The legislative history of the reform bill of 1832

Dunlavy, Josephine

Boston University

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Thesis

THE LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE REFORM BILL OF 1832

Submitted by

Josephine Dunlavy

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The Legislative History of the Reform Bill of 1832.

1. Outline

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G. Conditions in favor of political reform
   1. War over and spread of democratic ideas
   2. Artisans in towns paid and more self reliant
   3. Laborers in counties no better than any previous time.
4. Great population hardly represented.

5. Demand to make the House of Commons a representative institution because of three main anomalies
   (a) Many insignificant places returned members while many important ones did not.
   (b) Even in large towns the members were often elected by a small fraction of the population.
   (c) Counties and parliamentary boroughs regardless of size or importance returned all alike two members.

H. Reformers encouraged.

1. William IV unpledged on Parliamentary Reform.

2. Three days revolution in France; people triumph.


4. New parliament.
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(a) King implies opposition to reform of Constitution.
(b) Duke of Wellington strongly opposed to reform.
(c) Earl Grey in favor of reform.
(d) Tory ministry becomes odious to people.
(e) Tory ministry overthrown by Whigs.
(f) Grey sent for to form new ministry.
(g) Accepts on condition that Reform be made a cabinet measure.

1. Lord Grey's Ministry
   (a) Lord Durham-Privy Seal arranges with Lord Russell for formation of committee to draw up outlines of a plan of political reform.

J. Lord John Russell's Plan for reform

1. Ten clauses.
2. Plan altered, approved by Lord Grey, adopted by the Cabinet.
3. Submitted to King and is sanctioned.
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X. Reform Bill (1st)
1. Introduced on Tuesday March 1, 1831 by Lord John Russell
   (a) Opposition by Sir Robert Ingles
   (b) Opposition by Sir Robert Peel
   (c) In favor, Daniel O'Connor
   (d) In favor, Lord Macauley
2. Second Reading, March 21, 1831
   1. Carried in Commons by one vote
3. Bill in Committee
   1. House divided 299 for, 291 against
4. Parliament dissolved
5. New Parliament June 21, 1831

L. Reform Bill (2nd) Practically same as first
1. Introduced on June 24, by Lord John Russell
2. Second Reading, July 4, 1831
   1. 367 for, 231 against
3. Parliamentary obstruction arranged and supervised by a committee.
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4. Passed House of Commons, September 2, 1831
5. Passed through committee, September 7, 1831
6. Third reading, September 19, 1831
   (a) 113 for, 58 against
7. Last division, September 22, 1831 5 A.M.
   (a) 345 for, 239 against
8. Brought to House of Lords, September 22, 1831
   (a) Lord Grey moved its first reading
   (b) 2nd reading, October 3, 1831
   (c) Division October 8, 1831 majority of 41 against
   (d) Whole work in vain
   (e) Country indignant

M. Reform Bill (3rd) no important differences between new bill and the former measures
1. Introduced on December 12, 1831 by Lord John Russell
2. Second reading, December 18, 1831, Sunday morning.
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(a) 324 for, 162 against, majority of 2-1

3. House goes into committee, January 20, 1832

4. Tactics of obstruction January 20 - March 14, 1832

5. Third Reading, March 23, 1832
   1. Majority of 116 for

6. Introduced into House of Lords April 9, 1832

7. Second reading, April 14, 1832
   (a) Motion carried for postponement
   Lord Grey moved adjournment of debate
   and further consideration of the Bill
   until May 10, 1832

N. Grey asks for King's assistance and to create
   a sufficient number of peers to insure passing
   of measure

   1. King refuses, Grey resigns; resignation
      accepted

   2. Commotion prevails, King alarmed asks
      for advice

7.
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3. Duke of Wellington prevailed upon to lead new administration
(a) Accepts through loyalty, but fails to get together anti-reform administration
King alarmed and everywhere is denounced.

0. Alternative plain Reform Bill or Civil War
1. King recalls Grey, and consents to measures necessary for the passing of the Reform Bill.
2. King in anger writes permission to Earl Grey and his Chancellor Lord Brougham to create the necessary number of peers
3. Bill passed House of Lords June 4, 1832
4. Royal assent to measure, June 7, 1832

P. Results of Reform
1. Transfer of seats from rotten boroughs to larger districts
2. 143 seats thus redistributed
3. County representation increased from 94-159
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4. County franchise extended to leaseholders and tenant occupiers

5. Borough franchise extended to all 10 pound occupiers

6. Introduction of registration

7. Reform bills for Scotland, Ireland

8. Scotch franchise extended

9. 5 new members given to Ireland and franchise extended

10. Total number of electors about doubled.

III. Summary

IV. Bibliography
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The epoch of Reform in England is the period of transition during which the present representative system in Parliament and the constitutional system in Monarchy gradually become settled institutions. The representative principle in parliamentary government is that which secures to the people the right of freely choosing an adequate number of men to speak for them in the House of Commons. The constitutional principle in Monarchy is that which requires the sovereign to act on the advice of his ministers, who are themselves responsible to parliament, and not to attempt to govern the country according to his own will. The epoch of Reform in England coincides very nearly with the epoch of revolution on the continent of Europe; on the continent, the recognition of the principle of political reform has been preceded by a revolution or a revolt followed by a reaction and then revolt again. Only in England have the reforms been accomplished without a violent struggle. There were many anomalies of English political life which bore down on certain classes more unjustly than such classes were borne down upon in almost any continental state. For a long time previous to 1830, there seemed to be no fixed rule
for the selection of the towns to have representatives in the House of Commons. The principle in former times appears to have been that the Sovereign issued his writ to any town or place he chose to select. The King invited such a place to send a representative to him. The assumption was that he chose the places to be represented in accordance with their population and their importance, but very often in the most arbitrary fashion. Habit came in many cases to make the arbitrary choice permanent and perpetual. Many places which had been populous when the Sovereign first invited them to send representatives to the House of Commons, lost their population and their importance and fell into actual decay. Yet the Sovereign continued to issue his writ and to invite those places to send representatives to Parliament. In some instances the places named actually ceased to be anything more than geographical expressions. The hamlet or village fell into ruin. There was no population.

The case of Old Sarum is famous. Old Sarum was a town in Wiltshire. It returned members to Parliament in Edward I.'s time and afterwards in the days of Edward III., and from that period down to the time of the Reform Bill.
the subject of this thesis. But the town of Old Sarum gradually disappeared. Owing to the rise of "New Sarum," Salisbury, the population gradually deserted Old Sarum, yet it continued to be represented in Parliament. Ludgershall in Wiltshire was another place which continued to send members to parliament long after it had ceased to be a constituency. A place called Gatton, with seven electors, had two members. Two-thirds of the House of Commons was made up of the nominees of peers or great landlords. The patrons owned their boroughs and their members just as they owned their parks and their cattle. One duke returned eleven members; another nine. Seats were openly bought and sold. The poll might remain open at one period for six weeks. Public opinion had hardly any influence on the choice of many of the constituencies. Territorial influence and money settled the matter between them.

While places no longer marked on the map had representatives, the great manufacturing towns, such as Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham, were without representation. They had grown to be prosperous and populous communities.
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The franchise, both in counties and in boroughs, was so high as to preclude anything like the possibility of popular representation. On the other hand, this high level of franchise was balanced in the boroughs and cities by a number of arbitrary franchises, conferred on what were called freeman, resident and non-resident: on forty-shilling freeholders, and on various associations or corporations of men; and these, connecting no moral or political responsibility whatever with the exercise of the vote, really tended only to give better facilities for corruption. Meanwhile great English populations were growing into importance in the manufacturing cities. Towns and cities began to arise here and there whose vastness, wealth and intelligence surpassed anything that could have been represented by local communities in earlier days of the parliament. Very naturally they began to crave for some place in the representative system of the country. ¹

¹ Material taken from:
(a) Lectures given by Warren O. Ault, Ph.D. on "The Constitutional History of England" at Boston University, 1923.
(b) The Epoch of Reform, Justin McCarthy, Pages 15-30,
(c) The Unreformed House of Commons, Edward and Annie G. Porritt, Pages 17-50.
These defects and irregularities fell under two principal heads:

1. The distribution of seats.

11. The qualifications for the franchise.

Sovereigns as far back as Elizabeth and James had admitted the existence of diverse abuses in the electoral system, each had urged their correction. A partial and temporary correction was made during the Commonwealth by Cromwell. A permanent correction was urged at the Restoration; again at the Revolution of 1688; again at the Union of Scotland with England in 1707; and once more in 1800, at the union of Ireland with Great Britain. From the time of Elizabeth the question of the reform of the House of Commons had never been long at rest.

The year 1769 is taken by Lecky as dating the origin of Radicalism in England, it is also the birth year of the movement for Parliamentary Reform.

The tyranny of the Court in the Wilkes affair and the Middlesex election not only united the various sections of the Opposition in furious protest in Parliament, but in taverns and coffee houses, started discussions which opened a new line of English politics. But apart from the doings of the governing class, the Wilkes affair made a deep impression on an order of men not as yet much connected with active politics. They founded a Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights; its formation was important because it was the first organized attempt to put pressure on Parliament from without. Though the cause languished, Reform pamphlets with arguments based on "natural rights" and "Saxon principles" were issued from 1774 onwards. The excitement which had died down after 1770 was raised to a higher and more sustained pitch by the mismanagement of the American war in its later years by Lord North's government. This wave of discontent carried the Reformers' prospects to a mark not reached again until 1830. As the former agitation was centered in Middlesex, the call to Reform now sounded out of Yorkshire. Late in 1779 a county meeting was held at York, supported by the great Whig
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landowners of the north to petition the House of Commons for economic reform in view of the distress caused by a wasteful war; it also maintained that Reform of the House of Commons was necessary.

Rockingham refused to attend the meeting. The proposals were attacked by Burke alike in the country and in Parliament, though supported by Shelburne, the leader of the Chatham Whigs. The doctrines made way however in the south especially at Westminster, where an association was formed with Charles Fox, an ally of Rockingham as chairman. They drew up a plan which favored annual parliaments, universal suffrage, the ballot, payment of members, the abolition of property qualifications and the division of the country into 513 equal electoral districts. Later the Duke of Richmond brought forward in the House of Lords a motion for Radical Reform. His speech was interrupted by the tumult of the Gordon mob outside, and indeed the terror caused in the country by these riots brought the Reformers into great discredit and afforded the King much needed support amid the disasters of the American
War. Partly for this reason, Reform made little impression on the country at the general election.

The Reformers, though disheartened were not hopeless. The more advanced then headed by John Cartwright, the life-long champion of the cause, had formed the Society for Promoting Constitutional Information. They proceeded to issue Reform literature, sometimes demanding annual parliaments and universal suffrage. In the spring of 1782 the aspect of affairs was changed by the formation of a coalition Whig government under the headship of Rockingham. The administration was short-lived, but it succeeded in passing into law several measures of reform but refused all but the most insignificant reform of the representation. The main assault of the Reformers in 1782 was led by William Pitt, who proposed in the House of Commons, the appointment of a committee to inquire into the state of representation. He maintained that the practice of the Constitution was untrue to its theory, the representatives being no longer
connected with the people. In 1783 Pitt's resolution in favor of Parliamentary reform was thrown out, as was his motion in 1785, in which he proposed to disfranchise 36 rotten boroughs (returning 72 members) and to give the members to the counties and to London. For Pitt's justification in dropping Reform is the unfriendly attitude of the King, the Cabinet, the country gentlemen who favored the House of Commons and the nation as a whole.

The Reform movement of the eighties failed because its ostensible objects were attained by other means. As it owed its rise to the mismanagement of George Ill.'s personal government, it sank with the mitigation of those abuses by the administrations of Rockingham and Pitt. Those grievances removed, there seemed no crying need for Reform while England was still predominantly agricultural. "Where the will of a nation is almost entirely homogeneous there is no injustice in selecting representatives by the haphazard methods then in use" says A. V. Dicey. The farm laborers indeed were wholly unrepresented
but they had not yet reached the stage of political consciousness.

Even before the full thunders of the French revolution burst upon Europe, Reformers' ears were awake to its first rumblings. The interest which had never wholly died was revived in 1788 by the centenary of the English Revolution, and in 1790 a general meeting of the friends of Reform was held in order to renew exertions in the country. In the Commons, too, while the nation was still listless and unterrified, Henry Flood proposed to forestall revolution by the moderate but novel measure of adding one hundred members elected by the resident house-holders of counties. His method was withdrawn without discussion. At first the general sentiment was one of neutrality if not of sympathy towards those who would give France a constitution. But although English sympathy quickly changed into alarm and disapproval there were many who were inspired with new zeal for Reform. Burke's "Reflections" were promptly answered by a host of pamphlets among them Tom Paine's "Rights of Man." It had great
influence and was in fact for the next forty years the main political literature of the working classes in England, among whom it won an enormous circulation. Also associations were being formed in very different levels of society. In January 1792, Thomas Hardy founded the London corresponding society for the reform of parliamentary representation, this claims to be the first political club formed by English working men. Another society was formed by the left wing of the Whig party in Parliament, and known as the Friends of the People. Among those responsible for this bold venture was Charles Grey, later Earl Grey. His motion for reform was opposed by Pitt and Burke and thrown out by a large majority and again in 1797.

Mr. Grey in his speech in the House of Commons, May 6, 1793, said—"What could be more palpably absurd in point of inequality, for instance, than that the county of Cornwall should send to Parliament almost as many members as the whole of Scotland. And that representatives should be sent from places where hardly a house remains---
he would ask. Whether there have been no alterations since the Revolution? Has not the patronage of Peers increased? Is not the patronage of India now vested in the Crown? Are all these innovations to be made in order to increase the influence of the Executive Power; and is nothing to be done in favour of the popular part of the Constitution to act as a counterpoise?"

Reform, the safeguard against revolution, became identified with revolution itself in the minds of most men. Not for some years after the fall of Napoleon did the subject of Parliamentary Reform become a serious question in the House of Commons. Lord Grey continued the recognized leader of the Reform Party although in 1809 Sir Francis Burdett brought in a motion for Reform and lost, and Brand's motion for a committee to consider parliamentary reform lost in 1810 and again in 1812. In 1817, 1818, 1819, Sir Francis Burdett's motions for reform were rejected although the years between

1. Debates in the House of Commons on the sixth and seventh of May 1793. J. Robertson.
1815 and 1830 were specially favorable for the growth of a spirit encouraging a new movement toward political reform. England was weary of a war which lasted with little intermission for more than twenty-one years. Domestic improvement had long been neglected. All schemes of Political Reform had been thrown into the shade for the time. But the continuance of peace brought a revival of domestic prosperity, and with it a revival of the feelings which make for political reform. Mr. Walpole in his "History of England" observes, in contrasting the England of 1830 with the England of 1815, that in 1815 legislation had been directed to secure advantages of a class. Now everywhere was felt the influence of the growing spirit of inquiry and reformation. The spread of democratic institutions and democratic ideas in other countries, had begun to tell upon public opinion in England, besides the manufacturing power of England had grown immensely. There were four conditions each acting in its own way as an influence

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in favor of political reform.

1. War is over and there seems no prospect of its return.

II. Artisans in town are better paid and more self reliant than they were.

III. Laborers in the counties are if not poorer, certainly no better off than at any previous time.

IV. The revolution had created a vast population, which was hardly represented at all.

The one great reform the public voice began to demand now was a measure which should make the House of Commons a representative institution. This was a change to be accomplished by law. There was however another reform necessary to be effected in order to make the English government constitutional in its true sense. This, indeed, did not require legislative action to give it effect, and could hardly be brought about by an Act of Parliament. It was a change in the relation of the Sovereign to the Ministry
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and to the House of Commons, a change which should make the majority of the House of Commons practically supreme over the Sovereign as well as over the Ministry. The one reform brought about the other.

The representation of the people of England was in an anomalous condition. The House of Commons did not in any sense, fairly represent the nation. Since the reign of Edward 1. each county and each borough had returned two members to Parliament. The exceptions to this rule were few. There were three main anomalies of the system:

1. Many insignificant places returned members while many important places did not.

11. Even in large towns the members were often elected by a tiny fraction of the population.

111. To say nothing of out-voters, counties and parliamentary boroughs in England, regardless of their relative importance returned all alike two members.
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The principal results of all this were two-fold:

(a) The first result was to confer immense power on the owners of land, and the landed interest.

(b) The second result was to place a considerable part of the representation of the country under the control of the Crown—that is of the Cabinet.

Every one had come to know that reform had no chance while George IV. lived. When he died June 26, 1830, the hopes of the reformers sprang up anew. William IV. succeeded and although he had strongly opposed a liberal policy and principles, yet it was considered he came to the throne unpledged on the subject of Parliamentary Reform. The Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel were the leaders of the Ministry (Reactionary Tory) when George IV. died, and it was supposed men of more progressive political opinions than these, might have some chance of
influencing the new king's public conduct. The Reactionary Tory policy of the Liverpool Ministry (really led by Lord Castlereagh, the Foreign Secretary) opposed all measures of economic and political reform which the masses urgently required. The Reactionary Tories were in power from 1815-1822. They were followed by Liberal Tories 1822-1828. Public discontent was greatly diminished by further ministerial changes towards a progressive policy. They did not desire a constitutional change, only wished to relieve the situation by a more kindly attitude. Through Huskisson, tariff was reduced and the colonies freed from some restrictions. Through Peel the Criminal Laws were made more lenient. The Reactionary Tories were in power again from 1828-1830, under Wellington. Though always a Tory of the old school in his steady resistance to all kinds of change, he yet accepted many measures of reform rather than incur the dangers of civil disturbances. The Corporation and Test Acts were repealed in 1828, and the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in May 1829, this period was the beginning of the Great Reform Era. Wellington's Ministry fell owing to his opposition to reforms and the anger of the Old Tories at his sufferance
of Catholic Emancipation, and the influence of the July
Revolution in France.

Parliament was dissolved, by proclamation, July 24, 1830. The Whigs were full of hope and spirit, although they little dreamed an event which was about to happen in another land was destined to give a most important impulse to the cause which they had at heart, namely, the struggle in France, culminating in the three days' revolution in which the King had been expelled and the people had triumphed. This was just when the English constituencies were entering on the election contest. The result was that for the first time in forty years, a House of Commons was returned in which the reforming element was predominant.

The actual work of the new parliament began on November 2nd, 1830. On that day the King came to the House and delivered his speech in person. A debate

1 Outline of Tory Ministry 1815-1830, based on lectures given by Warren O. Ault, Ph. D. on "The Constitutional History of England," at Boston University, April 1923.
arose in the House of Lords on the Address in which the King implied opposition to a reform of the Constitution. The Duke of Wellington made his declaration with regard to Parliamentary Reform which was a reply to Earl Grey's statement that he had been a reformer all his life and at no period had he been inclined to go further than "we would be prepared to go now if the opportunity were offered." This was a bold declaration and Wellington's reply was equally bold. The Duke declared distinctly that he had never read or heard of any measure which could in any degree satisfy his mind "that the state of representation could be improved or be rendered more satisfactory to the country at large than at the present moment." He declared: "The Legislature and the system of representation possessed the full and entire confidence of the country. I will go still further, and say that if at the present moment I had imposed upon me the duty of forming a legislature for a country like this in possession of great property of various descriptions, I do not mean to assert that I could form a legislature for a country like this in possession of great property of various descriptions, I do not mean to assert that
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I could form such a legislature as you possess now, for the nature of man is incapable of reaching such excellence at once; but my great endeavor would be to form some description of legislature which would produce the same results." He therefore declared plainly that he was not prepared to bring forward any measured reform and that he would always feel it his duty to resist such a measure when proposed by others.

The Tory Ministry from that moment became odious to the people. The Whigs now believed they saw their way for the overthrow of the Tory Ministry. The end came sooner than they had expected. The government resigned on the question of the appointment of a select committee to take into consideration the estimates and amounts proposed by the king regarding the civil list. Their resignation was accepted and the same evening both Houses of Parliament knew that the Tory ministry had come to an end.

Lord Grey was sent for by the King and invited to form a ministry. This was what everyone expected. He consented on condition that the Reform of Parliament should be made a Cabinet measure. The King made no objection to this and Grey proceeded at once to the building up of his Cabinet. "In four days he had made out of Old and New Whigs, Canningites, unattached Lords and gentry of reforming bent, a Cabinet at once sufficiently advanced in opinion to accept a sweeping Reform Bill, and yet sufficiently broad bottomed to muster the votes to carry it." Grey's Government was first and foremost a coalition to carry Reform. As such it proved one of the most successful structures in English political history, setting its architect high in the rank of British statesmen. The whole was soundly planned, and many of Grey's individual appointments, above all the choice of Durham and Russell for the Committee to draw up the Bill were happily inspired.

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Immediately after Lord Grey had formed his Ministry, Lord Durham, Lord Privy Seal, asked Lord John Russell to call upon him at his home. He there explained that Lord Grey wished him to consult Lord John with respect to the formation of a committee to draw up the outlines of a plan of political reform. He then asked him to draw a sketch of the principal heads of the measure of reform which he could submit to Lord Grey and if approved would be proposed to the Cabinet. Lord John Russell in his work "The English Government and Constitution" describes the principal on which he proceeded. "It was not my duty," he says, "to cut the body of our old parents to pieces and throw it into a Medea's cauldron with the hope of reviving the strength and vigor of youth." He goes on to say he was deeply impressed with Lord Grey's conviction that none but a large measure would be a safe measure. He accordingly drew up a plan which he presented to Lord Durham, and on which Lord Durham noted certain amendments of his own. The first paragraph proposes that
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1. Fifty boroughs of the smallest population according to the census of 1821 should be disfranchised. This was approved by Lord Durham as were the following:

11. Fifty more of the least considerable should send in the future only one member to Parliament.

111. Eighteen large towns should send two members.

IV. That four or six members should be added to the metropolis.

V. That twenty counties should send two more members each.

VI. That copy holders and lease holders with twenty-one years' interest should vote in counties.

Several clauses were struck out. The qualification for voting in both the old and new boroughs was fixed at ten pounds but reserving their life interest to those enjoying "the multifarious and
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inconvenient rights of voting now in existence."
On the question of ballot a real struggle occurred in the committee. Lord John Russell was opposed to it, but bowed to the decision of the majority. As a concession, the borough qualification was raised from ten pounds to twenty pounds. The cabinet, upon consideration determined not to adopt the ballot, and the twenty pounds' qualification was left until the king had seen the report. It was submitted to the king by whom, says Lord John Russell, "it was readily and cheerfully sanctioned." His real feeling on the subject may be judged from his letter written on February 4, 1831, No. 68 "The King to Earl Grey." He sanctioned the Bill but questions "Whether in such a constitution as these realms the dangers of change may not be more to be dreaded and deprecated than the existence of defects, and whether the preservation of blessings we enjoy be not preferable to the prosecution of that which when acquired after much difficulty and struggle, may grievously disappoint our expectations?"
"It would appear then that Lord Grey's statesmanlike conviction of the need and advantage of an extensive measure was the prime source of the Reform Bill; that the wisdom of Russell and the will of Durham embodied this conviction in a bold and simple form; and that, as regards the moderates in the Cabinet and the party generally, it was proved once again that a keen and determined minority will, by their very momentum overbear a comparatively indifferent and undecided majority."

The ministerial secret was well kept. It was thought to be one of great importance that the enemies of all reform should not know what the government had to propose until the movement came for introducing the scheme to Parliament. More than thirty persons were in the secret and yet so much discretion was shown by all that not the faintest whisper of the contents of the Reform Bill got out before the hour of its actual presentation to the House of Commons. The Bill

was introduced on Tuesday, March 1, 1831. Lord John Russell had been specially selected by the Government to introduce the Bill, because of the perseverance and ability with which he had advocated the cause of reform. It is worthy of notice that Lord John Russell not only introduced the Reform Bill, but was the first to adopt the name of Reformer as the designation of his own party, and to recognize the existence of the word Conservative as a description of the opposite school. The first of March was a day of intense excitement and even tumult in the House of Commons. Never before in that generation had there been so great a crowd of persons eager to get places in the House. Every inch of available space was occupied long before the business of the House began. At last Lord Russell's time came. He began his speech in a low voice amid profound silence. He explained that the Ministry wished to take their stand between two extremely hostile parties, neither agreeing with the bigotry of those who would reject all reform, nor with the fanaticism of those who would admit only one plan of reform. He showed
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that at an early period the ancient constitution of the country fully recognized the right of popular representation, and that a statute had provided that each county should send to the Commons, two knights of the shire, each city two burgesses, and each borough two members. This practice fell into disuse; innovations and alterations crept in, which all operated against the representative principle, and though at the early period to which Lord John Russell referred, the House of Commons as he explained did represent the people of England, there could be no doubt that the House of Commons as it existed in March 1831 had long ceased to have any real representative character. One passage in his speech was remarkable and has often been quoted. "He assumed the case of a stranger arriving in England, finding it unequalled in wealth and enjoying more civilization and more enlightenment than any country before it, finding that it prided itself on its freedom, and on its representatives, elected from its population at stated periods to act as the guardians and preservers of that freedom.
He describes the anxiety of this stranger to know how the people formed and secured their representation and chose their representatives." "What, then, would be his surprise" Lord Russell said "if he were taken by the guide whom he had asked to conduct him to one of those places of election, to a green mound and told that that green mound sent two members to Parliament? or to be taken to a stone wall with three niches in it, and told that those three niches sent two members to Parliament? or if he were shown a green park with many signs of flourishing vegetable life but none of human habitation and told that that green park sent two members to Parliament?" He then went on to say: "If this stranger were told all this and was not astonished, would he not be if he was to see large and populous towns, full of enterprise and industry and intelligence, containing vast magazines and every species of manufacture, and were to be told that these did not send representatives to Parliament?" He therefore proposed to deal with three chief grievances:
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1. The nominations of members by individuals.

II. The election by close corporations.

III. The expense of elections.

It was a ludicrous spectacle to see members lying back in disgust not knowing whether to be amused or enraged. The climax came when Lord Russell read out the list of condemned boroughs. As each venerable name was read, a long shout of ironical laughter rang from the benches opposite. The members whose seats were marked for the sacrifice lay back and laughed in bitter contempt as "A little fellow not weighing above eight stone" swept away one by one the venerable legacies of five hundred years.

The opposition to the proposals of the Government began at once. Lord John Russell's motion was opposed by Sir Robert Ingles member of the University of Oxford. He denied that there was any idea whatever of the representative

1. The Passing of the Great Reform Bill,
principle in the system of England. He insisted that no town or borough had ever been called into parliamentary existence because it was large and populous or shut out from it because it was small. He insisted that Reform was only Revolution.

Sir Robert Peel opposed the introduction of the Bill on grounds more plausible. He insisted that the "inevitable tendency of the Bill" would be to sever every line of connection between the poorer classes and that class from which their representatives are usually chosen." He said, "Let us never be tempted to resign the well tempered freedom which we enjoy, in the ridiculous pursuit of the wild liberty which France has established." Mr. O'Connell gave the Bill his earnest support. There were objections to it, he said. He declared that he was by conviction a Radical Reformer and that this was not a measure of Radical Reform. "In every practical mode, universal suffrage," he continued, ought to be adopted as a matter of right." Macauley said to the Opposition, "Turn where we may, within,
The Legislative History of the Reform Bill of 1832.

around, the voice of great events is proclaiming to us, Reform, that you may preserve,--now while the crash of the proudest throne of the continent is still resounding in our ears--now while the heart of England is still sound; now in this your accepted time take counsel; Review the youth of the state. Save property--save the multitude--save the aristocracy, save the greatest and fairest and most highly civilized community that ever existed."

The debate went on during seven nights until an early hour of the morning of March 10. Outside the people took up the Bill with a shout. Nearly all the leaders of popular movements out of doors lent a generous assistance to Lord Grey and Lord John Russell. On March 21, 1831, Lord John Russell moved the second reading of the Reform Bill. It was carried in the Commons by one vote, amid scenes of excitement and enthusiasm. The people through the press and through the unions were urged to do all they could to support the

government in carrying out Reform, as it was outside influence which had extorted the present measure and by outside influence it must be secured and improved.

As the second reading was carried only by a majority of one, the Opposition were for the time triumphant. They felt perfectly certain that a Bill which passed its second reading by only a majority of one could easily be so mutilated in Committee as to render it of little harm, even if it should succeed in passing through the House of Lords.

When the Bill was about to go into Committee, General Gascoigne moved an instruction declaring that in the opinion of the House, "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." This was the first of a series of motions by which the Opposition intended to interfere with the progress of the Committee in a manner, which, if submitted to, would be fatal to the
Bill, or at least so detrimental to it as to render it valueless. When the House divided there were 299 votes for General Gascoigne's motion and 291 against it. The majority against the Government being eight, the Ministers made up their mind to appeal to the country. The king was strongly opposed to dissolution, and had intimated to his Ministers when they first came into office that he did not feel inclined to dissolve a Parliament so newly elected in order to carry a Reform Bill. The Ministers were determined that Parliament should be prorogued at once with a view to its speedy dissolution. There was a great deal of trouble to induce the king to consent to this arrangement. He made all sorts of technical objections, but at last however, he was prevailed upon and the dissolution took place. It was celebrated by reformers all over the country, with the utmost enthusiasm.

When the elections came on, vast sums of money were spent on both sides. It is to be
feared that bribery and corruption were almost as active and flourishing on one side as on the other. In nearly all the great towns the result of the election was in favor of reform. General Gascoigne, one of the members for Liverpool, the man whose instructions to the Committee had been the first cause of the dissolution, found himself driven out of his seat by an overwhelming majority. Nearly all the English county members were now pledged to reform.

In the new Parliament Lord John Russell and Mr. Stanley appeared as Cabinet Ministers. On June 21, the King opened Parliament. On June 24, Lord John Russell introduced a second Bill on the subject of Parliamentary Reform. Except for some slight alterations in detail the new Reform Bill was practically the same as the old. The second reading was brought forward on July 4, and the debate occupied three nights; 367 votes were given for the second reading and 231 against it, thus showing a majority of 136 in favor of the Government. The Opposition now made up their
mind to try what they could do by the device of Parliamentary obstruction. There was something ingenious in the device by which the debate was kept up the whole of the night. For example some members of the Opposition would move "that the Speaker do now leave the Chair." On the motion being lost it would be moved "that the debate be now adjourned." That motion being lost, somebody would again move "that the Speaker do leave the Chair," and so with the alternation of motions for the Speaker to leave the Chair and for the House now to adjourn, the whole night was passed through and it was half-past seven in the morning when exhausted members were allowed to go home, only to assemble again at three that day.

Scenes of this kind were repeated again and again, week after week passed on, while determined Conservatives were talking against time, and were making use of the forms of the House with every possible ingenuity in order to delay the passing
of the Bill. Reformers both in and out of Parliament began to be seriously alarmed, if tactics of this kind were pursued, the Government might find it out of their power to carry through the Bill in any time during which Parliament could be expected to sit. The disfranchising clauses of the Bill gave immense opportunity for debate. The extinguishing of the condemned boroughs was accomplished at last. The struggle then began over the boroughs which were to be reduced from two members to one. The work of obstruction set in again. There was a regular division of labor in the work of obstruction, which was arranged and superintended by a committee of which Sir Robert Peel was the President. Meanwhile the people were furious at the long debate and were clamoring for the Bill to be passed into law. After the two hot summer months of battle, the second Reform Bill finally passed the Commons on September 2, after a struggle unprecedented in parliamentary history. The House had sat without a break from June onwards, and one occasion the debate had been prolonged till nearly eight in the morning by an Opposition anxious to exhaust every form of
constitutional protest against a revolutionary bill, and divisions were forced wherever possible.

On the afternoon of September 22, the Bill was brought up to the House of Lords. Lord Grey moved its first reading. No discussion took place as a meeting of Opposition peers had decided to let it be read a first time without challenge, and October 3 was fixed for the second reading. In the interval, and not less after the opening of the discussion, petitions poured in asking that the bill might be passed. There was one from the corporation of London, and one with thirty six thousand signatures from Edinburgh; on the first night of the debate Brougham alone presented no less than eighty, and Grey more than forty. On October 3, Lord Grey moved that the Bill be read a second time. His speech appears on testimony of all contemporaries to have been fully worthy of the great occasion. He opened the debate in a speech which recalled how over forty years ago he had championed in his youth the same cause.
in far other circumstances, he justified the proposal of so large a measure by the need of a final settlement. To the bishops in particular he appealed to "set their houses in order," and not frustrate the desire of the people. His own course was clear. "By this measure I am prepared to stand or fall. If it should be rejected, the question of my continuance in office, even for another hour, must depend upon my seeing any reasonable prospect of being able to effect a measure to which I am pledged, as I think, by every tie of private honour, by every obligation of public duty to my sovereign and to my country."

Grey was supported by the moderate members of the Cabinet, who admitted that their early prejudices had yielded to stress of events: but the great defence of the bill came from the Chancellor, in a wonderful declamation. He insisted that the question was that of Representation, and spoke in eloquent terms of the great middle class, the guardians of wealth, and

knowledge. Opponents had protested against yielding to the clamor of the mob. "If there is the mob," said Brougham, "there is the people also. I speak now of the middle classes--of those hundreds of thousands of respectable persons--the most numerous and by far the most wealthy order in the community, for if all your Lordships' castles, manors, rights of warren and rights of chase, with all your broad acres, were brought to the hammer, and sold at fifty years purchase, the price would fly up and kick the beam when counterpoised by the vast and solid riches of those middle classes, who are also the genuine depositaries of sober, rational, intelligent, and honest English feeling. Unable though they be to round a period, or point an epigram, they are solid right-judging men, and, above all, not given to change. If they have a fault, it is that error on the right side, a suspicion of State quacks--a dogged love of existing institutions--a perfect contempt of all political nostrums. They will neither be led
astray by false reasoning, not deluded by impudent flattery; but so neither will they be scared by classical quotations, or brow beaten by fine sentences; and as for an epigram they care as little for it as they do for a cannon-ball. Grave, intelligent, rational, fond of thinking for themselves, they consider a subject long before they make up their minds on it; and the opinions they are thus slow to form, they are not swift to abandon. It is an egregious folly to fancy that the popular clamour for Reform, or whatever name you please to give it, could have been silenced by a mere change of Ministry. The body of the people, such as I have distinguished and described them, had weighed the matter well, and they looked to the Government and to the Parliament for an effectual Reform. Rouse not, I beseech you" he cried with dramatic gesture," a peace-loving, but a resolute people; alienate not from your body the affections of a whole empire. As your friend, as the friend of my order, as the friend of my country, as the faithful servant of my sovereign, I counsel you
to assist with your uttermost efforts in preserving the peace and upholding and perpetuating the Constitution. Therefore, I pray and I exhort you not to reject this measure. By all you hold most dear--by all the ties that bind everyone of us to our common order and common country, I solemnly adjure you--I warn you--I implore you--yea, on my bended knees, I supplicate you--Reject not this Bill!"

The main argument on the other side was that the British Constitution had worked well in the past, whereas the new system would make government itself unworkable. The House of Commons would become a democratic assembly straining to lay sacrilegious hands on property, religion, and the Crown itself. "The Ministers," said Lord Harrowby, "have done what no Ministers ever ought to do--they have brought forward a measure which it may be almost equally dangerous to adopt or to reject."

On the other hand the need of some Reform was generally admitted, except by the Duke, who, in a

1. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Series III.Volume VII.

41.
soldier's unwary language, expressed "the greatest contempt" for the Birmingham meetings and its threats to refuse taxes. He and Lyndhurst laid stress on the Whigs' complicity in exciting the country, which, if the Bill were rejected, would soon regain its normal composure. Lord Grey in reply repeated his pledge to stand by the bill or a measure no less extensive. There was much discussion and finally the division took place on the morning of October 8, and there was found to be a majority of 41 against the second reading. The whole work of a session in the Commons had been done in vain. The Lords interposed at the last moment and there was an end of reform for that year.

Passionate emotion spread over the country when the news went abroad. Tumultuous meetings were held everywhere. In many towns the shops were closed and mourning bells tolled from the churches. Many dreaded that an indignant people might resent the insolent injustice of the House of Lords so roughly as to shake to its foundations the whole fabric of the English constitution. How nearly England came...
at this time to the verge of actual revolution, will probably be never known with certainty.

Parliament reassembled on December 6, 1831. The King in person opened the session. His speech announced that measures for the reform of the Commons would be introduced, and added that "the speedy and satisfactory settlement of this question becomes daily of more impressing importance to the security of the State and the contentment and welfare of the people." On Monday, December 12, Lord Russell rose in the House of Commons to ask leave to bring in his third Reform Bill. There were no very important differences between the new Bill and former measures. The Opposition struggled hard to have the second reading delayed, and made it a reproach to Ministers that whatever changes they had introduced into their measure had been borrowed from the Conservative side of the House. The second reading of the Bill was taken on December 18, on Sunday morning. There were 324 votes for the second reading 162 against it; a majority of exactly 2 to 1 indicating Tory abstentions.
Parliament adjourned for the Christmas Holidays. Much of the early part of the New Year was occupied in trying the rioters who had made disturbances through the country and they were dealt with severely in some cases. That winter was in every respect a portentous season, trade was stagnant, agriculture was depressed. The terror and fanaticism that the cholera caused among the ignorant added to the political and social horrors of that time. All over the industrial districts of the north and midlands there were strikes, unemployment and violence. With such turmoil, confusion and universal distrust and alarm, to prorogue and reassemble Parliament was not sufficient. For the preservation of the public peace, the success of the Bill was now become absolutely necessary. Parliament reassembled on January 17, 1832; on the 20th, the House went into committee, on the Reform Bill. The tactics of obstruction came promptly into play again. From January 20, March 14 was occupied in this sort of opposition. The Bill got out of Committee then and passed its third reading on March 23 by a
majority of 116. It was introduced into the House of Lords at once, its second reading fixed for April 9.

The great question now was whether the Lords would give way. For some time past, various modes had been discussed of getting rid of the obstruction created by the House of Lords. A popular proposal was the creation of a sufficient number of peers in whom the ministers could confide for the purpose of obtaining a majority in favor of the bill. The King, when the Reform Bill was first proposed to him said he could never consent to any coercion of the peers by means of creations. In fact during the previous autumn when the cry for peerage making first grew loud, Grey was opposed to it for reasons of principle and tactics. He thought the creation of fifty or more peers would "destroy" the House of Lords as an independent and self-respecting body. He held also that it would gravely injure the Commons to take out of it so many of the best county members, withdrawing from it so great a portion of the property of the country.
His tactical objections, in the interest of the bill itself, were two:

1. To create new peers avowedly to carry the Bill would cause some of its previous supporters and all the "waverers" to vote against it in protest; for this reason it was impossible to calculate how many new creations would be wanted—certainly well over fifty.

11. The King, if he ever consented at all, would insist on calling up the heirs to existing peerages, many of whom were doing good work; in which their family influence had helped to gain. There would have to be a great number of bye-elections under disadvantageous conditions. These arguments against peer-making would doubtless have continued to weigh with Grey, if the passage of the bill could have been secured by any other means.

During the last days of December the Ministry constantly discussed the proposal for the creation of a large number of peers in order to come to a definite decision upon it, and on the
first of January, the majority reluctantly and at first only partially gave up their own opinion in favor of Lord Grey who had come to see that such a step was necessary as a last resort. The key of the difficulty however, was held in the hands of the king. If he would merely give his consent to a large creation of new peers, Lord Wharncliffe and his "Waverers" would most certainly never put the Government to the trouble of carrying such a measure into effect. They would never run the risk of having their House flooded with reforming peers. But this was exactly what the King was unwilling to do. He hoped that the Waverers would assist him in his desire to get a very moderate and from his point of view harmless Reform Bill introduced. When the Bill was brought into the House of Lords on April 9, the Duke of Wellington announced he was determined as ever to offer it an

1. So called, because their political action oscillated backwards and forwards between the Ministry and the Opposition. They really held the Balance of Power in the House of Lords. The course that they might decide upon at any moment would settle for the time the fate of the Reform Bill.
uncompromising opposition. The Waverers however supported the second reading of the Bill and it was carried 184-175 a majority of 9, on Saturday morning April 14, 1832.

The Opposition availed themselves of the privilege of recording their dissent. The Duke of Wellington and seventy-three other peers protested against the bill in a document which was published broadcast about the country by both parties for the next few weeks. It proposed, they said, "a new form of government, incompatible with monarchy;" it confiscated chartered rights, endangered other institutions, and struck a blow at the landed and moneyed interests; worst of all, it opened the door to unchecked democracy. But it was not too late to rally forces for a final effort. The Tories spent the Easter recess intriguing to defeat the bill's main provisions.

The ministers were jubilant in spite of the narrow majority, and congratulations poured in on Lady Grey. Grey's eloquence had long been
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considered one of the Whigs' chief assets in Parliament, and this final appeal in the early hours of Saturday, April 14, was a noble effort, worthy of a great occasion, being conciliatory as well as eloquent. The carrying of the second reading without a creation of peers was a great personal triumph for Lord Grey. He had brought Reform nearer to success than ever before, but no one knew better than he what dangers still lay in the way.

When the House went into committee Lord Lyndhurst led the opposition and moved that the consideration of the disenfranchising clauses should be postponed until the enfranchising clause had first been considered. Lord Grey saw in this an attempt to reassert the power and prestige of the House of Lords by taking the conduct of the Bill out of the hands of the Ministers and handing it over to the leaders of the Opposition. He declared that if Lord Lyndhurst's motion was carried, he would regard it as fatal to the Bill. Lord Lyndhurst persevered and his motion was carried, by a majority of 35. Lord Grey at once moved the adjournment of
the debate and the further consideration of the Bill until May 10.

It was now clear that Lord Grey was determined to carry the measure by the assistance of the King or to resign his office. Although the King had half-consented in January to create peers if it were necessary, the number was left indefinite. Grey and Brougham posted down to Windsor and saw the King. They asked for not less than fifty peers. He replied he would send them an answer next day, but they had no doubt from his manner that it would contain a refusal. Next day (May 9) arrived the King's letter. Declining to make "so large an addition to the Peerage" he accepted their resignations. The wild commotion that spread all over the country alarmed for a while even the stoutest opponents of Reform. Utter commotion prevailed in the palace, the King sent for Lord Lyndhurst and begged his advice. The latter recommended that the Duke of Wellington be summoned. The King endeavored to prevail on the Duke to take the leadership of a new administration. The Duke recommended that
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Peel should be invited to form a Government. Peel knew he could not and properly declined. The Duke of Wellington was once more urged and out of sheer loyalty and devotion to his Sovereign, he actually made the vain attempt to get together an anti-reform administration. It came to nothing and had to be given up. The King found himself in an awkward position. The people throughout the country were determined on Reform, and everywhere the King was denounced. The guards had to take the utmost care lest some personal attack should be made on him.

There could be no mistake, the bill must be passed peaceably, if possible, if not, it was clear that force would certainly be used. The alternative was plain, the Reform Bill, or Civil War. Nothing was left but for the King to recall Lord Grey to power and to consent to the measures necessary for the passing of the Reform Bill. Lord Grey and Lord Brougham insisted as a condition of their returning to office, that the King should give his consent to the creation of a sufficient number of new peers.
The King yielded at last and in an angry mood, which was intensified when Lord Brougham requested that the consent should be put into writing. At last the King gave out and wrote,

"The King's mind had been too deeply engaged in the consideration of the circumstances in which this country is placed, and of his own position to require that His Majesty should hesitate to say, in reply to the Minute of Cabinet left with him this afternoon by Earl Grey and the Lord Chancellor that communications to his confidential servants, his Majesty's wish and desire that they remain in his councils.

His Majesty is, therefore, prepared to afford to them the security they require for passing the Reform Bill unimpaired in its principles and in its essential provisions, and as nearly as possible

1. No. 450
Correspondence of Earl Grey with King William IV
The King to Earl Grey
St. James's Palace, May 18, 1832.
in its present form; and with this view His Majesty authorises Earl Grey, if any obstacle should arise during the further progress of the Bill, to submit to him a creation of Peers to such extent as shall be necessary to enable him to carry the Bill, always bearing in mind that it has been and still is His Majesty's object to avoid any permanent increase to the Peerage, and therefore that this addition to the House of Peers, if unfortunately it should become necessary, shall comprehend as large a proportion of the eldest sons of Peers and collateral heirs of childless Peers as can possibly be brought forward. In short (to quote the Lord Chancellor's own words used in the interview between his Majesty, his Lordship, and Earl Grey,) that the lists of eldest sons and collaterals who can be brought forward shall be completely exhausted before any list be resorted to which can entail to the Peerage.

Subject to these conditions, which have been already stated verbally, and admitted by Earl Grey and the Lord Chancellor, His Majesty assents
to the proposal conveyed in the Minute of Cabinet of this day; and this main point being so disposed of, it is unnecessary that his Majesty should notice any other part of the Minute.

    William R."

When that consent had been given there was an end to the opposition. The Duke of Wellington, withdrew not only from any debates on the Bill, but even from the House of Lords altogether until after the Bill had been passed. The Waverers of course gave way, and there was no further substantial opposition to the measure. The Bill passed through the Lords on June 4, and the Royal assent was given to the measure a few days later, June 7, 1832. "the scene was the House of Lords and the Tory benches were empty."

The House of Lords in yielding without further struggle settled the principle that the House of Lords was never to carry resistance to any measure coming from the Commons beyond a certain point--beyond the time when it became unmistakably
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evident that the Commons were in interest. It also became practically settled that the personal will of the Sovereign was no longer to be a decisive authority in the scheme of Government.

What the Reform Bill actually did was:

1. To pass sentence on the system of close or nomination boroughs.

2. To establish in practical working order the principle that the House of Commons was a representative assembly, bearing due proportion in its numbers and its arrangement to the numbers and the interests of the constituents.

3. To extend the suffrage so as to enfranchise the great bulk of the middle and lower classes of the community.

Its one main defect was the manner in which it left the great body of the working classes entirely
outside what was called the pale of the constitution. It redeemed the political power of the State from being the monopoly of one great class, and made it the partnership of two great classes. That was an advance in itself and made further advance possible. It was in truth a revolution, and no less decisive than that which subdued the Crown to Parliament.

Results of Reform

1. Transfer of seats from rotten boroughs to larger districts.
2. One hundred forty three seats thus re-distributed.
3. County representation increased from 94-159.
4. County franchise extended to lease-holders and tenant occupiers.
5. Borough franchise extended to all 10 pound occupiers.
6. Introduction of registration.
7. Reform bills for Scotland, Ireland.
   Eight new members given to the former.
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Vlll. Scotch franchise extended.

IX. Five new members given to Ireland and franchise extended.

X. Total number of electors about doubled.

"The securing and still more the passing of the bill was followed in the country by a customary orgy of bell ringing, illuminations and banquets. But, long after the tumult and the shouting had died, the struggle for the Reform Bill lived in the minds of those who remembered it, as an event quite distinct from anything else in British History."

The change effected by the Reform Bill was social as well as political, as it was the introduction of a wholly new class of society into the duties of government. The aristocratic classes, which hitherto had the monopoly of power, were

1. The Passing of the Great Reform Bill.
Page 423, James Ramsey Montagu Butler.
forced to admit to an equality with themselves the middle class. This Bill, by the fact and by the manner of its passing, had done a great deal more than enfranchise one-half of the middle class. It had asserted the power of the whole nation: enfranchised and unenfranchised, because it had been carried by the popular will against the strenuous resistance of the old order entrenched in the House of Lords. The "sovereignty of the people" had been established in fact, if not in law.
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III. Summary.

Long before the dawn of Radicalism, proposals of Parliamentary Reform had on several occasions been made to the two Houses of Parliament. In 1776 Wilkes proposed a motion which contained all the leading principles of Parliamentary Reform adopted during the next fifty years. During the years 1782-5 the younger Pitt brought forward motions for Reform without success. The example of the French Revolution frightened everyone, and induced the majority of Englishmen to cling to the old system. Consequently the Reform motions, proposed by Charles Grey during the years 1792-1797 were rejected by enormous majorities.

All these proposals, with the possible exception of that of Wilkes, were made by politicians who were supported by some section of the Tory or Whig parties, and who proposed Reform from a Radical standpoint. The Radicals instinctively foresaw that the Whigs, rather than themselves, would secure political benefits from the discredit into which merciless criticisms and the popular agitations had thrown the Tory Government.
The Legislative History of the Reform Bill of 1832.

In the year 1819 Lord John Russell brought forward motions for the disfranchisement of corrupt boroughs and for the transference to large unrepresented towns of franchises so forfeited. Thus, at the moment when Reform seemed to have become an exclusively Radical question, it was revived by a section of the Whig party in a moderate and reasonable form.

The attitude of the Tory party towards the great question of Parliamentary Reform was the same during the Radical agitation of 1817-1821, as in the years 1821-1832 which marked the gradual acceptance of Reform by the Whig party. It has been thought, that the political views of the Tories were based wholly on reactionary prejudice and upon blind hatred of innovation; and that their creed was that of laissez-faire, with the principles and justifications of such a policy, withdrawn. To yield to Reform—especially of the system of representation was to destroy the last bulwark, to remove the last plank between the Constitution and the boundless flood of democracy.
During the years of 1820-1830 Lord John Russell brought forward a series of exceedingly moderate motions on Reform. Although he possessed the undivided support of an influential section of the Whig party, the official adoption of Reform by the Whig party was still to come. The alliance of Whig peers and landowners with Leeds' wool merchants and Manchester cotton-princes was at length consummated. General exasperation was felt when Lord John Russell's proposal for the enfranchisement of Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester, were summarily rejected in the Commons. Intense indignation was awakened by Wellington's reply to Earl Grey. He foolishly alleged that the legislature and system of representation deservedly possessed the confidence of the country, when even defenders of the old system excused it on the ground that it worked better in practice than in appearance. His speech had a great effect, but exactly the reverse of the speaker's intention. Popular indignation arose and swept the Tories from office and placed the Whigs in power.
Grey who headed the new ministry accepted the office only on the direct understanding that Reform should be made a Cabinet measure, and that a Bill should be introduced as soon as possible, into the Commons.

On March 1, 1831 Lord John Russell introduced the Reform Bill into the Commons and revealed the well-kept secret that all the nomination boroughs were to be abolished without compensation to the borough-owners and the Ministers sprang to the summit of popularity at a single bound.

Three weeks after its introduction the Bill passed its second reading by one vote, in a most exciting division. A defeat in Committee soon narrowed the issue to a choice between the new Ministry with a much modified Bill, or a General Election to save Bill and Ministry together. In April the King, William IV., had to decide whether he would accept Grey's resignation or his advice to dissolve. Since there had been a majority of one for the second reading, he granted Grey his dissolution, but with many misgivings.
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The dramatic circumstances of the dissolution, increased the popular excitement and added to the reputation of the Ministry. There can be no question whatever that popular influence had much to do with the return of the Whigs with a hugely increased majority. With such support they immediately introduced a second Reform Bill.

Lord John Russell warned the Tories against opposing this second Bill too bitterly as "it was impossible for the whisper of a faction to prevail against the voice of a nation." The new Bill was carried by sweeping majorities in the Commons, but on October 8, it was thrown out by a majority of 41 in the Lords. Until then agitation had been peaceful; demonstrations and riots in all parts of the country expressed the indignation of the people.

Before Christmas a third Reform Bill was introduced into the Commons, modified in some detail to meet some reasonable criticisms and so save the face of the "waverers" among the peers, but not weakened as a democratic measure. It quickly passed the Commons.
and was accepted by 9 votes on the second reading in the Lords.

The final crisis known as the "days of May" was provoked by an attempt of the Lords to take the Bill out of the Ministers in charge and amend it in their own way. The Cabinet had long been occupied with the question of overcoming the opposition of the Lords. As early as September 1831, the project of creating Peers had been suggested. It was strongly opposed by the King. In the first two months of 1832 the majority of the Cabinet were strongly in favor of creating peers. Two days after the Lords had finally thrown out the Bill in committee, the Cabinet sent a minute to the King, unanimously recommending the creation of Peers. The King declined the proposals and accepted the resignations of the Ministers.

William IV appealed to Wellington to form a Tory Ministry for the purpose of carrying the Bill. The Duke had to abandon the task and recommended the King to recall Lord Grey. The King was obliged to come to terms with Grey, and could only get him
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back by a written promise to create any number of Peers necessary to carry the Bill. The threat when known in the Upper House sufficed, and the Duke agreed to withdraw enough Peers to secure the passage of the Bill. It was hurried through the committee stage and third reading, and received the royal assent on June 7, 1832.

The chief results of the Reform Bill of 1832 were:

1. The disappearance of nomination and rotten boroughs.

II. The franchise became more regular and less restricted.

III. The duration of the poll was shortened.

IV. Along with the English Bill, Reform Bills for Scotland and Ireland were also produced and passed.

The people and the House of Commons had triumphed over the scruples of the King and the opposition of the Peerage. The old electoral system
founded on monopoly and corruption had been destroyed, and a new system, erected on the broad foundations of popular support, had taken its place.
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