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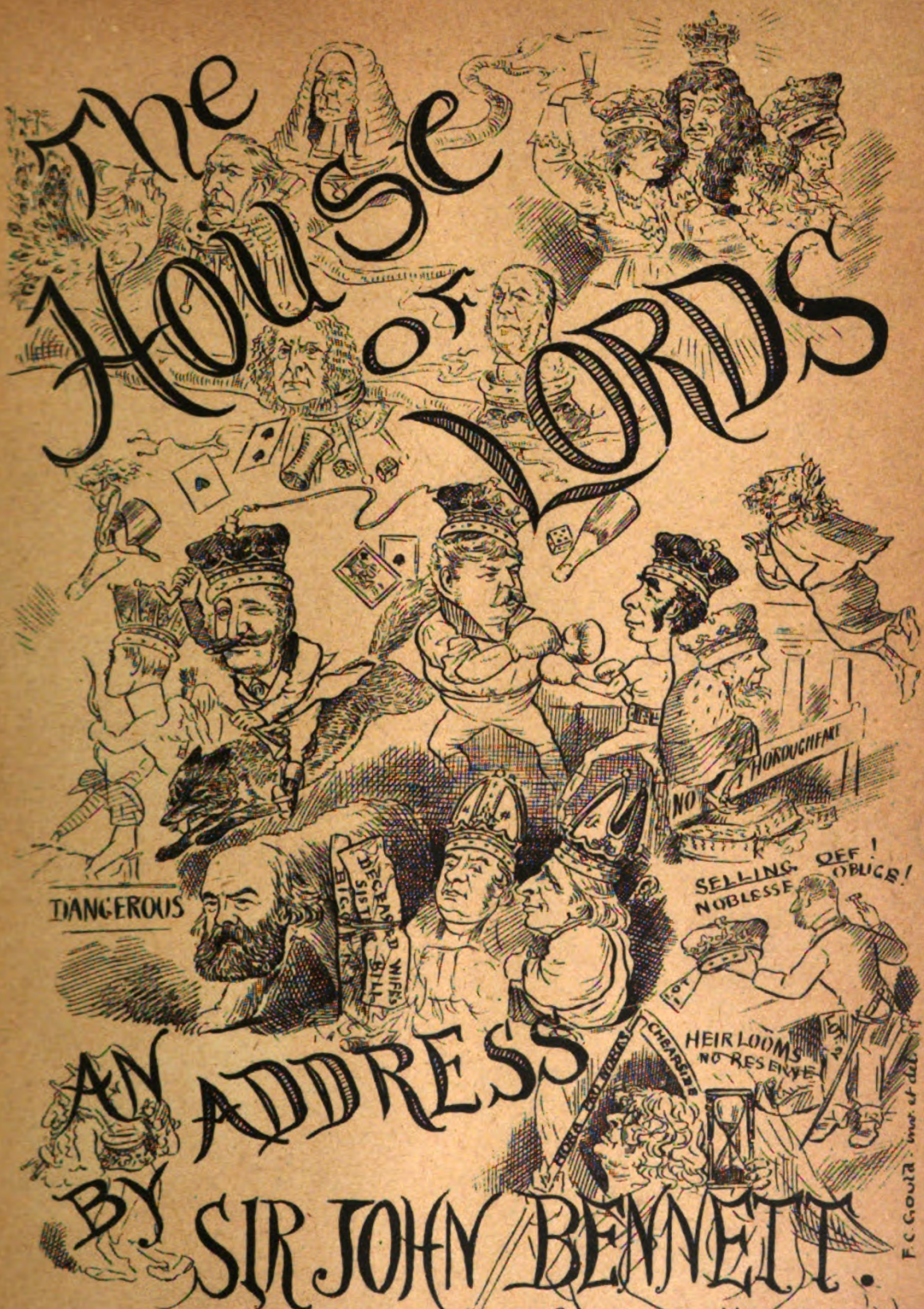
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Chevalier of the Legion of Honour,
 & Ex-Sheriff of London & Middlesex. 1884



Reprinted from the "ESSEX TELEGRAPH."

THE
HOUSE OF LORDS:

AN ADDRESS

BY

SIR JOHN BENNETT

(CHEVALIER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR AND EX-SHERIFF OF
LONDON AND MIDDLESEX).

LONDON : DAVID BOGUE, 3, ST. MARTIN'S PLACE, TRAFALGAR
SQUARE.

MANCHESTER : JOHN HEYWOOD, DEANSGATE.

1884.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Mr. WALTER, M.P., in addressing the House of Commons on the first reading of the new Reform Bill, said he thought it might be advantageous to commend it to the consideration of the Minister of Education, if he might so call him, to introduce elementary books into the schools on the duties of British Citizens.

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UNDER the auspices of the Colchester Liberal Reading Rooms, SIR JOHN BENNETT delivered a lecture on "The House of Lords," at the Public Hall, on Tuesday evening. Mr. Councillor WICKS occupied the chair, and the building was crowded by an unanimous and enthusiastic audience. Amongst those present were the Mayor (Mr. ALFRED FRANCIS), the Deputy-Mayor (Mr. J. B. HARVEY), and most of the principal inhabitants of the town and district.

The CHAIRMAN, in introducing the Lecturer, remarked that SIR JOHN BENNETT had been long known as the champion of public rights in England. (Cheers.) He (the Chairman) had only that day, and within the last hour or two, incidentally heard that forty years ago, at Greenwich, Sir JOHN BENNETT and his brothers embarked in the purification of the nest of corruption there, and grandly succeeded in it. They knew that again and

again they had found his name always on the popular side, and he had been a conspicuous member of the School Board, working that grand charter for our rights and liberties in England. SIR JOHN has rendered great services to us in the London School Board, and among other offices he has served as Sheriff for London and Middlesex, as well as taken an active part in the work of the City Corporation for many years.

SIR JOHN BENNETT, when the cheering with which he was received had subsided, said: MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES, and GENTLEMEN, —In the course of a busy life, by some chance or mischance, it has fallen to my lot to deliver during the last thirty years more than a thousand lectures in various parts of the country; some twenty years ago I had the honour to address an assembly in Colchester. I remember in the chair then a noble-hearted Iron Quaker, CATCHPOOL, well known in your bright, smart, and wholesome town. But your fathers were not the men in those days that I see assembled here to-night. Your fathers were not quite so prepared in those days to deal with the House of Lords as you are now. (Hear, hear.) Now it becomes a burning question, within the range of practical decision. (Applause.) And well it may. (Laughter.) They have had a long time of it, the Lords have. (More laughter.) But bad was their beginning.

You know a thousand years ago our Saxon Alfred proclaimed the self-government of the people to be the very fundamental principle of the country's mode of rule and government. He had the wisest and the best men selected by popular election in London, and even in those barbarous days they sought to do and did their very best for the people's welfare. We know very well he lived in barbarous times. People were ill-educated then, and they could scarcely be expected to take part in so liberal a Constitution.

But, unfortunately, in 1066 came the Norman William, with different views. He brought his fighting men over, with their discipline and their weapons, and he got the best of it; and these fighting men were distributed throughout the country. They had the land of the country appropriated to them for certain purposes, and on certain conditions. They formed the leaders under the feudal system. They were the Barons under the kings that

followed William the Norman. But they found the Saxon spirit of liberty a difficult nut to crack. (Hear, hear.) They were bound, with all their valour and all their power, to have some respect and regard for established institutions. Indeed, we find in 1215—some 150 years after the invasion of the Normans—we find John the King, for exercising despotic rule under feudal authority, brought to book by the popular spirit and power of the day. (Applause.) In London the Corporation had then become established. The citizens had a will of their own, the Church had some men—good men, strange to say—(laughter)—among them. Langton, the Archbishop, and the Barons themselves could not stand the narrow despotic rule that John desired to establish. John by nature was no fool. (Laughter.) He was simply a fool in the way he employed his abilities, and in despotic rule in conjunction with the worst men of the Church. Why, he was ready to give the kingdom in fiefdom to the Pope to maintain his position! But the public spirit of the citizens was too many for him. (Cheers.) They took him down to Runnymede, and on the Thames they rubbed his nose in *Magna Charta*. (Laughter and cheers.) And *Magna Charta* was the first public document to establish the freedom of the British people. (Applause.) It began well, as everybody in this room knows—or ought to know—as they ought to know of every great act protective of the liberties of our people. (Applause.) John was made to sign it, and it commenced, “In this our realm we decree that justice shall neither be sold nor delayed.” How fine that was on paper, but what did it come to? It was moonshine when badly administered. Let any poor devil—(laughter)—here in Colchester get into the hands of a Christian lawyer—(great laughter)—and he will understand then how far in practice the precept of *Magna Charta* still exists, that justice shall neither be sold nor delayed. (Hear, hear.) But, said *Magna Charta*, “the people through their representatives shall alone impose the taxation of the country, and conduct the legislation of the country.” (Cheers.) Well, there evidently was the first germ of that Constitution which we have more or less enjoyed in increasing strength from that day to this. (Applause.)

You know we are speaking of early times, and we must pass rapidly over centuries; but from that day, no doubt, popular power began and continued to increase in force, especially in London. London then was the heart and soul and life of that Corporation which has run through the brightest pages of English history. It lived on, not only till the Barons, as the House of Lords, surrounded the despotic power of the Throne, but till under Edward here came a representative body, a house representing the popular will and the popular power. (Applause.) And from that time came continually side by side two powers, sometimes tolerably well united, at other times fighting for rights and mastery.

But now we come to the origin of a brighter state of things—we had the discovery of the Press—(cheers)—we had the diffusion of knowledge among the people in that Press, we had the Bible in the vulgar tongue circulated among the people—(applause)—and from that to the time of our Reformation there prevailed an increasing amount of liberty on the popular side. We know how hardly it struggled from time to time under the Plantagenets and the Tudors.

But the Reformation was before the people—a Reformation declaring the rights of private judgment as its great fundamental doctrine—(applause)—and that right of private judgment had reference not only to opinions celestial—to celestial matters, but it was equally established in regard to the judgment of the people in things below, that concerned their political and their social and their every-day life. (Applause.) Kings got on pretty well in those days—(laughter)—because they managed things cleverly. Their House of Lords consisted of the Barons, inhabiting their castles throughout the country surrounded by their immediate relations and friends and dependents. The conditions of their occupancy were that from their revenues they should support the religion of the day, they should minister to the wants of the poor, and they should supply fighting forces for the chief, their King. Unfortunately, often and often, we know perfectly well that those forces went abroad through France, through Europe, through the Crusades, cutting people's throats who did not want their throats cut by any means—(laughter)—and

so using up the energies of the people that, under a better system of popular control, would have been far more usefully employed in the promotion of the welfare of the people at home. (Loud cheers.)

But you know that despotic authority under the King and his nobles was supported and sanctioned by the ecclesiastical power, with which it was then allied, and with which, unfortunately, as I think, it is too closely allied at the present day. (Applause.) What a happy mode of administering public affairs—(laughter)—that the Church should come down from century to century, arm in arm with the despotic authority of the Crown and the Crown's surroundings, that they should tax the people, oppress the people, rule the people, enjoy their luxuries as they would, always having the Church by their side, who would go forth and should put into every little community throughout the country a house of worship, as they called it, with a pulpit and a teacher, and a "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; whatever the ruling authorities do or decree, it is perfectly in accordance with the will of Heaven and should be respected by the people." I cannot imagine a more comfortable arrangement between Church and State. (Laughter.) You see the ruling powers were to do as they pleased, and in this is constituted despotic authority. The Church was to sanctify the deed, and the two together were to share the plunder. (Laughter and cheers.) This was not alone the good luck of our own country, but of every other country we know, ancient and modern. You cannot find a people willing to submit to royal tyranny unless it were sanctified and sanctioned by the ecclesiastical bodies with whom they were associated in those days.

Well, matters progressed towards a different arrangement in the Reformation, and we must now come to that. One of the last rulers under whom you would have thought a change could be made in favour of popular liberty was one of the most rumbustical, tyrannical fellows—our Royal Blue Beard, Harry the Eighth. (Laughter.) Here was a man with a strong will. He loved the enjoyment and the exercise of all authority and power, but he loved something else—he loved his wives. (Laughter and applause.) You wonder, when you look through that man's

history, how the Reformation could have come from him. Why, half his time was taken up in marrying wives, and the other half in cutting off their heads. (Great laughter.) Then, you know, he published a work, with Wolsey at his elbow, to establish his right to be called the Defender of the Faith. Think of that! But the Reformation streamed from Anna Boleyn's eyes. She said, "No, my fine fellow, I must have the sanction of the Pope before I can be your wife." The Pope would not agree—like a fool. (Laughter.) I do not think he showed his infallibility in that matter. (Cheers, and more laughter.) He gained nothing by letting Harry the Eighth do as he liked with Anna Boleyn. "Marry her, be virtuous, and be happy," he might have said; but he didn't, he refused, and the result was Harry rebelled and started Pope on his own account. (Laughter.) He put himself at the head of the English ecclesiastical system, and established, under certain conditions, the Reformation.

Strange to say he could carry with him not only the people of England, but the popular will, and also the baronial and ecclesiastical authorities by whom he was surrounded, including the wily Cardinal Wolsey. There was a fresh start for the people. There was really an expansion and diffusion of knowledge and of popular power, whence started from that time those liberties that we have enjoyed, which we are enjoying, and which we meet here to-night to endeavour to promote and to increase. (Loud cheers.)

Well, the popular power under the new system, especially in the Metropolis, increased from year to year, but it was sorely tried under the pedantic and bigoted James from Scotland, followed by Charles. Now, Charles brought the thing to a crisis. He was a fine, gentlemanly, aristocratic fellow. (Laughter.) He was born, you know, with a peculiar notion in his royal noddle. (Much laughter.) It was that he was an emanation from Heaven—(more laughter)—and that he ruled, not by the will of the people, whether *pro* or *con.*, but by Divine right. Now that question had to be tried; that question was tried, and he got the worst of it. The people believed that they had a voice in the matter. (Cheers.) London then formed a strong Corporate body, well organised for the exercise of political

rights and power. He was born too late, was Charles, for the exercise of Divine right against the will of the people. (Laughter.) It was a glorious fight! (Cheers.) It is well described by our best historians, and is a bright and interesting chapter of our English history; a history which deserves to be thoroughly understood, as we can understand it in recent authors—Green, Stubbs, Hallam, Macaulay, and the rest of them. (Applause.) We can and we should, and not only the men but the ladies—whom I am happy to see here to-night. (Cheers.) If the men do not choose to give their attention to it, what better than for a good wife at night, when she has got her husband well under control—(much laughter)—to infuse a proper dose of English history into him—(renewed laughter)—and send him to bed a wiser and a better man. (Continued laughter.)

Yes, Charles tried it stoutly and strongly, but he was mistaken. First he tried his despotic decrees; then he was stupid enough to try military force, but in that he made a great mistake. If fighting had to be done he should not have been seen in the business. (Laughter.) He should have waited till his servile tools had done their brutal work, and then he could have come in and reaped the advantages of their success. But no, there was some chivalry about the fellow after all, and he had a determined wife at his elbow, a Roman Catholic wife, a woman with a strong will. Now a man is a lucky fellow who has got a wife with a strong will, because when he is wrong, she can put him right—(laughter)—especially if she happen to be right herself. (More laughter.) In this case it was not so. Charles came down with his military force, to take into custody the principal popular leaders in the House of Commons—Pym, Hampden, Haselrig, and the rest of them. He singled out half-a-dozen, and came down to the House with his military men to seize them.

Then fortunately they had a House such as the world has seldom seen in the intensity of their desire to promote the popular interest, to be the protectors of popular rights. (Applause.) The Speaker—he was a brick, the Speaker was. (Laughter.) He said, “Your gracious Majesty,”—he was very courteous, of course, as everybody should be when Majesty appears—“Your

gracious Majesty may give your commands, and your faithful Commons will seriously consider the matter." That was not what Charles wanted. He desired to take into custody the leaders of the House of Commons who opposed his will. He started off to the City, to the Guildhall, where the corporate body, who at that time were truly the leaders of popular liberty, were assembled, but down came the King, with his red-coats, and he encountered the Mayor, who was a good fellow—quite as good a fellow as the Speaker of the House of Commons. When the King demanded the half-dozen leaders, he said, "We will consider the matter." His Majesty was in a rage. There happened then to be one white sheriff and one black. The King went off with his black sheriff into Moorgate Street. Then he returned to the Lord Mayor—the question was whether he could get his supplies without a vote of the House of Commons—and required that the Chief Magistrate of the City should become his collector of tonnage and poundage—ship money. "Well," said the Lord Mayor, "where's your authority? You must have a vote of the House of Commons, according to law." I can understand that the King was taken aback. He said, "Well, if it comes to this, I shall take my court to Oxford"—not to Colchester, Mr. Chairman—(laughter)—but to Oxford. The Lord Mayor said, "Your Majesty, in your wisdom, may take your court where you please, but do the citizens the favour to leave the Thames behind you—(laughter)—and I believe we can manage our commerce and public matters in the royal absence." (Laughter and cheers.)

Again assembled the royal army, and so did the citizens. They had a brave volunteer force in that day; a real, true train-band force, and Macaulay pictures in one of the most striking chapters of his history how the train-bands in the corporate body the whole day long trooped through Cheapside, there to meet the royal forces. The King did go to Oxford, but he went like chaff before the wind—he went before the Roundhead soldiers and the train-bands that came with Cromwell at their head. (Cheers.) Then followed the declaration in the House of Commons of popular rights, and then the fight between the royal party, with the Lords on their side—most of them—and the Commons, with the popular party, on the other. Then

followed Marston Moor, and other decisive battles, which settled the business. The King fled north, but he could not find friends enough there, and they brought him back. He was charged with being a traitor against the liberties and the laws of his country. To his great surprise he was found guilty. Cromwell invited the best men of the Commons—I am afraid he had not many of the Lords with him—the best men among the citizens and in the corporation to take a chop at the King's Head, and with that chop ended Divine right. (Laughter and applause.) Of course it was a serious operation, but it was an operation which the King was quite prepared to perform upon any number of thousands of his own loyal and faithful subjects, if he had had the chance—(hear, hear)—but Cromwell stopped him there; and so ended the rule of Divine right as exemplified in the person of Charles the First.

There is the history; there was a memorable chapter in our annals, and from that time forward was established the right of popular authority to follow its own will, to appoint its own representatives, and to frame its own laws. (Cheers.) Ah! but there was some trouble in the matter, and Cromwell found it to be so great a man that he was—as Macaulay says, “one of the greatest of English princes.” (Applause.) Yes, but see the times! You had no assemblies like this in every great and small town in the country in those days. In those days you had no such Press, with such reporters as I see—and am very happy to see—so busy here to-night; but you had John Milton—(applause)—at Cromwell's right hand. (Renewed applause.) You had martial forces under the Protector, and you had intellectual power and wisdom and integrity of the highest order in his secretary, John Milton. Ah! if you had had such a Press then as we have now; if you had had an educated people then, even poorly educated as we are at the present moment, but still sufficiently educated to enjoy the teaching of our best possible instructor—the Press—Cromwell would have had a different time of it. His *Mercury* was a small instructor, a poor missionary among the people then. He had to do the best he could. The Lords were against him and he was against

the Lords. (Laughter.) Aha, aha, he was a strong man. (Cheers.) He made short work of the Lords—he did not call them together. (Laughter.) He told them to go about their business. He went further, and confiscated, by the will of the Commons, their estates. Some, it is true, were allowed to come back by paying about a third of the value, on certain conditions of docility and civility and obedience to the new Constitution.

Things went on better, and there was a marvellous twelve years of it. I know he dealt strangely with the House of Commons; he had to weed out the House of Commons, "Take away that bauble," he said, when he represented both sides, black and white. "I want money; I want men to carry my measures," said Cromwell, and he called up the best men from the City to help him to make the House of Commons in accordance with the exigencies of the time. What was he to do? A man like Cromwell, with his genius and his noble ambition, as well as his desire to promote the highest and best interests of the people, was not to be stopped by the ordinary rules which he found in existence. So with the Commons; during twelve years what did he do to justify his position as Protector? Why, he took the Statute Book, appointed a commission of the wisest men—the Cokes and the great men of that day—and they tore out the old despotic leaves one after another from the Statute Book, and put in the Republican white leaves, the Cromwell leaves, of greater popular power and liberty. (Applause.) They did that, and there was his justification, in the Lord Protector's Government of the country during his short and eventful career. (Cheers.)

He was eventually worried into the other world, but he left behind him his Statute Book, and when his successor Charles—Charles II.—returned, of course, he expected to be surrounded by the flunkies of the old court, by the Lords and the Barons; and he thought at first, and they thought, they were about to play the old despotic game, but it could not be done! (Loud cheers.) The people had tasted of liberty—(renewed cheers)—and were not likely to allow a restoration of the old state of things, and Charles was obliged to leave the

Statute Book as he found it. He could not get his Lords, or his Commons either, to fly madly in the face of public opinion—ripened as it was for better things—and so to make matters comfortable they erased Cromwell's name from the records, and declared that all the good Acts passed in Cromwell's time were to be attributed to his most religious and gracious Majesty, Charles II. (Laughter.) I do not think the people cared very much what the Acts were called, so that they got them, (Hear, hear.) But history tells its own tale. (Applause.)

Luckily enough, Charles was of a different stamp from the bold and determined Kings amongst the Plantagenets and the Tudors. He had been to Paris, and he had had an easy time of it. The Lords were all very well, but he preferred the ladies. (Much laughter.) Well, lucky for us he did. (More laughter.) He found the Lords weak, but he strengthened the Lords through the ladies, quantity being no object among his "beauties," as he called them. If Kings have a regiment of ladies they call them beauties; if any of you had a regiment, people would call them something else. (Laughter and cheers.) You can see his beauties at Hampton Court. Well, you know, a pint pot won't hold half-a-gallon, so these ladies ran over measure, and Charles had to marry 'em off, and he did. He made dukes of their husbands; the ladies humbled themselves that their husbands might be exalted—(laughter)—and so the House of Lords was fortified by the husbands of Charles's ladies. (More laughter.) Some of them, you know—their descendants at all events—are now in existence. He not only gave them wives and dukedoms, but he gave them pensions and he saddled them on various departments of the State, and you are now paying, and your ancestors have been paying, the penalty of Charles's management of his House of Lords and his ladies. (Cries of "Shame.") You have some of them still on the list—I am stating simple historical facts. Some of them have been wise enough to get their heads out of the collar by commuting their annual pensions into lump sums, but some remain on the list now, and are receiving pensions from the happy connection of their noble ancestors with

Royal Charles. (Laughter.) There are some ugly men in the House of Commons, and one ugly man who is not yet admitted into the House of Commons—(laughter)—who have had on the paper a very dreadful motion with reference to these pensions among Charles's beauties' dukes. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) They will have to be dealt with, and you will find they will be dealt with. (Cheers.)

Charles II. was at last too good for this world—(laughter)—so he was called up to a higher and a better sphere. (More laughter.) His most religious and gracious Majesty went aloft—(renewed laughter)—and I have no doubt he made a better angel above than he had made King below. (Continued laughter and cheers.) Then his brother came, who was not so wise a fellow by any means. He had not the same free and easy mode of dealing with public affairs. He threw himself into the arms of the ecclesiastical authorities as a Roman Catholic—so was Charles the First through his wife—but it does not much matter what his religion was, if he was guilty of these iniquitous proceedings. (Applause.) I judge the value of a man's religion by what he does himself and for his fellow men. (Applause.) Well, the people would not stand it. The pot boiled over. They would not cut off a second King's head—this fellow was not worth it—(laughter)—but they simply gave him notice to quit. He was what Henry George called last week "fired off into France," and to France he went, and then the people had to arrange their Constitution under the man of their own choice.

Now comes an important event in our history. The national power, so fortified by knowledge, by determination, and by popular support, said, "Now we have had enough of this, we are sick of these Kings and their despotic operations." Well they might be! (Hear, hear.) God knows! they had had a queer lot, from the Norman downwards, if you come to look at them. The people said, "We want a Constitution, we want a popular authority in the House of Commons, we want a House of Commons to elect a Committee, and that Committee shall be the Government, and that Government shall advise—in spite of the Upper House—shall advise the King, the Monarch, the Crown, as to the administration and direction of public affairs. Well now, we

must have the right fellow to act under such a system." The Dutch William, the stadtholder, he was recommended. There was Mary, the royal sister, she was a tough bit of goods, she was—(laughter)—and William was told, "Now then, my good sir, take Mary, and you shall have the Crown under certain conditions;" and he submitted—he took her for better and for worse—and they could not have done better. He was one of the bravest, and the best, and the most upright, and the most trustworthy man for the purpose. You know they presented a Declaration of Rights, followed by the Bill of Rights, under the Revolution. "Well now," they said, "my fine fellow, remember we want a King, but that King must be the servant of the people and not the master. (Applause.) He must be the popular officer of the people's will, and not the despotic power that we have found in the succession of the Kings of old." Now what demand could be more reasonable? And you know this was established under the Bill of Rights, and William took the Crown on these terms. In fact, he was a mere figure-head—an active figure-head, no doubt, obedient to the laws of the land just as much as were the people who made those laws, and whose right and privilege it was to control those laws for their own interest and the public welfare. I know that after a time he got into bad company—which is corrupting to the best of men—and he would have liked to have had more swing, more sway; but he was kept in order under the laws. He had, however, a tolerable time of it, during which England increased in prosperity, in power, and in general enlightenment. (Applause.) He died, leaving the country in a higher condition than when he was called upon to administer its affairs. The Statute Book had been amended and strengthened; it looked like a solid, trustworthy set of laws between the people and the ruling body. But, unfortunately, people then had not School Boards such as we have nowadays, they had not the popular Press, they had not the means of social gatherings, or of public platforms.

Next came the four Georges. If anyone wants to know about these Kings beyond the general run of historic record, let him take Thackeray's "Four Georges." (Hear, hear.) It is a fine

book ; it is to be got for a trifle ; and I think it is the duty of every man with a head on his shoulders, and to whom God has given intelligence and the power of judgment—it is the duty of every man to study such things as these. Thackeray told me that though his “Four Georges” had given serious offence in high quarters, nevertheless he was prepared with authority for every line he wrote in that remarkable book. Well, you find the Lords on the one side surrounding the royal party, and you find the popular power rising gradually through the hundred and more years of the four Georges. Knowledge was increasing, literature was being diffused—our grand literature, surpassed by none that ever blessed the world with a knowledge of affairs. (Applause.) You know we had produced here in times back—from the time of Elizabeth—our great men, our Shakespeare, our grand dramatic authors ; and, remember, they were the newspapers, they were the platform of those days. The people frequented the theatre and derived from the drama that instruction in knowledge and wisdom which general literature afterwards supplied. As knowledge became diffused, the people became more intellectual, and a brighter people in intelligence, during the reigns of the four Georges, though I cannot say much for these Georges. Look at George I.—he was an uncultivated bear—(laughter)—and how the people who had selected a man like William could have chosen a fellow like George I., I cannot imagine. He could not speak English to begin with ; he could not even die in England : he had to go back to Hanover to get out of the world. (Laughter.) He was followed by George II., who is said to have been able to speak English, but he never spoke a sentence worth recording. (Laughter.) So much the better for him, and perhaps so much the better for us, because we cannot condemn a man whose statements have never come to light.

Then started that remarkable man, George III., and he had a long innings—sixty years of it. Narrow-minded, bigoted, one of the most obstinate and curious fellows, he was surrounded by the Lords and by authority that enabled him to keep down in a most mysterious and marvellous way the natural rise of

English liberty through his long reign. Why, even when a lunatic, locked up in Kew Gardens, the fellow somehow or other, through his surroundings, exercised a despotic power through the Church, through the Lords, and through his friends. Of course great was the King, and they all cried, "God save the King!"—Bishops and the rest—and well they might. "God save the King" meant "God save our cocked hats and feathers"—(laughter)—and "God save our mitres, God save our pensions, God save our sinecures"—nothing to do and plenty to be got. (Cheers and laughter.) Therefore it was "God save the King," lunatic as he was; but at last they could not stand it, and gave him up. He was set aside, and a Regent—George IV.—was appointed to reign in his stead.

Well, George IV. was really a jump out of the frying-pan into the fire. (Laughter.) He was such a rumbustical fellow, an unmitigated scapegrace, regardless of his public duty, saturated in selfish luxury all the days of his life—(applause)—that they brushed up the King and got his physicians to give a certificate and say he had come to his senses again, and they did not allow the Regency to return to the field.

Mind you, I am only telling historical facts. (Hear, hear.) Those of you who may object to my statements must object to the facts of history. I do not care what your politics are now—here you are, these are the facts of the case, whether you like them or whether you don't like them. (Cheers.) Well, so they jogged on, and you got some foreign wars to divert public attention. There was that horrid struggle against the Continental Napoleon, diverting people to postpone the establishment of that popular liberty which came years after the old George's death. The King hadn't it all his own way. He had now and then a troublesome customer or two. He had in the City John Wilkes, three times vetoed by the aldermanic body, and yet a man whom Gladstone declared stood in the foremost rank amongst the champions of English liberty. Wilkes thought the City was strong enough to establish certain rights; but we did not make much progress, except in the steady increase of popular intelligence, which meant, when the time and opportunity came,

popular power. (Applause.) Well, off went George aloft—(laughter)—to meet his fellow Kings, such as they were. I should think they must have kept together. (Laughter.) They must have been a select party. (More laughter.) When Dante went down to the infernal regions and was shown the inhabitants, he was shown the lawyers—(laughter)—no, the kings first, so he said, “What! so few of them?” and the answer was, “They are all that ever reigned, what would you have?” (Laughter.) There they were, in the infernal regions, a compact and happy body; but still they are out of reach—(laughter)—they are in better hands—(much laughter)—and we do not want to disturb their condition, whatever it may happen to be. We have quite enough to do with our own affairs, now and in the future. (Hear, hear.)

But see in what different times we live nowadays. We remember the Reform Bill of 1832. (Cheers.) We remember that great and glorious struggle, we remember how determined the people were to assert their own just rights. But see, too, how the Lords at every step followed their old game of obstruction. (Hear, hear.) Ah, what a fight! I wonder the people had not been strong enough to kill two birds with one stone. They had the Lords down—why didn't they keep them down in the year 1832? Why were we to be bothered with them from that time to this—(laughter)—with their old rapacity and power? Look at the list of men who have done their duty in life, done their duty in their families, in their commercial affairs, and see how much of their time has been wasted and thrown away from year to year in fighting and removing this Lordly obstruction before good measures can be carried. (Hear, hear.) But in spite of all we have done it. (Cheers.) We, from the ten-pounders of 1832—down to Dizzy's no-pounders—(laughter)—we have put five hundred great Acts on the Statute Book. (Applause.) See what a deal of rubbish we have torn, as Cromwell did in his time, out of the Statute Book. See how many good Acts, beneficial to the whole mass of the people and to the world, have been put in their place during this happy predominance of popular power, under the ten-pounders and the no-pounders in the House of Commons.

We may be happy and grateful for that, but some of us are not. Strange to say, some of us—young men like myself, you see—(laughter)—have been only reaping the fruits instead of fighting the battle for the cultivation and protection of those fruits. We are apt to forget what a struggle our fathers had here fifty or sixty years ago to establish a better state of things, but I think the people are at last alive to their own true interest. (Hear, hear.) From what I see—and I have the means of seeing, for it is often my privilege (a privilege which I cannot too highly appreciate) to be invited to attend assemblies of this kind, and even much larger, in the greatest towns throughout the country—in the north especially—and I find, humble man as I am, moderate—(laughter)—as my powers may be, nevertheless in my earnestness, they are willing to accept the principles I bring to their notice. (Applause.) On all sides we find people doing what you are doing to-night—determined to know your powers, your privileges, and your rights, and determined to maintain them and to possess them in their fulness in the future. (Loud cheers.) Aha, we are making history with a vengeance—(cheers)—just as we shall be doing for the next ten years. Yes, indeed, let the Lords stand out of the way, for if the Lords obstruct, mind you, God help the Lords! (Loud cheers.) It won't be a question of fundamental principles or of right measures alone, but it will be a question of Lordly obstruction on the part of the House—that will come before us, and for that we are quite prepared. (Applause.) We are not children, we have the platform, we have the Press, we have our own strong will, we have our knowledge of affairs, we have our popular rights, and with these we are prepared to face the handful of old gentlemen in the “gilded chamber,” not all of them infallible in wisdom or in character. (Applause.) Let the Lords spiritual and temporal rage together as they may, the people when they set to work on their own Statute Book will not imagine a vain thing. (Applause.) It will be the struggle between the many and the few. Where can be greater folly than for the Lords to fight against the inevitable, when they

know they will have to bow before the impending and inevitable democracy of the future. (Applause.)

But I fear I am wearying you. (Cries of "No, no," and "Go on.") I know I am in your hands, and I would just ask you to see whether such a state of things now exists in any other country in the civilised world as we find in the constitution of our House of Lords. It is worth while to look abroad for practical examples in this matter. If we are wrong, there is no reason why we should not be set right as speedily as possible—(hear, hear)—but suppose we find their plans in the right direction, let us then follow their better example. Let us look at them. I will take them as they come. Belgium, with its five millions of people, has a Senate of sixty-eight, elected for eight years during the good behaviour of those elected, and if it happens that a resolution of the House of Commons or Chamber of Deputies dissolves that body, why their House of Lords suffers dissolution at the same time. (Hear, hear.) The people have the right of saying how they will choose their Commons, and their Senate is constituted in accordance with that opinion. There is no conflict of authority; they both act under the popular control.

Greece—rising Greece—a marvellous people, with ancient traditions, with its city of Athens full now of liberty and of knowledge, with schools, with a university to which flock all the bright spirits that surround the city—in Greece they chose their King Otho, but they did not agree with him, and they gave him notice to quit. Why? Because he was not strong enough for the place. They got another King, who is more docile and more obedient; and he had better be so, or he will have notice to quit also. (Laughter.) But they gave their Upper House notice to quit too, and they have not called the Upper House together since. (Laughter.) They are content to manage their own affairs through their own representatives. (Cheers.) The Netherlands have thirty representatives, elected for three years; Sweden, one hundred and thirty-three, elected for nine years. One-third goes out every three years, so that they can keep them in order. Norway is something like it. They elect their representatives by a rather complicated process, but still they have them well in hand—

(laughter)—and if they had half-a-dozen Salisburys there they would know what to do with them. (Cheers.) Switzerland has forty-four, a Senate composed, I think, of two representatives from each Canton, and they are elected annually for four years. They have a certain check, I know, upon the vote of the Chamber of Deputies for a time, but it can not last more than four years, because they then have to go back to the electors—every man above twenty years of age being an elector—(cheers)—and that settles the matter.

The United States have a Senate of seventy-four—two for each State. It is true it is under a peculiar Constitution, but it is found to work well—at least it has done so for a hundred years. The power of the Senate is great within certain limits, but it is under popular control, and its exercise is strictly prescribed and limited. After a hundred years' working of the Republican Constitution of America we do not find the people complain of the obstruction of their Upper House.

But the most remarkable instance is that of France. There you have a Senate of three hundred—four seventy-fives. One seventy-five, it is true, is elected for life at present, but they are about to revise their Constitution, and I think they are not very obstructive, because they are chosen by the Republican House, and the Senate being Republican, they take care to choose men satisfactory to the Republican spirit of France. But there is much dissatisfaction with that arrangement, as a matter of theory, and we find Ferry declaring that he will have a revision of the life-membership of the Upper House. (Hear, hear.) The other three seventy-fives are elected for nine years, one-third going out every three years, and you find them going on in perfect harmony. Well, we know perfectly well, after centuries of the tyranny and despotic authority of kings, we cannot in ten minutes make the people understand, as we have done here in England since Cromwell's time, the blessings of the operation of a free Constitution such as it is; but the French are settling down, and there is every reason to believe that the rights of popular government in France will not suffer. From my boyhood I have known France well. I have been in the habit of visiting France for

commercial matters and matters of pleasure too—business and pleasure and pleasure and business, a happy combination, a triumphant mixture, which I think every man does well to enjoy—(cheers)—and from my own observation I know perfectly well that whatever else there may be, there is an amount of prosperity, of happiness, of enjoyment, of enlightenment, and of general content among the thirty-six millions of France such as has never been seen before under any other system of French Government. (Applause.)

Well now, if you have an elective House of Lords all over the world, it becomes us to know whether possibly hereditary wisdom is an actual fact in any body of men—whether Nature makes it possible to have hereditary wisdom.

'Tis rare the father in the son we see,
He sometimes rises in the third degree,
Now on the crest of the wave, now in the trough of the sea.

The crest may appear again, possibly, but it is for the people to say how they like it. They judge of the past; and remember we in this assembly have a perfect and absolute Constitutional right to try and pass judgment upon this legislative body. (Hear, hear.) We are not children. Every man has a perfect right to have his own opinion on the matter, to express that opinion, to act upon it, to carry it out as far as he can, and to make it, if he pleases, the future law of the land. But what of the House of Lords? What has the House of Lords done in the past ages, over which, with your kind favour, I have gone to-night? What have they done to deserve any other fate than that of being subject to the elective will of the people? Tell me in our whole history of any one great beneficial Act which has originated from the House of Lords. (Applause.) Of all the 500 Acts I mentioned as having been placed upon the Statute Book since 1832—fifty years—tell me of one that has not met with the most bitter and determined opposition from this obstructive body. (Cheers.) See what trouble we have had to get these fellows out of the way—(laughter)—before we could move with a good and popular measure. (Applause.)

But what says Lord Salisbury, who represents—and thank God he is the fellow—(laughter)—who is chosen to represent—the

House of Lords? No greater gain could be conceived for us than that a self-willed obstructive like that is chosen to represent the House of Lords. (Applause.) With his obstinacy, with his arbitrary temper, he ought to have been beside Charles I. (Hear, hear.) What an incredible thing for the mere accident of an accident, to be in a position to defy the will of the people of England! (Applause.) He is born, though he does not know it, two centuries and a half too late. (Cheers.) The man is out of date as much as my grandfather's pigtail. (Laughter.) He should have been permitted to look on and see Divine Right's head coming off, for he would have been quite ready to uphold the same doctrine as the demented Charles. (Applause.) But our noble hero lives too late, and he shan't do it now. (Loud cheers.) Lord Salisbury says many things, things utterly unwise, and as utterly obsolete, things of which we are judges and have the right to be judges, as British citizens and as thoughtful men. (Hear, hear.) He says, "Oh! but if the House of Lords is to be a mere echo of the will of the House of Commons, I for one say the sooner the House of Lords is abolished the better." He had actually a lucid interval enough one day to say that. (Much laughter.) We cannot accuse him of unmitigated absurdity when he is guilty of letting the cat out of the bag in that magnificent manner. (More laughter.) No, but if the House of Lords, as he says, is always to be cognizant of and obedient to the expressed will of the people in the House of Commons, I do not see of what use they are! (Cheers.) If they are only to act when the people have acted before them, of what use are they? And if they obstruct the action of the people, I think they are worse than useless—they are absolutely mischievous, and ought to be subjected to the people's good pleasure. (Enthusiastic cheering.) Take what you like, take any number of public questions you please—I am not going to trouble you with figures or with many facts at this late hour, because I know perfectly well—(Cries of "Go on.") Oh, no, I know better. (Laughter.) I am an old lecturer, and I know perfectly well that the patience and indulgence of an audience like this have their limits.

Take the land question now—the great question before us in the present day. In that, the House of Lords have the supreme control. The House of Lords or the House of landlords—(applause)—and not only the House of landlords above, but very often their nominees, who are erroneously supposed to represent the people in the House below—how have they dealt with the land? Why, in their own interest, very naturally, and egregiously so, so that it is utterly impossible this system of landlordism can go on. (Hear, hear.) We, as a people, cannot submit to it. See the way they treated the question.

The House of Lords, you know, is a House not only of secular powers, but of spiritual powers, and whenever they are going to do an act of mischief, any unusual amount of mischief, they are always pious. But remember, in all great legislative measures, with all their ecclesiastical piety, the spiritual peers have invariably given their voices and their votes on the wrong side. Look at their three famous resolutions. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.” (Laughter.) Number one—carried, and carried unanimously in favour of the Lords spiritual and temporal. (Laughter.) The next was, “The Lord hath given the same to his saints”—carried unanimously. (Renewed laughter.) But the third was the most important, “We are His saints, and therefore we take all the land we can get. (Loud laughter and cheers.)

The good old rule...the simple plan,
They should take who have the power,
They should keep who can.

And then these Lords have the audacity to look the people of England in the face and talk of the vested rights and interests of landed property. (Cheers.) What! people to be born in England, on the land and soil of England, and under successive encroachment Acts passed by the Lords to be turned out into the hard highway, and to have no right to stand on any one square yard of the green soil of England—utterly absurd and unjust. (Loud cheers.) What do they think the people were made for? In servitude to work for the farmers? for life to labour for the farmers? Then they think the farmers were made

to suck the land, and the landlords were made to suck the farmers. (Laughter.)

Mark well all the land laws, and when you see through them all, it comes to that. Well, the landlords may be brought to book, and circumstances, the march of events, are strongly against them. Yes, the New World, even the Punjaub, with its grain, and Russia sending its wheat at less than £1 a sack; and meat from New Zealand at sixpence a pound in vessels of 2,000 or 3,000 tons burthen—the New Zealand mutton so fine that it is frequently sold for English mutton to fools who like to pay a handsome price for it, though imported at so low a figure. (Laughter.)

Well, the Lords, with all their land laws, cannot meet this; it is no longer a profitable game. I can get two or three thousand acres of land in many places rent free for four or five years, if I will only keep the fences up and the weeds down and the buildings upon their legs. (Laughter.) Thus, we do not want many land laws to settle the value of landed property nowadays, and with landed property in such a disastrous state, there goes the territorial influence of old feudality. While the landlords are quarrelling over this state of things, honest people, the people of England, will step in and secure their own rights and privileges. (Applause.)

I am speaking now to a body of men far better acquainted with these matters than I am myself, though I was a farmer, and a very successful farmer in Sussex for twenty years, and never failed till 1879 in the production of my hops, a crop that severely tries the quality of the farmer, and therefore I have a right to know which way the wind blows in that direction. (Hear, hear.) God knows I have never derived much benefit from our English land laws, I can tell you. I knew something of the rapacity of the landlord's hares and rabbits. I knew what tithes and taxes and landlords' rule meant, and extraordinary tithes into the bargain. (Cheers.) Think of this—I lay down 40 or 50 acres of land to fruit or hops at a profit, by my own science, my own tact, my own skill, my own industry, my own business habits, and at my own cost, and in steps his highness the parson—(laughter)—and demands a tax out of my pocket for my own industry. The thing

is too monstrous—(loud cheers)—it is so opposed to every principle of right and justice, that so soon as the people have more power in the House of Commons that will go with the rest of the rubbish. (Continued cheering.)

Take any other question—take the education of the people. The House of Lords always opposed the universal education of the people, and I do not wonder at it, because they knew very well that universal knowledge means universal power. (Hear, hear.) It does not mean money alone, it means judgment, it means intelligence on the part of the people, it means the right to determine their own rights and wrongs, to judge between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and evil. (Applause.) Why, do you think if I had been on the bench of Bishops I would have extended the powers of the people in education? Not a bit of it. Why, it would be committing suicide to do so. (Laughter.) But we have changed all that, and now I defy you to keep the House of Lords and the Bishops in their present position as a House, hereditary and irresponsible, in the face of an enlightened people and household suffrage. (Cheers.)

Well, I won't trouble you with more examples, because you know them perfectly well. I am only too happy and too glad to find myself here in Colchester, to be permitted as I am to give a lecture on such a subject, altogether inadequate as I am to the task, with my brain immersed in matters of commerce and the affairs of every-day life, and in a different sphere nearly every night—last night at the opening of a great Board School with a blazing speech—(laughter)—to a thousand people, so that I did not get into the bosom of my family and say my prayers before midnight—(laughter)—and then up and at it to-day. (Cheers.) Well, I hope that may be in your eyes an apology for the very inadequate and inefficient manner—(“No, no.”)—in which I have laid this question before you. I feel the responsibility, Mr. Chairman, of the position of any man who stands before an audience like this to lay before them great questions.

But I appeal to you—have I not stated historical facts?—I appeal to your own knowledge of history, have I not faithfully given their interpretation? (Cheers.) I am told that I am honoured

by the presence here of men of hostile opinions—men who wear their eyes at the back of their head instead of the front. (Loud laughter.) But I defy the most wooden-headed old Tory that ever breathed—(great and prolonged laughter)—to say that my historical facts are not founded on truth, and for which I have not absolute authority. (Cheers.)

Well, I will put you out of your misery now by terminating my lecture. I know if you take home the facts I have given there is enough to think of and digest to some little advantage, and therefore, by way of bringing it to a practical issue, I should like to move a resolution in these terms :—“ That in the opinion of this meeting (largely influential as it is) it is high time to dispense with the attendance of Bishops in the House of Lords —(loud and enthusiastic cheering)—and that the privilege of a seat in that Assembly, from the mere accident of birth, should be abolished—(more cheering)—whether the noble Peer is sane or insane—(laughter)—in order to bring into more complete harmony the acts of the hereditary and irresponsible House with the chosen representatives of the people.” (Cheers.) “ There’s my resolution, which I venture most respectfully, after this statement of mine, to submit to this influential meeting. I trust that it is of a character to put your views to-night into practical harmony with your opinion. Let us hear from someone, either on the platform or in the meeting, whether he thinks proper to second this, and the Chairman will then do us the favour to put it to you to see what you think of it. (Loud cheers, during which SIR JOHN resumed his seat.)

Mr. J. H. COCKERELL seconded the resolution ; and the CHAIRMAN having put it to the meeting, it was declared carried with only three dissentients, one woman holding up both hands, a performance which occasioned considerable laughter.

The CHAIRMAN then proposed a vote of thanks to the Lecturer for his racy and historical address, and remarked that though this was the first opportunity they had had of hearing SIR JOHN BENNETT, he trusted it would not be the last.

The vote was carried amidst loud cheers, and the meeting closed with a similar compliment being accorded to the CHAIRMAN, on the motion of SIR JOHN BENNETT.

VOTES OF THE BISHOPS IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

BILLS.	DATE.	VOTED FOR.	VOTED AGAINST.	REMARKS.
Shop-lifting Bill (to abolish Capital Punishment for stealing from Shops property of the value of Five Shillings)	1810	0	7	Rejected on Second Reading by 31 to 11.
National Education : Parochial Schools Bill (to authorise Magistrates to provide Schools where they were wanted out of the Rates)	1839	3	15	Rejected on Second Reading by 229 to 118.
Appointment of Committee of Privy Council for Education Bill (to deal with matters affecting the education of the people)	1807	...	...	Rejected on Second Reading without a Division.
Roman Catholics Disabilities Bill (to render Roman Catholics eligible to sit in Parliament)	1821	2	25	Rejected on Second Reading by 159 to 120.
Roman Catholics (Peers) Relief Bill (to render Roman Catholic Peers eligible to sit in Parliament)	1822	1	23	Rejected on Second Reading.
Roman Catholic Relief Bill (same object as previous Bills)	1829	10	20	Third Read. carried by 213 to 104.
Reform Bill	1831	2	21	Rejected on Sec. Read. by 199 to 158
Do.	1832	12	15	Carried on Sec. Read. by 184 to 175.
Jewish Disabilities Repeal Bill (to render Jews eligible to sit in Parliament)	1833	3	20	Rejected on Second Reading by 104 to 54.
Admission of Dissenters to the Universities Bill	1834	2	22	Rejected on Sec. Read. by 187 to 85.
University Tests Abolition Bill (to abolish ecclesiastical tests and restrictions which prevented Nonconformists from enjoying the rights and privileges of the Universities)	1867	2	4	Rejected on Second Reading by 74 to 46.
Do. do. do.	1869	0	3	Rej. by 91 to 54. Became law in 1871

1858	0	24	1861	0	4	1866	...	1877	1	15	1883	...
Church Rate Abolition Bill												
Do. do.	1860	16	1860	0	2	1861	0	1861	0	4	1866	...
Do. do.	1867	7	1867	0	7	1862	1	1862	1	12	1863	...
Qualification for Offices Abolition Bill (to abolish the declaration not to exercise power, authority, or influence, possessed in virtue of any office, to interfere or weaken the Protestant Church as it is by law established in England, or to disturb the said Church, or the Bishops and Clergy of the said Church, in the possession of any rights or privileges to which the said Church and the said Bishops and Clergy are or may be by law entitled)	1860	2	1860	0	2	1865	1	1865	1	10	1866	...
Do. do.												
Do. do.												
Do. do.												
Do. do.												
Do. do.												
The Burials Question. Motion to permit in Churchyards "Christian and orderly" funeral services other than that of the Church of England)	1876	16	1876	1	16	1877	1	1877	1	15	1883	...
Do. do.												
Do. do.												
Do. do.												
Burials Bill of Mr. Gladstone's Government ...												
Marriage with Deceased Wife's Sister Bill ...												
Do. do.												
Cruelty to Animals Acts Amendment Bill (to abolish pigeon shooting)	1883	...	1883	...	...	1883	...	1883	...	...	1883	...

(None of the Bishops spoke or took part in the division.)

THIRTY-TWO YEARS' PENSIONS.

A detailed estimate of the amount of public money paid to dukes, marquises, and earls, and their relatives since 1850, is published in the "Financial Reform Almanack" for 1884. From this we gather that 261 families of dukes, marquises, and earls, embracing 4,536 scions, and filling 8,228 offices, have obtained from the taxes, in thirty-two years, the sum of £66,247,242. The following are the amounts paid to some of the families mentioned during that period :—

	£			£
ARGYLLS	140,500	CALEDONS		824,500
ATHOLES	417,750	CARLISLES.....		615,000
BEAUFORTS	540,600	CLARENDONS		553,900
BEDFORDS	554,200	COURTOWNS		650,400
GRAFTONS.....	1,115,850	DALHOUSIES		827,500
MARLBOROUGHS	633,250	DUNMORES		896,012
NORTHUMBERLANDS ...	330,000	GREYS		1,069,500
RICHMONDS	1,600,500	HADDINGTONS		770,950
RUTLANDS	371,090	HOPETOUNS		1,039,800
WELLINGTONS	1,425,500	KIMBERLEYS		1,296,100
CLANRICARDES	635,250	LICHFIELDS		730,100
HERTFORDS	598,600	MINTOS		1,220,942
LOTHIANS.....	512,100	NORTHBROOKS		797,000
TWEEDDALES.....	566,000	RADNORS		789,200
WATERFORDS.....	1,308,200	RANFURLYS		937,230
BUCHANS	642,000	SHREWSBURYS		589,500

