

told that politics are unknown in these walls. I believe it because I am told it. I believe it in faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for; faith is the evidence of things not seen; and therefore I face the situation, and I am to return thanks for a most ancient and venerable assembly of which I am a very recent and a very obscure member.

What can I say? Well, one thing I can say with perfect truth. In these days of change and flurry, when the great wave of popular opinion is ever heaving and never continuing in one state, it is a comfort to some minds to be able to contemplate something fixed, immovable, unchanged, unaffected by the shock of circumstances or the lapse of time, which, braving the respectful, sometimes the disrespectful, curiosity of the nineteenth century, stands with exactly the same coolness and courage with which it confronted the inquiring reverence of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is certain that in that time empires have risen and have fallen; dynasties have waxed and waned in this country; religion has been changed more than once; one king has lost his head upon the scaffold, another has been dethroned and punished by act of Parliament; the science of political economy has been born, and from all I can learn, seems about to die. The franchise has been revolutionized. The House of Commons has been reformed again and again, and almost every municipal institution in the country has been either created or at all events re-created.

Two institutions, and only two, remain as they were 500 or 600 years ago—the House of Lords and the Corporation of London. Alas, alas, for the instability of human affairs—the Lord Mayor himself has been nibbled at; and the House of Lords has been told by him whom I follow, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in calling the most powerful statesman of the age, that he is going to think three times before he abolishes it. It is pretty certain that, if not to him, at any rate, to some one, sooner or later, will go forth that mandate—"mandate," is my noble friend's word, and I take it with great satisfaction—that mandate to which all politicians of all sides bow down, to subject the

great assembly for which I am returning thanks to that process of inquiry and of subsequent change which it does seem that every human institution of this country in this century is doomed to undergo.

I have not disguised—why should I disguise?—that I am of opinion, with thirteen years' experience of its working, and of the renewed flow of things that goes on all around us, that it cannot be expected that the House of Lords, any more than any other institution in this country, should be saved forever from change and reconstruction. But I will be equally frank, and I would say that I do hope that it will be dealt with in the way of change and reconstruction, and not by way of abolition. In every free country, I believe—I am sure in most—it is found necessary, or it is believed to be necessary, to have a second Chamber in the legislative machinery of the State, and I am certain that in the English House of Lords there is the most admirable material for the reconstruction of the Chamber.

The English House of Lords never did want, and it does not now want grand commanding ability. A debate in which—to go no further than four names—a debate in which the Duke of Argyll, Lord Salisbury and Lord Selborne, and the Bishop of Peterborough mingled, is a thing, let me tell you, worth a man's while to go many miles to listen to; and we find that still to great men of all sorts, to great contractors, to great brewers, to great bankers, to great men of commerce, to great soldiers and sailors, and may I say, excluding myself, great lawyers, not only to men who are remarkable for nothing but the number of acres and the quantity of stock, or consols they may own, the position of a seat in the House of Lords is still an object of ambition; and I would undertake to say, speaking with all reverence in presence of some of the foremost men in the House of Commons, that a man might now take up fifty men out of the House of Lords who, man for man, would be the equals in ability, with perhaps one enormous exception that will occur to every one, on whichever side of politics he may sit—absolute equals of any fifty men in the House of Commons. It is not in eloquence, it is not in