CHAPTER III.

Re-assembling of Parliament.—Reform Bill prepared by the Cabinet.—Lord John Russell introduces the Reform Bill.—Wonder and alarm at its contemplated provisions.—Fears of the Aristocracy.—The Debates on the First Reading.—The Debates on the Second Reading.—Defeat of the Ministry in Committee.—Lord Grey and Lord Brougham urge the King to Dissolve.—The Dissolution and General Election.—The Reform Bill carried.—The Bill in Committee.—It is passed.—The Bill in the House of Lords.—The Bill rejected upon the Second Reading.—Resolutions of the House of Commons.—Parliament prorogued.

When the Legislature re-assembled on the 3rd of February, numerous petitions were presented to the House of Commons praying for Reform of Parliament. Lord Althrop then informed the House that on Tuesday the 1st of March the government would be prepared to submit their plan for the improvement of the representative system; and that the task of explaining the nature and extent of the reform which they contemplated would be confided to Lord John Russell. He was best entitled to propose a full and efficient improvement of the representation who had so often failed in his most zealous attempts to procure a partial one. In the House of Lords earl Grey stated that a measure of reform which would be effective, without exceeding the bounds of a just and well-advised moderation, had received the unanimous consent of the whole government, and would at as early a period as possible be submitted to the other House of Parliament. It is now known that a Committee of four members of the government, two of whom were of the Cabinet, had been selected by lord Grey to consider the manifold details connected with so large a change, and to prepare a Bill. That Committee consisted of lord Durham, sir James Graham, lord John Russell, and viscount Duncannon. The assertion of a son of earl Grey that his father "laid down the principles on which the measure was to be founded, the details of which were to be worked out by other members of the government," is no doubt substantially correct.* The measure prepared by the Committee, which was finally adopted by the Cabinet, was submitted to the king on the 30th of January. The time had gone by, as far as regarded England, when, on that day which was then

* "Life and Opinions of Charles Earl Grey," by Lieut.-General Hon. C. Grey, 1861.

called the anniversary of a martyrdom, according to Voltaire every king in Europe rises from his bed with a crick in his neck. William IV. is represented to have been anxious to postpone the proposal of the measure to parliament. Lord Grey would have had little difficulty in convincing him that the Crown was most safe when the three branches of the Constitution were working in harmony with the just desires of the people.

In the interval between the announcement of the 3rd of February, and the bringing forward the Reform Bill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had introduced his budget, of which some portions were carried and others abandoned. The duties on newspapers and advertisements were to be reduced; those on coals, on candles, and on printed cottons were to be abolished. The propositions to reduce the duty on glass and the duty on tobacco were withdrawn; for some of the taxes offered as substitutes had been strenuously opposed. The Whig ministry had not learnt to know the ministerial safety of firmness. It was to be the privilege of the financial minister of fourteen years later to produce improvements in our architectural taste and in our domestic comforts, which few could have anticipated, by relieving the manufacturers of glass altogether from the payment of duty and from the interference of the officers of revenue with their processes. In that same interval lord Brougham had also introduced a Bill for establishing a new Court in Bankruptcy, which was read a first time.

During the month of February the scope of the Reform Bill had been kept profoundly secret. A few persons were in the confidence of the government whose judgment and experience were valuable in the arrangement of its details. But when on the 1st of March the Speaker came down to prayers, and not only found the House remarkably full, but every empty seat bearing a label of the name of its proposed occupant, not a dozen of that crowd had the slightest conception of the nature of that measure which they might be called upon to support or to oppose. The speech with which lord John Russell introduced the proposition of the government was lucid, slightly argumentative, entirely free from rhetorical ornament. The proposed reform was far too great to require more than the simplest and most intelligible statement. It was intelligible enough to produce both wonder and ridicule. It was proposed to a House of Commons of which one hundred and sixty-eight members for England were returned by boroughs. They could scarcely imagine that the whole system of nomination should come to an end. Sixty boroughs were proposed to be wholly disfranchised, as having each less than two thousand in-

habitants; forty-seven boroughs, having less than four thousand inhabitants each, were to return one member instead of two; and a single borough which had formerly returned four members was to be reduced to half its number of representatives. It was not proposed wholly to fill up the seats thus to be disposed of, but to reduce the number of members of the House of Commons. The existing number of six hundred and fifty-eight was to be curtailed to five hundred and ninety-six. Seven unrepresented large towns were to have the right of returning two members each, twenty smaller towns unrepresented were to return one member each. London was to be divided into four districts, each having two members. Fifty-four members were to be added to the county representation. These and other details of the measure were subsequently altered. Instead of the old rights of election in boroughs, a household franchise of 10*l.* was substituted. Corporations were deprived of the exclusive privileges which some possessed of returning members. The duration of elections was to be remedied by a previous registration. When lord John Russell proceeded to read the names of the boroughs to be disfranchised wholly or in part, then indeed was the excitement of the House at an unprecedented height. For once in the grave records of Parliamentary debate we find a morsel of description upon which the imagination may raise up a picture of a most extraordinary scene. "The noble lord accordingly read the following list, in the course of which he was frequently interrupted by shouts of laughter, cries of 'Hear, Hear,' from members for these boroughs, and by various interlocutions across the table." * For many members it was indeed a personal question of the last importance. Statesmen, too, who looked beyond individual interests were aghast at a proposal so sweeping, so revolutionary as they were warranted in believing. It was left to Opposition members somewhat below the highest mark to reply that night to lord John Russell. Sir Robert Peel sat rigid as a statue, his face working with internal emotion, his brow furrowed as by the wrinkles of age. Around him were many of his supporters, bursting again and again into uncontrollable laughter at what appeared to them the prelude to a certain and speedy downfall of the ministry. There were fashionable parties that night where the hosts and the guests sat late in anxious expectation of intelligence from the House. At one of these was the duke of Wellington. As news of the ministerial proposition was read or told there was a burst of merriment in the company. "It is no joke," said the duke;

* Hansard, vol. ii. col. 1077.

"you will find it no laughing matter." All London knew the next day what the ministerial project meant. Lord Eldon wrote, in his first moments of surprise, "There is no describing the amazement this plan of reform has occasioned." *

Sir Robert Inglis, the member for the University of Oxford, was the first to reply to the arguments of lord John Russell. His speech was an able one, anticipating most of the arguments which were employed for the seven wearisome nights of debate on the introduction of the Bill, and making a free use of that great weapon of alarm which had been so successfully employed by his party, from the time when Pitt abandoned his position as a reformer in the general terror at the first outbreak of the French revolution. The lapse of forty years had furnished a new argument to prove the danger of any accession to the strength of the democratic principle. Sir Robert Inglis maintained the impossibility of the co-existence of a monarchy with a free press and a purely popular representation. "Sir, I am fully persuaded that a representative system so exclusively popular as that which the noble lord wishes to introduce, has never yet been found in juxtaposition with a free press on the one hand and with a monarchy on the other." † The destruction of the monarchy was to involve the simultaneous destruction of the House of Peers. On the very day, said sir Robert Inglis, when the House of Commons of 1648 murdered their king they voted the Lords to be useless and dangerous. The abolition of the House of Lords was the most stirring and practical of the prophecies of the alarmists. "Whatever," added sir Robert Inglis, "the intentions of the framers or of the supporters of this measure may be, I am quite sure that, if carried, it will sweep clean the House of Peers in ten years." In or out of Parliament the cry was that the destruction of the aristocracy by the passing of the democratic Reform Bill was inevitable.

The word aristocracy was used, both by the enemies and friends of reform, with a very loose signification. By some it was intended exclusively to mean the nobility; to others it more properly signified the governing body of the great and wealthy families, and not a particular class whose rank was hereditary. It is recorded that during one of the debates on the Reform Bill lord Sidmouth said to lord Grey, "I hope God will forgive you on account of this Bill; I don't think I can:" to which lord Grey replied, "Mark my words; within two years you will find that we shall have become unpopular, for having brought forward the most aristocratic meas-

* Twiss, vol. iii. p. 120.

† Hansard, vol. ii. col. 1122.

ure that ever was proposed in parliament." * We have understood that lord Althorp expressed pretty much the same opinion. Neither of the two ministers could have meant to say that the Reform Bill would especially increase the power and influence of the Peers. Lord Eldon must also have used "aristocracy" in the extended sense of a governing body not wholly composed of a privileged order, when he said at a Pitt dinner in May, "The aristocracy once destroyed, the best supporters of the lower classes would be swept away. In using the term lower classes he meant nothing offensive. How could he do so? He himself had been one of the lower classes." † To see nothing in the social condition of our country but a governing body of great families and the "lower classes," was one of the defects of the able lawyer's mental vision. He boasted, and not improperly so, that, like himself, "the humblest in the realm might, by a life of industry, propriety, and good moral and religious conduct, rise to eminence." But the father of lord Eldon and of lord Stowell would have been indignant enough could he have foreseen that his distinguished son would have ranked him as one of "the lower classes;" the father being, according to the description of his other remarkable son, "a considerable merchant, who by a successful application of his industry to various branches of commerce raised a competent fortune." ‡ The ex-Chancellor, when he thus talked about "the lower classes," looked at them with the prejudices of caste which, singular enough, were most cherished by the new nobility. That system had not only been modified, but almost destroyed, a century before John Scott sat in the House of Peers. "The nobility and the middle classes in England followed the same business, embraced the same professions, and what is far more significant, intermarried with each other." § There was another mode of amalgamation in England between the highest and the humblest, which was more rare and yet not less instructive. In the lapse of time, some of the lower classes—some even of the lowliest—could, by right of blood, have stood upon the same level as the proudest peer of the realm, who in common with them could trace his lineage to one of the three great fountains of honour, Edward III., Edward I., or Henry III. The Marquis of Chandos, who was one of the most conspicuous of the noble opponents of the Reform Bill, was christened Richard Plantagenet, by reason of his descent from Elizabeth of York. there were others of his time not so highly placed, but perhaps

* "Life of Lord Sidmouth," vol. iii. p. 439, note.

† Twiss, vol. iii. p. 127. ‡ *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 23.

§ De Tocqueville, "France before the Revolution," book ii. chap. ix.

more happily, who could carry up their lineage even higher than himself. In 1845, John Penny, apprentice to Mr. Watson, saddler, of Windmill-street, the only surviving son of Stephen James Penny, late sexton of St. George's, Hanover-square, could claim undoubted descent from Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester, fifth son of king Edward the Third. At the same period George Wilmot, keeping the turnpike-gate at Cooper's Bank, near Dudley, who is shown to have descended from Edmund of Woodstock, earl of Kent, sixth son of king Edward the First, was taking toll "almost under the very walls of those feudal towers that gave the name to the barony of which he is a co-heir." * The aristocracy and the lower classes were not wholly separated by an exclusive right of quartering coat armour. The author of "Royal Descents" thinks that the princely blood of Plantagenet might be found to flow through veins even more humble than some of those which he has recorded He adds, "This is as it should be. There is no prescriptive right of interminable gentility, any more than of great talents or personal attractions." The intermarriages that prevented the aristocracy becoming a caste in England, and the constant elevation of what lord Eldon denominated "the lower classes" to form part of the governing body, rendered it quite certain that the revolution, as it was called, —the Reform measure of 1831,—would resolve itself into something very different from the government of a democracy; and that no fears were more idle than those which proclaimed that the degradation of rank and the destruction of property were close at hand.

The second night of the debate was memorable for the speeches of Mr. Macaulay and Mr. Stanley, of which sir James Mackintosh said, they were "two of the finest speeches ever spoken in Parliament." M. Guizot, having affirmed that "the loftiest minds, the most eloquent orators of England, called for reform with earnest conviction, and seemed to regard it as even more indispensable than irresistible," † then quotes, though imperfectly, the peroration of Macaulay's speech:—"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

* We derive these particulars from the curious and interesting volume of the late Mr. C. E. Long, entitled "Royal Descents: a Genealogical List of the several persons entitled to Quarter the Arms of the Royal Houses of England," 1845.

† "Memoirs of Peel," p. 56.

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 new 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 ungovernable passions. Save the aristocracy, endangered by its own unpopular power. Save the greatest, and fairest, and most highly civilized 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 comment of M. Guizot upon this burst of eloquence is: "These sombre prognostics, this powerful language, carried some disturbance into the soul of Peel."

The third night of the debate presented unusual interest in the antagonism of lord Palmerston and sir Robert Peel. The minister who had quitted office when the friends of Mr. Canning appeared to be insulted in the ejection of Mr. Huskisson from the Cabinet, now stood forward as the advocate of a measure of reform compared with which the case of East Retford was but a drop in the ocean. Lord Palmerston ventured to assert that if Mr. Canning "had lived to mark the signs of the present times, and to bring his great and comprehensive intellect to an examination of the difficulties to be overcome, he would have been as ardent a supporter of the measure now proposed by the government as any of the friends he saw around him." † Sir Robert Peel, in his reply, exclaimed, would to God that Mr. Canning were here, "to confound the sophistry and fallacies of reformers, and to win back the people by the charms of truth and eloquence to a right appreciation of the form of government under which they live." Sir Robert Peel concluded his speech by a solemn admonition to the ministers: "It was the duty of the government to claim, not to stimulate, the fever of popular excitement. They have adopted a different course—they have sent through the land the fire-brand of agitation, and no one can now recall it." ‡ The debate on lord

* "Speeches of T. B. Macaulay, corrected by himself," p. 18.

† Hansard, vol. ii. col. 1323.

‡ *Ibid.*, col. 1334 and 1356.

John Russell's motion for leave to bring in the Bill was closed on the seventh night without a division; and when the Speaker had decided that the ayes had it, the cheers from the ministerial benches were enthusiastic. The bill was read a first time on the 14th of March.

On the 21st of March, lord John Russell moved the order of the day for the second reading of the Reform Bill. Sir Richard Vivian moved, as an amendment, that the bill be read a second time that day six months. The second reading was carried by a majority of one only in a house of six hundred and eight; "probably the greatest number which up to that time had ever been assembled at a division." * In ordinary times this bare majority would have compelled the retirement of a ministry from office. They had now the support of the great body of the people, and they must fight the battle till the proper time should arrive for an appeal to the constituencies that had returned the unreformed parliament. On the 18th of April the House went into Committee on the order of the day, to consider the provisions of the bill for the amendment of the representation. General Gascoigne, following lord John Russell, moved, "that it is the opinion of this House that the total number of knights, citizens, and burgesses, returned to parliament for that part of the United Kingdom called England and Wales, ought not to be diminished." The debate was adjourned to the 19th. At a late hour the House divided; for General Gascoigne's amendment, 299; against it, 291. The ministry were beaten by a majority of eight. A man of the rarest genius, though not a striking parliamentary orator,—Francis Jeffrey—has left an exquisite picture of an outdoor scene on this memorable daybreak: "It was a beautiful, rosy, dead calm morning, when we broke up a little before five to-day; and I took three pensive turns along the solitude of Westminster Bridge; admiring the sharp clearness of St. Paul's and all the city spires soaring up in a cloudless sky, the orange red light that was beginning to play on the trees of the Abbey and the old windows of the Speaker's house, and the flat, green mist of the river floating upon a few lazy hulks on the tide and moving low under the arches. It was a curious contrast with the long previous imprisonment in the stifling roaring House, amidst dying candles, and every sort of exhalation." †

On the 21st of April, in the House of Peers, lord Wharncliffe gave notice that he should the next day move that an address be presented to his Maiesty praying that he would be graciously

* May, "Constitutional History," vol. i. p. 352.

† Cockburn, "Life of Lord Jeffrey," p. [illegible]

pleased not to exercise his undoubted prerogative of dissolving parliament. On the same evening in the House of Commons, ministers were again defeated by a majority of twenty-two on a question of adjournment. Mr. May states that this vote could not bear the construction which lord Brougham affirmed on the following day, that it amounted to "stopping the supplies." The question before the House was a question concerning the Liverpool election. "Late down in the list of Orders for the day a report from the Committee of Supply was to be received, which dropped by reason of the adjournment." *

On the morning of Friday the 22nd, the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor were with the King. They had come either to lay the resignations of the Ministry at his Majesty's feet, or to request him to dissolve the Parliament. The popular story of the time was that the King was reluctant to dissolve until the notice given by lord Wharncliffe was felt by him to be an interference with his prerogative; that then he was impatient to go at once to Parliament, and said, if the royal carriages were not ready send for a hackney coach. Mr. Roebuck has given a most interesting relation of "the whole scene of this interview of the King and his Ministers, as related by those who could alone describe it." † The Chancellor was requested to manage the King on the occasion. His Majesty was startled at their proposition of a dissolution—how could he, after such a fashion, repay the kindness of Parliament in granting him a most liberal civil list, and giving to the Queen a splendid annuity in case she survived him. Nevertheless the Chancellor said that the further existence of the present House of Commons was incompatible with the peace and safety of the kingdom. Lord Grey stated that without a dissolution they could not continue to conduct the affairs of the country. But nothing is arranged, said the King, the great officers of State are not summoned—the crown and the robes are not prepared—the Guards, the troops, have had no orders, and cannot be ready in time. The "daring Chancellor," as Mr. Roebuck terms him, replied, deferentially, that the officers of State had been prepared to be summoned, and that the crown and robes would be ready. The difficulty about the troops was not so easily answered. The orders for the attendance of the troops upon such occasions always emanate from the sovereign. "Pardon me, Sir," said the Chancellor, "I have given orders, and the troops are ready." The King then burst out, "You, my Lord Chancellor, ought to know that such an act is treason, high treason, my lord."

* "Constitutional History," vol. i. p. 352.
† "History of the Whig Ministry," vol. ii. p. 148.

The Chancellor humbly acknowledged that he did know it, and that nothing but his own solemn belief that the safety of the State depended upon that day's proceedings could have emboldened him to venture upon so improper a proceeding. The King cooled down; the speech to be read by his Majesty was in the Chancellor's pocket; and the Ministers were dismissed with something like a menace and a joke upon the audacity of their proceedings. The Lords had begun to assemble at two o'clock. At twenty minutes before three the Lord Chancellor took his seat, and almost immediately withdrew from the House, lord Shaftesbury being called to the chair. Lord Wharncliffe rose to make his motion. At the moment of completing the reading of his resolution, the Lord Chancellor entered the House, and immediately addressing it said, with great emphasis, "I never yet heard that the Crown ought not to dissolve Parliament whenever it thought fit, particularly at a moment when the House of Commons had thought fit to take the extreme and unprecedented step of stopping the supplies." * There was great confusion, with cries of "The King, the King." Lord Londonderry rose in fury, and exclaimed, "I protest, my Lords, I will not submit to" —— The Chancellor, hearing the King approaching, clutched up the Seals and rushed again out of the House. There was again terrible confusion. The earl of Shaftesbury resumed the chair, and the earl of Mansfield proceeded to deliver a general harangue against the Reform Bill. The Lord Chancellor had met the King whilst the noise of the House was distinctly audible. "What's that?" said his Majesty. "Only, may it please you, Sir, the House of Lords amusing themselves while awaiting your Majesty's coming." The King entered the House, cut short lord Mansfield's oration, and after the Speaker of the House of Commons and about a hundred members had attended at the bar, commenced his Speech with these very decisive words: "My Lords and Gentlemen, I have come to meet you for the purpose of proroguing this Parliament, with a view to its immediate dissolution." The House of Commons, before the Usher of the Black Rod had tapped at the door, had been a scene of turbulence and confusion—even outrivalling that of the Lords–which the Speaker had vainly endeavoured to repress. Lord Campbell, at that time member for Stafford, says, "Never shall I forget the scene then exhibited in the House of Commons, which might convey an adequate idea of the tumultuary dissolutions in the times of the Stuarts. The most exciting moment of my public life was when we cheered the guns which announced his Majesty's approach." † Had those guns been

* Hansard, vol. iii. col. 1807. † "Lives of the Chancellors," chap. ccx., note.

heard a day later, the probability is that both Houses would have resolved upon an Address to the King against dissolution, and the royal prerogative would not have been exercised at all, or exercised under circumstances of great difficulty and danger.

On the dissolution of Parliament there was an illumination in London, sanctioned by the Lord Mayor, which was attended with more mischief from the turbulence of a mob—who broke the windows of the duke of Wellington and other anti-reformers,—than productive of any real advantage to the popular cause. After the Edinburgh election the Lord Provost was rudely assaulted, and was with difficulty rescued by the soldiery. These things were disclaimed by Reformers as being the acts of blackguards ; but it must be acknowledged that there was a very slight approach to justice in the charge that sir Robert Peel had made against the government, that they had, "like the giant enemy of the Philistines, lighted three hundred brands and scattered through the country discord and dismay." * The zeal of their supporters, we fear, was not everywhere satisfied with the formation of Political Unions; but that they read without much dissatisfaction the newspaper reports of smashed glass, and rude assaults during the elections in towns where the magistrates were supine and the police feeble. Such proceedings seriously damaged the just cause of peaceable Reform. The cry that went through the country of "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill," delighted the Government, for it set aside all minor differences of opinion amongst Reformers, and materially influenced the elections by the application of this simple test to a candidate,—would he support the Bill ? But the mob-violence became to them a source of anxiety and alarm, producing distrust and desertion amongst the ranks of Reformers. "For God's sake keep the people quiet in Scotland," wrote the Lord Advocate a few months later ; "nothing in the world would do such fatal mischief as riot and violence." †

The appeal to the people was signally triumphant. Parliament opened on the 14th of June, when Mr. Manners Sutton was chosen Speaker for the sixth time. The king went in state to the House of Lords on the 21st of June, and in his speech recommended the important question of reform in the representation to the earliest and most attentive consideration of Parliament. On the 24th lord John Russell again brought in the Reform Bill, with a few alterations. The measure thus proposed was confined to England. There was to be a separate bill for Scotland, which was brought in by the Lord Advocate on the 1st of July ; and a separate bill

* Hansard, vol. ii. col. 1356. † "Life of Jeffrey," p. 324.

for Ireland, which was brought in by Mr. Stanley on the 30th of June. The discussion upon the English bill was to take place on the second reading, which was moved by lord John Russell on the 4th of July. There were three nights of debate. Mr. Macaulay's speech on the second night was described by lord Jeffrey as putting him "clearly at the head of the great speakers, if not the debaters, of the House." One passage of that speech may be now read with especial interest. "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. Civilization 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. . . . . . 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." * On the third night of the debate the House divided : for the second reading, 367 ; against it, 231. On the 12th of July the House went into Committee. It was not till the 6th of September that the bill came out of this harassing stage of its progress, being the thirty-ninth sitting of the Committee. Night after night there were debates upon every clause of disfranchisement and every clause of enfranchisement. The leader of this mode of opposition was Mr. John Wilson Croker, whose power of mastering the most obscure details, whether in politics or literature, was perhaps unrivalled, and, we fear we must add, whose application of his minute researches was not always quite honest. His mind was formed by nature and habit for controversy. His acuteness and his energy were supported by his determined will, and his passionate resolve to look only at one side of the shield. He was a master of sarcasm, which, however, was not unaccompanied by a kindly spirit. Guizot, with a just discrimination between the value of set speeches and real business, assigns to this "man of vigorous, clear, precise, and practical mind," † the real leadership in the oppo-

* "Speeches of T. B. Macaulay, corrected by himself," p. 32.
† "Memoirs of Peel," p. 56.

sition to the Reform Bill in the House of Commons. The minister who was always ready to repel his attacks was one of very different character. Lord Althorp subdued his adversaries, and was a buckler to his supporters, by his singleness of purpose. Never was any one more truly described than the Chancellor of the Exchequer was by Jeffrey: "There is something to me quite delightful in his calm, clumsy, courageous, immutable probity and well-meaning, and it seems to have a charm for everybody." * Mr. Croker was to the last a most unyielding advocate of principles which had ceased to have any consistent application. When the Reform Bill passed, he believed, with men of more timidity and less intellectual grasp, that the time was not far distant when all that England prized would perish under a reformed parliament. In September, 1832, it was written of Mr. Croker by one of his own party, that "no words can describe his desponding, hopeless view of all public matters; national ruin and bankruptcy with him are inevitable." † In 1836 his friends observed that he absolutely seemed to rejoice at any partial fulfilment of his prophecies. "Fitzgerald once said to lord Wellesley at the Castle, 'I have had a very melancholy letter from C—— this morning.' 'Aye!' said lord Wellesley, 'written, I suppose, in a strain of the most sanguine despondency.'" ‡ It is satisfactory to contrast the opinions of the duke of Wellington after the passing of the Reform Bill, as reported by the same authority: "He said, we have seen great changes; we can only hope for the best; we cannot foresee what will happen; but few people will be sanguine enough to imagine that we shall ever again be as prosperous as we have been. His language breathed no bitterness, neither sunk into despondency." §

Before the Reform Bill came out of Committee, an importan alteration was carried by the marquis of Chandos,—that tenants-a will paying fifty pounds per annum for their holdings should hav a vote for the county. This proposal, which involved other amen ments of a similar tendency, was carried by a majority of eighty-four. It was contended that this clause, instead of making the farmers more independent, as was alleged, would make a tenant wholly dependent upon the will of his landlord in the exercise of his franchise. Undoubtedly, before the repeal of the corn-laws, which, in freeing the farmers from the shackles of protection, gave scope for the exercise of their skill and capital, the tenant-at-wi was more subservient to the commands of the owner of the so It may, however, be doubted now, when the interests of landlo

* Cockburn, "Life of Jeffrey," p. 322.
† Raikes's "Diary," vol. i. p. 8
‡ Raikes's "Diary," vol. iii. p. 43.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 68.

and tenant have become more identified, because the social relations of each are better understood, whether it would be possible, as apprehended by lord Milton, that "a knot of persons, of great landed possessions, would combine for the purpose of securing the representation, and by the power which the adoption of these proposed amendments would give them, would fix the whole representation in the hands of an oligarchy."* Freed from the committee; having been read a third time, after a division in a House whose diminished numbers showed how wearisome were the protracted discussions; the Reform Bill passed the House of Commons on the 21st of September, the numbers being three hundred and forty-five for the measure, and two hundred and thirty-six against it.

On the 22nd of September the House of Lords presented an unusual attendance of Peers. Peeresses were accommodated at the bar, and the space allotted to strangers was thronged to an overflow. The Lord Chancellor takes his seat at the Woolsack. The Deputy-Usher of the Black Rod announces "A Message from the Commons:" the doors are thrown open; and lord Althorp and lord John Russell, bearing the Reform Bill in their hands, appear at the head of a hundred members of the Lower House. Lord John Russell, in delivering the Bill to the Lord Chancellor, who had come to the bar, says with a firm and audible voice, "My Lords, the House of Commons have passed an Act to Amend the Representation of England and Wales, to which they desire your Lordships' concurrence." † The words, usually of mere form and ceremony, by which a Message from the Commons is communicated to the Lords, were spoken by the Lord Chancellor with unusual solemnity of tone and manner amidst breathless silence. ‡ The Bill was then read a first time, and was ordered to be read a second time on Monday, the 3rd of October.

During the five nights of debate in this memorable week, the House of Lords stood before the nation presenting examples of the highest eloquence that ever characterized a great deliberative assembly. Whatever adverse sentiments the Reports of these debates might excite, they could not fail to impress the thinking part of the nation with the conviction that the House of Lords fitly represented the most powerful nobility in Europe, not only because it was the most wealthy and the best educated of any aristocratic assembly; not only that it was surrounded with grand historical associations; but that, however it might be opposed for a

* Hansard, vol. vi. col. 274.
† This scene forms the subject of a historical painting.
‡ Hansard, vol. vii. col. 480.