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Reform Bill, 1867

Maurice Cowling

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The Passing of the second Reform Bill

BY

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PREFACE

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‘The influence of the country gentlemen of England rest[s] on a more solid basis than that of any electoral franchises. . . . A country gentleman, one of large territorial possessions, living with his people, and, as Queen Elizabeth used to say, for his people, wield[s] an influence superior to any other class in this or in any other nation in the world. This bill [is] a great and comprehensive measure—and the most liberal ever offered to Parliament.’

Sir Thomas Lloyd, Liberal MP. for Cardiganshire in *Hansard*, May 27 1867 (1157).

‘The Reform bill may be considered “through” . . . What an unknown world we are to enter, but I believe more, or at least as safely, and more permanently than a £5 franchise would enable us to do. If the gentry will take their part, they will be adopted as leaders. If we are left to the demagogues, God help us!’

Gathorne Hardy, Home Secretary and Conservative MP. for the University of Oxford. *Diary*, August 9 1867, Cranbrook MSS East Suffolk County Record Office.

‘If we wish to commit political suicide, it is not difficult to do so and, as far as I am personally concerned, I have no particular objection; but politically I have a very strong one. I accepted office very unwillingly, but having accepted it, I mean to keep it as long as I can. . . .’

Derby to Sir John Pakington, December 4 1866. Derby MSS Box 193/1.