

position was humble and subordinate in regard to office, yet his influence was powerful and his power was great. The new Ministry came into power by the voice of the nation, because the country now urged measures of reform, and parliamentary reform was called for by the nation at large. This was a very strong government, and was composed of men of the first character and of the highest degree of literary and political ability. Lord Durham, Sir James Graham, and Lord Duncannon, were some of the colleagues who were to assist him in the great work of parliamentary reform. But the most important part of the work devolved on Lord John Russell because he was found adequate to the task. On the 1st of March, 1831, Lord John introduced into the House of Commons the "Great Reform Bill," agreed upon by his colleagues in office, and although some measure of reform was looked for, and had been expected, yet a bill so comprehensive in its character was not expected, and it took the nation by surprize. The writer of this article was residing in Scotland at the time this bill was brought forward, and remembers the universal excitement and joy that prevailed even in the land of steady habits and sober thought. The Bill was received by the great tory party, now forming the opposition for the first time, with derision—and, indeed, scorn and contempt, and was pronounced wholly impracticable. But the enthusiasm of the nation, and the universal popularity of the bill, changed their derision into alarm. The opposition roused all their energies and mustered all their strength for the contest, for they still regarded close boroughs as an essential part of the British Constitution. Sir Robert Peel took the lead in the opposition for the first time; but he lived long enough to take the opposite side of the political craft. The debates in the House of Commons were unusually warm and animated; talent and weight of influence were arraigned on both sides, and after a great deal of violence in debate, and tact and manœuvring on both sides, the bill passed the second reading by a majority of only one. This was a triumph to the opposition, and on the motion for going into committee, the bill was thrown out by a majority of eight. The ministry must either resign, or dissolve the parliament; and they adopted the latter alternative. The ministry knew that the nation was with them; and they appealed to the nation to be heard on the important question at issue, and the voice of the nation was heard, and decided most promptly and vigorously in favor of the ministry. Lord John Russell was returned for the County of Devon; and when the new Parliament met, the progress of the bill through the House of Commons, was speedy and triumphant. The ministry was now strong, and could command a large majority, yet, it did not last long; for it was soon taken up by internal