

bill. His scheme for the double vote was shorn away, his "fancy franchises" were struck off, but he still went on. He was compelled to accept the lowering of the household franchise to £5 in the towns and £12 in the counties, and to give votes to all lodgers paying £10 a year. Thus the measure became very democratic in form, more so than many even among the Whigs desired; but Disraeli persevered, and "took the Leap in the Dark" by bestowing the franchise on the masses. Save the agricultural labourers in the rural districts, practically all householders in the United Kingdom were now given the power of becoming electors. Among the groans of timid Conservatives and the scoffs of angry Liberals, who complained that Disraeli had stolen the credit of granting Reform from them, the bill became law in August, 1867.

For another session Disraeli continued to cling to office, holding out many schemes of social and economic legislation which he promised to put in practice. He was now possessed of complete control over his party, The Liberals  
return to  
office. for in 1868 his aged colleague Lord Derby retired from politics, and there was no other member of the cabinet who could exercise the least influence over him. But his dexterous parliamentary tactics could not save him. The Liberals seized on the Irish question, and began to clamour for remedial legislation for the sister island as a cure for the disease of Fenianism. They began with pointing out the Established Church of Ireland as an abuse and an anachronism; Gladstone carried in the Commons a resolution demanding its disestablishment, and, defeated on this point, Disraeli could only resign or dissolve parliament. He chose the latter alternative; the new constituencies created by the Reform Bill of 1867 gave the Liberals a crushing majority of 120, and the Conservatives had to retire from office (December, 1868).

Gladstone, coming into office with such a splendid majority at his back, was able at once to take in hand all the changes