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1832 Reform Riots



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On 22nd September 1831, the [House of Commons](#) passed the [Reform Bill](#). However, the [Tories](#) still dominated the [House of Lords](#), and after a long debate the bill was defeated. When people heard the news, riots took place in several British towns. In [London](#), the houses owned by the [Duke of Wellington](#) and bishops who had voted against the bill in the Lords were attacked.

With [London](#) the scene of huge and stormy demonstrations, [Earl Grey](#) and his [Whig](#) government tried again to introduce a Reform Act. Finally, on 13th April 1832, the [Reform Act](#) was passed by a small majority in the [House of Lords](#).

(1) Mary Frampton was the daughter of a prosperous landowner in Dorset. She recorded her thoughts on the Reform Riots in her journal on 5th November, 1831.

The riots at Bristol were quieted and a sufficient force fixed there, two troops of the 3rd Dragoons returned to their headquarters at Dorchester. This morning intelligence was received that a mob from Poole were intending to attack Lord Eldon's place at Encombe, and also Corfe Castle. Mr Bond's troop of Yeomanry were in consequence called out, and stationed on and about the bridge at Wareham, thus effectively guarding the only approach from Poole.

(2) Bishop of Exeter, letter to the Duke of Wellington (5th November, 1831)

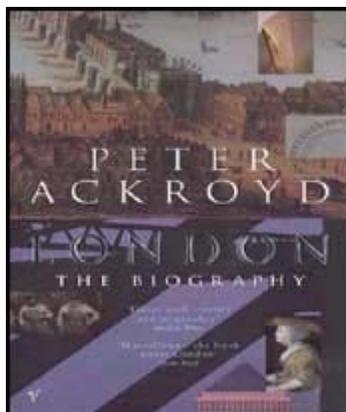
The most inflammatory bills have been freely circulated, calling on the populace to "arm themselves and imitate the heroic acts of the Bristol men". There are strong indications of an expectation, if not an actual plan, of insurrection against property among the lowest orders. This detestable Reform Bill has raised the hopes of the utmost. At Plymouth and the neighbouring towns, the spirit is tremendously bad. The shopkeepers are almost all Dissenters, and such is the rage on the question of Reform at Plymouth, that I have received from several quarters the most earnest requests that I will not come to concentrate a church, as I had engaged to do. They assure me that my own person, and the security of the public peace, would be in the greatest danger.

(3) Letters from the Duke of Wellington to Mrs Arbuthnot (April/May, 1831)

(28th April) I learn from John that the mob attacked my House and broke about thirty windows. He fired two blunderbusses in the air from the top of the house, and they went off.

(29th April) I think that my servant John saved my house, or the lives of many of the mob - possibly both - by firing as he did. They certainly intended to destroy the house, and did not care one pin for the poor Duchess being dead in the house.

(1st May) Matters appear to be going as badly as possible. It may be relied upon that we shall have a revolution. I have never doubted the inclination and disposition of the lower orders of the people. I told you years ago that they are rotten to the core. They are not bloodthirsty, but they are desirous of plunder. They will plunder, annihilate all property in the country. The majority of them will starve; and we shall witness scenes such as have never yet occurred in any part of the world.



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