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LORD BROUGHAM'S SPEECH

ON

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM,

IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

AUGUST 3RD, 1857.

LONDON:
JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.
1857.



S P E E C H,

ETC.

IN rising to move for the Returns connected with the Elective franchise, and the notice respecting which has announced my intention of entering upon the subject of our Parliamentary Constitution, I must set out with the admission that I am discharging what I deem to be a duty incumbent upon me at a considerable personal sacrifice; for the great honour of addressing your Lordships is purchased at the expense both of much fatigue in a sultry season, after a somewhat laborious though not very long session, and of much correspondence during the vacation with able, well informed, but zealous advocates of further change, and others of equal merit, as conscientiously opposed to any alteration of the system established five and twenty years ago. The share, however, which I had in that great measure imperatively calls for a statement of circumstances connected with it, which to many of your Lordships may not be known, by some may be forgotten, and which are suggestive of lessons, and of warnings to guide the course of those who have undertaken to bring forward a plan next session. The Government has announced this intention, and therefore a measure must be produced. They are to prepare it

during the leisure of the recess ; and therefore, entirely trusting the capacity, and the honesty of my noble friends, I cannot doubt that they will apply themselves ably and conscientiously to the task they have undertaken. Beside my two noble friends now absent, Lord Ripon and Lord Glenelg, I alone in this House remain of the authors of the Act of 1832, except my noble friend opposite who is a member of the Government (Lord Lansdowne). Lord Ripon's health has prevented his attendance during the session ; but I had hoped to have the advantage of Lord Glenelg's presence, whose great talents, extraordinary accomplishments, and strict integrity, would have made me most happy in appealing to him upon the present occasion. The reception your Lordships have given to this remark, shews that I do not give an exaggerated estimate of his merits ; but I must add that I have had no opportunity of conferring with him upon the subject, any more than I have had with my noble friends opposite.

In approaching this important subject, I must begin with the observation that they are equally in error who expect no excitement as likely to prevail in the country upon the question of Reform, and they who expect that it will at all resemble the excitements of 1831. I well recollect when taunted at that time with the apathy which was supposed to have been shewn at the general election of the preceding autumn, I was asked if in my canvass of Yorkshire there had ever been the least allusion made to

Reform. Slavery, it was said, had been constantly mentioned, and the late revolution at Paris; but of Reform not a word, although in Yorkshire ever since the times of Sir George Saville and Mr. Wyvill that was there a kind of local question. I felt bound to acknowledge that there was some foundation for this statement; as certainly little had been said of Reform. But how grievously mistaken were those who from thence concluded that the question was dead! No sooner had I given my notice of bringing it forward, which was on the very first night of the Session, than all Yorkshire and soon afterwards all England became so wrapt up in the subject that nothing else for months was thought of. Now this was not owing to my notice, but mainly because on the change of Government, the Ministers announced that they had taken up the subject, and were preparing their Bill. We must not therefore suppose that the subject will excite no interest now, merely because of late we have heard little about it. But it is said that the like announcement now will produce the same effect, and that the feeling in the country will soon be as great and as intense as it was in 1831. I gravely doubt it. The excitement at that crisis was owing to the demand for Reform occasioned by its long postponement; the pertinacious refusal to entertain the question; the Duke of Wellington's declaration, perhaps the only mistake he ever committed, that our parliamentary constitution was perfect, and had he to form a new

system, he could only found it upon the same principles ; the hopeless prospect thus held out, of the great towns being excluded from all representation, of nomination or as they were termed rotten boroughs being maintained in the existing number ; of all the abuses incident to elections in other boroughs more corrupt far with the other evils of the system being continued, produced naturally enough the determination to prevent such glaring defects, such gross abuses being perpetuated. Grievances so enormous, so intolerable could no longer be endured, and the country was bent upon a large remedial measure. The case is entirely different now ; and therefore, while I am far from asserting that Lord Palmerston's announcement will produce no effect in rousing a spirit of reform, I entirely deny that it can create anything like the feeling which prevailed in 1831, for the same grievances do no longer exist, thanks to the Bill of that year. That considerable defects may be justly imputed to it I am far from denying ; as far as I am from admitting that it was a measure subversive of our institutions — what some able, eminent, and worthy friends of mine have called a Revolutionary measure. Whatever imperfections may be found in some of its parts, my defence of it as a whole, I will not say the only defence, but one quite decisive for its acquittal, rests in a word — in a date—the tenth of April, 1848. Had not the Reform bill passed, that day would assuredly not have passed over our heads in the

peaceful, quiet, even tranquil manner, on which all men, whatever may be their opinions upon the merits of the measure, can look back with unmingled satisfaction. But if I differ with those who, in such exaggerated phrases, denounce it as perilous, I can still less agree with those who describe our plan as ineffectual to its purpose; a mock Reform, as some over zealous advocates of change have called all moderate Reforms, using, as Major Cartwright was wont to do, the words moderate and mock as synonymous terms. I have the most absolute certainty the number of such objectors was exceedingly limited, at least among the known and tried friends of Reform; I know that they generally speaking were more than satisfied with its extent. To mention names would be invidious; but I assert that some whose devotion to the question had been the longest and the most implicit, who held the highest rank among Parliamentary Reformers, and had the greatest authority with them, only questioned whether it did not go rather too far in the democratic direction. That the measure was faultless no one could affirm; but that it was fitted to remedy safely and surely the evils complained of, and that it effected great improvements in our system, cannot be denied.

Some indeed who admit this, who allow that the measure was by these improvements deserving of approbation, have had doubts respecting the quality of the fabric which it produces—the goods, as it were,

which it turns out—they look to the Parliament which it furnishes, and do not find that the excellence of the article thus manufactured is equal to that of the mechanism applied to the process. I have no doubt these objectors are in error; and that the results of its working—the value of the workmanship—is entirely to be commended. It may, however, be capable of improvement; and if important defects which must be confessed to exist in the machine are removed, it will work better and more profitably. The House of Commons as at present constituted no doubt deserves the confidence of the country; but as certainly its composition is capable of improvement, and so is the course of its procedure, by amending in some particulars, yet without anything like a sweeping change, the provisions of the measure adopted in 1832. Possibly were I to determine the best course to take in the proposed Bill, I should be for confining it within some such limits as curing the manifest defects of that measure, and giving the extension in two material particulars, which I shall afterwards mention, and which may, with perfect safety and great advantage, be so altered. But, at all events, the defects must be cured, whatever else is done. These are not numerous, but they are important; and what I regard as chiefly claiming our attention might have been removed when the second reading of the Bill was debated in this House. I then, referring to the Duke's very pertinent question, how is the King's

government to be carried on after the change shall take place? I admitted that some facilities might be desirable; and, in arguing the principles of the measure against him and Lord Harrowby, who had made the ablest speech on that side, I pledged myself that if the second reading were agreed to, some additions should be considered in the committee with a view to meet the difficulty which had weighed on the mind of the Duke. I conceived that I saw my way to a solution; and though of course I could not pledge my colleagues to the method I contemplated, I could answer for it being fully considered, as well as another difficulty, arising from the uniformity of the ten pound franchise, the great variety in the rent of houses seeming to require that it should be different in different towns. But the very practical objection raised by the Duke appeared likely to be removed by two improvements upon the Bill, applicable to the two principal evils, the gravity of which cannot be denied and of which the bad effects are still experienced in the exclusion from Parliament of persons whose presence is most desirable, and, indeed, their exclusion also from office. Certain important offices can only be held by members of the House of Commons. But even if a person has obtained a seat, he may lose it by taking or by changing a place, and he may lose it from no fault of his own. A Chancellor of the Exchequer by proposing a tax necessary for the public service, may be required to support the public credit;

an Attorney General, by performing his duty in prosecuting frauds upon the revenue, or parties guilty of sedition, may be thrown out by a popular outcry ; or may, by the local changes incident to elections, lose their seats. This happened soon after the Act passed in 1832. The Solicitor General having been promoted had to be re-elected ; he failed ; and the whole measures for the improvement of our Jurisprudence were stopped during an entire session, because the first law officer of the Crown was not in Parliament. No seat could be found for him until the member for Edinburgh being raised to the Bench, occasioned a vacancy during the recess, and the Attorney General returned to Parliament. Now two modes of remedying this serious practical evil at once suggested themselves—giving official seats in the other House without votes, and enabling members to take office without being re-elected. On both these proposals I had a good deal of discussion with Lord Grey and Lord Althorpe. To the second they saw no objection whatever, and considered that the only alternative which could be urged was the confining it to a change of the member's office, so as to require his vacating only upon his first appointment ; but upon this neither of my noble friends held any decided opinion, or saw any material objection to the plan proposed. Respecting the other plan, both had much greater doubt ; indeed they felt considerable repugnance to it, not merely as a scheme of foreign growth, but from the anomaly of seats without

votes, and the manifest impossibility of persons voting only in right of their offices. Yet I feel well assured that had an opportunity been afforded for a full consideration of the subject, the evils arising from the restriction upon the choice of public servants, and the complete success of the proposed arrangement both in France, while she had a Parliamentary constitution, and in all other countries enjoying that blessing, would have gone far to overcome the repugnance of my noble friends; and of nothing can I be more absolutely certain than of the entire candour, the freedom from all bias and all narrow-minded prejudices, with which they would have entered into the important discussion. No opportunity however was given for it; the opposition confiding in their strength, as the event proved they had reason to do, threw out the Bill; and when it was again introduced the year after, all compromise was precluded by the course which both parties pursued. I may, nevertheless, add, that upon the lesser of the two measures, the dispensing with re-election upon taking office; a noble friend (Lord Hatherton) afterwards made a proposal, in which my colleagues entirely concurred, and some accidental circumstance alone prevented it being adopted.

I must, at the same time, fully admit that the requirement of the Duke and those who went entirely with him, would not have been satisfied by any such addition to the Bill, however much it must have tended to remove a main part of the objection; for he re-

garded the extinction of Nomination Boroughs as practically fatal to the prerogative; and it never was in my contemplation when I held out the prospect of alterations in the Committee, to break in upon Schedule A. Nothing could be better known at that time than my reluctance to accept this part of the Bill; for I had on the eve of the Duke's resignation laid before the Whig party the plan to be proposed on my motion, which stood for the day of that resignation, and which having been framed with the concurrence of my noble friends at the head of the Government that succeeded, had been fully approved by the meeting; and that plan retained one member for each closeborough. But I was bound in candour to admit that upon no constitutional principle could the choice of representatives of the people by single individuals be defended; and when a measure was to be propounded by the Government for establishing a representative system, I felt that all objections to the abolition of close seats must give way to this paramount consideration; objections grounded on the undeniable fact that these seats have great practical uses in facilitating the working of the constitution, and that they are very much less liable to the charge of corruption than are the small boroughs with nominal rather than real bodies of electors; the creation of a good number of which is one of the greatest blots upon the Reform of 1832.

Another defect appears to me manifest, and it is easily removed; there seems to be no good reason for requiring in the registration that the voters in

towns should annually prove their qualification. The ground of the requiring occupancy of a certain value is to secure a respectable station in the voter. His year's residence is required ; but why should he cease to have a vote because he no longer occupies a £10. house ? If he has already been put on the register as of sufficient station, surely he does not lose that degree of respectability by lowering the value of the house he inhabits. The difference between the town and country franchise may no doubt make it necessary to go before the revising barrister in the former case, in order to prove residence ; but there can be no reason why value should be inquired into. The rule should be "Once a voter always a voter."

The vesting the appointment of these barristers in the Judges appears to be another fault of the system. All grant of patronage to the judicial body is in my humble opinion to be avoided. It is hurtful to the Judges ; it is injurious to the independence of the Bar ; it is not always calculated to secure good appointments ; for the power is exercised by different persons each year from accidental changes in the circuits, so that no real responsibility exists ; and we accordingly constantly have complaints made of the choice being dictated by favouritism or by connection rather than by merit. I am bound to add that as far as my own observation has gone, I have never known any ground for such complaints ; their existence, however, in the profession is not to be disregarded ;

and upon the whole it would be advisable to vest the choice in the Home Department.

The prospect of alteration in the Committee was held out by me upon the same occasion in reference to a much more important matter, the uniformity of the Household franchise. The term £10. house means things widely different in different towns. In the capital there is scarcely such a house ; in many places persons of considerable income inhabit houses of that class ; and a circumstance which occurred while the Bill was under preparation will at once illustrate the difference of which I speak. Originally £20. was the sum fixed upon. This appeared much too great, and upon returns being called for, we found that nearly as many close boroughs would be created as were disfranchised by Schedule A. One, I well remember, having upwards of twenty thousand inhabitants, was found to have no more than some half dozen houses which let for £20. There appeared to be no special virtue in an uniformity of qualification ; in some respects a variety in franchise, leading to a variety in the constituent body is advantageous, and there seemed no insurmountable objection to the introduction of it. This, therefore, was distinctly stated by me to be a subject for the consideration of the Committee had the second reading been carried.

I have hitherto stated those defects of the Bill which it was proposed to discuss in order to meet some of the principal objections of our adversaries. But a greater defect perhaps than any other was ac-

tually introduced into it, and has been unfortunately retained; it was a concession to them, and expected to facilitate the passing through the other House. I refer to the votes of freemen. Considerable restriction was no doubt added for the purpose of preventing the great abuse of fictitious enfranchisement under the name of honorary burgesses; and the number of hereditary freemen was greatly diminished by restricting the right to such as claimed their freedom by servitude, or through those who had their freedom in May 1831. Nevertheless, the class still exists, and it is in no respect the best, in many respects the worst of the constituency, being more tainted with corruption than any other. There can be no doubt that the abolition of this franchise would be a great improvement.

I am thus naturally led to consider the most important class of all who are now excluded from the right of voting—the valuable body of artisans, thus named in contradistinction to day labourers; skilled workmen, of whom it is impossible to speak in terms of too great commendation, whether we regard their ability, their acquirements, or their character. Very many of them possess considerable scientific knowledge; most of them are of eminent skill; almost all of them are distinguished by independence of mind. They are indeed in a position of independence, being more necessary to their masters than their masters are to them. Accordingly in almost all places where they chance to

have votes they are very far from desiring to exercise the franchise in secret, and they, generally speaking, treat the notion of the ballot with contempt. I by no means intend to affirm that there are no places which form an exception to this statement; but I have no hesitation in making it with respect to this most valuable class of men as the general rule. Yet, unhappily, they do not, in the vast majority of instances, possess the franchise. The body of all others in the middle class the most deserving of the right, and the best qualified to exercise it safely for the community, and creditably to themselves, are shut out from the enjoyment of it. In London they are almost always lodgers; in the provinces they rarely occupy £10. houses. I would fain hope that in any plan which may be devised for supplying the defects of the present Act, means may be found of admitting this important class within the pale of the constitution. Different ways suggest themselves; but if it be found impossible to devise any plan of examination, or of certificates from teachers, or from employers, or from trustworthy vouchers, plans the great difficulty of which I am ready to acknowledge, I own that rather than this exclusion should be perpetuated I feel disposed to adopt the expedient, which I grant is a coarse one, of lowering the town qualification generally, supposing always it should be found impossible to lower it in the excepted case of these artisans. Nor let it be imagined that if I speak of a six pound rent,

which would in all places out of London admit this class, I am departing from the principle I would recommend of avoiding all sweeping measures of change in the existing system. I have as confident an opinion as it would be fit to hold upon an untried matter, and therefore a subject of speculation only, that though there would be a very great increase of the number of voters were the franchise thus lowered, there would be little or no change in the results of elections. All the persons most conversant with this subject, to whose opinions I have resorted, take the same view. I have found hardly any who feels persuaded that I am wrong in my conjecture. When you mark the difference between the show of hands and the poll at town elections, were you to infer from thence that the multitude who are so often found to be the majority at the nomination and the minority at the election, are the six pound householders, you would assuredly commit an egregious error. That multitude are the day labourers, who pay no such rent as between a fourth and a fifth of their earnings. We know that the artizan is shut out because he will not pay a seventh of his wages for a £10. house; we may, thus, be quite certain that the common labourer does not pay a fifth of his wages. I therefore continue of the opinion which I held before the introduction of the Bill in 1831, that a low qualification for the towns will not have any tendency towards greater democratic influences in the constitution than it was then deemed expedient to establish by

giving representation to the great towns, and a larger increase of borough than of county members. Indeed the plan which was laid before the meeting I have referred to as held before my motion, while it retained half the nomination seats, gave household suffrage in all the towns. It carefully preserved, however, the property qualification for counties. I can see no objection to what has been frequently proposed, requiring a longer period of residence where the qualification is an occupancy at a lower rent; to require two years, for example, for a £8. house, with one for a £10. house; but also adopting the rule, once a voter always a voter, in this as in the other case. The great advantage of this improvement would be that we should give the franchise to that important and estimable class whom I have mentioned as artizans or skilled workmen.

I have adverted to an Education franchise. This has been often proposed; and in the last of the Education Bills which I presented to your Lordships, and which were warmly supported by the Government of the day, a right of voting was given to all who should be pupils of schools under public inspection, and had there completed their course of instruction. This assumed that the acquisition of merely elementary knowledge, with the habits formed by school discipline might be a sufficient proof of respectable station and character. But the obstacles found to exist in the way of such a plan, and still more the great advantages of a higher kind which may be de-

rived from another of a different description substituted for it, call upon me to give your Lordships the outline of that substitute. It has been proposed to form a body of voters whose qualification shall be a liberal education, as tested by their station in life, professional and other. This class would consist of all the learned bodies, clerical, medical, legal; of persons in orders, whether beneficed or not; of surgeons and apothecaries as well as physicians; and of all the branches of the law. It would comprise officers in the army and navy, directors of chartered companies, teachers of endowed schools, persons having degrees in any university or college, fellows of scientific or literary societies established by charter, or otherwise incorporated. We cannot doubt that this body comprises members of the community who are eminently entitled to a voice in the election of representatives, and above all that their choice, if falling upon those of their own class, and as it probably would upon the more distinguished individuals, would tend very greatly to improve the composition of the Representative body. I may state with confidence that this plan is now about to be pressed upon the consideration of the Government by noble friends of mine, and others not members of this House; and that, were I at liberty to mention the names of both classes, the proposal would command your respectful attention independent of its intrinsic merits. But I may safely rely on these, and proceed to observe that, as the

expected Bill must without doubt put an end to a considerable number of Parliamentary Boroughs, those which all are agreed in regarding as left without due consideration in the Act of 1832, it is reckoned that somewhere about seventy seats may thus be left unfilled by choice of the existing body of electors ; and it is proposed that these should be appropriated in the different counties and greater towns to those returned by the class whom I have described, the class of scientific, literary, and generally well educated men, exercising the right of voting either with any other qualification which they may happen to have, or without it if they have none. I beg leave to add what is of really very little importance, but to avoid the supposition of my having only stated the opinion of others, that upon a full consideration of the subject, and without disguising from myself the objections which it is likely to meet with, I have come to adopt the views of the promoters of the plan, and desire to be regarded as among them, having indeed joined in signing their memorial to the Government.

About to express my difference with other friends of Reform, and to protest against some changes which they have with great zeal, accompanied by more or less of knowledge, propounded, I may here pause to observe that while I have distinctly deprecated any large and sweeping change in our electoral system, I have, I really think, said enough to shew how little I can be accused of unwillingness

to revise the errors that have been committed, or of bigoted adherence to what is already established, or of unwillingness to extend the elective rights of the people, where this can be done with safety and advantage. I fear me I may possibly rather be charged with going too far in this direction. But be that as it may, I must now address a few words of warning to my noble friends regarding measures which I plainly foresee, from what has already passed elsewhere, will surely be pressed upon them. I refer to the plan for breaking down the distinction between County and Borough representation. I regard the maintenance of that distinction inviolate, as absolutely necessary to the constitution of this country; and I cannot well find words to express my astonishment that some friends for whom I have the greatest respect and the warmest affection, should have viewed the late proposal of letting in the £10. voters upon the counties as a matter of minor importance. It is in truth the abolition of the county representation by the extinction, by the overwhelming of proprietary right of voting, and the transfer of the choice of the members from the counties to the towns—from the counties which at present return less than half the number of borough members, and are always influenced by town voters in their return of that half, while county voters can hardly be said to influence borough elections at all. I am quite aware of the argument derived from the apparent hardship of so many persons being deprived of votes, because neither

having the county qualification nor inhabiting Parliamentary boroughs, being £10. householders, yet having no votes because residing in counties. But our whole electoral system abounds in such inequalities. The maxim relied upon, that representation should go along with taxation is very plausible, to those who reflect not upon its consequences, and that following out at once lands us in universal suffrage. For why confine the franchise to those who pay direct taxes? Does not every man contribute to the revenue who drinks a cup of tea, or a glass of beer, or takes a pinch of snuff? Nay, why stop at the age of one-and-twenty when you take men of eighteen for your militia, not to mention their use of taxable commodities? Can there, too, be a greater inequality than that one county, Rutland, of 24,000 inhabitants should return as many members as the West Riding of Yorkshire with fifty-five times as many, or 1,400,000? To get rid of such inequalities it has been once and again proposed that the country should be divided into electoral districts like France.

LORD DERBY.—That was Lord Durham's plan.

LORD BROUGHAM.—My noble friend is quite right, but not the plan that my lamented friend ever made the least allusion to in the debates on the Reform Bill, or, as I believe, in the sub-committee which prepared it. The plan was adopted in the Bill which he introduced ten years before in the other House; and such a division, I need hardly add, must give the return of all county members to

the towns within each district as it does in France, I should rather say as it did while France had really a Parliamentary constitution. But the whole system in that country, even with a real representative body, was entirely different from ours, because there existed no order between the Crown and the people. The transfer of all county elections to the towns here will eventually produce the same constitution, and some may prefer it to our own ; I am not of the number of these. But I stop not to compare the relative merits of the two. I will not argue with those who think the proposed change would be for the better ; it is enough to say, that it would not be the same but an entirely different frame of government, and must rest upon wholly different principles.

At one time, when the extent of borough corruption was so universally complained of, and the means taken to extirpate it were supposed to have failed, I listened to the proposition of those who suggested as a remedy a general measure for throwing corrupt boroughs into the hundreds, when it was deemed inexpedient to visit them with disfranchisement. We had at that moment been disappointed in the hopes entertained of trying the experiment of the Evidence Bill, to which I had the satisfaction of obtaining the assent of your Lordships in 1851. It is, however, most gratifying to find that our apprehensions have proved groundless. I am informed, by those best acquainted with the late proceedings in the other House, that the provisions of the Act

for the Examination of Parties have had the most salutary effect; that Election Agents have in general been afraid of their inevitable detection; that Candidates have in like manner been deterred from the course previously pursued, being compelled to keep a strict watch over all in their employ by the prospect of a searching investigation before the Committee; that there never was any former election in which so few cases of general corruption were found to exist; and, indeed, that in no preceding instance were there so few members unseated for bribery. The Act to which I have referred has been generally referred to as at least one main cause of this fortunate result; the Act respecting Election Expenses introduced by Sir F. Kelly also greatly contributed to it.

Depend upon it, my Lords, the principal objection to universal suffrage itself is not the evil effects which it might produce in Borough elections, though these would be very great, but its destruction of the County representation, by depriving property of all its influence, and thus destroying the balance of the constitution. Nor is the aversion to it confined to this House, and to reflecting men in this country. Our neighbours on the other side of the Channel hold it in supreme reprobation, those, I mean, who desire to have a constitutional government. A respected friend of the Noble Marquis and mine (Lord Lansdowne) not long ago warned me very unnecessarily against it, holding that the

liberties of France lie prostrate before Universal Suffrage. While I admit that the very worst form of it is its application to the choice of a ruler or other office-bearer, or a measure, and that it can thus work nothing but mischief very much greater than if only used in the selection of men to consult for the public, or by the worse course of an intermediate election of persons to choose such men—I yet was bound to give my answer, that constitutional government in France lies prostrate not before Universal Suffrage, but before the recollection of 1793 and 1794—the recollection of those dreadful scenes which no one can name without shuddering, when Paris, and through Paris France, was ruled by the mob, that worst of tyrants, everywhere present, nameless, and irresponsible, having all the bad propensities, the evil desires, the cruel nature of the individual tyrant, with all his insane caprices—alike dangerous when elevated not soothed by hope, or depressed not tamed by fear, nor more to be dreaded in the intoxication of success than in the paroxysms of alarm; for the mob, like the single scourge, is not inaccessible to fear, the appointed punishment of tyrants—

*Qui terret, plus ipse timet; sors ista tyrannis
Convenit.*

The memory of the horrors perpetrated by the populace in the fury of those times, the darkest page in the history of France, has formed the strength of all the usurpations, the foundation of all the despotisms, which have succeeded one another, from the Directory to the Consulship, the Empire,

the Restoration ; and the constitutional government which for a while was enjoyed, fell a sacrifice to the events somewhat less sanguinary, but little less disgraceful, which followed the downfall of the Monarchy and accompanied the mock Republic, until an attempt to carry on Parliamentary Government once more showed how little our gallant and amiable neighbours are capable of conducting a system whose virtue and, indeed its safety, consists in balances and checks. But with so enlightened, so ingenious, so painstaking a people, a people so accomplished in all the sciences that demand the most profound inquiry, the deepest reflexion—why exists there this difference between the two nations in the conduct of their political affairs? First, because it is characteristic of the Englishman's nature always to respect, to love, and to hold by that which is established, by the institutions handed down from other ages, the result of gradual amendments and bearing the fruits of long and varied experience. This feeling of repugnance to innovation, of reluctance even to moderate improvement, because involving change, is oftentimes carried to excess, and I and other reformers have not seldom had to complain that the country is slow to admit things to be wrong and tardy in affording the application of a remedy. But across the Channel it is enough that anything is established, any institution has been what is called *inaugurated*, for all voices to be raised against it ; and while we have for our motto, " Whatever is, is

right'—theirs would seem to be, "Whatever is, is wrong." One cannot really say that after so many efforts, and such terrible sacrifices to obtain freedom, they have any great love of liberty, at least in practice; equality they highly prize; they can bear no superior; they would lower all above them, without much caring to bring those below them up to their own level. It was a pleasantry of one of their most famous wits, that whatever faults he might have, and how far inferior he might be to other men, he certainly had one quality peculiar to himself; he was the only man in France that did not believe he ought to be the King of the country. These of course are great exaggerations, and even in the more moderate estimate of the national character, I am very far indeed from speaking of the nation at large; but that a very great body of the people, and of those who possess important influence on the destinies of the nation, are open to the remarks thus so often made, no doubt can be entertained. But this national habit of discontent with existing institutions, and proneness to admit any change of them is not the only cause of the diversity in political circumstances, nor is it unfortunately a cause easily to be removed. There is another much more within the possibility of being changed, and to which may be moreover ascribed their never having obtained a stable constitution; and I wish I could make my voice heard by them, while I exhort them to take a leaf out of our book, as I wish we might

take one out of theirs, for instance, the noble example set by them of public gratitude, as when an eminent personage like my friend General Carnot happened to lose his election to the Council of Five Hundred, and was forthwith chosen by fourteen or fifteen other places, which I fear never would have happened in England. But I allude to that which maintains our system, and which in France is wholly wanting—the spirit of compromise arising out of the attachment to established things, that I have noted as a characteristic of Englishmen. With us the contest of parties, the most animated, even the most rancorous never goes beyond a certain length—never is suffered to put the existence of our Government in jeopardy. The ignorance or irreflexion is inconceivable of those who deride all notion of checks and balances as absurd, because say they either one predominates over the other, or all movement is stopped and the machine stands still. It would be so in France; in England the reverse takes place. The opposing forces act at an angle, and not directly against each other; so that the machine is neither stopped nor torn asunder, but its motion is continued in the diagonal between the two lines of force. Each party yields a little to the other, rather than that irreparable mischief should be done, or all action be suspended. In many instances the joint action is even beneficial, and a better result is obtained for all, than if either party had everything its own way; but above all the peril

of collision, the disruption of the system, is effectually prevented. The Government proceeds without a revolution. In France it is far otherwise. The forces are in direct antagonism ; there is no mutual concession ; compromise, the science which has been called the science of Government itself, is unknown ; in each struggle contending parties conflict with desperation, and care not how they may destroy the constitution itself. It is never that a force in one line acts at an angle to a force in another, but two forces are diametrically opposed and the result is either the suspension of all motion ; or the destruction of one faction and the supremacy, the despotism of the other ; and, in many cases, the disruption of the whole machine ; so that the conflict of parties is pushed to extremities, and ends, not as with us—witness Emancipation, Free Trade, Reform itself, perhaps the Currency too—in compromise, the system being preserved, though modified ; but in revolt, in revolution, often, as at the end of the last century, preceded by anarchy that convulsed the country, or massacre under the profaned name of judicial proceedings, that stamped upon it a stigma never to be effaced. Even of later years somewhat of a similar catastrophe, though in an exceedingly mitigated form, has been known. The same grievous defects in the conduct of Parliamentary proceedings, of party measures, have been seen to exercise a most inauspicious influence upon the fortunes of France, and, combined with the

necessity of arresting at all hazards, and at the cost of any sacrifice, the swift progress downward to Socialism, and its legitimate offspring confusion, have brought about the erection of an absolute monarchy upon the ruins of representative and party government; the establishment of a power wielded with a strong hand, guided by eminent capacity, pointed by a firm purpose to the maintenance of order at home, and peace abroad, and commanding the good wishes of all who prize those inestimable blessings. My purpose this day has been to mark the diversity between the political conduct held in the two countries, both as shewing how our course must needs be followed by our neighbours if they really desire to obtain a constitutional government, or preserve it when acquired; and as illustrating the doctrines of moderation, gradual amendment, and wise concession, which I have recommended as essential to guide us in the administration of our happy system, our mixed and balanced constitution. Against these doctrines he will grievously sin who shall patronize any scheme that, under the name of Reform, should break in upon the fundamental principles sanctioned a quarter of a century ago by the united voice of the Parliament and the country. Abiding by those principles I protest against whatever change would substitute for our limited monarchy a democracy, to end, as elsewhere, in a monarchy without any limits at all; although I have to-day proved to your Lordships that there exists no warmer friend