which lasted three nights. On the morning of the twenty-second of September the House divided; and the Bill passed by 345 votes to 236. The following Speech was made on the second night of the debate.

It is not without great diffidence, Sir, that I rise to address you on a subject which has been nearly exhausted. Indeed, I should not have risen had I not thought that, though the arguments on this question are for the most part old, our situation at present is in a great measure new. At length the Reform Bill, having passed without vital injury through all the dangers which threatened it, during a long and minute discussion, from the attacks of its enemies and from the dissensions of its friends, comes before us for our final ratification, altered, indeed, in some of its details for

the better, and in some for the worse, but in its great principles still the same bill which, on the first of March, was proposed to the late Parliament, the same bill which was received with joy and gratitude by the whole nation, the same bill which, in an instant, took away the power of interested agitators, and united in one firm body all the sects of sincere Reformers, the same bill which, at the late election, received the approbation of almost every great constituent body in the empire. With a confidence which discussion has only strengthened, with an assured hope of great public blessings if the wish of the nation shall be gratified, with a deep and solemn apprehension of great public calamities if that wish shall be disappointed, I, for the last time, give my most hearty assent to this noble law, destined, I trust, to be the parent of many good laws, and, through a long series of years, to secure the repose and promote the prosperity of my country.

When I say that I expect this bill to promote the prosperity of the country, I by no means intend to encourage those chimerical hopes which the honourable and learned Member for Rye (Mr Pemberton.), who has so much distinguished himself in this debate, has imputed to the Reformers. The people, he says, are for the bill, because they expect that it will immediately relieve all their distresses. Sir, I believe that very few of that large and respectable class which we are now about to admit to a share of political power entertain any such absurd expectation. They expect relief, I doubt not; and I doubt not that they will find it: but sudden relief they are far too wise to expect. The bill,

says the honourable and learned gentleman, is good for nothing: it is merely theoretical: it removes no real and sensible evil: it will not give the people more work, or higher wages, or cheaper bread. Undoubtedly, Sir, the bill will not immediately give all those things to the people. But will any institutions give them all those things? Do the present institutions of the country secure to them those advantages? If we are to pronounce the Reform Bill good for nothing, because it will not at once raise the nation from distress to prosperity, what are we to say of that system under which the nation has been of late sinking from prosperity into distress? The defect is not in the Reform Bill, but in the very nature of government. On the physical condition of the great body of the people, government acts not as a specific, but as an alternative. Its operation is powerful, indeed, and certain, but gradual and indirect. The business of government is not directly to make the people rich; and a government which attempts more than this is precisely the government which is likely to perform less. Governments do not and cannot support the people. We have no miraculous powers: we have not the rod of the Hebrew lawgiver: we cannot rain down bread on the multitude from Heaven: we cannot smite the rock and give them to drink. We can give them only freedom to employ their industry to the best advantage, and security in the enjoyment of what their industry has acquired. These advantages it is our duty to give at the smallest possible cost. The diligence and forethought of individuals will thus have fair play; and it is only by the diligence

and forethought of individuals that the community can become prosperous. I am not aware that His Majesty's Ministers, or any of the supporters of this bill, have encouraged the people to hope, that Reform will remove distress, in any other way than by this indirect process. By this indirect process the bill will, I feel assured, conduce to the national prosperity. If it had been passed fifteen years ago, it would have saved us from our present embarrassments. If we pass it now, it will gradually extricate us from them. It will secure to us a House of Commons, which, by preserving peace, by destroying monopolies, by taking away unnecessary public burthens, by judiciously distributing necessary public burthens, will, in the progress of time, greatly improve our condition. This it will do; and those who blame it for not doing more blame it for not doing what no Constitution, no code of laws, ever did or ever will do; what no legislator, who was not an ignorant and unprincipled quack, ever ventured to promise.

But chimerical as are the hopes which the honourable and learned Member for Rye imputes to the people, they are not, I think, more chimerical than the fears which he has himself avowed. Indeed, those very gentlemen who are constantly telling us that we are taking a leap in the dark, that we pay no attention to the lessons of experience, that we are mere theorists, are themselves the despisers of experience, are themselves the mere theorists. They are terrified at the thought of admitting into Parliament members elected by ten pound householders. They

have formed in their own imaginations a most frightful idea of these members. My honourable and learned friend, the Member for Cockermonth (Sir James Scarlett.), is certain that these members will take every opportunity of promoting the interests of the journeyman in opposition to those of the capitalist. The honourable and learned Member for Rye is convinced that none but persons who have strong local connections, will ever be returned for such constituent bodies. My honourable friend, the Member for Thetford (Mr Alexander Baring.), tells us, that none but mob orators, men who are willing to pay the basest court to the multitude, will have any chance. Other speakers have gone still further, and have described to us the future borough members as so many Marats and Santerres, low, fierce, desperate men, who will turn the House into a bear-garden, and who will try to turn the monarchy into a republic, mere agitators, without honour, without sense, without education, without the feelings or the manners of gentlemen. Whenever, during the course of the fatiguing discussions by which we have been so long occupied, there has been a cry of "question," or a noise at the bar, the orator who has been interrupted has remarked, that such proceedings will be quite in place in the Reformed Parliament, but that we ought to remember that the House of Commons is still an assembly of gentlemen. This, I say, is to set up mere theory, or rather mere prejudice, in opposition to long and ample experience. Are the gentlemen who talk thus ignorant that we have already the means of judging what kind

of men the ten pound householders will send up to parliament? Are they ignorant that there are even now large towns with very popular franchises, with franchises even more democratic than those which will be bestowed by the present bill? Ought they not, on their own principles, to look at the results of the experiments which have already been made, instead of predicting frightful calamities at random? How do the facts which are before us agree with their theories? Nottingham is a city with a franchise even more democratic than that which this bill establishes. Does Nottingham send hither mere vulgar demagogues? It returns two distinguished men, one an advocate, the other a soldier, both unconnected with the town. Every man paying scot and lot has a vote at Leicester. This is a lower franchise than the ten pound franchise. Do we find that the Members for Leicester are the mere tools of the journeymen? I was at Leicester during the contest of 1826; and I recollect that the suffrages of the scot and lot voters were pretty equally divided between two candidates, neither of them connected with the place, neither of them a slave of the mob, one a Tory Baronet from Derbyshire, the other a most respectable and excellent friend of mine, connected with the manufacturing interest, and also an inhabitant of Derbyshire. Look at Norwich. Look at Northampton, with a franchise more democratic than even the scot and lot franchise. Northampton formerly returned Mr Perceval, and now returns gentlemen of high respectability, gentlemen who have a great stake in the prosperity and tranquillity of the country. Look

at the metropolitan districts. This is an a fortiori case. Nay it is—the expression, I fear, is awkward—an a fortiori case at two removes. The ten pound householders of the metropolis are persons in a lower station of life than the ten pound householders of other towns. The scot and lot franchise in the metropolis is again lower than the ten pound franchise. Yet have Westminster and Southwark been in the habit of sending us members of whom we have had reason to be ashamed, of whom we have not had reason to be proud? I do not say that the inhabitants of Westminster and Southwark have always expressed their political sentiments with proper moderation. That is not the question. The question is this: what kind of men have they elected? The very principle of all Representative government is, that men who do not judge well of public affairs may be quite competent to choose others who will judge better. Whom, then, have Westminster and Southwark sent us during the last fifty years, years full of great events, years of intense popular excitement? Take any one of those nomination boroughs, the patrons of which have conscientiously endeavoured to send fit men into this House. Compare the Members for that borough with the Members for Westminster and Southwark; and you will have no doubt to which the preference is due. It is needless to mention Mr Fox, Mr Sheridan, Mr Tierney, Sir Samuel Romilly. Yet I must pause at the name of Sir Samuel Romilly. Was he a mob orator? Was he a servile flatterer of the multitude? Sir, if he had any fault, if there was any blemish on that most serene and spotless

character, that character which every public man, and especially every professional man engaged in politics, ought to propose to himself as a model, it was this, that he despised popularity too much and too visibly. The honourable Member for Thetford told us that the honourable and learned Member for Rye, with all his talents, would have no chance of a seat in the Reformed Parliament, for want of the qualifications which succeed on the hustings. Did Sir Samuel Romilly ever appear on the hustings of Westminster? He never solicited one vote; he never showed himself to the electors, till he had been returned at the head of the poll. Even then, as I have heard from one of his nearest relatives, it was with reluctance that he submitted to be chaired. He shrank from being made a show. He loved the people, and he served them; but Coriolanus himself was not less fit to canvass them. I will mention one other name, that of a man of whom I have only a childish recollection, but who must have been intimately known to many of those who hear me, Mr Henry Thornton. He was a man eminently upright, honourable, and religious, a man of strong understanding, a man of great political knowledge; but, in all respects, the very reverse of a mob orator. He was a man who would not have yielded to what he considered as unreasonable clamour, I will not say to save his seat, but to save his life. Yet he continued to represent Southwark, Parliament after Parliament, for many years. Such has been the conduct of the scot and lot voters of the metropolis; and there is clearly less reason to expect democratic violence from ten pound householders than from scot

and lot householders; and from ten pound householders in the country towns than from ten pound householders in London. Experience, I say, therefore, is on our side; and on the side of our opponents nothing but mere conjecture and mere assertion.

Sir, when this bill was first brought forward, I supported it, not only on the ground of its intrinsic merits, but, also, because I was convinced that to reject it would be a course full of danger. I believe that the danger of that course is in no respect diminished. I believe, on the contrary, that it is increased. We are told that there is a reaction. The warmth of the public feeling, it seems, has abated. In this story both the sections of the party opposed to Reform are agreed; those who hate Reform, because it will remove abuses, and those who hate it, because it will vert anarchy; those who wish to see the electing body controlled by ejections, and those who wish to see it controlled by riots. They must now, I think, be undeceived. They must have already discovered that the surest way to prevent a reaction is to talk about it, and that the enthusiasm of the people is at once rekindled by any indiscreet mention of their seeming coolness. This, Sir, is not the first reaction which the sagacity of the Opposition has discovered since the Reform Bill was brought in. Every gentleman who sat in the late Parliament, every gentleman who, during the sitting of the late Parliament, paid attention to political speeches and publications, must remember how, for some time before the debate on General Gascoyne's motion, and during the debate on that motion, and down to the very day of

the dissolution, we were told that public feeling had cooled. The right honourable Baronet, the member for Tamworth, told us so. All the literary organs of the Opposition, from the Quarterly Review down to the Morning Post, told us so. All the Members of the Opposition with whom we conversed in private told us so. I have in my eye a noble friend of mine, who assured me, on the very night which preceded the dissolution, that the people had ceased to be zealous for the Ministerial plan, and that we were more likely to lose than to gain by the elections. The appeal was made to the people; and what was the result? What sign of a reaction appeared among the Livery of London? What sign of a reaction did the honourable Baronet who now represents Okehampton find among the freeholders of Cornwall? (Sir Richard Vyvyan.) How was it with the large represented towns? Had Liverpool cooled? or Bristol? or Leicester? or Coventry? or Nottingham? or Norwich? How was it with the great seats of manufacturing industry, Yorkshire, and Lancashire, and Staffordshire, and Warwickshire, and Cheshire? How was it with the agricultural districts, Northumberland and Cumberland, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire, Kent and Essex, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Somersetshire, Dorsetshire, Devonshire? How was it with the strongholds of aristocratical influence, Newark, and Stamford, and Hertford, and St Alban's? Never did any people display, within the limits prescribed by law, so generous a fervour, or so steadfast a determination, as that very people whose apparent languor had just before inspired the enemies of

Reform with a delusive hope.

Such was the end of the reaction of April; and, if that lesson shall not profit those to whom it was given, such and yet more signal will be the end of the reaction of September. The two cases are strictly analogous. In both cases the people were eager when they believed the bill to be in danger, and quiet when they believed it to be in security. During the three or four weeks which followed the promulgation of the Ministerial plan, all was joy, and gratitude, and vigorous exertion. Everywhere meetings were held: everywhere resolutions were passed: from every quarter were sent up petitions to this House, and addresses to the Throne: and then the nation, having given vent to its first feelings of delight, having clearly and strongly expressed its opinions, having seen the principle of the bill adopted by the House of Commons on the second reading, became composed, and awaited the result with a tranquillity which the Opposition mistook for indifference. All at once the aspect of affairs changed. General Gascoyne's amendment was carried: the bill was again in danger: exertions were again necessary. Then was it well seen whether the calmness of the public mind was any indication of indifference. The depth and sincerity of the prevailing sentiments were proved, not by mere talking, but by actions, by votes, by sacrifices. Intimidation was defied: expenses were rejected: old ties were broken: the people struggled manfully: they triumphed gloriously: they placed the bill in perfect security, as far as this house was concerned; and

they returned to their repose. They are now, as they were on the eve of General Gascoyne's motion, awaiting the issue of the deliberations of Parliament, without any indecent show of violence, but with anxious interest and immovable resolution. And because they are not exhibiting that noisy and rapturous enthusiasm which is in its own nature transient, because they are not as much excited as on the day when the plan of the Government was first made known to them, or on the day when the late Parliament was dissolved, because they do not go on week after week, hallooing, and holding meetings, and marching about with flags, and making bonfires, and illuminating their houses, we are again told that there is a reaction. To such a degree can men be deceived by their wishes, in spite of their own recent experience. Sir, there is no reaction; and there will be no reaction. All that has been said on this subject convinces me only that those who are now, for the second time, raising this cry, know nothing of the crisis in which they are called on to act, or of the nation which they aspire to govern. All their opinions respecting this bill are founded on one great error. They imagine that the public feeling concerning Reform is a mere whim which sprang up suddenly out of nothing, and which will as suddenly vanish into nothing. They, therefore, confidently expect a reaction. They are always looking out for a reaction. Everything that they see, or that they hear, they construe into a sign of the approach of this reaction. They resemble the man in Horace, who lies on the bank of the river, expecting that it will every moment pass by and leave

him a clear passage, not knowing the depth and abundance of the fountain which feeds it, not knowing that it flows, and will flow on for ever. They have found out a hundred ingenious devices by which they deceive themselves. Sometimes they tell us that the public feeling about Reform was caused by the events which took place at Paris about fourteen months ago; though every observant and impartial man knows, that the excitement which the late French revolution produced in England was not the cause but the effect of that progress which liberal opinions had made amongst us. Sometimes they tell us that we should not have been troubled with any complaints on the subject of the Representation, if the House of Commons had agreed to a certain motion, made in the session of 1830, for inquiry into the causes of the public distress. I remember nothing about that motion, except that it gave rise to the dullest debate ever known; and the country, I am firmly convinced, cared not one straw about it. But is it not strange that men of real ability can deceive themselves so grossly, as to think that any change in the government of a foreign nation, or the rejection of any single motion, however popular, could all at once raise up a great, rich, enlightened nation, against its ancient institutions? Could such small drops have produced an overflowing, if the vessel had not already been filled to the very brim? These explanations are incredible, and if they were credible, would be anything but consolatory. If it were really true that the English people had taken a sudden aversion to a representative system which they had always loved and admired,

because a single division in Parliament had gone against their wishes, or because, in a foreign country, in circumstances bearing not the faintest analogy to those in which we are placed, a change of dynasty had happened, what hope could we have for such a nation of madmen? How could we expect that the present form of government, or any form of government, would be durable amongst them?

Sir, the public feeling concerning Reform is of no such recent origin, and springs from no such frivolous causes. Its first faint commencement may be traced far, very far, back in our history. During seventy years that feeling has had a great influence on the public mind. Through the first thirty years of the reign of George the Third, it was gradually increasing. The great leaders of the two parties in the State were favourable to Reform. Plans of reform were supported by large and most respectable minorities in the House of Commons. The French Revolution, filling the higher and middle classes with an extreme dread of change, and the war calling away the public attention from internal to external politics, threw the question back; but the people never lost sight of it. Peace came, and they were at leisure to think of domestic improvements. Distress came, and they suspected, as was natural, that their distress was the effect of unfaithful stewardship and unskilful legislation. An opinion favourable to Parliamentary Reform grew up rapidly, and became strong among the middle classes. But one tie, one strong tie, still bound those classes to the Tory party. I mean

the Catholic Question. It is impossible to deny that, on that subject, a large proportion, a majority, I fear, of the middle class of Englishmen, conscientiously held opinions opposed to those which I have always entertained, and were disposed to sacrifice every other consideration to what they regarded as a religious duty. Thus the Catholic Question hid, so to speak, the question of Parliamentary Reform. The feeling in favour of Parliamentary Reform grew, but it grew in the shade. Every man, I think, must have observed the progress of that feeling in his own social circle. But few Reform meetings were held, and few petitions in favour of Reform presented. At length the Catholics were emancipated; the solitary link of sympathy which attached the people to the Tories was broken; the cry of "No Popery" could no longer be opposed to the cry of "Reform." That which, in the opinion of the two great parties in Parliament, and of a vast portion of the community, had been the first question, suddenly disappeared; and the question of Parliamentary Reform took the first place. Then was put forth all the strength which had been growing in silence and obscurity. Then it appeared that Reform had on its side a coalition of interests and opinions unprecedented in our history, all the liberality and intelligence which had supported the Catholic claims, and all the clamour which had opposed them.

This, I believe, is the true history of that public feeling on the subject of Reform which had been ascribed to causes quite inadequate to the production of such an effect. If ever there was in the history of mankind a national sentiment which was the

very opposite of a caprice, with which accident had nothing to do, which was produced by the slow, steady, certain progress of the human mind, it is the sentiment of the English people on the subject of Reform. Accidental circumstances may have brought that feeling to maturity in a particular year, or a particular month. That point I will not dispute; for it is not worth disputing. But those accidental circumstances have brought on Reform, only as the circumstance that, at a particular time, indulgences were offered for sale in a particular town in Saxony, brought on the great separation from the Church of Rome. In both cases the public mind was prepared to move on the slightest impulse.

Thinking thus of the public opinion concerning Reform, being convinced that this opinion is the mature product of time and of discussion, I expect no reaction. I no more expect to see my countrymen again content with the mere semblance of a Representation, than to see them again drowning witches or burning heretics, trying causes by red hot ploughshares, or offering up human sacrifices to wicker idols. I no more expect a reaction in favour of Gaton and Old Sarum, than a reaction in favour of Thor and Odin. I should think such a reaction almost as much a miracle as that the shadow should go back upon the dial. Revolutions produced by violence are often followed by reactions; the victories of reason once gained, are gained for eternity.

In fact, if there be, in the present aspect of public affairs, any sign peculiarly full of evil omen to the opponents of

Reform, it is that very calmness of the public mind on which they found their expectation of success. They think that it is the calmness of indifference. It is the calmness of confident hope: and in proportion to the confidence of hope will be the bitterness of disappointment. Disappointment, indeed, I do not anticipate. That we are certain of success in this House is now acknowledged; and our opponents have, in consequence, during the whole of this Session, and particularly during the present debate, addressed their arguments and exhortations rather to the Lords than to the assembly of which they are themselves Members. Their principal argument has always been, that the bill will destroy the peerage. The honourable and learned Member for Rye has, in plain terms, called on the Barons of England to save their order from democratic encroachments, by rejecting this measure. All these arguments, all these appeals, being interpreted, mean this: "Proclaim to your countrymen that you have no common interests with them, no common sympathies with them; that you can be powerful only by their weakness, and exalted only by their degradation; that the corruption which disgusts them, and the oppression against which their spirit rises up, are indispensable to your authority; that the freedom and purity of election are incompatible with the very existence of your House. Give them clearly to understand that your power rests, not as they have hitherto imagined, on their rational convictions, or on their habitual veneration, or on your own great property, but on a system fertile of political evils, fertile also of

low iniquities of which ordinary justice take cognisance. Bind up, in inseparable union, the privileges of your estate with the grievances of ours: resolve to stand or fall with abuses visibly marked out for destruction: tell the people that they are attacking you in attacking the three holes in the wall, and that they shall never get rid of the three holes in the wall, till they have got rid of you; that a hereditary peerage and a representative assembly, can co-exist only in name, and that, if they will have a real House of Peers, they must be content with a mock House of Commons." This, I say, is the advice given to the Lords by those who call themselves the friends of aristocracy. That advice so pernicious will not be followed, I am well assured; yet I cannot but listen to it with uneasiness. I cannot but wonder that it should proceed from the lips of men who are constantly lecturing us on the duty of consulting history and experience. Have they never heard what effects counsels like their own, when too faithfully followed, have produced? Have they never visited that neighbouring country, which still presents to the eye, even of a passing stranger, the signs of a great dissolution and renovation of society? Have they never walked by those stately mansions, now sinking into decay, and portioned out into lodging rooms, which line the silent streets of the Faubourg St Germain? Have they never seen the ruins of those castles whose terraces and gardens overhang the Loire? Have they never heard that from those magnificent hotels, from those ancient castles, an aristocracy as splendid, as brave, as proud, as accomplished,

as ever Europe saw, was driven forth to exile and beggary, to implore the charity of hostile Governments and hostile creeds, to cut wood in the back settlements of America, or to teach French in the schoolrooms of London? And why were those haughty nobles destroyed with that utter destruction? Why were they scattered over the face of the earth, their titles abolished, their escutcheons defaced, their parks wasted, their palaces dismantled, their heritage given to strangers? Because they had no sympathy with the people, no discernment of the signs of their time; because, in the pride and narrowness of their hearts, they called those whose warnings might have saved them theorists and speculators; because they refused all concession till the time had arrived when no concession would avail. I have no apprehension that such a fate awaits the nobles of England. I draw no parallel between our aristocracy and that of France. Those who represent the peerage as a class whose power is incompatible with the just influence of the people in the State, draw that parallel, and not I. They do all in their power to place the Lords and Commons of England in that position with respect to each other in which the French gentry stood with respect to the Third Estate. But I am convinced that these advisers will not succeed. We see, with pride and delight, among the friends of the people, the Talbots, the Cavendishes, the princely house of Howard. Foremost among those who have entitled themselves, by their exertions in this House, to the lasting gratitude of their countrymen, we see the descendants of Marlborough, of Russell, and of Derby. I hope,

and firmly believe, that the Lords will see what their interests and their honour require. I hope, and firmly believe, that they will act in such a manner as to entitle themselves to the esteem and affection of the people. But if not, let not the enemies of Reform imagine that their reign is straightway to recommence, or that they have obtained anything more than a short and uneasy respite. We are bound to respect the constitutional rights of the Peers; but we are bound also not to forget our own. We, too, have our privileges; we, too, are an estate of the realm. A House of Commons strong in the love and confidence of the people, a House of Commons which has nothing to fear from a dissolution, is something in the government. Some persons, I well know, indulge a hope that the rejection of the bill will at once restore the domination of that party which fled from power last November, leaving everything abroad and everything at home in confusion; leaving the European system, which it had built up at a vast cost of blood and treasure, falling to pieces in every direction; leaving the dynasties which it had restored, hastening into exile; leaving the nations which it had joined together, breaking away from each other; leaving the fundholders in dismay; leaving the peasantry in insurrection; leaving the most fertile counties lighted up with the fires of incendiaries; leaving the capital in such a state, that a royal procession could not pass safely through it. Dark and terrible, beyond any season within my remembrance of political affairs, was the day of their flight. Far darker and far more terrible will be the day of their return. They will return

in opposition to the whole British nation, united as it was never before united on any internal question; united as firmly as when the Armada was sailing up the Channel; united as firmly as when Bonaparte pitched his camp on the cliffs of Boulogne. They will return pledged to defend evils which the people are resolved to destroy. They will return to a situation in which they can stand only by crushing and trampling down public opinion, and from which, if they fall, they may, in their fall, drag down with them the whole frame of society. Against such evils, should such evils appear to threaten the country, it will be our privilege and our duty to warn our gracious and beloved Sovereign. It will be our privilege and our duty to convey the wishes of a loyal people to the throne of a patriot king. At such a crisis the proper place for the House of Commons is in front of the nation; and in that place this House will assuredly be found. Whatever prejudice or weakness may do elsewhere to ruin the empire, here, I trust, will not be wanting the wisdom, the virtue, and the energy that may save it.

# **PARLIAMENTARY REFORM. (OCTOBER 10, 1831) A SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 10TH OF OCTOBER, 1831**

On the morning of Saturday, the eighth of October, 1831, the House of Lords, by a majority of 190 to 158, rejected the Reform Bill. On the Monday following, Lord Ebrington, member for Devonshire, moved the following resolution in the House of Commons:

"That while this House deeply laments the present fate of a bill for amending the representation of the people in England and Wales, in favour of which the opinion of the country stands unequivocally pronounced, and which has been matured by discussions the most anxious and laborious, it feels itself called upon to reassert its firm adherence to the principle and leading provisions of that great measure, and to express its unabated confidence in the integrity, perseverance, and ability of those Ministers, who, in introducing and conducting it, have so well consulted the best interests of the country."

The resolution was carried by 329 votes to 198. The following speech was made early in the debate.

I doubt, Sir, whether any person who had merely heard the speech of the right honourable Member for the University of Cambridge (Mr Goulburn.) would have been able to conjecture what the question is on which we are discussing, and what the occasion on which we are assembled. For myself, I can with perfect certainty declare that never in the whole course of my life did I feel my mind oppressed by so deep and solemn a sense of responsibility as at the present moment. I firmly believe that the country is now in danger of calamities greater than ever threatened it, from domestic misgovernment or from foreign hostility. The danger is no less than this, that there may be a complete alienation of the people from their rulers. To soothe the public mind, to reconcile the people to the delay, the short delay, which must intervene before their wishes can be legitimately gratified, and in the meantime to avert civil discord, and to uphold the authority of law, these are, I conceive, the objects of my noble friend, the Member for Devonshire: these ought, at the present crisis, to be the objects of every honest Englishman. They are objects which will assuredly be attained, if we rise to this great occasion, if we take our stand in the place which the Constitution has assigned to us, if we employ, with becoming firmness and dignity, the powers which belong to us as trustees of the nation, and as advisers of the Throne.

Sir, the Resolution of my noble friend consists of two parts. He calls upon us to declare our undiminished attachment to the principles of the Reform Bill, and also our undiminished

confidence in His Majesty's Ministers. I consider these two declarations as identical. The question of Reform is, in my opinion, of such paramount importance, that, approving the principles of the Ministerial Bill, I must think the Ministers who have brought that bill forward, although I may differ from them on some minor points, entitled to the strongest support of Parliament. The right honourable gentleman, the Member for the University of Cambridge, has attempted to divert the course of the debate to questions comparatively unimportant. He has said much about the coal duty, about the candle duty, about the budget of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. On most of the points to which he has referred, it would be easy for me, were I so inclined, to defend the Ministers; and where I could not defend them, I should find it easy to recriminate on those who preceded them. The right honourable Member for the University of Cambridge has taunted the Ministers with the defeat which their plan respecting the timber trade sustained in the last Parliament. I might, perhaps, at a more convenient season, be tempted to inquire whether that defeat was more disgraceful to them or to their predecessors. I might, perhaps, be tempted to ask the right honourable gentleman whether, if he had not been treated, while in office, with more fairness than he has shown while in opposition, it would have been in his power to carry his best bill, the Beer Bill? He has accused the Ministers of bringing forward financial propositions, and then withdrawing those propositions. Did not he bring forward, during the Session

of 1830, a plan respecting the sugar duties? And was not that plan withdrawn? But, Sir, this is mere trifling. I will not be seduced from the matter in hand by the right honourable gentleman's example. At the present moment I can see only one question in the State, the question of Reform; only two parties, the friends of the Reform Bill and its enemies.

It is not my intention, Sir, again to discuss the merits of the Reform Bill. The principle of that bill received the approbation of the late House of Commons after a discussion of ten nights; and the bill as it now stands, after a long and most laborious investigation, passed the present House of Commons by a majority which was nearly half as large again as the minority. This was little more than a fortnight ago. Nothing has since occurred to change our opinion. The justice of the case is unaltered. The public enthusiasm is undiminished. Old Sarum has grown no larger. Manchester has grown no smaller. In addressing this House, therefore, I am entitled to assume that the bill is in itself a good bill. If so, ought we to abandon it merely because the Lords have rejected it? We ought to respect the lawful privileges of their House; but we ought also to assert our own. We are constitutionally as independent of their Lordships as their Lordships are of us. We have precisely as good a right to adhere to our opinion as they have to dissent from it. In speaking of their decision, I will attempt to follow that example of moderation which was so judiciously set by my noble friend, the Member for Devonshire. I will only say that I do not think

that they are more competent to form a correct judgment on a political question than we are. It is certain that, on all the most important points on which the two Houses have for a long time past differed, the Lords have at length come over to the opinion of the Commons. I am therefore entitled to say, that with respect to all those points, the Peers themselves being judges, the House of Commons was in the right and the House of Lords in the wrong. It was thus with respect to the Slave trade: it was thus with respect to Catholic Emancipation: it was thus with several other important questions. I, therefore, cannot think that we ought, on the present occasion, to surrender our judgment to those who have acknowledged that, on former occasions of the same kind, we have judged more correctly than they.

Then again, Sir, I cannot forget how the majority and the minority in this House were composed; I cannot forget that the majority contained almost all those gentlemen who are returned by large bodies of electors. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that there were single Members of the majority who had more constituents than the whole minority put together. I speak advisedly and seriously. I believe that the number of freeholders of Yorkshire exceeds that of all the electors who return the Opposition. I cannot with propriety comment here on any reports which may have been circulated concerning the majority and minority in the House of Lords. I may, however, mention these notoriously historical facts; that during the last forty years the powers of the executive Government have been, almost without

intermission, exercised by a party opposed to Reform; and that a very great number of Peers have been created, and all the present Bishops raised to the bench during those years. On this question, therefore, while I feel more than usual respect for the judgment of the House of Commons, I feel less than usual respect for the judgment of the House of Lords. Our decision is the decision of the nation; the decision of their Lordships can scarcely be considered as the decision even of that class from which the Peers are generally selected, and of which they may be considered as virtual representatives, the great landed gentlemen of England. It seems to me clear, therefore, that we ought, notwithstanding what has passed in the other House, to adhere to our opinion concerning the Reform Bill.

The next question is this; ought we to make a formal declaration that we adhere to our opinion? I think that we ought to make such a declaration; and I am sure that we cannot make it in more temperate or more constitutional terms than those which my noble friend asks us to adopt. I support the Resolution which he has proposed with all my heart and soul: I support it as a friend to Reform; but I support it still more as a friend to law, to property, to social order. No observant and unprejudiced man can look forward without great alarm to the effects which the recent decision of the Lords may possibly produce. I do not predict, I do not expect, open, armed insurrection. What I apprehend is this, that the people may engage in a silent, but extensive and persevering war against

the law. What I apprehend is, that England may exhibit the same spectacle which Ireland exhibited three years ago, agitators stronger than the magistrate, associations stronger than the law, a Government powerful enough to be hated, and not powerful enough to be feared, a people bent on indemnifying themselves by illegal excesses for the want of legal privileges. I fear, that we may before long see the tribunals defied, the tax-gatherer resisted, public credit shaken, property insecure, the whole frame of society hastening to dissolution. It is easy to say, "Be bold: be firm: defy intimidation: let the law have its course: the law is strong enough to put down the seditious." Sir, we have heard all this blustering before; and we know in what it ended. It is the blustering of little men whose lot has fallen on a great crisis. Xerxes scourging the winds, Canute commanding the waves to recede from his footstool, were but types of the folly of those who apply the maxims of the Quarter Sessions to the great convulsions of society. The law has no eyes: the law has no hands: the law is nothing, nothing but a piece of paper printed by the King's printer, with the King's arms at the top, till public opinion breathes the breath of life into the dead letter. We found this in Ireland. The Catholic Association bearded the Government. The Government resolved to put down the Association. An indictment was brought against my honourable and learned friend, the Member for Kerry. The Grand Jury threw it out. Parliament met. The Lords Commissioners came down with a speech recommending the suppression of the self-

constituted legislature of Dublin. A bill was brought in: it passed both Houses by large majorities: it received the Royal assent. And what effect did it produce? Exactly as much as that old Act of Queen Elizabeth, still unrepealed, by which it is provided that every man who, without a special exemption, shall eat meat on Fridays and Saturdays, shall pay a fine of twenty shillings or go to prison for a month. Not only was the Association not destroyed: its power was not for one day suspended: it flourished and waxed strong under the law which had been made for the purpose of annihilating it. The elections of 1826, the Clare election two years later, proved the folly of those who think that nations are governed by wax and parchment: and, at length, in the close of 1828, the Government had only one plain choice before it, concession or civil war. Sir, I firmly believe that, if the people of England shall lose all hope of carrying the Reform Bill by constitutional means, they will forthwith begin to offer to the Government the same kind of resistance which was offered to the late Government, three years ago, by the people of Ireland, a resistance by no means amounting to rebellion, a resistance rarely amounting to any crime defined by the law, but a resistance nevertheless which is quite sufficient to obstruct the course of justice, to disturb the pursuits of industry, and to prevent the accumulation of wealth. And is not this a danger which we ought to fear? And is not this a danger which we are bound, by all means in our power, to avert? And who are those who taunt us for yielding to intimidation? Who are those who affect to speak with

contempt of associations, and agitators, and public meetings? Even the very persons who, scarce two years ago, gave up to associations, and agitators, and public meetings, their boasted Protestant Constitution, proclaiming all the time that they saw the evils of Catholic Emancipation as strongly as ever. Surely, surely, the note of defiance which is now so loudly sounded in our ears, proceeds with a peculiarly bad grace from men whose highest glory it is that they abased themselves to the dust before a people whom their policy had driven to madness, from men the proudest moment of whose lives was that in which they appeared in the character of persecutors scared into toleration. Do they mean to indemnify themselves for the humiliation of quailing before the people of Ireland by trampling on the people of England? If so, they deceive themselves. The case of Ireland, though a strong one, was by no means so strong a case as that with which we have now to deal. The Government, in its struggle with the Catholics of Ireland, had Great Britain at its back. Whom will it have at its back in the struggle with the Reformers of Great Britain? I know only two ways in which societies can permanently be governed, by public opinion, and by the sword. A Government having at its command the armies, the fleets, and the revenues of Great Britain, might possibly hold Ireland by the sword. So Oliver Cromwell held Ireland; so William the Third held it; so Mr Pitt held it; so the Duke of Wellington might perhaps have held it. But to govern Great Britain by the sword! So wild a thought has never, I will venture to say, occurred to any

public man of any party; and, if any man were frantic enough to make the attempt, he would find, before three days had expired, that there is no better sword than that which is fashioned out of a ploughshare. But, if not by the sword, how is the country to be governed? I understand how the peace is kept at New York. It is by the assent and support of the people. I understand also how the peace is kept at Milan. It is by the bayonets of the Austrian soldiers. But how the peace is to be kept when you have neither the popular assent nor the military force, how the peace is to be kept in England by a Government acting on the principles of the present Opposition, I do not understand.

There is in truth a great anomaly in the relation between the English people and their Government. Our institutions are either too popular or not popular enough. The people have not sufficient power in making the laws; but they have quite sufficient power to impede the execution of the laws when made. The Legislature is almost entirely aristocratical; the machinery by which the decrees of the Legislature are carried into effect is almost entirely popular; and, therefore, we constantly see all the power which ought to execute the law, employed to counteract the law. Thus, for example, with a criminal code which carries its rigour to the length of atrocity, we have a criminal judicature which often carries its lenity to the length of perjury. Our law of libel is the most absurdly severe that ever existed, so absurdly severe that, if it were carried into full effect, it would be much more oppressive than a censorship. And yet, with this severe law

of libel, we have a press which practically is as free as the air. In 1819 the Ministers complained of the alarming increase of seditious and blasphemous publications. They proposed a bill of great rigour to stop the growth of the evil; and they carried their bill. It was enacted, that the publisher of a seditious libel might, on a second conviction, be banished, and that if he should return from banishment, he might be transported. How often was this law put in force? Not once. Last year we repealed it: but it was already dead, or rather it was dead born. It was obsolete before *Le Roi le veut* had been pronounced over it. For any effect which it produced it might as well have been in the Code Napoleon as in the English Statute Book. And why did the Government, having solicited and procured so sharp and weighty a weapon, straightway hang it up to rust? Was there less sedition, were there fewer libels, after the passing of the Act than before it? Sir, the very next year was the year 1820, the year of the Bill of Pains and Penalties against Queen Caroline, the very year when the public mind was most excited, the very year when the public press was most scurrilous. Why then did not the Ministers use their new law? Because they durst not: because they could not. They had obtained it with ease; for in obtaining it they had to deal with a subservient Parliament. They could not execute it: for in executing it they would have to deal with a refractory people. These are instances of the difficulty of carrying the law into effect when the people are inclined to thwart their rulers. The great anomaly, or, to speak more properly, the

great evil which I have described, would, I believe, be removed by the Reform Bill. That bill would establish harmony between the people and the Legislature. It would give a fair share in the making of laws to those without whose co-operation laws are mere waste paper. Under a reformed system we should not see, as we now often see, the nation repealing Acts of Parliament as fast as we and the Lords can pass them. As I believe that the Reform Bill would produce this blessed and salutary concord, so I fear that the rejection of the Reform Bill, if that rejection should be considered as final, will aggravate the evil which I have been describing to an unprecedented, to a terrible extent. To all the laws which might be passed for the collection of the revenue, or for the prevention of sedition, the people would oppose the same kind of resistance by means of which they have succeeded in mitigating, I might say in abrogating, the law of libel. There would be so many offenders that the Government would scarcely know at whom to aim its blow. Every offender would have so many accomplices and protectors that the blow would almost always miss the aim. The Veto of the people, a Veto not pronounced in set form like that of the Roman Tribunes, but quite as effectual as that of the Roman Tribunes for the purpose of impeding public measures, would meet the Government at every turn. The administration would be unable to preserve order at home, or to uphold the national honour abroad; and, at length, men who are now moderate, who now think of revolution with horror, would begin to wish that the lingering agony of the State

might be terminated by one fierce, sharp, decisive crisis.

Is there a way of escape from these calamities? I believe that there is. I believe that, if we do our duty, if we give the people reason to believe that the accomplishment of their wishes is only deferred, if we declare our undiminished attachment to the Reform Bill, and our resolution to support no Minister who will not support that bill, we shall avert the fearful disasters which impend over the country. There is danger that, at this conjuncture, men of more zeal than wisdom may obtain a fatal influence over the public mind. With these men will be joined others, who have neither zeal nor wisdom, common barrators in politics, dregs of society which, in times of violent agitation, are tossed up from the bottom to the top, and which, in quiet times, sink again from the top to their natural place at the bottom. To these men nothing is so hateful as the prospect of a reconciliation between the orders of the State. A crisis like that which now makes every honest citizen sad and anxious fills these men with joy, and with a detestable hope. And how is it that such men, formed by nature and education to be objects of mere contempt, can ever inspire terror? How is it that such men, without talents or acquirements sufficient for the management of a vestry, sometimes become dangerous to great empires? The secret of their power lies in the indolence or faithlessness of those who ought to take the lead in the redress of public grievances. The whole history of low traders in sedition is contained in that fine old Hebrew fable which we have all read in the Book of

Judges. The trees meet to choose a king. The vine, and the fig tree, and the olive tree decline the office. Then it is that the sovereignty of the forest devolves upon the bramble: then it is that from a base and noxious shrub goes forth the fire which devours the cedars of Lebanon. Let us be instructed. If we are afraid of political Unions and Reform Associations, let the House of Commons become the chief point of political union: let the House of Commons be the great Reform Association. If we are afraid that the people may attempt to accomplish their wishes by unlawful means, let us give them a solemn pledge that we will use in their cause all our high and ancient privileges, so often victorious in old conflicts with tyranny; those privileges which our ancestors invoked, not in vain, on the day when a faithless king filled our house with his guards, took his seat, Sir, on your chair, and saw your predecessor kneeling on the floor before him. The Constitution of England, thank God, is not one of those constitutions which are past all repair, and which must, for the public welfare, be utterly destroyed. It has a decayed part; but it has also a sound and precious part. It requires purification; but it contains within itself the means by which that purification may be effected. We read that in old times, when the villeins were driven to revolt by oppression, when the castles of the nobility were burned to the ground, when the warehouses of London were pillaged, when a hundred thousand insurgents appeared in arms on Blackheath, when a foul murder perpetrated in their presence had raised their passions to madness, when

they were looking round for some captain to succeed and avenge him whom they had lost, just then, before Hob Miller, or Tom Carter, or Jack Straw, could place himself at their head, the King rode up to them and exclaimed, "I will be your leader!" and at once the infuriated multitude laid down their arms, submitted to his guidance, dispersed at his command. Herein let us imitate him. Our countrymen are, I fear, at this moment, but too much disposed to lend a credulous ear to selfish impostors. Let us say to them, "We are your leaders; we, your own house of Commons; we, the constitutional interpreters of your wishes; the knights of forty English shires, the citizens and burgesses of all your largest towns. Our lawful power shall be firmly exerted to the utmost in your cause; and our lawful power is such, that when firmly exerted in your cause, it must finally prevail." This tone it is our interest and our duty to take. The circumstances admit of no delay. Is there one among us who is not looking with breathless anxiety for the next tidings which may arrive from the remote parts of the kingdom? Even while I speak, the moments are passing away, the irrevocable moments pregnant with the destiny of a great people. The country is in danger: it may be saved: we can save it: this is the way: this is the time. In our hands are the issues of great good and great evil, the issues of the life and death of the State. May the result of our deliberations be the repose and prosperity of that noble country which is entitled to all our love; and for the safety of which we are answerable to our own consciences, to the memory of future ages, to the Judge of all

hearts!

**PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.  
(DECEMBER 16, 1831) A  
SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS ON  
THE 16TH OF DECEMBER 1831**

On Friday, the sixteenth of December 1831, Lord Althorpe moved the second reading of the Bill to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales. Lord Porchester moved, as an amendment, that the bill should be read a second time that day six months. The debate lasted till after midnight, and was then adjourned till twelve at noon. The House did not divide till one on the Sunday morning. The amendment was then rejected by 324 votes to 162; and the original motion was carried. The following Speech was made on the first night of the debate.

I can assure my noble friend (Lord Mahon.), for whom I entertain sentiments of respect and kindness which no political difference will, I trust, ever disturb, that his remarks have given me no pain, except, indeed, the pain which I feel at being compelled to say a few words about myself. Those words shall be very few. I know how unpopular egotism is in this House. My noble friend says that, in the debates of last March, I declared myself opposed to the ballot, and that I have since recanted, for

the purpose of making myself popular with the inhabitants of Leeds. My noble friend is altogether mistaken. I never said, in any debate, that I was opposed to the ballot. The word ballot never passed my lips within this House. I observed strict silence respecting it on two accounts; in the first place, because my own opinions were, till very lately, undecided; in the second place, because I knew that the agitation of that question, a question of which the importance appears to me to be greatly overrated, would divide those on whose firm and cordial union the safety of the empire depends. My noble friend has taken this opportunity of replying to a speech which I made last October. The doctrines which I then laid down were, according to him, most intemperate and dangerous. Now, Sir, it happens, curiously enough, that my noble friend has himself asserted, in his speech of this night, those very doctrines, in language so nearly resembling mine that I might fairly accuse him of plagiarism. I said that laws have no force in themselves, and that, unless supported by public opinion, they are a mere dead letter. The noble Lord has said exactly the same thing to-night. "Keep your old Constitution," he exclaims; "for, whatever may be its defects in theory, it has more of the public veneration than your new Constitution will have; and no laws can be efficient, unless they have the public veneration." I said, that statutes are in themselves only wax and parchment; and I was called an incendiary by the opposition. The noble Lord has said to-night that statutes in themselves are only ink and parchment; and those very persons who reviled me have

enthusiastically cheered him. I am quite at a loss to understand how doctrines which are, in his mouth, true and constitutional, can, in mine, be false and revolutionary.

But, Sir, it is time that I should address myself to the momentous question before us. I shall certainly give my best support to this bill, through all its stages; and, in so doing, I conceive that I shall act in strict conformity with the resolution by which this House, towards the close of the late Session, declared its unabated attachment to the principles and to the leading provisions of the First Reform Bill. All those principles, all those leading provisions, I find in the present measure. In the details there are, undoubtedly, considerable alterations. Most of the alterations appear to me to be improvements; and even those alterations which I cannot consider as in themselves improvements will yet be most useful, if their effect shall be to conciliate opponents, and to facilitate the adjustment of a question which, for the sake of order, for the sake of peace, for the sake of trade, ought to be, not only satisfactorily, but speedily settled. We have been told, Sir, that, if we pronounce this bill to be a better bill than the last, we recant all the doctrines which we maintained during the last Session, we sing our palinode; we allow that we have had a great escape; we allow that our own conduct was deserving of censure; we allow that the party which was the minority in this House, and, most unhappily for the country, the majority in the other House, has saved the country from a great calamity. Sir, even if this charge were well founded,

there are those who should have been prevented by prudence, if not by magnanimity, from bringing it forward. I remember an Opposition which took a very different course. I remember an Opposition which, while excluded from power, taught all its doctrines to the Government; which, after labouring long, and sacrificing much, in order to effect improvements in various parts of our political and commercial system, saw the honour of those improvements appropriated by others. But the members of that Opposition had, I believe, a sincere desire to promote the public good. They, therefore, raised no shout of triumph over the recantations of their proselytes. They rejoiced, but with no ungenerous joy, when their principles of trade, of jurisprudence, of foreign policy, of religious liberty, became the principles of the Administration. They were content that he who came into fellowship with them at the eleventh hour should have a far larger share of the reward than those who had borne the burthen and heat of the day. In the year 1828, a single division in this House changed the whole policy of the Government with respect to the Test and Corporation Acts. My noble friend, the Paymaster of the Forces, then sat where the right honourable Baronet, the member for Tamworth, now sits. I do not remember that, when the right honourable Baronet announced his change of purpose, my noble friend sprang up to talk about palinodes, to magnify the wisdom and virtue of the Whigs, and to sneer at his new coadjutors. Indeed, I am not sure that the members of the late Opposition did not carry their indulgence too far; that they did not too easily

suffer the fame of Grattan and Romilly to be transferred to less deserving claimants; that they were not too ready, in the joy with which they welcomed the tardy and convenient repentance of their converts, to grant a general amnesty for the errors of the insincerity of years. If it were true that we had recanted, this ought not to be made matter of charge against us by men whom posterity will remember by nothing but recantations. But, in truth, we recant nothing. We have nothing to recant. We support this bill. We may possibly think it a better bill than that which preceded it. But are we therefore bound to admit that we were in the wrong, that the Opposition was in the right, that the House of Lords has conferred a great benefit on the nation? We saw—who did not see?—great defects in the first bill. But did we see nothing else? Is delay no evil? Is prolonged excitement no evil? Is it no evil that the heart of a great people should be made sick by deferred hope? We allow that many of the changes which have been made are improvements. But we think that it would have been far better for the country to have had the last bill, with all its defects, than the present bill, with all its improvements. Second thoughts are proverbially the best, but there are emergencies which do not admit of second thoughts. There probably never was a law which might not have been amended by delay. But there have been many cases in which there would have been more mischief in the delay than benefit in the amendments. The first bill, however inferior it may have been in its details to the present bill, was yet herein far

superior to the present bill, than it was the first. If the first bill had passed, it would, I firmly believe, have produced a complete reconciliation between the aristocracy and the people. It is my earnest wish and prayer that the present bill may produce this blessed effect; but I cannot say that my hopes are so sanguine as they were at the beginning of the last Session. The decision of the House of Lords has, I fear, excited in the public mind feelings of resentment which will not soon be allayed. What then, it is said, would you legislate in haste? Would you legislate in times of great excitement concerning matters of such deep concern? Yes, Sir, I would: and if any bad consequences should follow from the haste and the excitement, let those be held answerable who, when there was no need of haste, when there existed no excitement, refused to listen to any project of Reform, nay, who made it an argument against Reform, that the public mind was not excited. When few meetings were held, when few petitions were sent up to us, these politicians said, "Would you alter a Constitution with which the people are perfectly satisfied?" And now, when the kingdom from one end to the other is convulsed by the question of Reform, we hear it said by the very same persons, "Would you alter the Representative system in such agitated times as these?" Half the logic of misgovernment lies in this one sophistical dilemma: If the people are turbulent, they are unfit for liberty: if they are quiet, they do not want liberty.

I allow that hasty legislation is an evil. I allow that there are great objections to legislating in troubled times. But

reformers are compelled to legislate fast, because bigots will not legislate early. Reformers are compelled to legislate in times of excitement, because bigots will not legislate in times of tranquillity. If, ten years ago, nay, if only two years ago, there had been at the head of affairs men who understood the signs of the times and the temper of the nation, we should not have been forced to hurry now. If we cannot take our time, it is because we have to make up for their lost time. If they had reformed gradually, we might have reformed gradually; but we are compelled to move fast, because they would not move at all.

Though I admit, Sir, that this bill is in its details superior to the former bill, I must say that the best parts of this bill, those parts for the sake of which principally I support it, those parts for the sake of which I would support it, however imperfect its details might be, are parts which it has in common with the former bill. It destroys nomination; it admits the great body of the middle orders to a share in the government; and it contains provisions which will, as I conceive, greatly diminish the expense of elections.

Touching the expense of elections I will say a few words, because that part of the subject has not, I think, received so much attention as it deserves. Whenever the nomination boroughs are attacked, the opponents of Reform produce a long list of eminent men who have sate for those boroughs, and who, they tell us, would never have taken any part in public affairs but for those boroughs. Now, Sir, I suppose no person will maintain that a

large constituent body is likely to prefer ignorant and incapable men to men of information and ability? Whatever objections there may be to democratic institutions, it was never, I believe, doubted that those institutions are favourable to the development of talents. We may prefer the constitution of Sparta to that of Athens, or the constitution of Venice to that of Florence: but no person will deny that Athens produced more great men than Sparta, or that Florence produced more great men than Venice. But to come nearer home: the five largest English towns which have now the right of returning two members each by popular election, are Westminster, Southwark, Liverpool, Bristol, and Norwich. Now let us see what members those places have sent to Parliament. I will not speak of the living, though among the living are some of the most distinguished ornaments of the House. I will confine myself to the dead. Among many respectable and useful members of Parliament, whom these towns have returned, during the last half century, I find Mr Burke, Mr Fox, Mr Sheridan, Mr Windham, Mr Tierney, Sir Samuel Romilly, Mr Canning, Mr Huskisson. These were eight of the most illustrious parliamentary leaders of the generation which is passing away from the world. Mr Pitt was, perhaps, the only person worthy to make a ninth with them. It is, surely, a remarkable circumstance that, of the nine most distinguished Members of the House of Commons who have died within the last forty years, eight should have been returned to Parliament by the five largest represented towns. I am, therefore, warranted in saying that great constituent

bodies are quite as competent to discern merit, and quite as much disposed to reward merit, as the proprietors of boroughs. It is true that some of the distinguished statesmen whom I have mentioned would never have been known to large constituent bodies if they had not first sat for nomination boroughs. But why is this? Simply, because the expense of contesting popular places, under the present system, is ruinously great. A poor man cannot defray it; an untried man cannot expect his constituents to defray it for him. And this is the way in which our Representative system is defended. Corruption vouches corruption. Every abuse is made the plea for another abuse. We must have nomination at Gatton because we have profusion at Liverpool. Sir, these arguments convince me, not that no Reform is required, but that a very deep and searching Reform is required. If two evils serve in some respects to counterbalance each other, this is a reason, not for keeping both, but for getting rid of both together. At present you close against men of talents that broad, that noble entrance which belongs to them, and which ought to stand wide open to them; and in exchange you open to them a bye entrance, low and narrow, always obscure, often filthy, through which, too often, they can pass only by crawling on their hands and knees, and from which they too often emerge sullied with stains never to be washed away. But take the most favourable case. Suppose that the member who sits for a nomination borough owes his seat to a man of virtue and honour, to a man whose service is perfect freedom, to a man who would think himself degraded

by any proof of gratitude which might degrade his nominee. Yet is it nothing that such a member comes into this House wearing the badge, though not feeling the chain of servitude? Is it nothing that he cannot speak of his independence without exciting a smile? Is it nothing that he is considered, not as a Representative, but as an adventurer? This is what your system does for men of genius. It admits them to political power, not as, under better institutions, they would be admitted to power, erect, independent, unsullied; but by means which corrupt the virtue of many, and in some degree diminish the authority of all. Could any system be devised, better fitted to pervert the principles and break the spirit of men formed to be the glory of their country? And, can we mention no instance in which this system has made such men useless, or worse than useless, to the country of which their talents were the ornament, and might, in happier circumstances, have been the salvation? Ariel, the beautiful and kindly Ariel, doing the bidding of the loathsome and malignant Sycorax, is but a faint type of genius enslaved by the spells, and employed in the drudgery of corruption—

"A spirit too delicate

To act those earthy and abhorred commands."

We cannot do a greater service to men of real merit than by destroying that which has been called their refuge, which is their house of bondage; by taking from them the patronage of the

great, and giving to them in its stead the respect and confidence of the people. The bill now before us will, I believe, produce that happy effect. It facilitates the canvass; it reduces the expense of legal agency; it shortens the poll; above all, it disfranchises the outvoters. It is not easy to calculate the precise extent to which these changes will diminish the cost of elections. I have attempted, however, to obtain some information on this subject. I have applied to a gentleman of great experience in affairs of this kind, a gentleman who, at the last three general elections, managed the finances of the popular party in one of the largest boroughs in the kingdom. He tells me, that at the general election of 1826, when that borough was contested, the expenses of the popular candidate amounted to eighteen thousand pounds; and that, by the best estimate which can now be made, the borough may, under the reformed system, be as effectually contested for one tenth part of that sum. In the new constituent bodies there are no ancient rights reserved. In those bodies, therefore, the expense of an election will be still smaller. I firmly believe, that it will be possible to poll out Manchester for less than the market price of Old Sarum.

Sir, I have, from the beginning of these discussions, supported Reform on two grounds; first, because I believe it to be in itself a good thing; and secondly, because I think the dangers of withholding it so great that, even if it were an evil, it would be the less of two evils. The dangers of the country have in no wise diminished. I believe that they have greatly increased. It is,

I fear, impossible to deny that what has happened with respect to almost every great question that ever divided mankind has happened also with respect to the Reform Bill. Wherever great interests are at stake there will be much excitement; and wherever there is much excitement there will be some extravagance. The same great stirring of the human mind which produced the Reformation produced also the follies and crimes of the Anabaptists. The same spirit which resisted the Ship-money, and abolished the Star Chamber, produced the Levellers and the Fifth Monarchy men. And so, it cannot be denied that bad men, availing themselves of the agitation produced by the question of Reform, have promulgated, and promulgated with some success, doctrines incompatible with the existence, I do not say of monarchy, or of aristocracy, but of all law, of all order, of all property, of all civilisation, of all that makes us to differ from Mohawks or Hottentots. I bring no accusation against that portion of the working classes which has been imposed upon by these doctrines. Those persons are what their situation has made them, ignorant from want of leisure, irritable from the sense of distress. That they should be deluded by impudent assertions and gross sophisms; that, suffering cruel privations, they should give ready credence to promises of relief; that, never having investigated the nature and operation of government, they should expect impossibilities from it, and should reproach it for not performing impossibilities; all this is perfectly natural. No errors which they may commit ought ever to make us forget

that it is in all probability owing solely to the accident of our situation that we have not fallen into errors precisely similar. There are few of us who do not know from experience that, even with all our advantages of education, pain and sorrow can make us very querulous and very unreasonable. We ought not, therefore, to be surprised that, as the Scotch proverb says, "it should be ill talking between a full man and a fasting;" that the logic of the rich man who vindicates the rights of property, should seem very inconclusive to the poor man who hears his children cry for bread. I bring, I say, no accusation against the working classes. I would withhold from them nothing which it might be for their good to possess. I see with pleasure that, by the provisions of the Reform Bill, the most industrious and respectable of our labourers will be admitted to a share in the government of the State. If I would refuse to the working people that larger share of power which some of them have demanded, I would refuse it, because I am convinced that, by giving it, I should only increase their distress. I admit that the end of government is their happiness. But, that they may be governed for their happiness, they must not be governed according to the doctrines which they have learned from their illiterate, incapable, low-minded flatterers.

But, Sir, the fact that such doctrines have been promulgated among the multitude is a strong argument for a speedy and effectual reform. That government is attacked is a reason for making the foundations of government broader, and deeper, and

more solid. That property is attacked is a reason for binding together all proprietors in the firmest union. That the agitation of the question of Reform has enabled worthless demagogues to propagate their notions with some success is a reason for speedily settling the question in the only way in which it can be settled. It is difficult, Sir, to conceive any spectacle more alarming than that which presents itself to us, when we look at the two extreme parties in this country; a narrow oligarchy above; an infuriated multitude below; on the one side the vices engendered by power; on the other side the vices engendered by distress; one party blindly averse to improvement; the other party blindly clamouring for destruction; one party ascribing to political abuses the sanctity of property; the other party crying out against property as a political abuse. Both these parties are alike ignorant of their true interest. God forbid that the state should ever be at the mercy of either, or should ever experience the calamities which must result from a collision between them! I anticipate no such horrible event. For, between those two parties stands a third party, infinitely more powerful than both the others put together, attacked by both, vilified by both, but destined, I trust, to save both from the fatal effects of their own folly. To that party I have never ceased, through all the vicissitudes of public affairs, to look with confidence and with good a hope. I speak of that great party which zealously and steadily supported the first Reform Bill, and which will, I have no doubt, support the second Reform Bill with equal steadiness and equal zeal. That party is

the middle class of England, with the flower of the aristocracy at its head, and the flower of the working classes bringing up its rear. That great party has taken its immovable stand between the enemies of all order and the enemies of all liberty. It will have Reform: it will not have revolution: it will destroy political abuses: it will not suffer the rights of property to be assailed: it will preserve, in spite of themselves, those who are assailing it, from the right and from the left, with contradictory accusations: it will be a daysman between them: it will lay its hand upon them both: it will not suffer them to tear each other in pieces. While that great party continues unbroken, as it now is unbroken, I shall not relinquish the hope that this great contest may be conducted, by lawful means, to a happy termination. But, of this I am assured, that by means, lawful or unlawful, to a termination, happy or unhappy, this contest must speedily come. All that I know of the history of past times, all the observations that I have been able to make on the present state of the country, have convinced me that the time has arrived when a great concession must be made to the democracy of England; that the question, whether the change be in itself good or bad, has become a question of secondary importance; that, good or bad, the thing must be done; that a law as strong as the laws of attraction and motion has decreed it.

I well know that history, when we look at it in small portions, may be so construed as to mean anything, that it may be interpreted in as many ways as a Delphic oracle. "The French

Revolution," says one expositor, "was the effect of concession." "Not so," cries another: "The French Revolution was produced by the obstinacy of an arbitrary government." "If the French nobles," says the first, "had refused to sit with the Third Estate, they would never have been driven from their country." "They would never have been driven from their country," answers the other, "if they had agreed to the reforms proposed by M. Turgot." These controversies can never be brought to any decisive test, or to any satisfactory conclusion. But, as I believe that history, when we look at it in small fragments, proves anything, or nothing, so I believe that it is full of useful and precious instruction when we contemplate it in large portions, when we take in, at one view, the whole lifetime of great societies. I believe that it is possible to obtain some insight into the law which regulates the growth of communities, and some knowledge of the effects which that growth produces. The history of England, in particular, is the history of a government constantly giving way, sometimes peaceably, sometimes after a violent struggle, but constantly giving way before a nation which has been constantly advancing. The forest laws, the laws of villenage, the oppressive power of the Roman Catholic Church, the power, scarcely less oppressive, which, during some time after the Reformation, was exercised by the Protestant Establishment, the prerogatives of the Crown, the censorship of the Press, successively yielded. The abuses of the representative system are now yielding to the same irresistible force. It was impossible for the Stuarts, and

it would have been impossible for them if they had possessed all the energy of Richelieu, and all the craft of Mazarin, to govern England as England had been governed by the Tudors. It was impossible for the princes of the House of Hanover to govern England as England had been governed by the Stuarts. And so it is impossible that England should be any longer governed as it was governed under the four first princes of the House of Hanover. I say impossible. I believe that over the great changes of the moral world we possess as little power as over the great changes of the physical world. We can no more prevent time from changing the distribution of property and of intelligence, we can no more prevent property and intelligence from aspiring to political power, than we can change the courses of the seasons and of the tides. In peace or in tumult, by means of old institutions, where those institutions are flexible, over the ruins of old institutions, where those institutions oppose an unbending resistance, the great march of society proceeds, and must proceed. The feeble efforts of individuals to bear back are lost and swept away in the mighty rush with which the species goes onward. Those who appear to lead the movement are, in fact, only whirled along before it; those who attempt to resist it, are beaten down and crushed beneath it.

It is because rulers do not pay sufficient attention to the stages of this great movement, because they underrate its force, because they are ignorant of its law, that so many violent and fearful revolutions have changed the face of society. We have heard it

said a hundred times during these discussions, we have heard it said repeatedly in the course of this very debate, that the people of England are more free than ever they were, that the Government is more democratic than ever it was; and this is urged as an argument against Reform. I admit the fact; but I deny the inference. It is a principle never to be forgotten, in discussions like this, that it is not by absolute, but by relative misgovernment that nations are roused to madness. It is not sufficient to look merely at the form of government. We must look also to the state of the public mind. The worst tyrant that ever had his neck wrung in modern Europe might have passed for a paragon of clemency in Persia or Morocco. Our Indian subjects submit patiently to a monopoly of salt. We tried a stamp duty, a duty so light as to be scarcely perceptible, on the fierce breed of the old Puritans; and we lost an empire. The Government of Louis the Sixteenth was certainly a much better and milder Government than that of Louis the Fourteenth; yet Louis the Fourteenth was admired, and even loved, by his people. Louis the Sixteenth died on the scaffold. Why? Because, though the Government had made many steps in the career of improvement, it had not advanced so rapidly as the nation. Look at our own history. The liberties of the people were at least as much respected by Charles the First as by Henry the Eighth, by James the Second as by Edward the Sixth. But did this save the crown of James the Second? Did this save the head of Charles the First? Every person who knows the history of our civil dissensions knows that

all those arguments which are now employed by the opponents of the Reform Bill might have been employed, and were actually employed, by the unfortunate Stuarts. The reasoning of Charles, and of all his apologists, runs thus:—"What new grievance does the nation suffer? What has the King done more than what Henry did? more than what Elizabeth did? Did the people ever enjoy more freedom than at present? Did they ever enjoy so much freedom?" But what would a wise and honest counsellor, if Charles had been so happy as to possess such a counsellor, have replied to arguments like these? He would have said, "Sir, I acknowledge that the people were never more free than under your government. I acknowledge that those who talk of restoring the old Constitution of England use an improper expression. I acknowledge that there has been a constant improvement during those very years during which many persons imagine that there has been a constant deterioration. But, though there has been no change in the government for the worse, there has been a change in the public mind which produces exactly the same effect which would be produced by a change in the government for the worse. Perhaps this change in the public mind is to be regretted. But no matter; you cannot reverse it. You cannot undo all that eighty eventful years have done. You cannot transform the Englishmen of 1640 into the Englishmen of 1560. It may be that the simple loyalty of our fathers was preferable to that inquiring, censuring, resisting spirit which is now abroad. It may be that the times when men paid their benevolences cheerfully

were better times than these, when a gentleman goes before the Exchequer Chamber to resist an assessment of twenty shillings. And so it may be that infancy is a happier time than manhood, and manhood than old age. But God has decreed that old age shall succeed to manhood, and manhood to infancy. Even so have societies their law of growth. As their strength becomes greater, as their experience becomes more extensive, you can no longer confine them within the swaddling bands, or lull them in the cradles, or amuse them with the rattles, or terrify them with the bugbears of their infancy. I do not say that they are better or happier than they were; but this I say, that they are different from what they were, that you cannot again make them what they were, and that you cannot safely treat them as if they continued to be what they were." This was the advice which a wise and honest Minister would have given to Charles the First. These were the principles on which that unhappy prince should have acted. But no. He would govern, I do not say ill, I do not say tyrannically; I only say this; he would govern the men of the seventeenth century as if they had been the men of the sixteenth century; and therefore it was, that all his talents and all his virtues did not save him from unpopularity, from civil war, from a prison, from a bar, from a scaffold. These things are written for our instruction. Another great intellectual revolution has taken place; our lot has been cast on a time analogous, in many respects, to the time which immediately preceded the meeting of the Long Parliament. There is a change in society. There must be a

corresponding change in the government. We are not, we cannot, in the nature of things, be, what our fathers were. We are no more like the men of the American war, or the men of the gagging bills, than the men who cried "privilege" round the coach of Charles the First were like the men who changed their religion once a year at the bidding of Henry the Eighth. That there is such a change, I can no more doubt than I can doubt that we have more power looms, more steam engines, more gas lights, than our ancestors. That there is such a change, the Minister will surely find who shall attempt to fit the yoke of Mr Pitt to the necks of the Englishmen of the nineteenth century. What then can you do to bring back those times when the constitution of this House was an object of veneration to the people? Even as much as Strafford and Laud could do to bring back the days of the Tudors; as much as Bonner and Gardiner could do to bring back the days of Hildebrand; as much as Villele and Polignac could do to bring back the days of Louis the Fourteenth. You may make the change tedious; you may make it violent; you may—God in his mercy forbid!—you may make it bloody; but avert it you cannot. Agitations of the public mind, so deep and so long continued as those which we have witnessed, do not end in nothing. In peace or in convulsion, by the law, or in spite of the law, through the Parliament, or over the Parliament, Reform must be carried. Therefore be content to guide that movement which you cannot stop. Fling wide the gates to that force which else will enter through the breach. Then will it still be, as it has

hitherto been, the peculiar glory of our Constitution that, though not exempt from the decay which is wrought by the vicissitudes of fortune, and the lapse of time, in all the proudest works of human power and wisdom, it yet contains within it the means of self-reparation. Then will England add to her manifold titles of glory this, the noblest and the purest of all; that every blessing which other nations have been forced to seek, and have too often sought in vain, by means of violent and bloody revolutions, she will have attained by a peaceful and a lawful Reform.

# **ANATOMY BILL. (FEBRUARY 27, 1832) A SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 27TH OF FEBRUARY, 1832**

On Monday, the twenty-seventh of February, 1832, the House took into consideration the report of the Committee on Mr Warburton's Anatomy Bill. Mr Henry Hunt attacked that bill with great asperity. In reply to him the following Speech was made.

Sir, I cannot, even at this late hour of the night, refrain from saying two or three words. Most of the observations of the honourable Member for Preston I pass by, as undeserving of any answer before an audience like this. But on one part of his speech I must make a few remarks. We are, he says, making a law to benefit the rich, at the expense of the poor. Sir, the fact is the direct reverse. This is a bill which tends especially to the benefit of the poor. What are the evils against which we are attempting to make provision? Two especially; that is to say, the practice of Burking, and bad surgery. Now to both these the poor alone are exposed. What man, in our rank of life, runs the smallest risk of being Burked? That a man has property, that he has connections, that he is likely to be missed and sought for, are circumstances which secure him against the Burker. It is curious to observe the

difference between murders of this kind and other murders. An ordinary murder hides the body, and disposes of the property. Bishop and Williams dig holes and bury the property, and expose the body to sale. The more wretched, the more lonely, any human being may be, the more desirable prey is he to these wretches. It is the man, the mere naked man, that they pursue. Again, as to bad surgery; this is, of all evils, the evil by which the rich suffer least, and the poor most. If we could do all that in the opinion of the Member for Preston ought to be done, if we could destroy the English school of anatomy, if we could force every student of medical science to go to the expense of a foreign education, on whom would the bad consequences fall? On the rich? Not at all. As long as there is in France, in Italy, in Germany, a single surgeon of eminent skill, a single surgeon who is, to use the phrase of the member for Preston, addicted to dissection, that surgeon will be in attendance whenever an English nobleman is to be cut for the stone. The higher orders in England will always be able to procure the best medical assistance. Who suffers by the bad state of the Russian school of surgery? The Emperor Nicholas? By no means. The whole evil falls on the peasantry. If the education of a surgeon should become very extensive, if the fees of surgeons should consequently rise, if the supply of regular surgeons should diminish, the sufferers would be, not the rich, but the poor in our country villages, who would again be left to mountebanks, and barbers, and old women, and charms and quack medicines. The honourable gentleman talks of

sacrificing the interests of humanity to the interests of science, as if this were a question about the squaring of the circle, or the transit of Venus. This is not a mere question of science: it is not the unprofitable exercise of an ingenious mind: it is a question between health and sickness, between ease and torment, between life and death. Does the honourable gentleman know from what cruel sufferings the improvement of surgical science has rescued our species? I will tell him one story, the first that comes into my head. He may have heard of Leopold, Duke of Austria, the same who imprisoned our Richard Coeur-de-Lion. Leopold's horse fell under him, and crushed his leg. The surgeons said that the limb must be amputated; but none of them knew how to amputate it. Leopold, in his agony, laid a hatchet on his thigh, and ordered his servant to strike with a mallet. The leg was cut off, and the Duke died of the gush of blood. Such was the end of that powerful prince. Why, there is not now a bricklayer who falls from a ladder in England, who cannot obtain surgical assistance, infinitely superior to that which the sovereign of Austria could command in the twelfth century. I think this a bill which tends to the good of the people, and which tends especially to the good of the poor. Therefore I support it. If it is unpopular, I am sorry for it. But I shall cheerfully take my share of its unpopularity. For such, I am convinced, ought to be the conduct of one whose object it is, not to flatter the people, but to serve them.

**PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.  
(FEBRUARY 28, 1832) A SPEECH  
DELIVERED IN A COMMITTEE  
OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
ON THE 28TH OF FEBRUARY, 1832**

On Tuesday, the twenty-eighth of February, 1832, in the Committee on the Bill to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales, the question was put, "That the Tower Hamlets, Middlesex, stand part of Schedule C." The opponents of the Bill mustered their whole strength on this occasion, and were joined by some members who had voted with the Government on the second reading. The question was carried, however, by 316 votes to 236. The following Speech was made in reply to the Marquess of Chandos and Sir Edward Sugden, who, on very different grounds, objected to any increase in the number of metropolitan members.

Mr Bernal,—I have spoken so often on the question of Parliamentary Reform, that I am very unwilling to occupy the time of the Committee. But the importance of the amendment proposed by the noble Marquess, and the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed to-night, make me so anxious that I cannot remain silent.

In this debate, as in every other debate, our first object should be to ascertain on which side the burden of the proof lies. Now, it seems to me quite clear that the burden of the proof lies on those who support the amendment. I am entitled to take it for granted that it is right and wise to give representatives to some wealthy and populous places which have hitherto been unrepresented. To this extent, at least, we all, with scarcely an exception, now profess ourselves Reformers. There is, indeed, a great party which still objects to the disfranchising even of the smallest boroughs. But all the most distinguished chiefs of that party have, here and elsewhere, admitted that the elective franchise ought to be given to some great towns which have risen into importance since our representative system took its present form. If this be so, on what ground can it be contended that these metropolitan districts ought not to be represented? Are they inferior in importance to the other places to which we are all prepared to give members? I use the word importance with perfect confidence: for, though in our recent debates there has been some dispute as to the standard by which the importance of towns is to be measured, there is no room for dispute here. Here, take what standard you will, the result will be the same. Take population: take the rental: take the number of ten pound houses: take the amount of the assessed taxes: take any test in short: take any number of tests, and combine those tests in any of the ingenious ways which men of science have suggested: multiply: divide: subtract: add: try squares or cubes: try square roots or

cube roots: you will never be able to find a pretext for excluding these districts from Schedule C. If, then, it be acknowledged that the franchise ought to be given to important places which are at present unrepresented, and if it be acknowledged that these districts are in importance not inferior to any place which is at present unrepresented, you are bound to give us strong reasons for withholding the franchise from these districts.

The honourable and learned gentleman (Sir E. Sugden.) has tried to give such reasons; and, in doing so, he has completely refuted the whole speech of the noble Marquess, with whom he means to divide. (The Marquess of Chandos.) The truth is that the noble Marquess and the honourable and learned gentleman, though they agree in their votes, do not at all agree in their forebodings or in their ulterior intentions. The honourable and learned gentleman thinks it dangerous to increase the number of metropolitan voters. The noble Lord is perfectly willing to increase the number of metropolitan voters, and objects only to any increase in the number of metropolitan members. "Will you," says the honourable and learned gentleman, "be so rash, so insane, as to create constituent bodies of twenty or thirty thousand electors?" "Yes," says the noble Marquess, "and much more than that. I will create constituent bodies of forty thousand, sixty thousand, a hundred thousand. I will add Marylebone to Westminster. I will add Lambeth to Southwark. I will add Finsbury and the Tower Hamlets to the City." The noble Marquess, it is clear, is not afraid of the excitement which

may be produced by the polling of immense multitudes. Of what then is he afraid? Simply of eight members: nay, of six members: for he is willing, he tells us, to add two members to the two who already sit for Middlesex, and who may be considered as metropolitan members. Are six members, then, so formidable? I could mention a single peer who now sends more than six members to the House. But, says the noble Marquess, the members for the metropolitan districts will be called to a strict account by their constituents: they will be mere delegates: they will be forced to speak, not their own sense, but the sense of the capital. I will answer for it, Sir, that they will not be called to a stricter account than those gentlemen who are nominated by some great proprietors of boroughs. Is it not notorious that those who represent it as in the highest degree pernicious and degrading that a public man should be called to account by a great city which has intrusted its dearest interests to his care, do nevertheless think that he is bound by the most sacred ties of honour to vote according to the wishes of his patron or to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds? It is a bad thing, I fully admit, that a Member of Parliament should be a mere delegate. But it is not worse that he should be the delegate of a hundred thousand people than of one too powerful individual. What a perverse, what an inconsistent spirit is this; too proud to bend to the wishes of a nation, yet ready to lick the dust at the feet of a patron! And how is it proved that a member for Lambeth or Finsbury will be under a more servile awe of his constituents than a member

for Leicester, or a member for Leicestershire, or a member for the University of Oxford? Is it not perfectly notorious that many members voted, year after year, against Catholic Emancipation, simply because they knew that, if they voted otherwise, they would lose their seats? No doubt this is an evil. But it is an evil which will exist in some form or other as long as human nature is the same, as long as there are men so low-minded as to prefer the gratification of a vulgar ambition to the approbation of their conscience and the welfare of their country. Construct your representative system as you will, these men will always be sycophants. If you give power to Marylebone, they will fawn on the householders of Marylebone. If you leave power to Gatton, they will fawn on the proprietor of Gatton. I can see no reason for believing that their baseness will be more mischievous in the former case than in the latter.

But, it is said, the power of this huge capital is even now dangerously great; and will you increase that power? Now, Sir, I am far from denying that the power of London is, in some sense, dangerously great; but I altogether deny that the danger will be increased by this bill. It has always been found that a hundred thousand people congregated close to the seat of government exercise a greater influence on public affairs than five hundred thousand dispersed over a remote province. But this influence is not proportioned to the number of representatives chosen by the capital. This influence is felt at present, though the greater part of the capital is unrepresented. This influence is felt in

countries where there is no representative system at all. Indeed, this influence is nowhere so great as under despotic governments. I need not remind the Committee that the Caesars, while ruling by the sword, while putting to death without a trial every senator, every magistrate, who incurred their displeasure, yet found it necessary to keep the populace of the imperial city in good humour by distributions of corn and shows of wild beasts. Every country, from Britain to Egypt, was squeezed for the means of filling the granaries and adorning the theatres of Rome. On more than one occasion, long after the Cortes of Castile had become a mere name, the rabble of Madrid assembled before the royal palace, forced their King, their absolute King, to appear in the balcony, and exacted from him a promise that he would dismiss an obnoxious minister. It was in this way that Charles the Second was forced to part with Oropesa, and that Charles the Third was forced to part with Squillaci. If there is any country in the world where pure despotism exists, that country is Turkey; and yet there is no country in the world where the inhabitants of the capital are so much dreaded by the government. The Sultan, who stands in awe of nothing else, stands in awe of the turbulent populace, which may, at any moment, besiege him in his Seraglio. As soon as Constantinople is up, everything is conceded. The unpopular edict is recalled. The unpopular vizier is beheaded. This sort of power has nothing to do with representation. It depends on physical force and on vicinity. You do not propose to take this sort of power away from London. Indeed, you cannot take it

away. Nothing can take it away but an earthquake more terrible than that of Lisbon, or a fire more destructive than that of 1666. Law can do nothing against this description of power; for it is a power which is formidable only when law has ceased to exist. While the reign of law continues, eight votes in a House of six hundred and fifty-eight Members will hardly do much harm. When the reign of law is at an end, and the reign of violence commences, the importance of a million and a half of people, all collected within a walk of the Palace, of the Parliament House, of the Bank, of the Courts of Justice, will not be measured by eight or by eighty votes. See, then, what you are doing. That power which is not dangerous you refuse to London. That power which is dangerous you leave undiminished; nay, you make it more dangerous still. For by refusing to let eight or nine hundred thousand people express their opinions and wishes in a legal and constitutional way, you increase the risk of disaffection and of tumult. It is not necessary to have recourse to the speeches or writings of democrats to show that a represented district is far more likely to be turbulent than an unrepresented district. Mr Burke, surely not a rash innovator, not a flatterer of the multitude, described long ago in this place with admirable eloquence the effect produced by the law which gave representative institutions to the rebellious mountaineers of Wales. That law, he said, had been to an agitated nation what the twin stars celebrated by Horace were to a stormy sea; the wind had fallen; the clouds had dispersed; the threatening

waves had sunk to rest. I have mentioned the commotions of Madrid and Constantinople. Why is it that the population of unrepresented London, though physically far more powerful than the population of Madrid or of Constantinople, has been far more peaceable? Why have we never seen the inhabitants of the metropolis besiege St James's, or force their way riotously into this House? Why, but because they have other means of giving vent to their feelings, because they enjoy the liberty of unlicensed printing, and the liberty of holding public meetings. Just as the people of unrepresented London are more orderly than the people of Constantinople and Madrid, so will the people of represented London be more orderly than the people of unrepresented London.

Surely, Sir, nothing can be more absurd than to withhold legal power from a portion of the community because that portion of the community possesses natural power. Yet that is precisely what the noble Marquess would have us do. In all ages a chief cause of the intestine disorders of states has been that the natural distribution of power and the legal distribution of power have not corresponded with each other. This is no newly discovered truth. It was well known to Aristotle more than two thousand years ago. It is illustrated by every part of ancient and of modern history, and eminently by the history of England during the last few months. Our country has been in serious danger; and why? Because a representative system, framed to suit the England of the thirteenth century, did not suit the England of the nineteenth

century; because an old wall, the last relique of a departed city, retained the privileges of that city, while great towns, celebrated all over the world for wealth and intelligence, had no more share in the government than when they were still hamlets. The object of this bill is to correct those monstrous disproportions, and to bring the legal order of society into something like harmony with the natural order. What, then, can be more inconsistent with the fundamental principle of the bill than to exclude any district from a share in the representation, for no reason but because that district is, and must always be, one of great importance? This bill was meant to reconcile and unite. Will you frame it in such a manner that it must inevitably produce irritation and discord? This bill was meant to be final in the only rational sense of the word final. Will you frame it in such a way that it must inevitably be shortlived? Is it to be the first business of the first reformed House of Commons to pass a new Reform Bill? Gentlemen opposite have often predicted that the settlement which we are making will not be permanent; and they are now taking the surest way to accomplish their own prediction. I agree with them in disliking change merely as change. I would bear with many things which are indefensible in theory, nay, with some things which are grievous in practice, rather than venture on a change in the composition of Parliament. But when such a change is necessary,—and that such a change is now necessary is admitted by men of all parties,—then I hold that it ought to be full and effectual. A great crisis may be followed by the complete

restoration of health. But no constitution will bear perpetual tampering. If the noble Marquess's amendment should unhappily be carried, it is morally certain that the immense population of Finsbury, of Marylebone, of Lambeth, of the Tower Hamlets, will, importunately and clamorously, demand redress from the reformed Parliament. That Parliament, you tell us, will be much more democratically inclined than the Parliaments of past times. If so, how can you expect that it will resist the urgent demands of a million of people close to its door? These eight seats will be given. More than eight seats will be given. The whole question of Reform will be opened again; and the blame will rest on those who will, by mutilating this great law in an essential part, cause hundreds of thousands who now regard it as a boon to regard it as an outrage.

Sir, our word is pledged. Let us remember the solemn promise which we gave to the nation last October at a perilous conjuncture. That promise was that we would stand firmly by the principles and leading provisions of the Reform Bill. Our sincerity is now brought to the test. One of the leading provisions of the bill is in danger. The question is, not merely whether these districts shall be represented, but whether we will keep the faith which we plighted to our countrymen. Let us be firm. Let us make no concession to those who, having in vain tried to throw the bill out, are now trying to fritter it away. An attempt has been made to induce the Irish members to vote against the government. It has been hinted that, perhaps, some of the seats

taken from the metropolis may be given to Ireland. Our Irish friends will, I doubt not, remember that the very persons who offer this bribe exerted themselves not long ago to raise a cry against the proposition to give additional members to Belfast, Limerick, Waterford, and Galway. The truth is that our enemies wish only to divide us, and care not by what means. One day they try to excite jealousy among the English by asserting that the plan of the government is too favourable to Ireland. Next day they try to bribe the Irish to desert us, by promising to give something to Ireland at the expense of England. Let us disappoint these cunning men. Let us, from whatever part of the United Kingdom we come, be true to each other and to the good cause. We have the confidence of our country. We have justly earned it. For God's sake let us not throw it away. Other occasions may arise on which honest Reformers may fairly take different sides. But to-night he that is not with us is against us.

# **REPEAL OF THE UNION WITH IRELAND. (FEBRUARY 6, 1833) A SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 6TH OF FEBRUARY 1833**

On the twenty-ninth of January 1833, the first Parliament elected under the Reform Act of 1832 met at Westminster. On the fifth of February, King William the Fourth made a speech from the throne, in which he expressed his hope that the Houses would entrust him with such powers as might be necessary for maintaining order in Ireland and for preserving and strengthening the union between that country and Great Britain. An Address, assuring His Majesty of the concurrence and support of the Commons, was moved by Lord Ormelie and seconded by Mr John Marshall. Mr O'Connell opposed the Address, and moved, as an amendment, that the House should resolve itself into a Committee. After a discussion of four nights the amendment was rejected by 428 votes to 40. On the second night of the debate the following Speech was made.

Last night, Sir, I thought that it would not be necessary for me to take any part in the present debate: but the appeal which has this evening been made to me by my honourable friend the

Member for Lincoln (Mr Edward Lytton Bulwer.) has forced me to rise. I will, however, postpone the few words which I have to say in defence of my own consistency, till I have expressed my opinion on the much more important subject which is before the House.

My honourable friend tells us that we are now called upon to make a choice between two modes of pacifying Ireland; that the government recommends coercion; that the honourable and learned Member for Dublin (Mr O'Connell.) recommends redress; and that it is our duty to try the effect of redress before we have recourse to coercion. The antithesis is framed with all the ingenuity which is characteristic of my honourable friend's style; but I cannot help thinking that, on this occasion, his ingenuity has imposed on himself, and that he has not sufficiently considered the meaning of the pointed phrase which he used with so much effect. Redress is no doubt a very well sounding word. What can be more reasonable than to ask for redress? What more unjust than to refuse redress? But my honourable friend will perceive, on reflection, that, though he and the honourable and learned Member for Dublin agree in pronouncing the word redress, they agree in nothing else. They utter the same sound; but they attach to it two diametrically opposite meanings. The honourable and learned Member for Dublin means by redress simply the Repeal of the Union. Now, to the Repeal of the Union my honourable friend the Member for Lincoln is decidedly adverse. When we get at his real meaning, we find that he is just

as unwilling as we are to give the redress which the honourable and learned Member for Dublin demands. Only a small minority of the House will, I hope, and believe, vote with that honourable and learned member; but the minority which thinks with him will be very much smaller.

We have, indeed, been told by some gentlemen, who are not themselves repealers, that the question of Repeal deserves a much more serious consideration than it has yet received. Repeal, they say, is an object on which millions have, however unwisely, set their hearts; and men who speak in the name of millions are not to be coughed down or sneered down. That which a suffering nation regards, rightly or wrongly, as the sole cure for all its distempers, ought not to be treated with levity, but to be the subject of full and solemn debate. All this, Sir, is most true: but I am surprised that this lecture should have been read to us who sit on your right. It would, I apprehend, have been with more propriety addressed to a different quarter. Whose fault is it that we have not yet had, and that there is no prospect of our having, this full and solemn debate? Is it the fault of His Majesty's Ministers? Have not they framed the Speech which their Royal Master delivered from the throne, in such a manner as to invite the grave and searching discussion of the question of Repeal? and has not the invitation been declined? Is it not fresh in our recollection that the honourable and learned Member for Dublin spoke two hours, perhaps three hours,—nobody keeps accurate account of time while he speaks,—but two or three

hours without venturing to join issue with us on this subject? In truth, he suffered judgment to go against him by default. We, on this side of the House, did our best to provoke him to the conflict. We called on him to maintain here those doctrines which he had proclaimed elsewhere with so much vehemence, and, I am sorry to be forced to add, with a scurrility unworthy of his parts and eloquence. Never was a challenge more fairly given: but it was not accepted. The great champion of Repeal would not lift our glove. He shrank back; he skulked away; not, assuredly, from distrust of his powers, which have never been more vigorously exerted than in this debate, but evidently from distrust of his cause. I have seldom heard so able a speech as his: I certainly never heard a speech so evasive. From the beginning to the end he studiously avoided saying a single word tending to raise a discussion about that Repeal which, in other places, he constantly affirms to be the sole panacea for all the evils by which his country is afflicted. Nor is this all. Yesterday night he placed on our order-book not less than fourteen notices; and of those notices not a single one had any reference to the Union between Great Britain and Ireland. It is therefore evident to me, not only that the honourable and learned gentleman is not now prepared to debate the question in this House, but that he has no intention of debating it in this House at all. He keeps it, and prudently keeps it, for audiences of a very different kind. I am therefore, I repeat, surprised to hear the Government accused of avoiding the discussion of this subject. Why should we avoid a battle in which the bold and

skilful captain of the enemy evidently knows that we must be victorious?

One gentleman, though not a repealer, has begged us not to declare ourselves decidedly adverse to repeal till we have studied the petitions which are coming in from Ireland. Really, Sir, this is not a subject on which any public man ought to be now making up his mind. My mind is made up. My reasons are such as, I am certain, no petition from Ireland will confute. Those reasons have long been ready to be produced; and, since we are accused of flinching, I will at once produce them. I am prepared to show that the Repeal of the Union would not remove the political and social evils which afflict Ireland, nay, that it would aggravate almost every one of those evils.

I understand, though I do not approve, the proceedings of poor Wolfe Tone and his confederates. They wished to make a complete separation between Great Britain and Ireland. They wished to establish a Hibernian republic. Their plan was a very bad one; but, to do them justice, it was perfectly consistent; and an ingenious man might defend it by some plausible arguments. But that is not the plan of the honourable and learned Member for Dublin. He assures us that he wishes the connection between the islands to be perpetual. He is for a complete separation between the two Parliaments; but he is for indissoluble union between the two Crowns. Nor does the honourable and learned gentleman mean, by an union between the Crowns, such an union as exists between the Crown of this kingdom and the Crown of Hanover.

For I need not say that, though the same person is king of Great Britain and of Hanover, there is no more political connection between Great Britain and Hanover than between Great Britain and Hesse, or between Great Britain and Bavaria. Hanover may be at peace with a state with which Great Britain is at war. Nay, Hanover may, as a member of the Germanic body, send a contingent of troops to cross bayonets with the King's English footguards. This is not the relation in which the honourable and learned gentleman proposes that Great Britain and Ireland should stand to each other. His plan is, that each of the two countries shall have an independent legislature, but that both shall have the same executive government. Now, is it possible that a mind so acute and so well informed as his should not at once perceive that this plan involves an absurdity, a downright contradiction. Two independent legislatures! One executive government! How can the thing be? No doubt, if the legislative power were quite distinct from the executive power, England and Ireland might as easily have two legislatures as two Chancellors and two Courts of King's Bench. But though, in books written by theorists, the executive power and the legislative power may be treated as things quite distinct, every man acquainted with the real working of our constitution knows that the two powers are most closely connected, nay, intermingled with each other. During several generations, the whole administration of affairs has been conducted in conformity with the sense of Parliament. About every exercise of the prerogative of the Crown it is the privilege

of Parliament to offer advice; and that advice no wise king will ever slight. It is the prerogative of the Sovereign to choose his own servants; but it is impossible for him to maintain them in office unless Parliament will support them. It is the prerogative of the Sovereign to treat with other princes; but it is impossible for him to persist in any scheme of foreign policy which is disagreeable to Parliament. It is the prerogative of the Sovereign to make war; but he cannot raise a battalion or man a frigate without the help of Parliament. The repealers may therefore be refuted out of their own mouths. They say that Great Britain and Ireland ought to have one executive power. But the legislature has a most important share of the executive power. Therefore, by the confession of the repealers themselves, Great Britain and Ireland ought to have one legislature.

Consider for one moment in what a situation the executive government will be placed if you have two independent legislatures, and if those legislatures should differ, as all bodies which are independent of each other will sometimes differ. Suppose the case of a commercial treaty which is unpopular in England and popular in Ireland. The Irish Parliament expresses its approbation of the terms, and passes a vote of thanks to the negotiator. We at Westminster censure the terms and impeach the negotiator. Or are we to have two foreign offices, one in Downing Street and one in Dublin Castle? Is His Majesty to send to every court in Christendom two diplomatic agents, to thwart each other, and to be spies upon each other? It is inconceivable

but that, in a very few years, disputes such as can be terminated only by arms must arise between communities so absurdly united and so absurdly disunited. All history confirms this reasoning. Superficial observers have fancied that they had found cases on the other side. But as soon as you examine those cases you will see either that they bear no analogy to the case with which we have to deal, or that they corroborate my argument. The case of Ireland herself has been cited. Ireland, it has been said, had an independent legislature from 1782 to 1800: during eighteen years there were two coequal parliaments under one Crown; and yet there was no collision. Sir, the reason that there was not perpetual collision was, as we all know, that the Irish parliament, though nominally independent, was generally kept in real dependence by means of the foulest corruption that ever existed in any assembly. But it is not true that there was no collision. Before the Irish legislature had been six years independent, a collision did take place, a collision such as might well have produced a civil war. In the year 1788, George the Third was incapacitated by illness from discharging his regal functions. According to the constitution, the duty of making provision for the discharge of those functions devolved on the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland. Between the government of Great Britain and the government of Ireland there was, during the interregnum, no connection whatever. The sovereign who was the common head of both governments had virtually ceased to exist: and the two legislatures were no more to each other than this House

and the Chamber of Deputies at Paris. What followed? The Parliament of Great Britain resolved to offer the Regency to the Prince of Wales under many important restrictions. The Parliament of Ireland made him an offer of the Regency without any restrictions whatever. By the same right by which the Irish Lords and Commons made that offer, they might, if Mr Pitt's doctrine be the constitutional doctrine, as I believe it to be, have made the Duke of York or the Duke of Leinster Regent. To this Regent they might have given all the prerogatives of the King. Suppose,—no extravagant supposition,—that George the Third had not recovered, that the rest of his long life had been passed in seclusion, Great Britain and Ireland would then have been, during thirty-two years, as completely separated as Great Britain and Spain. There would have been nothing in common between the governments, neither executive power nor legislative power. It is plain, therefore, that a total separation between the two islands might, in the natural course of things, and without the smallest violation of the constitution on either side, be the effect of the arrangement recommended by the honourable and learned gentleman, who solemnly declares that he should consider such a separation as the greatest of calamities.

No doubt, Sir, in several continental kingdoms there have been two legislatures, and indeed more than two legislatures, under the same Crown. But the explanation is simple. Those legislatures were of no real weight in the government. Under Louis the Fourteenth Brittany had its States; Burgundy had its

States; and yet there was no collision between the States of Brittany and the States of Burgundy. But why? Because neither the States of Brittany nor the States of Burgundy imposed any real restraint on the arbitrary power of the monarch. So, in the dominions of the House of Hapsburg, there is the semblance of a legislature in Hungary and the semblance of a legislature in the Tyrol: but all the real power is with the Emperor. I do not say that you cannot have one executive power and two mock parliaments, two parliaments which merely transact parish business, two parliaments which exercise no more influence on great affairs of state than the vestry of St Pancras or the vestry of Marylebone. What I do say, and what common sense teaches, and what all history teaches, is this, that you cannot have one executive power and two real parliaments, two parliaments possessing such powers as the parliament of this country has possessed ever since the Revolution, two parliaments to the deliberate sense of which the Sovereign must conform. If they differ, how can he conform to the sense of both? The thing is as plain as a proposition in Euclid.

It is impossible for me to believe that considerations so obvious and so important should not have occurred to the honourable and learned Member for Dublin. Doubtless they have occurred to him; and therefore it is that he shrinks from arguing the question here. Nay, even when he harangues more credulous assemblies on the subject, he carefully avoids precise explanations; and the hints which sometimes escape him are not

easily to be reconciled with each other. On one occasion, if the newspapers are to be trusted, he declared that his object was to establish a federal union between Great Britain and Ireland. A local parliament, it seems, is to sit at Dublin, and to send deputies to an imperial parliament which is to sit at Westminster. The honourable and learned gentleman thinks, I suppose, that in this way he evades the difficulties which I have pointed out. But he deceives himself. If, indeed, his local legislature is to be subject to his imperial legislature, if his local legislature is to be merely what the Assembly of Antigua or Barbadoes is, or what the Irish Parliament was before 1782, the danger of collision is no doubt removed: but what, on the honourable and learned gentleman's own principles, would Ireland gain by such an arrangement? If, on the other hand, his local legislature is to be for certain purposes independent, you have again the risk of collision. Suppose that a difference of opinion should arise between the Imperial Parliament and the Irish Parliament as to the limits of their powers, who is to decide between them? A dispute between the House of Commons and the House of Lords is bad enough. Yet in that case, the Sovereign can, by a high exercise of his prerogative, produce harmony. He can send us back to our constituents; and, if that expedient fails, he can create more lords. When, in 1705, the dispute between the Houses about the Aylesbury men ran high, Queen Anne restored concord by dismissing the Parliament. Seven years later she put an end to another conflict between the Houses by making twelve peers

in one day. But who is to arbitrate between two representative bodies chosen by different constituent bodies? Look at what is now passing in America. Of all federal constitutions that of the United States is the best. It was framed by a convention which contained many wise and experienced men, and over which Washington presided. Yet there is a debateable ground on the frontier which separates the functions of Congress from those of the state legislatures. A dispute as to the exact boundary has lately arisen. Neither party seems disposed to yield: and, if both persist, there can be no umpire but the sword.

For my part, Sir, I have no hesitation in saying that I should very greatly prefer the total separation which the honourable and learned gentleman professes to consider as a calamity, to the partial separation which he has taught his countrymen to regard as a blessing. If, on a fair trial, it be found that Great Britain and Ireland cannot exist happily together as parts of one empire, in God's name let them separate. I wish to see them joined as the limbs of a well formed body are joined. In such a body the members assist each other: they are nourished by the same food: if one member suffer, all suffer with it: if one member rejoice, all rejoice with it. But I do not wish to see the countries united, like those wretched twins from Siam who were exhibited here a little while ago, by an unnatural ligament which made each the constant plague of the other, always in each other's way, more helpless than others because they had twice as many hands, slower than others because they had twice as many legs,

sympathising with each other only in evil, not feeling each other's pleasures, not supported by each other's ailments, but tormented by each other's infirmities, and certain to perish miserably by each other's dissolution.

Ireland has undoubtedly just causes of complaint. We heard those causes recapitulated last night by the honourable and learned Member, who tells us that he represents not Dublin alone, but Ireland, and that he stands between his country and civil war. I do not deny that most of the grievances which he recounted exist, that they are serious, and that they ought to be remedied as far as it is in the power of legislation to remedy them. What I do deny is that they were caused by the Union, and that the Repeal of the Union would remove them. I listened attentively while the honourable and learned gentleman went through that long and melancholy list: and I am confident that he did not mention a single evil which was not a subject of bitter complaint while Ireland had a domestic parliament. Is it fair, is it reasonable in the honourable gentleman to impute to the Union evils which, as he knows better than any other man in this house, existed long before the Union? *Post hoc: ergo, propter hoc* is not always sound reasoning. But *ante hoc: ergo, non propter hoc* is unanswerable. The old rustic who told Sir Thomas More that Tenterden steeple was the cause of Godwin sands reasoned much better than the honourable and learned gentleman. For it was not till after Tenterden steeple was built that the frightful wrecks on the Godwin sands were heard of. But the honourable

and learned gentleman would make Godwin sands the cause of Tenterden steeple. Some of the Irish grievances which he ascribes to the Union are not only older than the Union, but are not peculiarly Irish. They are common to England, Scotland, and Ireland; and it was in order to get rid of them that we, for the common benefit of England, Scotland, and Ireland, passed the Reform Bill last year. Other grievances which the honourable and learned gentleman mentioned are doubtless local; but is there to be a local legislature wherever there is a local grievance? Wales has had local grievances. We all remember the complaints which were made a few years ago about the Welsh judicial system; but did anybody therefore propose that Wales should have a distinct parliament? Cornwall has some local grievances; but does anybody propose that Cornwall shall have its own House of Lords and its own House of Commons? Leeds has local grievances. The majority of my constituents distrust and dislike the municipal government to which they are subject; they therefore call loudly on us for corporation reform: but they do not ask us for a separate legislature. Of this I am quite sure, that every argument which has been urged for the purpose of showing that Great Britain and Ireland ought to have two distinct parliaments may be urged with far greater force for the purpose of showing that the north of Ireland and the south of Ireland ought to have two distinct parliaments. The House of Commons of the United Kingdom, it has been said, is chiefly elected by Protestants, and therefore cannot be trusted to legislate for Catholic Ireland. If

this be so, how can an Irish House of Commons, chiefly elected by Catholics, be trusted to legislate for Protestant Ulster? It is perfectly notorious that theological antipathies are stronger in Ireland than here. I appeal to the honourable and learned gentleman himself. He has often declared that it is impossible for a Roman Catholic, whether prosecutor or culprit, to obtain justice from a jury of Orangemen. It is indeed certain that, in blood, religion, language, habits, character, the population of some of the northern counties of Ireland has much more in common with the population of England and Scotland than with the population of Munster and Connaught. I defy the honourable and learned Member, therefore, to find a reason for having a parliament at Dublin which will not be just as good a reason for having another parliament at Londonderry.

Sir, in showing, as I think I have shown, the absurdity of this cry for Repeal, I have in a great measure vindicated myself from the charge of inconsistency which has been brought against me by my honourable friend the Member for Lincoln. It is very easy to bring a volume of Hansard to the House, to read a few sentences of a speech made in very different circumstances, and to say, "Last year you were for pacifying England by concession: this year you are for pacifying Ireland by coercion. How can you vindicate your consistency?" Surely my honourable friend cannot but know that nothing is easier than to write a theme for severity, for clemency, for order, for liberty, for a contemplative life, for a active life, and so on. It was a common exercise

in the ancient schools of rhetoric to take an abstract question, and to harangue first on one side and then on the other. The question, Ought popular discontents to be quieted by concession or coercion? would have been a very good subject for oratory of this kind. There is no lack of commonplaces on either side. But when we come to the real business of life, the value of these commonplaces depends entirely on the particular circumstances of the case which we are discussing. Nothing is easier than to write a treatise proving that it is lawful to resist extreme tyranny. Nothing is easier than to write a treatise setting forth the wickedness of wantonly bringing on a great society the miseries inseparable from revolution, the bloodshed, the spoliation, the anarchy. Both treatises may contain much that is true; but neither will enable us to decide whether a particular insurrection is or is not justifiable without a close examination of the facts. There is surely no inconsistency in speaking with respect of the memory of Lord Russell and with horror of the crime of Thistlewood; and, in my opinion, the conduct of Russell and the conduct of Thistlewood did not differ more widely than the cry for Parliamentary Reform and the cry for the Repeal of the Union. The Reform Bill I believe to be a blessing to the nation. Repeal I know to be a mere delusion. I know it to be impracticable: and I know that, if it were practicable, it would be pernicious to every part of the empire, and utterly ruinous to Ireland. Is it not then absurd to say that, because I wished last year to quiet the English people by giving them that which

was beneficial to them, I am therefore bound in consistency to quiet the Irish people this year by giving them that which will be fatal to them? I utterly deny, too, that, in consenting to arm the government with extraordinary powers for the purpose of repressing disturbances in Ireland, I am guilty of the smallest inconsistency. On what occasion did I ever refuse to support any government in repressing disturbances? It is perfectly true that, in the debates on the Reform Bill, I imputed the tumults and outrages of 1830 to misrule. But did I ever say that those tumults and outrages ought to be tolerated? I did attribute the Kentish riots, the Hampshire riots, the burning of corn stacks, the destruction of threshing machines, to the obstinacy with which the Ministers of the Crown had refused to listen to the demands of the people. But did I ever say that the rioters ought not to be imprisoned, that the incendiaries ought not to be hanged? I did ascribe the disorders of Nottingham and the fearful sacking of Bristol to the unwise rejection of the Reform Bill by the Lords. But did I ever say that such excesses as were committed at Nottingham and Bristol ought not to be put down, if necessary, by the sword?

I would act towards Ireland on the same principles on which I acted towards England. In Ireland, as in England, I would remove every just cause of complaint; and in Ireland, as in England, I would support the Government in preserving the public peace. What is there inconsistent in this? My honourable friend seems to think that no person who believes that disturbances have

been caused by maladministration can consistently lend his help to put down those disturbances. If that be so, the honourable and learned Member for Dublin is quite as inconsistent as I am; indeed, much more so; for he thinks very much worse of the Government than I do; and yet he declares himself willing to assist the Government in quelling the tumults which, as he assures us, its own misconduct is likely to produce. He told us yesterday that our harsh policy might perhaps goad the unthinking populace of Ireland into insurrection; and he added that, if there should be insurrection, he should, while execrating us as the authors of all the mischief, be found in our ranks, and should be ready to support us in everything that might be necessary for the restoration of order. As to this part of the subject, there is no difference in principle between the honourable and learned gentleman and myself. In his opinion, it is probable that a time may soon come when vigorous coercion may be necessary, and when it may be the duty of every friend of Ireland to co-operate in the work of coercion. In my opinion, that time has already come. The grievances of Ireland are doubtless great, so great that I never would have connected myself with a Government which I did not believe to be intent on redressing those grievances. But am I, because the grievances of Ireland are great, and ought to be redressed, to abstain from redressing the worst grievance of all? Am I to look on quietly while the laws are insulted by a furious rabble, while houses are plundered and burned, while my peaceable fellow-subjects are butchered? The

distribution of Church property, you tell us, is unjust. Perhaps I agree with you. But what then? To what purpose is it to talk about the distribution of Church property, while no property is secure? Then you try to deter us from putting down robbery, arson, and murder, by telling us that if we resort to coercion we shall raise a civil war. We are past that fear. Recollect that, in one county alone, there have been within a few weeks sixty murders or assaults with intent to murder and six hundred burglaries. Since we parted last summer the slaughter in Ireland has exceeded the slaughter of a pitched battle: the destruction of property has been as great as would have been caused by the storming of three or four towns. Civil war, indeed! I would rather live in the midst of any civil war that we have had in England during the last two hundred years than in some parts of Ireland at the present moment. Rather, much rather, would I have lived on the line of march of the Pretender's army in 1745 than in Tipperary now. It is idle to threaten us with civil war; for we have it already; and it is because we are resolved to put an end to it that we are called base, and brutal, and bloody. Such are the epithets which the honourable and learned Member for Dublin thinks it becoming to pour forth against the party to which he owes every political privilege that he enjoys. He need not fear that any member of that party will be provoked into a conflict of scurrility. Use makes even sensitive minds callous to invective: and, copious as his vocabulary is, he will not easily find in it any foul name which has not been many times applied to those who

sit around me, on account of the zeal and steadiness with which they supported the emancipation of the Roman Catholics. His reproaches are not more stinging than the reproaches which, in times not very remote, we endured unflinchingly in his cause. I can assure him that men who faced the cry of No Popery are not likely to be scared by the cry of Repeal. The time will come when history will do justice to the Whigs of England, and will faithfully relate how much they did and suffered for Ireland; how, for the sake of Ireland, they quitted office in 1807; how, for the sake of Ireland, they remained out of office more than twenty years, braving the frowns of the Court, braving the hisses of the multitude, renouncing power, and patronage, and salaries, and peerages, and garters, and yet not obtaining in return even a little fleeting popularity. I see on the benches near me men who might, by uttering one word against Catholic Emancipation, nay, by merely abstaining from uttering a word in favour of Catholic Emancipation, have been returned to this House without difficulty or expense, and who, rather than wrong their Irish fellow-subjects, were content to relinquish all the objects of their honourable ambition, and to retire into private life with conscience and fame untarnished. As to one eminent person, who seems to be regarded with especial malevolence by those who ought never to mention his name without reverence and gratitude, I will say only this: that the loudest clamour which the honourable and learned gentleman can excite against Lord Grey will be trifling when compared with the clamour which

Lord Grey withstood in order to place the honourable and learned gentleman where he now sits. Though a young member of the Whig party, I will venture to speak in the name of the whole body. I tell the honourable and learned gentleman, that the same spirit which sustained us in a just contest for him will sustain us in an equally just contest against him. Calumny, abuse, royal displeasure, popular fury, exclusion from office, exclusion from Parliament, we were ready to endure them all, rather than that he should be less than a British subject. We never will suffer him to be more.

I stand here, Sir, for the first time as the representative of a new constituent body, one of the largest, most prosperous, and most enlightened towns in the kingdom. The electors of Leeds, believing that at this time the service of the people is not incompatible with the service of the Crown, have sent me to this House charged, in the language of His Majesty's writ, to do and consent, in their name and in their behalf, to such things as shall be proposed in the great Council of the nation. In the name, then, and on the behalf of my constituents, I give my full assent to that part of the Address wherein the House declares its resolution to maintain inviolate, by the help of God, the connection between Great Britain and Ireland, and to intrust to the Sovereign such powers as shall be necessary to secure property, to restore order, and to preserve the integrity of the empire.

# **JEWISH DISABILITIES. (April 17, 1833) a speech delivered in a committee of the whole house OF COMMONS ON THE 17TH OF APRIL, 1833**

On the seventeenth of April, 1833, the House of Commons resolved itself into a Committee to consider of the civil disabilities of the Jews. Mr Warburton took the chair. Mr Robert Grant moved the following resolution:—

"That it is the opinion of this Committee that it is expedient to remove all civil disabilities at present existing with respect to His Majesty's subjects professing the Jewish religion, with the like exceptions as are provided with respect to His Majesty's subjects professing the Roman Catholic religion."

The resolution passed without a division, after a warm debate, in the course of which the following Speech was made.

Mr Warburton,—I recollect, and my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford will recollect, that when this subject was discussed three years ago, it was remarked, by one whom we both loved and whom we both regret, that the strength of the case of the Jews was a serious inconvenience to their advocate, for that it was hardly possible to make a speech for them without wearying the audience by repeating truths which were universally admitted. If Sir James Mackintosh felt

this difficulty when the question was first brought forward in this House, I may well despair of being able now to offer any arguments which have a pretence to novelty.

My honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford, began his speech by declaring that he had no intention of calling in question the principles of religious liberty. He utterly disclaims persecution, that is to say, persecution as defined by himself. It would, in his opinion, be persecution to hang a Jew, or to flay him, or to draw his teeth, or to imprison him, or to fine him; for every man who conducts himself peaceably has a right to his life and his limbs, to his personal liberty and his property. But it is not persecution, says my honourable friend, to exclude any individual or any class from office; for nobody has a right to office: in every country official appointments must be subject to such regulations as the supreme authority may choose to make; nor can any such regulations be reasonably complained of by any member of the society as unjust. He who obtains an office obtains it, not as matter of right, but as matter of favour. He who does not obtain an office is not wronged; he is only in that situation in which the vast majority of every community must necessarily be. There are in the United Kingdom five and twenty million Christians without places; and, if they do not complain, why should five and twenty thousand Jews complain of being in the same case? In this way my honourable friend has convinced himself that, as it would be most absurd in him and me to say that we are wronged because we are not Secretaries of State, so it

is most absurd in the Jews to say that they are wronged, because they are, as a people, excluded from public employment.

Now, surely my honourable friend cannot have considered to what conclusions his reasoning leads. Those conclusions are so monstrous that he would, I am certain, shrink from them. Does he really mean that it would not be wrong in the legislature to enact that no man should be a judge unless he weighed twelve stone, or that no man should sit in parliament unless he were six feet high? We are about to bring in a bill for the government of India. Suppose that we were to insert in that bill a clause providing that no graduate of the University of Oxford should be Governor General or Governor of any Presidency, would not my honourable friend cry out against such a clause as most unjust to the learned body which he represents? And would he think himself sufficiently answered by being told, in his own words, that the appointment to office is a mere matter of favour, and that to exclude an individual or a class from office is no injury? Surely, on consideration, he must admit that official appointments ought not to be subject to regulations purely arbitrary, to regulations for which no reason can be given but mere caprice, and that those who would exclude any class from public employment are bound to show some special reason for the exclusion.

My honourable friend has appealed to us as Christians. Let me then ask him how he understands that great commandment which comprises the law and the prophets. Can we be said to do unto

others as we would that they should do unto us if we wantonly inflict on them even the smallest pain? As Christians, surely we are bound to consider, first, whether, by excluding the Jews from all public trust, we give them pain; and, secondly, whether it be necessary to give them that pain in order to avert some greater evil. That by excluding them from public trust we inflict pain on them my honourable friend will not dispute. As a Christian, therefore, he is bound to relieve them from that pain, unless he can show, what I am sure he has not yet shown, that it is necessary to the general good that they should continue to suffer.

But where, he says, are you to stop, if once you admit into the House of Commons people who deny the authority of the Gospels? Will you let in a Mussulman? Will you let in a Parsee? Will you let in a Hindoo, who worships a lump of stone with seven heads? I will answer my honourable friend's question by another. Where does he mean to stop? Is he ready to roast unbelievers at slow fires? If not, let him tell us why: and I will engage to prove that his reason is just as decisive against the intolerance which he thinks a duty, as against the intolerance which he thinks a crime. Once admit that we are bound to inflict pain on a man because he is not of our religion; and where are you to stop? Why stop at the point fixed by my honourable friend rather than at the point fixed by the honourable Member for Oldham (Mr Cobbett.), who would make the Jews incapable of holding land? And why stop at the point fixed by the honourable Member for Oldham rather than at the point which would have

been fixed by a Spanish Inquisitor of the sixteenth century? When once you enter on a course of persecution, I defy you to find any reason for making a halt till you have reached the extreme point. When my honourable friend tells us that he will allow the Jews to possess property to any amount, but that he will not allow them to possess the smallest political power, he holds contradictory language. Property is power. The honourable Member for Oldham reasons better than my honourable friend. The honourable Member for Oldham sees very clearly that it is impossible to deprive a man of political power if you suffer him to be the proprietor of half a county, and therefore very consistently proposes to confiscate the landed estates of the Jews. But even the honourable Member for Oldham does not go far enough. He has not proposed to confiscate the personal property of the Jews. Yet it is perfectly certain that any Jew who has a million may easily make himself very important in the State. By such steps we pass from official power to landed property, and from landed property to personal property, and from property to liberty, and from liberty to life. In truth, those persecutors who use the rack and the stake have much to say for themselves. They are convinced that their end is good; and it must be admitted that they employ means which are not unlikely to attain the end. Religious dissent has repeatedly been put down by sanguinary persecution. In that way the Albigenses were put down. In that way Protestantism was suppressed in Spain and Italy, so that it has never since reared its head. But I defy any body

to produce an instance in which disabilities such as we are now considering have produced any other effect than that of making the sufferers angry and obstinate. My honourable friend should either persecute to some purpose, or not persecute at all. He dislikes the word persecution I know. He will not admit that the Jews are persecuted. And yet I am confident that he would rather be sent to the King's Bench Prison for three months, or be fined a hundred pounds, than be subject to the disabilities under which the Jews lie. How can he then say that to impose such disabilities is not persecution, and that to fine and imprison is persecution? All his reasoning consists in drawing arbitrary lines. What he does not wish to inflict he calls persecution. What he does wish to inflict he will not call persecution. What he takes from the Jews he calls political power. What he is too good-natured to take from the Jews he will not call political power. The Jew must not sit in Parliament: but he may be the proprietor of all the ten pound houses in a borough. He may have more fifty pound tenants than any peer in the kingdom. He may give the voters treats to please their palates, and hire bands of gipsies to break their heads, as if he were a Christian and a Marquess. All the rest of this system is of a piece. The Jew may be a juryman, but not a judge. He may decide issues of fact, but not issues of law. He may give a hundred thousand pounds damages; but he may not in the most trivial case grant a new trial. He may rule the money market: he may influence the exchanges: he may be summoned to congresses of Emperors and Kings. Great potentates, instead

of negotiating a loan with him by tying him in a chair and pulling out his grinders, may treat with him as with a great potentate, and may postpone the declaring of war or the signing of a treaty till they have conferred with him. All this is as it should be: but he must not be a Privy Councillor. He must not be called Right Honourable, for that is political power. And who is it that we are trying to cheat in this way? Even Omniscience. Yes, Sir; we have been gravely told that the Jews are under the divine displeasure, and that if we give them political power God will visit us in judgment. Do we then think that God cannot distinguish between substance and form? Does not He know that, while we withhold from the Jews the semblance and name of political power, we suffer them to possess the substance? The plain truth is that my honourable friend is drawn in one direction by his opinions, and in a directly opposite direction by his excellent heart. He halts between two opinions. He tries to make a compromise between principles which admit of no compromise. He goes a certain way in intolerance. Then he stops, without being able to give a reason for stopping. But I know the reason. It is his humanity. Those who formerly dragged the Jew at a horse's tail, and singed his beard with blazing furzebushes, were much worse men than my honourable friend; but they were more consistent than he.

It has been said that it would be monstrous to see a Jew judge try a man for blasphemy. In my opinion it is monstrous to see any judge try a man for blasphemy under the present law. But, if the law on that subject were in a sound state, I do not see why

a conscientious Jew might not try a blasphemer. Every man, I think, ought to be at liberty to discuss the evidences of religion; but no man ought to be at liberty to force on the unwilling ears and eyes of others sounds and sights which must cause annoyance and irritation. The distinction is clear. I think it wrong to punish a man for selling Paine's *Age of Reason* in a back-shop to those who choose to buy, or for delivering a Deistical lecture in a private room to those who choose to listen. But if a man exhibits at a window in the Strand a hideous caricature of that which is an object of awe and adoration to nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of people who pass up and down that great thoroughfare; if a man in a place of public resort applies opprobrious epithets to names held in reverence by all Christians; such a man ought, in my opinion, to be severely punished, not for differing from us in opinion, but for committing a nuisance which gives us pain and disgust. He is no more entitled to outrage our feelings by obtruding his impiety on us, and to say that he is exercising his right of discussion, than to establish a yard for butchering horses close to our houses, and to say that he is exercising his right of property, or to run naked up and down the public streets, and to say that he is exercising his right of locomotion. He has a right of discussion, no doubt, as he has a right of property and a right of locomotion. But he must use all his rights so as not to infringe the rights of others.

These, Sir, are the principles on which I would frame the law of blasphemy; and if the law were so framed, I am at a loss to

understand why a Jew might not enforce it as well as a Christian. I am not a Roman Catholic; but if I were a judge at Malta, I should have no scruple about punishing a bigoted Protestant who should burn the Pope in effigy before the eyes of thousands of Roman Catholics. I am not a Mussulman; but if I were a judge in India, I should have no scruple about punishing a Christian who should pollute a mosque. Why, then, should I doubt that a Jew, raised by his ability, learning, and integrity to the judicial bench, would deal properly with any person who, in a Christian country, should insult the Christian religion?

But, says my honourable friend, it has been prophesied that the Jews are to be wanderers on the face of the earth, and that they are not to mix on terms of equality with the people of the countries in which they sojourn. Now, Sir, I am confident that I can demonstrate that this is not the sense of any prophecy which is part of Holy Writ. For it is an undoubted fact that, in the United States of America, Jewish citizens do possess all the privileges possessed by Christian citizens. Therefore, if the prophecies mean that the Jews never shall, during their wanderings, be admitted by other nations to equal participation of political rights, the prophecies are false. But the prophecies are certainly not false. Therefore their meaning cannot be that which is attributed to them by my honourable friend.

Another objection which has been made to this motion is that the Jews look forward to the coming of a great deliverer, to their return to Palestine, to the rebuilding of their Temple,

to the revival of their ancient worship, and that therefore they will always consider England, not their country, but merely as their place of exile. But, surely, Sir, it would be the grossest ignorance of human nature to imagine that the anticipation of an event which is to happen at some time altogether indefinite, of an event which has been vainly expected during many centuries, of an event which even those who confidently expect that it will happen do not confidently expect that they or their children or their grandchildren will see, can ever occupy the minds of men to such a degree as to make them regardless of what is near and present and certain. Indeed Christians, as well as Jews, believe that the existing order of things will come to an end. Many Christians believe that Jesus will visibly reign on earth during a thousand years. Expositors of prophecy have gone so far as to fix the year when the Millennial period is to commence. The prevailing opinion is, I think, in favour of the year 1866; but, according to some commentators, the time is close at hand. Are we to exclude all millennarians from Parliament and office, on the ground that they are impatiently looking forward to the miraculous monarchy which is to supersede the present dynasty and the present constitution of England, and that therefore they cannot be heartily loyal to King William?

In one important point, Sir, my honourable friend, the Member for the University of Oxford, must acknowledge that the Jewish religion is of all erroneous religions the least mischievous. There is not the slightest chance that the Jewish religion will

spread. The Jew does not wish to make proselytes. He may be said to reject them. He thinks it almost culpable in one who does not belong to his race to presume to belong to his religion. It is therefore not strange that a conversion from Christianity to Judaism should be a rarer occurrence than a total eclipse of the sun. There was one distinguished convert in the last century, Lord George Gordon; and the history of his conversion deserves to be remembered. For if ever there was a proselyte of whom a proselytising sect would have been proud, it was Lord George; not only because he was a man of high birth and rank; not only because he had been a member of the legislature; but also because he had been distinguished by the intolerance, nay, the ferocity, of his zeal for his own form of Christianity. But was he allured into the Synagogue? Was he even welcomed to it? No, sir; he was coldly and reluctantly permitted to share the reproach and suffering of the chosen people; but he was sternly shut out from their privileges. He underwent the painful rite which their law enjoins. But when, on his deathbed, he begged hard to be buried among them according to their ceremonial, he was told that his request could not be granted. I understand that cry of "Hear." It reminds me that one of the arguments against this motion is that the Jews are an unsocial people, that they draw close to each other, and stand aloof from strangers. Really, Sir, it is amusing to compare the manner in which the question of Catholic emancipation was argued formerly by some gentlemen with the manner in which the question of Jew emancipation

is argued by the same gentlemen now. When the question was about Catholic emancipation, the cry was, "See how restless, how versatile, how encroaching, how insinuating, is the spirit of the Church of Rome. See how her priests compass earth and sea to make one proselyte, how indefatigably they toil, how attentively they study the weak and strong parts of every character, how skilfully they employ literature, arts, sciences, as engines for the propagation of their faith. You find them in every region and under every disguise, collating manuscripts in the Bodleian, fixing telescopes in the observatory of Peking, teaching the use of the plough and the spinning-wheel to the savages of Paraguay. Will you give power to the members of a Church so busy, so aggressive, so insatiable?" Well, now the question is about people who never try to seduce any stranger to join them, and who do not wish anybody to be of their faith who is not also of their blood. And now you exclaim, "Will you give power to the members of a sect which remains sullenly apart from other sects, which does not invite, nay, which hardly ever admits neophytes?" The truth is, that bigotry will never want a pretence. Whatever the sect be which it is proposed to tolerate, the peculiarities of that sect will, for the time, be pronounced by intolerant men to be the most odious and dangerous that can be conceived. As to the Jews, that they are unsocial as respects religion is true; and so much the better: for, surely, as Christians, we cannot wish that they should bestir themselves to pervert us from our own faith. But that the Jews would be unsocial members of the civil

community, if the civil community did its duty by them, has never been proved. My right honourable friend who made the motion which we are discussing has produced a great body of evidence to show that they have been grossly misrepresented; and that evidence has not been refuted by my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford. But what if it were true that the Jews are unsocial? What if it were true that they do not regard England as their country? Would not the treatment which they have undergone explain and excuse their antipathy to the society in which they live? Has not similar antipathy often been felt by persecuted Christians to the society which persecuted them? While the bloody code of Elizabeth was enforced against the English Roman Catholics, what was the patriotism of Roman Catholics? Oliver Cromwell said that in his time they were Espaniolised. At a later period it might have been said that they were Gallicised. It was the same with the Calvinists. What more deadly enemies had France in the days of Louis the Fourteenth than the persecuted Huguenots? But would any rational man infer from these facts that either the Roman Catholic as such, or the Calvinist as such, is incapable of loving the land of his birth? If England were now invaded by Roman Catholics, how many English Roman Catholics would go over to the invader? If France were now attacked by a Protestant enemy, how many French Protestants would lend him help? Why not try what effect would be produced on the Jews by that tolerant policy which has made the English Roman Catholic a good Englishman, and the

French Calvinist a good Frenchman?

Another charge has been brought against the Jews, not by my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford—he has too much learning and too much good feeling to make such a charge—but by the honourable Member for Oldham, who has, I am sorry to see, quitted his place. The honourable Member for Oldham tells us that the Jews are naturally a mean race, a sordid race, a money-getting race; that they are averse to all honourable callings; that they neither sow nor reap; that they have neither flocks nor herds; that usury is the only pursuit for which they are fit; that they are destitute of all elevated and amiable sentiments. Such, Sir, has in every age been the reasoning of bigots. They never fail to plead in justification of persecution the vices which persecution has engendered. England has been to the Jews less than half a country; and we revile them because they do not feel for England more than a half patriotism. We treat them as slaves, and wonder that they do not regard us as brethren. We drive them to mean occupations, and then reproach them for not embracing honourable professions. We long forbade them to possess land; and we complain that they chiefly occupy themselves in trade. We shut them out from all the paths of ambition; and then we despise them for taking refuge in avarice. During many ages we have, in all our dealings with them, abused our immense superiority of force; and then we are disgusted because they have recourse to that cunning which is the natural and universal defence of the weak against the violence of the strong. But were

they always a mere money-changing, money-getting, money-hoarding race? Nobody knows better than my honourable friend the Member for the University of Oxford that there is nothing in their national character which unfits them for the highest duties of citizens. He knows that, in the infancy of civilisation, when our island was as savage as New Guinea, when letters and arts were still unknown to Athens, when scarcely a thatched hut stood on what was afterwards the site of Rome, this contemned people had their fenced cities and cedar palaces, their splendid Temple, their fleets of merchant ships, their schools of sacred learning, their great statesmen and soldiers, their natural philosophers, their historians and their poets. What nation ever contended more manfully against overwhelming odds for its independence and religion? What nation ever, in its last agonies, gave such signal proofs of what may be accomplished by a brave despair? And if, in the course of many centuries, the oppressed descendants of warriors and sages have degenerated from the qualities of their fathers, if, while excluded from the blessings of law, and bowed down under the yoke of slavery, they have contracted some of the vices of outlaws and of slaves, shall we consider this as matter of reproach to them? Shall we not rather consider it as matter of shame and remorse to ourselves? Let us do justice to them. Let us open to them the door of the House of Commons. Let us open to them every career in which ability and energy can be displayed. Till we have done this, let us not presume to say that there is no genius among the countrymen of Isaiah, no heroism

among the descendants of the Maccabees.

Sir, in supporting the motion of my honourable friend, I am, I firmly believe, supporting the honour and the interests of the Christian religion. I should think that I insulted that religion if I said that it cannot stand unaided by intolerant laws. Without such laws it was established, and without such laws it may be maintained. It triumphed over the superstitions of the most refined and of the most savage nations, over the graceful mythology of Greece and the bloody idolatry of the Northern forests. It prevailed over the power and policy of the Roman empire. It tamed the barbarians by whom that empire was overthrown. But all these victories were gained not by the help of intolerance, but in spite of the opposition of intolerance. The whole history of Christianity proves that she has little indeed to fear from persecution as a foe, but much to fear from persecution as an ally. May she long continue to bless our country with her benignant influence, strong in her sublime philosophy, strong in her spotless morality, strong in those internal and external evidences to which the most powerful and comprehensive of human intellects have yielded assent, the last solace of those who have outlived every earthly hope, the last restraint of those who are raised above every earthly fear! But let not us, mistaking her character and her interests, fight the battle of truth with the weapons of error, and endeavour to support by oppression that religion which first taught the human race the great lesson of universal charity.

# **GOVERNMENT OF INDIA. (JULY 10, 1833) A SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 10TH OF JULY 1833**

On Wednesday, the tenth of July 1833, Mr Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control, moved that the Bill for effecting an arrangement with the India Company, and for the better government of His Majesty's Indian territories, should be read a second time. The motion was carried without a division, but not without a long debate, in the course of which the following Speech was made.

Having, while this bill was in preparation, enjoyed the fullest and kindest confidence of my right honourable friend, the President of the Board of Control, agreeing with him completely in all those views which on a former occasion he so luminously and eloquently developed, having shared his anxieties, and feeling that in some degree I share his responsibility, I am naturally desirous to obtain the attention of the House while I attempt to defend the principles of the proposed arrangement. I wish that I could promise to be very brief; but the subject is so extensive that I will only promise to condense what I have to say as much as I can.

I rejoice, Sir, that I am completely dispensed, by the turn

which our debates have taken, from the necessity of saying anything in favour of one part of our plan, the opening of the China trade. No voice, I believe, has yet been raised here in support of the monopoly. On that subject all public men of all parties seem to be agreed. The resolution proposed by the Ministers has received the unanimous assent of both Houses, and the approbation of the whole kingdom. I will not, therefore, Sir, detain you by vindicating what no gentleman has yet ventured to attack, but will proceed to call your attention to those effects which this great commercial revolution necessarily produced on the system of Indian government and finance.

The China trade is to be opened. Reason requires this. Public opinion requires it. The Government of the Duke of Wellington felt the necessity as strongly as the Government of Lord Grey. No Minister, Whig or Tory, could have been found to propose a renewal of the monopoly. No parliament, reformed or unreformed, would have listened to such a proposition. But though the opening of the trade was a matter concerning which the public had long made up its mind, the political consequences which must necessarily follow from the opening of the trade seem to me to be even now little understood. The language which I have heard in almost every circle where the subject was discussed was this: "Take away the monopoly, and leave the government of India to the Company:" a very short and convenient way of settling one of the most complicated questions that ever a legislature had to consider. The honourable

Member for Sheffield (Mr Buckingham.), though not disposed to retain the Company as an organ of government, has repeatedly used language which proves that he shares in the general misconception. The fact is that the abolition of the monopoly rendered it absolutely necessary to make a fundamental change in the constitution of that great Corporation.

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