

should be absent from the administration of the country's business—(hear, hear). Admit these two millions of electors and their presence will be immediately felt by an intenser and a quicker flow of political life—(cheers). Well, gentlemen, the House of Commons, the great council of the nation, elected by and responsible to the nation, and in constant touch with it, has, by an almost unanimous vote passed this Franchise Bill, but, strange to say, we have to deplore the fact that it is not yet the law of the land. It seems that the lords and barons assembled in the Second Chamber of Parliament have decreed that that must not be, at least as yet. Perhaps they may hope never. It lies with this nation to say whether, in this matter, the peers or the people are to give way. Gentlemen, of the issue of such a contest there can be no doubt. The peers must give way—(cheers). The will of the nation must have effect—(cheers). Gentlemen, who are these peers of Parliament who presume to dispute the will of the people? A branch of the Legislature, no doubt exercising, so they say, their constitutional rights. Gentlemen, no branch of the Legislature can have a constitutional power to thwart the national will—(cheers). To carry out the national will is the purpose of a Legislature, the very ground and reason of its existence, and the moment it fails to appreciate that, the moment it is out of sympathy with those whose affairs it is administering—that moment it begins to die, and if its downward progress be not arrested, its doom is sealed—(cheers). But, gentlemen, suppose this Franchise Bill passed, I fear we cannot have done with the House of Lords—(hear, hear). We must have an end put to these struggles between the two branches of the Legislature—(cheers). The legislative machinery must be made to work more harmoniously—(hear, hear). The House of Commons must not always have to be asking itself the question how far the Lords will give effect to its labours—(cheers). Gentlemen, I am not at this moment concerned with the manner of the reform of the House of Lords, but, if I mistake not, we shall be found to be unanimous in this at least, that it needs serious and drastic reform—(cheers). If it is to exist, it can only be by its being changed from an arbitrary, hereditary, and irresponsible assembly to one thoroughly representative of the people; for the people must rule—(cheers). I know that some think that the only satisfactory way of reforming the House of Lords is to abolish it—(loud cheers). There are many who think that the action of the House of Lords has for centuries been evil, and only evil continually—(hear, hear). Far too much may undoubtedly be said in support of that opinion. We may well put the question—"In what reforms, in what beneficent legislation have the Lords been in the van?" Were they so in the great Reform Bill of 1832? Were they so in the great measure for the removal of the disabilities of our Roman Catholic brethren? Were they so in the Act for the abolition of the paper duty, the effect of which has been to scatter throughout the land so much political light and education? Were they so in the matter of the Ballot Act, the object of which was to enable the voter to exercise his right without fear or favour? Have they been so in any

of those great measures which have been passed during the last fifty years, and which have at last enabled us to see a sensible diminution of the many long-continued woes of Ireland?—(cheers.) In short, in what good work have they ever been engaged? Have not the policy and the spirit of their policy, conveyed by them too often to the House of Commons cost millions of money and hundreds of thousands of lives?—(loud cries of assent.) Is it to be wondered at that, in view of all it has done, many cry out, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" But at all events reform of it there must be—(cheers). Will the people of Scotland, who send to the House of Commons such a serried phalanx of Liberal representatives, permit themselves to be misrepresented in the Upper Chamber by an equally serried phalanx of Tory lords selected by a few Scotch peers?—(cries of "No.") Will we permit the measures of our chosen representatives acting in the Commons House of Parliament to be upset by the votes of a horde of Tory lords, whipped up from their estates and their country sports to the unwonted work of legislation—(laughter)—or rather to the recording of such votes as they are bid—(laughter). Will we, in short, allow the business of the nation to be interrupted and stopped at the bidding of the man, whoever he may be, who happens to have the confidence for the moment of the Conservative Tory leader in the House of Peers. To these questions you will, I am sure, give an emphatic "No"—(cheers). Gentlemen just a few words more and I have done. It has, I see, been suggested that the free criticism to which the action of the House of Peers is being subjected is a veiled attack upon the monarchy. I reject this as a most unfounded and disgraceful calumny—(hear and cheers). All Liberals recognise to the full the constitutional maxim that the King can do no wrong, and that for the acts of the Crown its Ministers must be held responsible—(cheers). Would that all Conservative Ministers had had a tender regard for this principle, and kept the name of the Sovereign sacred from any suggestion of party. I believe I express the feelings of this great assemblage when I say that it has unflinching loyalty to the Crown—(cheers). It recognises that in the great electoral struggle of 1832 the Crown was on the side, not of prejudice and privilege, but on that of the people; it rejoices to recognise how thoroughly Her present Majesty has fulfilled the duties of her exalted station in the closest sympathy with her people, and it feels assured that in so far as the assent and action of the Crown shall be necessary to the carrying out, however tardily of this great Act of justice, the assent of the Crown will not be wanting—(cheers). Gentlemen, our Poet Laureate, himself a peer, not, however, be it observed, by right of birth but of merit, describes this country as

A land of old and just renown,
Where Freedom broadens slowly down
From precedent to precedent

—(cheers). In the truth of that description we all concur; in its aptitude we all agree. But while we do so, I fear we must confess to ourselves that the broadening and widening of our freedom, so far as regards the great measure of enfranchisement now