

of Lords has a right to say this — “ We do not approve of the measure you bring before us. If you like to accept its rejection, well and good; if you object to its rejection your remedy is to appeal to the people.” And we do not think that under the constitution there is any other remedy than that.

But with respect to the right, not only in the House of Lords but in all of us, of pressing for a dissolution of Parliament, I admit that if it was to be done in respect to ordinary measures of controversy, or the ordinary legislation on which we have to decide, it would be matter of considerable inconvenience if we were to interfere with the discretion which is ordinarily reposed in the advisers of the crown. But the fallacy, the fundamental fallacy, of all the reasonings of ministerial arguers upon this point is that they ignore the fact that it is not a common question of legislation, it is a vital question, it is a question of the revision of the constitution. And in neither of the other popularly governed countries is the revision of the constitution treated even so lightly as we desire and are content to treat it.

Look at what they do in France. In France they have, curiously enough, the contemporaneous phenomenon of a Liberal minister who is trying to alter the constitution of the country in the hopes that it may affect agreeably the constitution of the next assembly that he has to meet. I presume that that is a characteristic of Liberal ministers all over the world. That whenever they don't know how to get a majority in any other way they try to revise the constitution; but it cannot be done by a simple bill in France as it can in England. There is an elaborate process of revision. A congress must be called under certain guarantees, and guarantees of a tolerably stringent character. It is not

treated in an ordinary manner, and the very fullest recognition is given to the right of the second Chamber to make its own opinions heard and felt in the conduct of that revision.

Well, but we pass from France, with which we have only a certain point of analogy, and go to our kith and kin on the other side of the Atlantic, who, full of English traditions, but cut off by circumstances from monarchy, set up a republic according to their own judgment for themselves. What did they do? They surrounded the question of the revision of the constitution with the most minute and elaborate guarantees. It can only be proposed, in the first instance, by a two thirds majority in both of the Houses of the legislature, and when it has been proposed that is not sufficient. It has to be submitted to each State of the country, and passed there by three fourths of the States.

That is the amount of security which the Anglo-Saxon mind, by circumstances cast loose from tradition, has judged to be absolutely necessary in the conduct of a popular government. And now, because the House of Lords interposes, and says that by a vote of a House of Commons, in the fifth year of its existence, passed at the bidding of a dictatorial minister — and thrown into an unprecedented form — because the House of Lords demurs to such a measure passing into law without the people having been consulted, you are told that they have been guilty of some strange and intolerable arrogance.

Just consider for a moment what the authority of the House of Commons is. I wish to speak of the House of Commons with the highest respect, and there is no doubt that, for ordinary purposes, dealing with ordinary bills, its authority is full and unquestioned to the term of its natural

career; but when it lays hands upon the constitution for the purpose of revising it, a very different state of things arises, and then you cannot turn away your attention from the fact that it is a House of Commons on the decline — that it has already existed longer than the average of Parliaments which have been since the Reform Bill of 1832 — the average is four years and two months, and we have passed that — and that its action is discredited and disavowed by every election that takes place in those constituencies which this bill is intended to affect.

You tell me that this bill has been passed by the representatives of the people. In a legal sense they are the representatives of the people — in a legal sense every act of Parliament is submitted to the unfettered will of the Sovereign, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons; but if you pass from a legal to an actual sense they are not the representatives of the people, they are the representatives of what the people were five years ago. And between that day and this there is an absolute gulf, so completely has the whole surface of the political world changed, so entirely different are all the objects of political controversy and interest, so utterly have passed away the burning questions upon which the last election was decided.

Now Mr. Bright tries to dispose of the House of Lords by saying that it is a Tory caucus. He tries to give you the impression that it was a Tory caucus under Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmertson, for he mentions their names. But my memory, I think, is as fresh as Mr. Bright's. I can perfectly remember what took place in the House of Lords, for instance. We will not deal with Lord Aberdeen's government. We will deal with Lord Palmerston's. There were two great questions which shook the ministry and

closely divided the House of Commons. They were two of the most burning questions of the day. They were the questions of the Chinese war and the Danish war.

The decision of one of them forced Lord Palmerston to dissolve. The decision of the other in his favor was regarded as the great victory of his administration. How did the House of Lords, this Tory caucus, vote? On both occasions the lords assembled at Westminster voted in favor of Lord Palmerston.

The truth is, that until Mr. Gladstone became a leading figure — became the leader of the Liberal party — there was no talk about this permanent majority in the House of Lords, and my belief is that if ever Mr. Gladstone ceases to be the leader of the Liberal party there will then be no longer that decided Tory majority in the House of Lords.

For whatever else you may say about his legislation, at least there can be no doubt of this, that he has applied principles to the rights of property of his fellow subjects which we never heard of in this England of ours before. Whether they were right or wrong, they were absolutely new, and they seemed to lead not only to gross injustice in the present, but to an illimitable horizon of spoliation in the future, and therefore it is that in the legislative body which has special charge of those interests and those rights, and to watch over the conservance and the protection of those rights of our fellow citizens — that in them that alarm at Mr. Gladstone's proceedings has spread and increased with every year.

I told you when Lord Palmerston was in office he was able on great critical questions to obtain a majority in the House of Lords. Since that time fifty-one Liberal peers have been created against only thirty-one Conservatives, and yet the normal majority is between fifty and seventy against the

government in the House of Lords. Is it surprising that the lords have felt something of that apprehension which has spread to every class and interest and industry in this country?

Look around, where will you find men who count on a secure and certain future in the history of trade? Everywhere you will hear of industry languishing, of commerce unable to find profitable channels, of the hearts of men of business failing them for fear, of banks refusing to receive money on deposit because they do not know where to invest it—every sign of the presence over the community of a great apprehension, of the disappearance of that old security which made property in England seem as solid as the rocks upon which England herself was founded. That time has passed away. Men will not invest as they formerly would; men are not employed as they formerly were; capitalists do not gain profit; the working classes are ceasing in many places to gain livelihoods. Is it surprising that this apprehension, which has reached so many classes of their countrymen, should deeply infect the peers as well, and that the shadow of Mr. Gladstone's formidable individuality should be thrown alike upon the judgment and the apprehensions of English peers as upon the industry, the commerce, and the labor upon which this country depends?

Well, Mr. Bright tells us that he does not go into the question whether the House of Lords has done right or wrong; he seems to abuse the House of Lords, and to desire to prove that they are a very disreputable body of men, who hold a title which he wishes to discredit. But I venture to say, and I submit it to the judgment of those who wish to consider this controversy impartially, that the merits of the House of Lords have nothing whatever to do with the case. The

question is, not what the House of Lords are, or how they got there, but whether they did right or wrong.

It would be no excuse for them if they had not done their duty, to say they have some doubts about the validity of their title to be there. That distinguished assembly over which my right honorable friend the Lord Mayor presides in the city of London, have at least this in common with the House of Lords, that they have been doomed by a distinguished statesman. The decree has gone forth from the lips of Sir William Harcourt that the one shall cease to exist as the decree has gone forth from the lips of Mr. Bright that the House of Lords shall cease to exist; and I think it is quite possible that both assemblies will continue to exist to do useful work for a very long time. If the corporation were to refuse to assemble to-morrow and to perform their ordinary duties, would it be any excuse for them to say, "Oh, we are condemned by Sir William Harcourt, or by any other statesman, and it is perfectly impossible that we can go on performing our duties."

Well, if the House of Lords had not performed what, I think, I have shown to you to be the elementary duty of a second Chamber, to prevent the first Chamber from using its power to filch a perpetuity of political predominance for one party in the state, if the House of Lords had refused to do its duty, on the ground that some Radicals thought that the country had an objection to the principles on which it is formed, would it not have been guilty of the most cowardly and craven action that you can positively conceive? It is a question which we shall be ready to argue when the time comes—the question as to the constitution of the second Chamber, and what is the best way in which it shall be upheld, and whatever its present theoretical difficulties, you

will not in practice much improve upon the House of Lords.

That has nothing to do with the question we have in hand. The question is, if the House of Lords does its duty, could it have acted otherwise than we have done? What is it after all that we have done? We have seen this strange and sinister spectacle of a minister claiming to resist by the compulsion of the House of Commons the action of the House of Lords. We have seen him applying that principle, not to ordinary principles of legislation, but to the most vital matter in which a deliberative assembly can be engaged — the reform of the constitution. We have seen him tampering with the very springs of political power. We have seen him do that in a manner unexampled and without precedent, and the House of Lords said to him, "You shall not exercise this unprecedented power; you shall not claim this right of compulsion; you shall not model the constitution according to your will and the interests of the dominant party of the day."

We are prepared to resist your power unless you will be able to assure us and prove to us that the people by whom alone you exist, by whose mandate you hold power, sanctions this strange exercise of power, and we utterly repudiate the idea that in assuming that attitude we shall be misconstrued by our countrymen.

I am sure that they will feel that in this, as in so many other cases, liberty has had to fear chiefly from the hands of its professed friends. We have been maintaining the essential conditions on which popular government reposes, and we have been upholding the true and ancient principles of English liberty.

## THE EGYPTIAN QUESTION

DELIVERED AT EDINBURGH IN NOVEMBER, 1882.

WITH regard to the campaign, the first thing that strikes you when you look at it as a whole is wonder that Arabi Pasha, with his force and with his opportunities, should have defied as he did the power of such a country as Great Britain. How is that mystery to be solved? If any nation suffers itself to get into war with a weaker nation which is sufficiently civilized to know the great difference that exists between them, you may depend upon it that there is something in the conduct of that stronger nation which induces the weaker nation to believe that the larger country will never exert its strength.

We have heard a great deal about prestige. I detest the word. It does not really express what we mean. I should rather say "military credit." Military credit stands in precisely the same position as financial credit. The use of it is to represent a military power, and to effect the objects of a military power without the necessity of a recourse to arms. You know that the man possessed of great financial credit can perform great operations by the mere knowledge of the wealth of which he is master, and that it is not necessary to sell him up, and ascertain if he can pay twenty shillings in the pound, in order to have the benefit of all the wealth he can command.

It is the same with a military nation that is careful to preserve its military credit. If it does so, it may, without shedding one drop of blood or incurring one penny of expen-