

The Project Gutenberg eBook, Beacon Lights of History, Volume X, by John Lord

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.net

Title: Beacon Lights of History, Volume X

Author: John Lord

Release Date: January 8, 2004 [eBook #10641]

Language: English

Character set encoding: iso-8859-1

START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY, VOLUME X

**E-text prepared by Juliet Sutherland, Charlie Kirschner,
and the Project Gutenberg Online Distributed Proofreading Team**

LORD'S LECTURES

BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.

BY JOHN LORD, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ROMAN WORLD," "MODERN EUROPE," ETC., ETC.

VOLUME X.

EUROPEAN LEADERS.

CONTENTS.

WILLIAM IV.

ENGLISH REFORMS.

Social evils in England on the accession of William IV.

Political agitations.

Premiership of Lord Grey.

Aristocratic character of the reformers.

Lord John Russell.

The Reform Bill.

Its final passage.

Henry Brougham.

Lord Melbourne, Prime Minister.

Troubles in Ireland.

O'Connell.

Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister.

His short administration.

Succeeded by Lord Melbourne.

Abolition of West India slavery.

Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Popular reforms.

Trades unions.

Reform of municipal corporations.

Death of William IV.

Penny postage.

Second ministry of Sir Robert Peel.

The Duke of Wellington.

Agitations for repeal of the Corn Laws.

SIR ROBERT PEEL.

POLITICAL ECONOMY.

Birth and education of Sir Robert Peel.
His conservative views.
His High Church principle.
Enters the Cabinet of Lord Liverpool.
Catholic Emancipation.
Resigns the representation of Oxford.
Member of Tamworth.
Opposes the Reform Bill.
Prime Minister in 1841.
Financial genius.
His sliding scale.
O'Connell's death.
The Factory Question.
Renewed charter of the Bank of England.
Financial measure.
Maynooth Grant.
Agitation for Free Trade.
Anti-Corn Association.
Cobden and Bright.
Free Trade leagues.
Free Trade Hall in Manchester.
Peel converted to Free Trade.
Disraeli leader of the Protectionists.
His virulent assaults on Peel.
Abolition of the Corn Laws.
Irish Coercion Bill.
Fall of the Peel Ministry.
Peel's great speech.
Chartist movement.
Its collapse.
Death of Sir Robert Peel.
Character of Sir Robert Peel.

CAVOUR.

UNITED ITALY.

The Roman Catholic Church.
The temporal power.
General desire of Italians for liberty.
Popular leaders.
The Carbonari.
Charles Albert.
Joseph Mazzini.
Young Italy.

Varied fortunes of Mazzini.
Marquis d'Azeglio.
His aspirations and labors.
Battle of Novara.
King Victor Emmanuel II.
Count Cavour.
His early days.
Prime Minister.
His prodigious labors.
His policy and aims.
His diplomacy.
Alliance with Louis Napoleon.
Garibaldi.
His wanderings and adventures.
Daniele Manin.
Takes part in the freedom of Italy.
Garibaldi in Caprera.
Peace of Villa-Franca.
Liberation of Naples and Sicily.
Flight of Francis II. of Naples.
Battle of Volturno.
Annexation of Naples to Sardinia.
Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy.
Venetian provinces annexed to Italy.
Withdrawal of French troops from Italy.
All Italy united under Victor Emmanuel.

CZAR NICHOLAS.

THE CRIMEAN WAR.

Origin of the Russians.
Extension of Russian conquests.
Conquests of Catherine I.
Conquests of Alexander I.
Conquests of Nicholas.
Treaty of Adrianople.
Ambition and aims of Nicholas.
His character.
Prince Mentchikof.
Lord Stratford.
Causes of the Crimean War.
England and France in alliance with Turkey.
Occupation by Russia of the Danubian provinces.
War declared.

Lord Palmerston.
Lord Aberdeen.
Lord Raglan.
Marshal Saint-Arnaud.
English and French at Varna.
Invasion of the Crimea.
Battle of Alma.
Colonel Todleben.
Siege of Sebastopol.
Battle of Balaklava.
"The Light Brigade".
"The Heavy Brigade".
Battle of Inkerman.
Horrors of the siege.
General disasters.
Florence Nightingale.
Sardinia joins the allies.
Assault of Sebastopol.
Death of Lord Raglan.
Treaty of Paris.
Indecisive results of the war.
The Eastern Question.

LOUIS NAPOLEON.

THE SECOND EMPIRE.

Fortunes and adventures of Louis Napoleon.
The political agitations of 1848.
Louis Napoleon, President of the French Republic.
His Ministers.
The Coup d'État.
Usurpation of Louis Napoleon.
His tools.
His enemies.
Hostility of the leading statesmen of France.
Character of Louis Napoleon.
The Crimean War.
Alliance of France and England.
Lord Palmerston.
Stability of the Empire.
Prosperity of France.
Public Works.
Splendid successes of Napoleon III.
War with Austria.

Peace of Villa-Franca.
Improvements of Paris.
Hausmann.
Mexican War.
Archduke Maxmilian.
Humiliations and shifts of Louis Napoleon.
War with Germany.
Indecision and incapacity of Louis Napoleon.
Battle of Worth.
Marshal Bazaine.
Gravelotte.
Battle of Sedan.
Fall of Napoleon III.
Calamities of France.

PRINCE BISMARCK.

THE GERMAN EMPIRE.

Humiliation of Prussia.
Her great deliverers.
Baron von Stein.
His financial genius.
His intense hatred of Napoleon.
His great reforms.
Disgrace of Stein.
Prince Hardenberg.
Baron von Humboldt.
Scharnhorst.
New military organization.
Frederick William III.
German Confederation.
Diet of Frankfort.
Reaction of liberal sentiments.
Influence of Metternich.
Frederick William IV.
Rise of Bismarck.
Early days.
Politician.
His unpopularity.
Diplomatist at the Diet of Frankfort.
Ambassador at St. Petersburg.
Death of Frederick William IV.
Bismarck, Prime Minister.
Increase of the army.

The Schleswig-Holstein Question.
Treaty of Vienna, 1864.
War between Austria and Prussia.
Count von Moltke.
Battle of Sadowa.
Great increase of Prussian territory and population.
New German Constitution.
War clouds--France and Luxembourg.
Conference at London.
King William at Paris.
Preparations and pretext for war with France.
Mobilization of German troops.
King William at Mayence.
Battle of Gravelotte.
Fall of Louis Napoleon at Sedan.
Siege and surrender of Paris.
King William crowned Emperor of Germany.
Labors of Bismarck.
His character.
Quarrel with the Catholics.
Socialism in Germany.
Bismarck's domestic policy.
Bismarck's famous speech, 1888.
Death of Emperor William.
Retirement of Bismarck.

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE.

THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF THE PEOPLE.

Precocity of Gladstone.
Life at Oxford.
Enters Parliament.
Negro Emancipation.
Under-Secretary for the Colonies.
Ultra-Conservative principles.
His eloquence as member of Parliament.
His marriage.
Essay on Church and State.
Parliamentary leader.
Represents Oxford.
Letter on the Government of Naples.
Benjamin Disraeli.
Gladstone Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Opposes the Crimean War.

Great abilities as finance minister.
Conversion to Free Trade.
"Studies on Homer".
His mistake about the American War.
Defeat at Oxford.
Irish Questions.
Rivalry between Gladstone and Disraeli.
Gladstone, Prime Minister.
His great popularity.
Disestablishment of Irish Church.
Irish Land Bill.
Radical army changes.
Settlement of the Alabama claims.
Irish University Bill.
Fall of Gladstone's Ministry.
Influence of Gladstone in retirement.
Disraeli as Prime Minister.
Return of Gladstone to power.
His second administration.
Parliamentary defeat of Gladstone.
The Irish Question.
Death.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME X.

[Bismarck at Versailles](#) *After the painting by Carl Wagner.*
[William IV., King of England](#) *After the painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence.*
[Sir Robert Peel](#) *From the engraving by Sartain.*
[Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield](#) *From a photograph.*
[Camillo Benso di Cavour](#) *From a photograph.*
[Assassination of the Emperor Paul I. of Russia](#) *After the painting by H. Merté.*
[Czar Nicholas I.](#) *After the painting by Horace Vernet.*
[Capture of Napoleon III. at Boulogne](#) *After the painting by R. Gutschmidt.*
[Louis Napoleon III.](#) *From a photograph.*
[Bismarck](#) *After the painting by Franz von Lenbach.*
[Count Von Moltke](#) *From a photograph from life.*
[Proclamation of King William of Prussia as Emperor of Germany, at Versailles](#) *After the painting by Anton von Werner.*
[William Ewart Gladstone](#) *After a photograph from life.*

BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.

WILLIAM IV.

1765-1837.

ENGLISH REFORMS.

On the death of George IV. in 1830, a new political era dawned on England. His brother, William IV., who succeeded him, was not his equal in natural ability, but was more respectable in his character and more liberal in his views. With William IV. began the undisputed ascendancy of the House of Commons in national affairs. Before his day, no prime minister could govern against the will of the sovereign. After George IV., as in France under Louis Philippe, "the king reigned, but did not govern." The chief of the ascendent political party was the real ruler.

When William IV. ascended the throne the Tories were still in power, and were hostile to reform. But the agitations and discontents of the latter days of George IV. had made the ministry unpopular. Great political reformers had arisen, like Lords Grey, Althorp, and Russell, and great orators like Henry Brougham and Macaulay, who demanded a change in the national policy. The social evils which stared everybody in the face were a national disgrace; they made the boasted liberty of the English a mockery. There was an unparalleled distress among the laboring classes, especially in the mining and manufacturing districts. The price of labor had diminished, while the price of bread had increased. So wretched was the condition of the poor that there were constant riots and insurrections, especially in large towns. In war times unskilled laborers earned from twelve to fifteen shillings a week, and mechanics twenty-five shillings; but in the stagnation of business which followed peace, wages suffered a great reduction, and thousands could find no work at all. The disbanding of the immense armies that had been necessary to combat Napoleon threw out of employ perhaps half a million of men, who became vagabonds, beggars, and paupers. The agricultural classes did not suffer as much as operatives in mills, since they got a high price for their grain; but the more remunerative agriculture became to landlords, the more miserable were those laborers who paid all they could earn to save themselves from absolute starvation. No foreign grain could be imported until wheat had arisen to eighty shillings a "quarter," ^[1]--which unjust law tended to the enrichment of land-owners, and to a corresponding poverty among the laboring classes. In addition to the high price which the people paid for bread, they were taxed heavily upon everything imported, upon everything consumed, upon the necessities and conveniences of life as well as its luxuries,--on tea, on coffee, on sugar, on paper, on glass, on horses, on carriages, on medicines,--since money had to be raised to pay the interest on the national debt and to provide for the support of

the government, including pensions, sinecures, and general extravagance.

[1] A quarter of a gross ton.

In the poverty which enormous taxes and low wages together produced, there were not only degradation and squalid misery in England at this time, but violence and crime. And there was also great injustice in the laws which punished crime. There were two hundred and twenty-three offences punishable with death. If a starving peasant killed a hare, he was summarily hanged. Catholics were persecuted for their opinions; Jews were disqualified from holding office. Only men of comfortable means were allowed to vote. The universities were closed against Dissenters. No man stood any chance of political preferment unless he was rich or was allied with the aristocracy, who controlled the House of Commons. The nobles and squires not merely owned most of the landed property of the realm, but by their "rotten boroughs" could send whom they pleased to Parliament. In consequence the House of Commons did not represent the nation, but only the privileged classes. It was as aristocratic as the House of Lords.

In the period of repose which succeeded the excitements of war the people began to see their own political insignificance, and to agitate for reforms. A few noble-minded and able statesmen of the more liberal party, if any political party could be called liberal, lifted up their voices in Parliament for a redress of scandalous evils; but the eloquence which distinguished them was a mere protest. They were in a hopeless minority; nothing could be done to remove or ameliorate public evils so long as the majority of the House of Commons were opposed to reform. It is obvious that the only thing the reformers could do, whether in or out of Parliament, was to agitate, to discuss, to hold public meetings, to write political tracts, to change public opinion, to bring such a pressure to bear on political aspirants as to insure an election of members to the House of Commons who were favorable to reform. For seven years this agitation had been going on during the later years of the reign of George IV. It was seen and felt by everybody that glaring public evils could not be removed until there should be a reform in Parliament itself,--which meant an extension of the electoral suffrage, by which more liberal and popular members might be elected.

On the accession of the new king, there was of course a new election of members to the House of Commons. In consequence of the agitations of reformers, public opinion had been changed, and a set of men were returned to Parliament pledged to reform. The old Tory chieftains no longer controlled the House of Commons, but Whig leaders like Brougham, Macaulay, Althorp, and Lord John Russell,--men elected on the issue of reform, and identified with the agitations in its favor.

The old Tory ministers who had ruled the country for fifty years went out of office, and the Whigs came into power under the premiership of Lord Grey. Although he was pledged to parliamentary reform, his cabinet was composed entirely of noblemen, with only one

exception. There was no greater aristocrat in all England than this leader of reform,--a cold, reticent, proud man. Lord Russell was also an aristocrat, being a brother of the Duke of Bedford; so was Althorp, the son and heir of Earl Spencer. The only man in the new cabinet of fearless liberality of views, the idol of the people, a man of real genius and power, was Brougham; but after he was made Lord Chancellor, the presiding officer of the Chamber of Peers, he could no longer be relied upon as the mouthpiece of the people, as he had been for years in the House of Commons. It would almost seem that the new ministry thought more and cared more for the dominion of the Whigs than they did for a redress of the evils under which the nation groaned. But the Whigs were pledged to parliamentary reform, and therefore were returned to Parliament. More at least was expected of them by the middle classes, who formed the electoral body, than of the Tories, who were hostile to all reforms,--men like Wellington and Eldon, both political bigots, great as were their talents and services. In politics the Tories resembled the extreme Right in the French Chamber of Deputies,--the ultra-conservatives, who sustained the throne of Charles X. The Whigs bore more resemblance to the Centre of the Chamber of Deputies, led by such men as Guizot, Broglie, and Thiers, favorable to a constitutional monarchy, but by no means radicals and democrats like Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, and Lamartine. The Whigs, at the best, were as yet inclined only to such measures as would appease popular tumults, create an intelligent support to the throne, and favor *necessary* reform. It was, with them, a choice between revolution and a fairer representation of the nation in Parliament. It may be reasonably doubted whether there were a dozen men in the House of Commons that assembled at the beginning of the reign of William IV. who were democrats, or even men of popular sympathies. What the majority conceded was from fear, rather than from a sense of justice. The great Whig leaders of the reform movement probably did not fully foresee the logical consequences of the Reform Bill which was introduced, and the change which on its enactment would take place in the English Constitution.

Even as it was, the struggle was tremendous. It was an epoch in English history. The question absorbed all other interests and filled all men's minds. It was whether the House of Commons should represent the privileged and well-to-do middle classes or the nation,--at least a larger part of the nation; not the people generally, but those who ought to be represented,--those who paid considerable taxes to support the government; large towns, as well as obscure hamlets owned by the aristocracy. The popular agitation was so violent that experienced statesmen feared a revolution which would endanger the throne itself. Hence Lord Grey and his associates determined to carry the Reform Bill at any cost, whatever might be the opposition, as the only thing to be done if the nation would escape the perils of revolution.

Lord John Russell was selected by the government to introduce the bill into the House of Commons. He was not regarded as the ablest of the Whig statesmen who had promised reform. His person was not commanding, and his voice was thin and feeble; but he was influential among the aristocracy as being a brother of the Duke of Bedford, head of a most

illustrious house, and he had no enemies among the popular elements. Russell had not the eloquence and power and learning of Brougham; but he had great weight of character, tact, moderation, and parliamentary experience. The great hero of reform, Henry Brougham, was, as we have said, no longer in the House of Commons; but even had he been there he was too impetuous, uncertain, and eccentric to be trusted with the management of the bill. Knowing this, his party had elevated him to the woolsack. He would have preferred the office of the Master of the Rolls, a permanent judicial dignity, with a seat in the House of Commons; but to this the king would not consent. Indeed, it was the king himself who suggested the lord chancellorship for Brougham.

Lord Russell was, then, the most prominent advocate of the bill which marked the administration of Lord Grey. It was a great occasion, March 1, 1831, when he unfolded his plan of reform to a full and anxious assembly of aristocratic legislators. There was scarcely an unoccupied seat in the House. At six o'clock he arose, and in a low and humble manner invoked reason and justice in behalf of an enlarged representation. He proposed to give the right of franchise to all householders who paid £10 a year in rates, and who qualified to serve on juries. He also proposed to disfranchise the numerous "rotten boroughs" which were in the gift of noblemen and great landed proprietors,--boroughs which had an insignificant number of voters; by which measure one hundred and sixty-eight parliamentary vacancies would occur. These vacancies were to be partially filled by sending two members each from seven large towns, and one member each from twenty smaller towns which were not represented in Parliament. Lord Russell further proposed to send two members each from four districts of the metropolis, which had a large population, and two additional members each from twenty-six counties; these together would add ninety-four members from towns and counties which had a large population. To obviate the great expenses to which candidates were exposed in bringing voters to the polls (amounting to £150,000 in Yorkshire alone), the bill provided that the poll should be taken in different districts, and should be closed in two days in the towns, and in three days in the counties. The general result of the bill would be to increase the number of electors five hundred thousand,--making nine hundred thousand in all. We see how far this was from universal suffrage, giving less than a million of voters in a population of twenty-five millions. Yet even so moderate and reasonable an enlargement of the franchise created astonishment, and was regarded by the opponents as subversive of the British Constitution; and not without reason, since it threw political power into the hands of the middle classes instead of into those of the aristocracy.

Lord Russell's motion was, of course, bitterly opposed by the Tories. The first man who arose to speak against it was Sir H. Inglis, member of the university of Oxford,--a fine classical scholar, an accomplished gentleman, and an honest man. He maintained that the proposed alteration in the representation of the country was nothing less than revolution. He eulogized the system of rotten boroughs, since it favored the return to Parliament of young men of great abilities, who without the patronage of nobles would fail in popular elections;

and he cited the cases of Pitt, Fox, Burke, Canning, Perceval, and others who represented Appleby, Old Sarum, Wendover, and other places almost without inhabitants. Sir Charles Wetherell, Mr. Croker, and Sir Robert Peel, substantially took the same view; Lord Althorp, Mr. Hume, O'Connell, and others supported the government. Amid intense excitement, for everybody saw the momentous issues at stake, leave was at length granted to Lord John Russell to bring in his bill. No less than seventy-one persons in the course of seven nights spoke for or against the measure. The Press, headed by the "Times," rendered great assistance to the reform cause, while public meetings were everywhere held and petitions sent to Parliament in favor of the measure. The voice of the nation spoke in earnest and decided tones.

On the 21st of March, 1831, Lord John Russell moved the second reading of the bill; but the majority for it was so small that ministers were compelled to make modifications. After a stormy debate there was a majority of seventy-eight against the government. The ministers, undaunted, at once induced the king to dissolve Parliament, and an appeal was made to the nation. A general election followed, which sent up an overwhelming majority of Liberal members, while many of the leading members of the last Parliament lost their places. On the 21st of June the new Parliament was opened by the king in person. He was received with the wildest enthusiasm by the populace, as he proceeded in state to the House of Lords in his gilded carriage, drawn by eight cream-colored horses. On the 24th of June Lord John Russell again introduced his bill, this time in a bold, manly, and decisive manner, in striking contrast with the almost suppliant tone which he assumed before. On the 4th of July the question of the second reading was brought forward. The discussion was carried on for three nights, and on division the great majority of one hundred and thirty-six was with the government. The only hope of the opposition was now in delay; and factious divisions were made on every point possible as the bill went through the committee. The opposition was most vexatious. Praed made twenty-two speeches against the bill, Sugden eighteen, Pelham twenty-eight, Peel forty-eight, Croker fifty-seven, and Wetherell fifty-eight. Of course the greater part of these speeches were inexpressibly wearisome, and ministers were condemned to sit and listen to the stale arguments, which were all that the opposition could make. Never before in a legislative body was there such an amount of quibbling and higgling, and "speaking against time;" and it was not till September 19 that the third reading came on, the obstructions in committee having been so formidable and annoying. On the 22d of September the bill finally passed in the House of Commons by a majority of one hundred and six, after three months of stormy debate.

But the parliamentary battles were only partially fought; victory in the end was certain, but was not yet obtained. It was necessary that the bill should pass the House of Lords, where the opposition was overwhelming.

On the very evening of September 22 the bill was carried to the Lords, and Lords Althorp and Russell, with one hundred other members of the Commons, entered the Upper House with their message. The Lord Chancellor Brougham advanced to the bar with the

usual formalities, and received the bill from the hands of Lord John Russell. He then resumed his seat on the woolsack, and communicated to the assembled peers the nature of the message. Earl Grey moved that the bill be read a first time, and the time was agreed to. On the 3d of October the premier addressed the House in support of the bill,--a measure which he had taken up in his youth, not so much from sympathy with the people as from conviction of its imperative necessity. There was great majesty in the manner of the patrician minister as he addressed his peers; his eye sparkled with intelligence, and his noble brow betokened resolution and firmness, while his voice quivered with emotion. Less rhetorical than his great colleague the Lord Chancellor, his speech riveted attention. For forty-five years the aged peer had advocated parliamentary reform, and his voice had been heard in unison with that of Fox before the French Revolution had broken out. Lord Wharncliffe, one of the most moderate and candid of his opponents, followed. Lord Melbourne, courteous and inoffensive, supported the bill, because, as he said, he dreaded the consequences of a refusal of concession to the demands of the people, rather than because he loved reform, which he had previously opposed. The Duke of Wellington of course uttered his warning protest, and was listened to more from his fame as a warrior than from his merits as a speaker. Lord Brougham delivered one of the most masterly of his great efforts in favor of reform, and was answered by Lord Lyndhurst in a speech scarcely inferior in mental force. The latter maintained that if the bill became a law the Constitution would be swept away, and even a republic be established on its ruins. Lord Tenterden, another great lawyer, took the side of Lord Lyndhurst, followed in the same strain by Dr. Howley, Archbishop of Canterbury. On a division, there was a majority of forty-one peers against the bill.

The news spread with rapidity to every corner of the land that the Lords had defeated the reform for which the nation clamored. Never in England was there greater excitement. The abolition of the House of Lords was everywhere discussed, and in many places angrily demanded. People could do nothing but talk about the bill, and politics threw all business into the shade. An imprudent speech from an influential popular leader might have precipitated the revolution which the anti-reformers so greatly dreaded. The disappointed people for the most part, however, restrained their wrath, and contented themselves with closing their shops and muffling their church bells. The bishops especially became objects of popular detestation. The Duke of Newcastle and the Marquis of Londonderry, being peculiarly obnoxious, were personally assailed by a mob of incensed agitators. The Duke of Cumberland, brother of the king, was dragged from his horse, while the mob demolished the windows of the palace which the nation had given to the Duke of Wellington. Throughout the country in all the large towns there were mobs and angry meetings and serious disturbances. At Birmingham a rude and indignant meeting of one hundred and fifty thousand people vented their wrath against those who opposed their enfranchisement. The most alarming of the riots took place in Bristol, of which Sir Charles Wetherell was the recorder, and he barely escaped being murdered by the mob, who burned most of the principal public buildings. The example of Bristol was followed in other towns, and the

whole country was in a state of alarm.

In the midst of these commotions Parliament was prorogued. But the passage of the bill became more than ever an obvious necessity in order to save the country from violence; and on December 12 Lord John Russell brought forward his third Reform Bill, which, substantially like the first, passed its second reading January 17, 1832, by the increased majority of one hundred and sixty-two. When considered in committee the old game of obstruction and procrastination was played by the opposition; but in spite of it, the bill finally passed the House on the 23d of March.

The question which everybody now asked was, What will the Lords do? It was certain that they would throw out the bill, as they did before, unless extraordinary measures were taken by the government. The creation of new peers, enough to carry the bill, was determined upon if necessary, although regretted by Lord Grey. To this radical measure there was great opposition on the part of the king, although he had thus far given the bill his support; but the reformers insisted upon it, if reform could not be accomplished in any other way. To use a vulgar expression, Lord Brougham fairly "bulldozed" his sovereign, and the king never forgave him. His assent was at last most reluctantly given; but the peers, dreading the great accession to their ranks of sixty or seventy Liberal noblemen, concluded to give way, led by the Duke of Wellington, and the bill passed the House of Lords on the 4th of June.

The Reform Bill of 1832 was the protest of the middle classes against evils which had been endured for centuries,--a protest to which the aristocracy was compelled to listen. Amid terrible animosities and fearful agitations, reaching to the extremities of the kingdom, the bill was finally passed by the Liberal members, who set aside all other matters, and acted with great unanimity and resolution.

As noted above, during this exciting parliamentary contest the great figure of Henry Brougham had disappeared from the House of Commons; but more than any other man, he had prepared the way for those reforms which the nation had so clamorously demanded, and which in part they had now achieved. From 1820 to 1831 he had incessantly labored in the lower House, and but little was done without his aid. It would have been better for his fame had he remained a commoner. He was great not only as a parliamentary orator, but as a lawyer. His labors were prodigious. Altogether, at this period he was the most prominent man in England, the most popular among the friends of reform, and the most hated by his political enemies,--a fierce, overbearing man, with great talent for invective and sarcasm, eccentric, versatile, with varied rather than profound learning. When Lord Melbourne succeeded Lord Grey as premier, Brougham was left out of the cabinet, being found to be irascible, mischievous, and unpractical; he retired, an embittered man, to private life, but not to idleness, He continued to write popular and scientific essays, articles for reviews, and biographical sketches, taking an interest in educational movements, and in all questions of the day. He was always a lion in society, and, next to Sir Walter Scott, was the object of

greatest curiosity to American travellers. Although great as statesman, orator, lawyer, and judge, his posthumous influence is small compared with that which he wielded in his lifetime,--which, indeed, may be said of most statesmen, the most noted exception to the rule being Lord Bacon.

With Brougham in the upper House, Lord John Russell had become the most prominent man in the lower; but being comparatively a poor man, he was contented to be only paymaster of the forces,--the most lucrative office in the government. His successful conduct of the great Reform Bill gave him considerable prestige. In the second ministry of Lord Melbourne, 1834-1841, Lord Russell was at first colonial and afterward home secretary. Whatever the post he filled, he filled it with credit, and had the confidence of the country; for he was honest, liberal, and sensible. He was not, however, an orator, although he subsequently became a great debater. I have often heard him speak, both in and out of Parliament; but I was never much impressed, or even interested. He had that hesitating utterance so common with aristocratic speakers, both clerical and lay, and which I believe is often assumed. In short, he had no magnetism, without which no public speaker can interest an ordinary audience; but he had intelligence, understood the temper of the House, and belonged to a great historical family, which gave him parliamentary influence. He represented the interests of the wealthy middle classes,--liberal as a nobleman, but without any striking sympathy with the people. After the passage of the Reform Bill, he was unwilling to go to any great lengths in further reforms, and therefore was unpopular with the radicals, although his spirit was progressive. It was his persistent advocacy of parliamentary reform which had made him prominent and famous, and it was his ability as a debater which kept him at the head of his party. Historians speak of him without enthusiasm, but with great respect. The notable orators of that day were O'Connell and Brougham. As a platform speaker, probably no one ever surpassed the Irish leader.

After the passage of the Reform Bill, the first thing of importance to which the reform Parliament turned its attention was the condition of Ireland. The crimes committed in that unfortunate country called loudly for coercive measures on the part of the government. The murders, the incendiary fires, the burglaries and felonious assaults, were unprecedented in number and atrocity. The laws which had been passed for the protection of life and property had become a dead letter in some of the most populous districts. Jurors were afraid to attend the assizes, and the nearest relatives of the victims dared not institute proceedings; even magistrates were deterred from doing their duty. In fact, crime went unpunished, and the country was rapidly sinking into semi-barbarism. In the single year of 1832 there were two hundred and forty-two homicides, eleven hundred and seventy-nine robberies, four hundred and one burglaries, five hundred and sixty-eight house-burnings, one hundred and sixty-one serious assaults, two hundred and three riots, besides other crimes,--altogether to the number of over nine thousand. A bill was accordingly brought into the Upper House by Lord Grey to give to the lord-lieutenant power to substitute courts-martial for the ordinary courts of justice, to enter houses for the purpose of

searching for arms, and to suspend the act of *habeas corpus* in certain districts. The bill passed the Lords without difficulty, but encountered severe opposition in the House of Commons from the radical members and from O'Connell and his followers. Nevertheless it passed, with some alterations, and was at once put in force in the county of Kilkenny, with satisfactory results. The diminution of crime was most marked; and as the excuse for disturbances arose chiefly from the compulsory tithes which the Catholic population were obliged to pay in support of the Protestant Church, the ministry wisely attempted to alleviate the grievance. It was doubtless a great injustice for Catholics to be compelled to support the Established Church of England; but the ministry were not prepared to go to the length which the radicals and the Irish members demanded,--the complete suppression of the tithe system; in other words, "the disestablishment of the Irish Church." They were willing to sacrifice a portion of the tithes, to reduce the number of bishops, and to apply some of the ecclesiastical property to secular purposes. But even this concession called out a fierce outcry from the conservatives, in and out of Parliament. A most formidable opposition came from the House of Lords, headed by Lord Eldon; but the ministers were at last permitted to carry out their measure.

Nothing satisfactory, however, was accomplished in reference to the collection of tithes, in spite of the concession of the ministers. The old difficulty remained. Tithes could not be collected except at the point of the bayonet, which of course was followed by crimes and disturbances that government could not prevent. In 1833 the arrears of tithes amounted to over a million of pounds, and the Protestant clergy were seriously distressed. The cost of collecting tithes was enormous, from the large coercive force which the government was obliged to maintain. When the pay of soldiers and policemen is considered, it took £25,000 to collect £12,000. The collection of tithes became an impossibility without a war of extermination. Every expedient failed. Even the cabinet was divided on all the schemes proposed; for every member of it was determined to uphold the Established Church, in some form or other.

At last Mr. Ward, member for St. Albans, in 1834 brought forward in the Commons a measure which had both reason and justice to commend it. After showing that the collection of tithes was the real cause of Irish discontents, that only a fourteenth of the population of Ireland were in communion with the English Church, that nearly half of the clergy were non-residents, and that there was a glaring inequality in the salaries of clergymen,--so that some rectors received from £500 to £1,000 in parishes where there were only ten or twelve Protestants, while some of the resident clergy did duty for less than £20 per annum,--he moved the following: "Resolved, that as the Protestant Episcopal Establishment of Ireland exceeds the spiritual wants of the Protestant population, it is the opinion of the House that the temporal possessions of the Church of Ireland ought to be reduced." The motion was seconded by Mr. Grote, the celebrated historian; but Lord Althorp rose and requested the House to adjourn, in consequence of circumstances he was not prepared to mention. All understood that there was trouble in the cabinet itself; and when the House reassembled, it

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

