

shelved. It was a very moderate measure, reducing the qualification for the franchise in the counties to £14, while in the boroughs the house of £7 was to be substituted for the house of £10 as the lowest limit of occupation conferring the vote. It was calculated that these changes would add about 400,000 electors to the 2,000,000 already in existence, so that the balance of power would still have remained in the hands of the middle classes.

The Tories naturally opposed the bill, on the ground that it was in no way superior to their own abortive measure which Disraeli had formulated in 1859. But it is more surprising to find that a section of the Liberal party also fought against it. A number of members who shared Palmerston's views, and had a rooted dislike to any further advance in the direction of democracy, declared that the bill was wholly unnecessary, and affirmed no real principle of value. They banded themselves into a small party of thirty or forty strong, which Gladstone in derision called "the Cave of Adullam"—because to it, as to David of old, fled "every one who was in distress, and every one who was discontented." The second reading of the Reform Bill was only passed by a majority of five in face of their opposition, and finally the Tories and "Adullamites" succeeded in carrying an amendment which wrecked the whole of the Government's scheme. Lord Russell thereupon resigned (June, 1866), and the queen sent for the Conservative leader, Lord Derby, and invited him to form a ministry.

Once more, as in 1858, Lord Derby and his lieutenant Benjamin Disraeli endeavoured to compass the difficult feat of carrying on the government of the country without a majority in the House of Commons at their back. For the Adullamites refused to coalesce with the Conservative party, and, quite contented to have wrecked Lord Russell's Reform Bill, fell back again into the Liberal ranks.

Lord Derby
prime
minister.