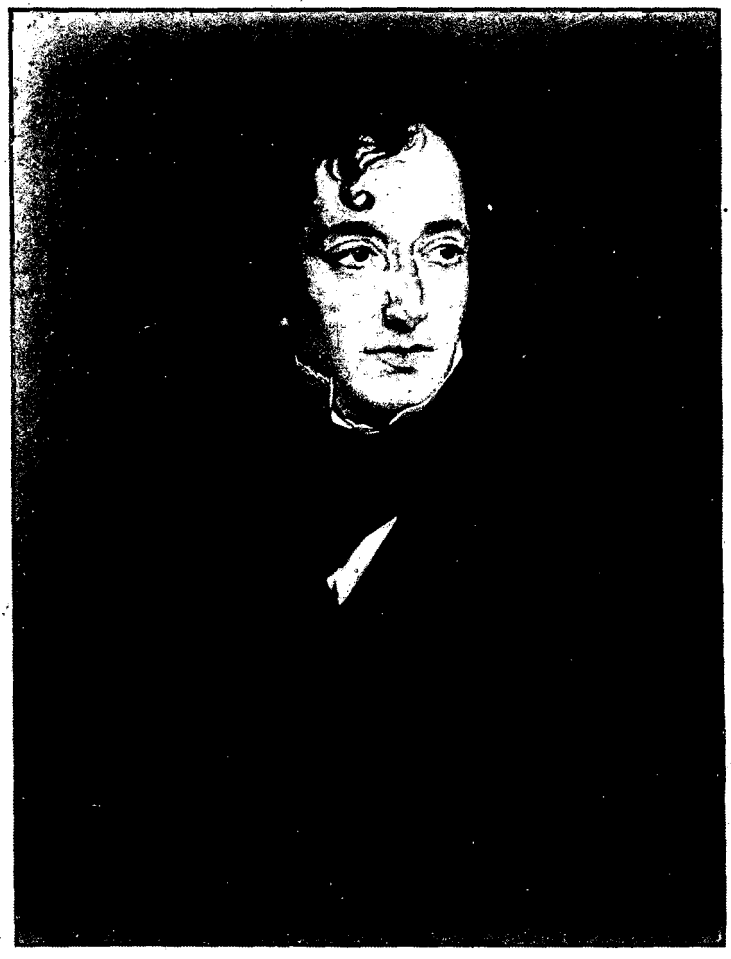
THE LIFE OF BENJAMIN DISRAELI EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

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The Right Honble. B. Disraeli, M.P.
1852
from the portrait by Sir Francis Grant
at Hughenden

1480

THE LIFE OF
BENJAMIN DISRAELI
EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

By WILLIAM FLAVELLE MONYPENNY
AND
GEORGE EARLE BUCKLE

NEW AND REVISED EDITION
IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I. 1804—1859
WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory.—CONTARINI FLEMING.

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INTRODUCTION TO NEW EDITION

It is nearly nineteen years since Volume I., and more than nine years since Volumes V. and VI., of the *Life of Disraeli* were published. During the whole period his reputation, compared with that of his contemporaries, has steadily increased; and his creation, the modern Conservative party, though subjected to-day to a formidable competition unknown in his time, has just polled, even in this moment of its depression, more votes among a fully-enfranchised democracy than any other single party. Its leader, Mr. Baldwin, a man almost as different as possible from Disraeli in race, circumstances, upbringing and personality, never tires of proclaiming, between forty and fifty years after Disraeli's death, that his own political creed is based on that great man's teachings. Moreover, the generous youth of to-day, especially at our Universities, who represent for us that 'new generation' in which Disraeli saw the real hope of the country and to which he constantly appealed, find their inspiration, if they are Conservatively inclined, in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, and adopt as their watchwords Disraeli's illuminating phrases, 'a real Throne,' 'Imperium et Libertas' and 'Sanitas Sanitatum.'

Nor is it merely among partisans and politicians that his fame has grown. Disraeli the man, and Disraeli the author, also exercise a wide fascination. Accordingly a very considerable number of books about him have issued in recent years from the press, some of a biographical, some of a critical character; some dealing with his political, some with his literary legacy; some endeavouring to penetrate the riddle of his complex personality,

others elaborating from his speeches and writings a body of doctrine, and a spirit in treating public affairs, wholesome for these times as for his. All this many-sided literature has necessarily to a large extent been based on the Monypenny-Buckle *Life*, which has indeed been criticised for its bulk, but of which the comprehensiveness and authority have never been questioned. It is hoped, therefore, that a new edition of that *Life*, bringing the book within the reach of readers of moderate means, will meet with a general welcome.

Owing to the adoption of very thin but durable paper, the whole of the letterpress of the original six volumes, including prefaces and appendices, is here given within two volumes. It has been set up almost entirely from the original plates, and sixteen of the numerous illustrations have been retained. I have carefully revised the work throughout, but solely with the view of correcting mistakes, making needed explanations, and adding such new facts of importance—in themselves extremely few—as have come to light since the original publication. In Volumes I. and II. of that publication, the work of Mr. Monypenny, I have placed my notes in square brackets and appended my initials; and, in regard to Volume I., I have had the advantage of consulting some corrections which Mr. Monypenny had made in his own copy.

This new edition appears with the co-operation and goodwill of all who were responsible in any way for the original publication—the Beaconsfield Trustees, the Proprietors of *The Times*, Mr. Coningsby Disraeli, and the publishing house of Murray. Indeed, to the publishers, who have alas! during the past year lost by death the John Murray with whom it had long been my privilege and pleasure to work, I owe and desire to express especial thanks.

G. E. B.

July, 1929.

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PREFACE

The main source of the biography of which this is the first volume is the great mass of papers bequeathed by Lord Beaconsfield to the late Lord Rowton and now in the keeping of the trustees of the Beaconsfield estate; and my first duty is a grateful recognition of the unfailing kindness and confidence which Lord Rothschild and the other trustees have bestowed upon me since I began my long and arduous enterprise. For this volume, the most difficult and laborious portion of the whole work, it has not been possible to derive much assistance from extraneous sources other than those which are accessible to all; my principal obligations are to Lady Layard for Disraeli's correspondence with the Austens; to Sir Herbert Thompson for the letters to William Pyne; and to Captain C. L. Lindsay for some of the original material which formed the basis of the published volume *Lord Beaconsfield's Letters*.

To the King I owe my dutiful acknowledgment of the permission which his Majesty has been graciously pleased to accord me to print the letter to Queen Victoria in Appendix A; and I have to thank Lord Grey, Lord Tennyson, and Constance Lady Haldon for access to, or permission to publish, other single documents. I have also to thank Mr. Coningsby Disraeli for much assistance with the illustrations, in particular for allowing the reproduction of pictures at Hughenden; and Mr. Moberly Bell and Mr. G. W. Prothero for their kindness in reading the proof sheets and for many valuable criticisms and suggestions.

While still in his youth Disraeli adopted the practice,

which he followed scrupulously and consistently to the end of his life, of spelling words such as 'honor,' 'favor,' and so forth, according to their Latin origin; and in passages where his own language is reproduced this spelling has been allowed to stand, though elsewhere the ordinary English usage has been followed.

W. F. M.

October, 1910.

CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY.

What a famous man believes as to his remote ancestral origins is often of more import than the dry, literal truth, and it will be best, therefore, to begin with the story of the Disraelis as it shaped itself in the mind of the subject of these memoirs.

There have been two great colonies of the Jewish race in Europe—in Spain and in Sarmatia. The origin of the Jews in Spain is lost in the night of time. That it was of great antiquity we have proof. The tradition, never derided, that the Iberian Jews were a Phœnician colony has been favoured by the researches of modern antiquaries, who have traced the Hebrew language in the ancient names of the localities. . . . We know that in the time of Cicero the Jews had been settled immemorially in Spain. When the Romans, converted to Christianity and acted on by the priesthood, began to trouble the Spanish Jews, it appears by a decree of Constantine that they were owners and cultivators of the soil, a circumstance which alone proves the antiquity and the nobility of their settlement, for the possession of the land is never conceded to a degraded race. The conquest of Spain by the Goths in the fifth and sixth centuries threatened the Spanish Jews, however, with more serious adversaries than the Romans. The Gothic tribes, very recently converted to their Syrian faith, were full of barbaric zeal against those whom they looked upon as the enemies of Jesus. But the Spanish Jews sought assistance from their kinsmen the Saracens on the opposite coast; Spain was invaded and subdued by the Moors, and for several centuries the Jew and the Saracen lived under the same benignant laws and shared the same brilliant prosperity. In the history of Spain during the Saracenic supremacy any

distinction of religion or race is no longer traced. And so it came to pass that when at the end of the fourteenth century, after the fell triumph of the Dominicans over the Albigenses, the Holy Inquisition was introduced into Spain, it was reported to Torquemada that two-thirds of the nobility of Arragon—that is to say, of the proprietors of the land—were Jews.

All that these men knew of Christianity was that it was a religion of fire and sword, and that one of its first duties was to revenge some mysterious and inexplicable crime which had been committed ages ago by some unheard-of ancestors of theirs in an unknown land. The inquisitors addressed themselves to the Spanish Jews in the same abrupt and ferocious manner in which the monks saluted the Mexicans and the Peruvians. All those of the Spanish Jews who did not conform after the fall of the Mohammedan kingdoms were expatriated by the victorious Goths, and these refugees were the main source of the Italian Jews, and of the most respectable portion of the Jews of Holland. These exiles found refuge in two republics—Venice and the United Provinces.[1]

After this historic preamble we enter the more dubious region of family tradition and genealogical legend.

My grandfather, who became an English denizen in 1748, was an Italian descendant of one of those Hebrew families whom the Inquisition forced to emigrate from the Spanish Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century, and who found a refuge in the more tolerant territories of the Venetian Republic. His ancestors had dropped their Gothic surname on their settlement on the terra firma, and, grateful to the God of Jacob who had sustained them through unprecedented trials and guarded them through unheard-of perils, they assumed the name of Disraeli, a name never borne before or since by any other family, in order that their race might be for ever recognised. Undisturbed and unmolested they flourished as merchants for more than two centuries under the protection of the lion of St. Mark, which was but just, as the patron Saint of the Republic was himself a child of Israel. But towards the middle of the eighteenth century the altered circumstances of England, favourable, as it was then supposed, to commerce and religious liberty, attracted the attention of my great-grandfather to this island, and

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 24.

he resolved that the youngest of his two sons, Benjamin, the son of his right hand, should settle in a country where the dynasty seemed at length established through the recent failure of Prince Charles Edward, and where public opinion appeared definitively adverse to persecution of creed and conscience.

The Jewish families who were then settled in England were few, though, from their wealth and other circumstances, they were far from unimportant. They were all of them Sephardim—that is to say, Children of Israel, who had never quitted the shores of the Midland Ocean until Torquemada had driven them from their pleasant residences and rich estates in Arragon, and Andalusia, and Portugal, to seek greater blessings even than a clear atmosphere and a glowing sun, amid the marshes of Holland and the fogs of Britain. Most of these families, who held themselves aloof from the Hebrews of Northern Europe, then only occasionally stealing into England, as from an inferior caste, and whose synagogue was reserved only for the Sephardim, are now extinct; while the branch of the great family, which, notwithstanding their own sufferings from prejudice, they had the hardihood to look down upon, have achieved an amount of wealth and consideration which the Sephardim, even with the patronage of Mr. Pelham, never could have contemplated. Nevertheless, at the time when my grandfather settled in England, and when Mr. Pelham, who was very favourable to the Jews, was Prime Minister, there might be found, among other Jewish families settled in this country, the Villa Reals, who brought wealth to these shores almost as great as their name, though that is the second in Portugal, and who have twice allied themselves with the English aristocracy, the Medinas, the Laras—who were our kinsmen—and the Mendez da Costas, who, I believe, still exist.

Whether it were that my grandfather, on his arrival, was not encouraged by those to whom he had a right to look up—which is often our hard case in the outset of life—or whether he was alarmed at the unexpected consequences of Mr. Pelham's favourable disposition to his countrymen in the disgraceful repeal of the Jew Bill which occurred a very few years after his arrival in this country, I know not; but certainly he appears never to have cordially or intimately mixed with his community. This tendency to alienation was, no doubt, subsequently encouraged by his marriage, which took place in 1765. My grandmother, the beautiful daughter of a family who had suffered from persecution, had imbibed that dislike for her race which the vain are

too apt to adopt when they find that they are born to public contempt. The indignant feeling that should be reserved for the persecutor, in the mortification of their disturbed sensibility, is too often visited on the victim; and the cause of annoyance is recognised not in the ignorant malevolence of the powerful, but in the conscientious conviction of the innocent sufferer. Seventeen years, however, elapsed before my grandfather entered into this union, and during that interval he had not been idle. He was only eighteen when he commenced his career and when a great responsibility devolved upon him. He was not unequal to it. He was a man of ardent character; sanguine, courageous, speculative, and fortunate; with a temper which no disappointment could disturb, and a brain, amid reverses, full of resource. He made his fortune in the midway of life, and settled near Enfield, where he formed an Italian garden, entertained his friends, played whist with Sir Horace Mann, who was his great acquaintance, and who had known his brother at Venice as a banker, ate macaroni which was dressed by the Venetian Consul, sang canzonettas, and, notwithstanding a wife who never pardoned him for his name, and a son who disappointed all his plans, and who to the last hour of his life was an enigma to him, lived till he was nearly ninety, and then died in 1817[1] in the full enjoyment of prolonged existence.

My grandfather retired from active business on the eve of that great financial epoch, to grapple with which his talents were well adapted; and when the wars and loans of the Revolution were about to create those families of millionaires, in which he might probably have enrolled his own. That, however, was not our destiny.[2]

Such is Benjamin Disraeli's story of the vicissitudes of his family, such the background of historic truth and genealogical legend in which he sought his connexion with the larger vicissitudes of his race. In these ancestral matters we are most of us prone to mistake possibilities for probabilities, and to rear grandiose theories on a very slender foundation of fact. Disraeli was no exception to the rule: indeed, all his days he was haunted, more than most men, by a longing to escape

[1] He really died in Nov., 1816, at the age of 86.

[2] Memoir of Isaac D'Israeli prefaced to the collected edition of his works published in 1849.

and Israeli, it would appear, is an Arabic word meaning Israelite, which from its constant application to individual Jews by the non-Jewish population in Moorish Spain and in the Levant frequently developed into a permanent surname. Thus all that our positive knowledge amounts to is that the D'Israelis were of the seed of Abraham, and that they came proximately from Italy—a land which has produced so many more than its due allotment of the world's great statesmen and rulers.

The circumstances of the young immigrant who came to London to seek his fortune were in all likelihood humble enough, and we need not suppose that when he set out for England the security of the Hanoverian dynasty figured very largely in his calculations. He was content to begin as a clerk in an Anglo-Italian house, and though he presently established himself in a business of his own as an Italian merchant, it was long before real prosperity came to him. To vary the monotony of his business as a merchant he tried experiments in the stock market; but these at first were unfortunate, and though eventually he won a good position as a stockbroker, and even became a member of the Stock Exchange Committee, he was for a time involved in serious difficulties. In 1765, however, he married, as his second[1] wife, one Sarah Siprut de Gabay, who, through her paternal grandmother, inherited the blood

from the sordid details of commonplace life into spacious historical atmospheres. In the present instance he had probably very little precise knowledge to cool his ardent imagination. His father, in spite of his multifarious curiosity, appears never to have troubled himself about his own family antecedents, and Benjamin D'Israeli the elder died before his grandson was of an age to have his curiosity awakened. It need not then surprise us to find that criticism has been busy with the narrative which has just been given. The tradition of an ancestor who took part in the great Jewish exodus from Spain in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella may or may not be well founded, but it is not supported by any independent evidence. The story of the long sojourn in Venice is even more open to suspicion; no trace of the family having been discovered in Venetian archives till a period subsequent to the migration to England. What we know for certain is that the grandfather Benjamin D'Israeli, who 'became an English denizen in 1748,' had his Italian home not in Venice but at Cento in Ferrara[1]: we know also that a Jewish colony, no doubt mainly of Levantine origin, existed in Ferrara before the Spanish exodus, but that it was largely reinforced by the exiles who fled from Torquemada. The name,[2] for which we have to be content with a less picturesque derivation than was claimed for it by the man who has made it so famous, is equally consistent either with a

that he was ever even a possible rival of the Rothschilds. At his death he left estate real and personal which was sworn under £35,000. In his will he sums up his vicissitudes of residence by describing himself as 'formerly of Enfield in the County of Middlesex, and then of Woodford in the County of Essex and of Old Broad Street, London, but late of Church Street, Stoke Newington,' where he died. His tomb, restored by his grandson when in the plenitude of his fame and greatness, may still be seen in the Portuguese Jews' Cemetery at Mile End, in the East of London.

Benjamin D'Israeli the elder remained to the end of his life a member of the Sephardi congregation of Bevis Marks, and though, as we are told,[1] he was somewhat lax in his observances and took no great interest in the affairs of the Synagogue, he contributed liberally to its support and increased his donations as the growth of his fortune gave him warrant. On one occasion he even served in the minor office of Inspector of the Charity School, though apparently his zeal in the performance of the duties was not remarkable. From the few glimpses we get of him, he seems to have been a man of winning and kindly disposition. His son Isaac, writing after his death, dwells on his 'sweetness of temper and generosity of feeling'; and more than half a century later his grandson still affectionately remembered the 'kind good-natured man who was in the habit of giving me presents when his wife was away.' Far different were Lord Beaconsfield's recollections of his grandmother: 'a demon,' as he described her to Lord Rowton in his grandiose way, 'only equalled by Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, Frances Anne [Marchioness of Londonderry], and perhaps Catherine of Russia.'

She lived till 1825, when she died, aged 82, and was buried in Willesden Church, where her monument is. She was informally a Protestant at the time of her death. She came to stay with my father and mother at Hyde House near

[1] Picciotto's *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History*, p. 295.

Chesham in the year 1825, and was kind and suave to all: upon seeing which I recollect that my mother remarked: 'Depend upon it she is going to die.' I remember with horror the journeys on Sundays from Bloomsbury Square to Kensington when I was a boy. No public conveyances, no kindness, no tea, no tips—nothing.

CHAPTER II.

ISAAC D'ISRAELI.

To Benjamin and Sarah D'Israeli a son Isaac, their only child, was born in 1766.

Nature [proceeds the Memoir from which we have already drawn] had disqualified him, from his cradle, for the busy pursuits of men. A pale, pensive child, with large dark brown eyes, and flowing hair, had grown up beneath this roof of worldly energy and enjoyment, indicating even in his infancy, by the whole carriage of his life, that he was of a different order from those among whom he lived. Timid, susceptible, lost in reverie, fond of solitude, or seeking no better company than a book, the years had stolen on, till he arrived at that mournful period of boyhood when eccentricities excite attention and command no sympathy. Then commenced the age of domestic criticism. His mother, not incapable of deep affections, but so mortified by her social position that she lived until eighty without indulging in a tender expression, foresaw for her child only a future of degradation. Having a strong, clear mind, without any imagination, she believed that she beheld an inevitable doom. The tart remark and the contemptuous comment on her part, elicited, on the other, all the irritability of the poetic idiosyncrasy. After frantic ebullitions, for which, when the circumstances were analysed by an ordinary mind, there seemed no sufficient cause, my grandfather always interfered to soothe with good-tempered commonplaces, and promote peace. He was a man who thought that the only way to make people happy was to make them a present. He took it for granted that a boy in a passion wanted a toy or a guinea. At a later date when my father ran away from home, and after some wanderings was brought back, found lying on a tombstone in Hackney Churchyard, he embraced him, and gave him a pony.

Soon however these remedies ceased to avail.

The crisis arrived, when, after months of abstraction and irritability, my father produced a poem. For the first time my grandfather was seriously alarmed. The loss of one of his argosies, uninsured, could not have filled him with more blank dismay. His idea of a poet was formed from one of the prints of Hogarth hanging in his room, where an unfortunate wight in a garret was inditing an ode to riches, while dunned for his milk-score.

Decisive measures were at once adopted and the young poet was sent to Amsterdam, 'consigned like a bale of goods to my grandfather's correspondent, who had instructions to place him at some collegium of repute in that city.' Here he lived for the next three or four years in the charge of a tutor who gave the intelligent boy the run of an excellent library, but made no attempt to impart the mental discipline that might have been so salutary. 'Before his pupil was fifteen, he had read the works of Voltaire and had dipped into Bayle,' authors, it may be remarked, whose influence can be seen in all his subsequent work and may be detected even in the mind of his more famous son. 'When he was eighteen he returned to England a disciple of Rousseau,' and no better equipped than when he left for taking the place which the commercial ambition of his father or the social aspirations of his mother would have assigned to him. The father proposed to place his son in a mercantile establishment at Bordeaux. Isaac replied that 'he had written a poem of considerable length, which he wished to publish, against commerce which was the corruption of man.' Finally a compromise was discovered.

He was sent abroad, to travel in France, which the peace then permitted, visit some friends, see Paris, and then proceed to Bordeaux if he felt inclined. My father travelled in France, and then proceeded to Paris, where he remained till the eve of great events in that capital. This was a visit recollected with satisfaction. He lived with learned men and moved in vast libraries, and returned in the earlier part of 1788, with some little knowledge of life, and with a considerable quantity of books.

As early as 1786 D'Israeli had appeared in print in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and the year after his return from Paris he published in the same serial an anonymous satire in verse which is now forgotten but was fortunate enough to attract some attention at the time and to win for its author, when his identity was revealed, the acquaintance of some of the minor literary celebrities of the day. Poetry, however, was not his field, and he presently struck a more productive vein. In his twenty-fifth year he published, again anonymously, a volume of anecdotes, sketches, and observations which under the happy title of "Curiosities of Literature" soon became popular. A second volume followed a couple of years later, and the success of this work gave a bias to its author's mental development and eventually determined his whole literary career. Many years indeed of undecided purpose, of 'hesitating and imperfect effort' and of vague aspirations after fame in the creative fields of literature were still to come; for, with ample means to supply his immediate wants provided under the will of his maternal grandmother and ample prospects secured in the succession to his father's fortune, Isaac D'Israeli missed the salutary compulsion which the necessity of earning his daily bread would have imposed. But at the age of thirty-five he renounced his dreams and, according to his son, 'resolved to devote himself for the rest of his life to the acquisition of knowledge.'

This crisis in his mental development coincided with an important change in the external ordering of his life. In 1802 he married Maria Basevi, the youngest daughter of an Italian Jew who had settled in England later than Benjamin D'Israeli. In the case of most great men the mother's influence is perhaps more potent than the father's in the shaping of character and career; but the subject of this biography seems to have been an exception. The Basevi family were then and later not devoid of intellectual distinction, but no portion of it seems to have fallen to the lot of Maria D'Israeli. She lived till 1847

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LIBRARY.

—long enough to see her son one of the foremost men in Parliament; yet in the family correspondence we seldom hear of her, or if she is mentioned it is usually in connexion with some passing illness or some domestic detail. In the Memoir of Isaac D'Israeli, which his son contributed to a collected edition of his works published after his death, and which forms the basis of this and the preceding chapter, she finds no place at all. Her daughter, writing on its appearance to congratulate her brother on 'the success of his labour of love' and writing with a sister's admiring partiality, was nevertheless quick to notice the omission.

> Your essay must ever rank among the most delightful biographic sketches in our language, if not the most so, and I can at this moment remember nothing like it. Never was there a character at once so skilfully, tenderly, and truthfully delineated. Every line told in my heart as I eagerly ran over them. As for the whole, no one but ourselves can know how true it is, but everybody will feel how charming. Only your magic pen could have so grouped materials which seemed so scant into a picture full of interest for all the world. If it be short, it is full of matter. Everything is in it,—everything at least but one. I do wish that one felicitous stroke, one tender word had brought our dear Mother into the picture. You will think me ungrateful not to be quite satisfied. It is easy for one who can do nothing else to make remarks.'

Maria D'Israeli in fact appears to have been an excellent wife and mother, who kept the affection of her husband and won the affection of her children, but never counted for much in the intellectual life of either.

For Isaac D'Israeli the ten years that followed his marriage were years mainly of accumulation. 'His pen was never idle, but it was to note and to register, not to compose. His researches were prosecuted every morning among the MSS. of the British Museum, while his own ample collections permitted him to pursue his investigation in his own library into the night.' Boxes of his papers still survive which bear testimony to this untiring if somewhat desultory industry—a chaos of fragmentary

notes in small and crowded penmanship, no scrap of paper that came to hand and had an unused corner being either too high or too low to serve his need. Eventually the desire of composition again came over him. 'From 1812 to 1822 the press abounded with his works. His *Calamities of Authors*, his *Memoirs of Literary Controversy*, in the manner of Bayle; his *Essay on the Literary Character*, the most perfect of his compositions, were all chapters in that History of English Literature which he then commenced to meditate, and which it was fated should never be completed.' There is evidence that even before his marriage the idea of this monumental work had occurred to him: it became no doubt the leading inspiration of his studies and gave to them whatever unity of purpose they possessed; and it hovered before his eyes for forty years till blindness overtook him. But his activity was by no means confined within the bounds of this great design. His early work, the *Curiosities of Literature*, was cosmopolitan rather than exclusively English in its range, and as the public continued to buy and read it, the author was eventually induced to begin a process of revision and enrichment under which it grew in time to its final ample dimensions. In its enlarged form it more than retained the favour it had already won, and remains to this day the most popular of his writings. Even more deserving of notice in a biography of his son are his excursions into the realm of political history. His literary studies had led him on to an *Inquiry into the Literary and Political Character of James the First*, in which he strove to vindicate the reputation of that monarch against the strictures of historians dominated by the Whig tradition; and, pursuing the same line of study, he gave five years of his life to an elaborate and ambitious treatise intended to perform a similar office for James's successor. The *Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles I.* have long been superseded by the works of later historians; but they won for their author an honorary degree at

Oxford to which he was presented as 'optimi regis vindex optimus'; and they have won for him also lasting credit as one of the first of English historians to recognise the value and attempt the exploration of the masses of manuscript material lodged in the British Museum and elsewhere.

Among his contemporaries, and not least among those whose praise was best worth having, Isaac D'Israeli's reputation stood high. Byron, Scott, Southey, Rogers, were all among his admirers. 'There's a man,' said Rogers to Southey, 'with only half an intellect who writes books that must live.' Byron was less caustic in his appreciation. 'I don't know a living man's books,' he wrote to his publisher, 'I take up so often —or lay down more reluctantly—as Israeli's;'[1] 'If there is anything new of Israeli's send it me. . . . He is the Bayle of literary speculation and puts together more amusing information than anybody.'[2]

Shortly after the publication of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* Byron and D'Israeli met, apparently not for the first time, and a scrap in Benjamin Disraeli's hand has preserved his father's recollection of his intercourse with the poet.

> I never knew a man with a more modest, gentlemanly, and perfectly unaffected manner. He was now in full fame, and until he left England I often met him. He treated me with so much respect—I had almost said reverence—that I, being a somewhat modest and retired man, thought at first that he was quizzing me, but I soon found that I did him injustice. The fact is my works being all about the feelings of literary men were exceedingly interesting to him. They contained knowledge which he could get nowhere else. It was all new

[1] Byron's *Letters and Journals* (Ed.: R. E. Prothero), IV., p. 274. The letter reproaches Murray for his indiscretion in showing D'Israeli Byron's copy of the original issue of the *Literary Character* full of marginal notes and emendations. This copy was the proximate cause of a revised and enlarged edition of that work, which appeared in 1818. Byron read the book in its new form and added notes which were embodied in the edition of 1822. In a note to the preface of the 1818 edition Byron declared that he had read D'Israeli's works 'oftener than perhaps those of any English writer whatever, except such as treat of Turkey.'

[2] *Ibid.*, V., p. 390.

to him. He told me that he had read my works over and over again. I thought this, of course, a compliment, but some years afterwards found it to be true.

D'Israeli in his turn was of course not behindhand in appreciation of the poet, and his son grew to manhood in a household where the name of Byron was always held in reverence. Yet in spite of this it is hard to believe that the father was really in sympathy with the romantic movement of the day. His true idol was Pope, and in the whole complexion of his mind we find an affinity with the eighteenth century rather than with the nineteenth. The son was more deeply penetrated with the spirit of the later time; and he had the dæmonic force which his father lacked and which that spirit calls for or inspires in its votaries. Yet we shall find, as we proceed, in subtle combination with very different matter, a certain eighteenth century element in the intellect of the son which, unless we are to explain it by direct inheritance from his father, was doubtless the result of early education and of constant intercourse during the impressionable age with a mind originally cast in the eighteenth century mould.

Isaac D'Israeli's works, especially the *Curiosities*, still have their readers, but his reputation has hardly rested at the level to which it rose during his life. It is as the father of his son that he now mainly interests us, and as a capital influence in the formation of that son's mind and character. Superficially the resemblance is slight between the student recluse buried in his books and the statesman who through the turmoil of public life forced his way to fame and honour, and the son was well aware that his father never fully understood him; yet he assigned to his father a foremost place among the few from whose wisdom he had himself drawn profit, and to the end of his days he retained the most unquestioning admiration for his works and was never weary of paying affectionate homage to his genius and attainments. If we bear in memory the lineaments of the father as drawn

by the son, we shall catch in the son himself many a suggestion of heredity even where the contrast between the two seems sharpest and where resemblance is least to be expected. Take, for instance, the following:—

> He was a complete literary character, a man who really passed his life in his library. Even marriage produced no change: he rose to enter the chamber where he lived alone with his books, and at night his lamp was ever lit within the same walls. Nothing, indeed, was more remarkable than the isolation of this prolonged existence. . . . He disliked business, and he never required relaxation; he was absorbed in his pursuits. In London his only amusement was to ramble among booksellers; if he entered a club, it was only to go into the library. In the country, he scarcely ever left his room but to saunter in abstraction upon a terrace; muse over a chapter, or coin a sentence. He had not a single passion or prejudice: all his convictions were the result of his own studies, and were often opposed to the impressions which he had early imbibed. He not only never entered into the politics of the day, but he could never understand them. He never was connected with any particular body or set of men; comrades of school or college, or confederates in that public life which, in England, is, perhaps, the only foundation of real friendship.

D'Israeli the elder lived through one of the most stirring periods in the history of the world, yet in all his correspondence there is hardly an allusion to passing events. Not the sort of man, one would say, whose son was likely to become Prime Minister of England; but we shall find as we proceed in the son himself something of the same tendency to aloofness and isolation, and many of the habits of the student recluse not eradicated though held in subordination by what was strenuous and enterprising in his character and genius.

Though at this stage it is in part an anticipation, one last extract from the Memoir by his son will complete the picture of Isaac D'Israeli:—

> On his moral character I shall scarcely presume to dwell. The philosophic sweetness of his disposition, the serenity of his lot, and the elevating nature of his pursuits, combined

to enable him to pass through life without an evil act, almost without an evil thought. As the world has always been fond of personal details respecting men who have been celebrated, I will mention that he was fair, with a Bourbon nose, and brown eyes of extraordinary beauty and lustre. He wore a small black velvet cap, but his white hair latterly touched his shoulders in curls almost as flowing as in his boyhood. His extremities were delicate and well-formed, and his leg, at his last hour, as shapely as in his youth, which showed the vigour of his frame. Latterly he had become corpulent. He did not excel in conversation, though in his family circle he was garrulous. Everything interested him, and blind and eighty-two he was still as susceptible as a child. One of his last acts was to compose some verses of gay gratitude to his daughter-in-law, who was his London correspondent, and to whose lively pen he was indebted for constant amusement. He had by nature a singular volatility which never deserted him. His feelings, though always amiable, were not painfully deep, and amid joy or sorrow the philosophic vein was ever evident. He more resembled Goldsmith than any man that I can compare him to; in his conversation, his apparent confusion of ideas ending with some felicitous phrase of genius, his naïveté, his simplicity not untouched with a dash of sarcasm affecting innocence—one was often reminded of the gifted friend of Burke and Johnson. There was however one trait in which my father did not resemble Goldsmith; he had no vanity. Indeed, one of his few infirmities was rather a deficiency of self-esteem.

CHAPTER III.

Early Years.

1804–1821.

On his marriage early in 1802, Isaac D'Israeli, who had been living in chambers in James Street, Adelphi, moved to 6, King's Road, Bedford Row,[1] and there at half-past five in the morning of Friday, December 21, 1804, or according to the Jewish reckoning the 19th of Tebet, 5565, his eldest son Benjamin was born. On the eighth day the boy was duly initiated into the covenant of Abraham, the rite of circumcision being performed by a relative of his mother's, David Lindo. Benjamin was not the eldest child, for a daughter Sarah had preceded him on December 29, 1802; and three sons were to follow—Naphtali (who died in infancy) in 1807, Raphael (Ralph) in 1809, and Jacobus (James) in 1813.

The glimpses we are able to catch at this distance of time of the future statesman's childhood are few and of slight significance. 'My son Ben assures me you are in Brighton. He saw you! Now, he never lies,' wrote Isaac D'Israeli from Brighton, where he was a frequent visitor, to his friend John Murray when the boy was between four and five. Perhaps not only truthfulness, but a certain precocious alertness, is to be deduced from

[1] Now 22, Theobald's Road. The house, though in what is now a noisy thoroughfare, has a pleasant outlook over Gray's Inn Garden, and is marked by a memorial tablet affixed by the London County Council. Oddly enough, Lord Beaconsfield seems never to have been certain either of the place of his birth or of the year in which it occurred.

this. At the age of six, or earlier,[1] Benjamin was sent to a school at Islington which was kept by a Miss Roper, and which is described by one who knew it as 'for those days a very high-class establishment.' Miss Roper had a Bucks connexion, so that by an odd coincidence Benjamin's schoolmates included a number of boys belonging to families among whom the Disraelis afterwards settled in that county. From Islington in process of time he passed to a school of higher grade kept by the Rev. John Potticany, an Independent minister, it is said,[2] in Elliott Place, Blackheath. Here the atmosphere, we are told, was liberal 'as to both politics and religion,' though most of the boys appear to have attended the services of the Established Church. Probably it was only in a school of a certain latitude in religious matters that room could be found in those days for a professing Jew; and we learn that Ben was not only allowed to stand back at prayer time, but in common with a schoolfellow who was also a Jew received instruction in Hebrew from a Rabbi who visited them on Saturdays. Among his contemporaries at Blackheath was Milner Gibson, the well-known Radical politician, who in later days was to sit opposite him in the House of Commons. From another contemporary we get a pleasant picture of Mr. Potticany's most distinguished pupil:—

When my father took me to school he handed me over to Ben, as he always called him. I looked up to him as a big boy, and very kind he was to me, making me sit next to him in play hours, and amusing me with stories of robbers and caves, illustrating them with rough pencil sketches, which he continually rubbed out to make way for fresh ones. He was a very rapid reader, was fond of romances, and would often let me sit by him and read the same book, good-naturedly waiting before turning a leaf till he knew I had reached the bottom of the page. He was very fond of playing at horses, and would often drive me and another boy as a pair with

[1] So early that he used afterwards to say he believed he was sent there to learn to speak.

[2] *Jewish Chronicle*, May 29, 1868. [It is doubtful whether this schoolmaster's name was Potticany or Potticary.—G. E. B.]

string reins. He was always full of fun; and at Midsummer, when he went home for the holidays in the basket of the Blackheath coach, fired away at the passers-by with his pea-shooter.[1]

Another and less friendly account, which appears to be based on the recollections of his Jewish schoolfellow, describes Disraeli as

> a lazy boy who excelled in none of the school exercises. However, he would amuse his companions on a wet half-holiday with a little extemporised drama. Being able to draw he would also construct a castle in paper as the scene of the adventures which he described. He had a taste not uncommon among schoolboys for little acts of bargaining and merchandise. . . . Mr. Potticany forbade newspapers, but a clique, of which the two Jew boys were members, were allowed to take in *Bell's Weekly Messenger*. So far as politics, the talk of the embryo Premier was pronounced Toryish.

According to this writer the youthful Benjamin was not only dramatist but actor; in a school performance of *The Merchant of Venice* he took the part of Gratiano, but failed to win applause.[2]

Meagre indeed, in other respects, is our knowledge of those schooldays at Blackheath, though they extended into a good many years. In both the reminiscences that have been cited we find touches that remind us of Disraeli's own pictures of the boyhood of his heroes in *Vivian Grey* and *Contarini Fleming*; and these two novels in their turn, which have an autobiographic significance above that of all the others, may help us to imagine what manner of boy their author must have been. Like both his heroes, we may surmise that he was daring and impetuous, sometimes perhaps mutinous and pugnacious;

[1] Rev. E. Jones in the *Standard* of April 28, 1887. Mr. Jones was only six months younger than his protector, who had no doubt, however, both physically and mentally, the precocious development of his race.

[2] *Jewish Chronicle*, May 29, 1868. Published soon after Disraeli had become Prime Minister for the first time, these recollections are open to the suspicion of having taken a colour from the political animus of later years.

keenly sensitive and warmly affectionate; a leader when he chose to lead, but somewhat isolated and much given to reverie and castle-building. According to a recollection of his brother Ralph's, he was fond of 'playing at Parliament' in the holidays, and always reserved for himself the part of leader and spokesman of the Government, keeping the others, somewhat to their annoyance, in the cold shades of opposition. Of Benjamin's studies at Blackheath we know nothing at all. The only letter of his early years that has come down to us is severely laconic and gives us no assistance. It owes its preservation to the fact that the reverse of the paper on which it is written afforded space for one of his father's multifarious notes, and it runs: 'Dear Mama,—I have arrived safe. B. D'Israeli.' From a letter by his grandfather which has also floated down, and which incidentally gives us a pleasant taste of the kind-hearted old man who wrote it, we hear of a serious illness by which the child was stricken in a summer vacation of this period. In August, 1816, Benjamin D'Israeli the elder writes to a relation:—'We are now in great anxiety for poor little Ben, who has been very ill. . . . I am very much alarmed by the account I have from Isaac, and very much afeard. God preserve him and grant that he may get the better and recover!' 'Little Ben' recovered, but three months later the grandfather died.

His death proved in its indirect consequences an important event in the life of the child. In the first place, Isaac D'Israeli, grown more affluent now by the accession of his father's fortune, moved in the course of the following year from King's Road to 6, Bloomsbury Square,[1] a better house, with the further advantage of closer neighbourhood to the British Museum. Here he resided till twelve years later he left London for the country, and here his eldest son grew up to manhood. In the religious history of the family the removal of the

[1] This house also is marked by a tablet affixed by the London County Council in accordance with their excellent practice.

grandfather from the scene was quickly followed by serious developments which his presence had delayed. By temperament and training Isaac D'Israeli was ultra-liberal or Laodicean in his attitude towards the traditional faith; his mother, we know, had little affection for it; and some of the Basevi family into which he had married shared his dislike for the narrow orthodoxy which was still supreme in the Synagogue. Nevertheless his children were until their grandfather's death brought up in the Jewish faith, special provision being made, as we have seen, for the religious instruction of his eldest son in Mr. Potticany's establishment; and though Isaac himself neither attended the Synagogue nor took any interest in its affairs, he paid his dues regularly and would no doubt have been content to retain his nominal connexion with it if only he had been left in peace. But in 1813 he was for some pedantic reason elected Parnass or Warden of the Congregation of Bevis Marks; and on his writing to the Mahamad or Chamber of Elders to point out the 'singular impropriety' of the choice, and to decline the office, he was fined £40, and told that his election was in strict accordance with the laws of the Congregation. The quarrel was pursued with curious obstinacy on the part of the Elders and growing irritation on the part of their rebellious colleague. A long letter of remonstrance which D'Israeli wrote in December, 1813, defines his attitude:—

> A person who has always lived out of the sphere of your observation; of retired habits of life; who can never unite in your public worship, because, as now conducted, it disturbs, instead of exciting, religious emotions, a circumstance of general acknowledgment; who has only tolerated some part of your ritual, willing to concede all he can in those matters which he holds to be indifferent;—such a man, with but a moderate portion of honour and understanding, never can accept the solemn functions of an Elder in your congregation, and involve his life, and distract his pursuits, not in temporary but in permanent duties always repulsive to his feelings.

Though in this letter he threatened to withdraw from their society, the dispute did not as yet come to any definite head. Without rescinding their decrees the Elders were content for the present not to enforce them; but three years later they renewed their demands and D'Israeli, no longer under the restraint of his father's influence, responded by insisting that his name should be erased from the list of their members. His resignation was not formally accepted till several years had elapsed, but the connexion of the D'Israeli family with the Synagogue was now at an end.

Isaac D'Israeli though he ceased to be a Jew never became a Christian; and apparently he saw no reason at first why his children should not remain in the same amphibious condition. 'It was Mr. Sharon Turner[1] who persuaded my father—after much trouble—to allow his children to be baptized. He, one day, half consented, upon which Mr. Turner called on the day following and took us off to St. Andrew's, Holborn.' This was Lord Beaconsfield's account of the matter in his later days, and no doubt it fairly represents the general situation; but like many of his autobiographic recollections it is inaccurate in detail, for the children were not all baptized on one day. Benjamin himself was received into the Church on July 31, 1817, the two younger boys, Ralph and James, having preceded him earlier in the month, and his sister following after a short interval. No one could have foreseen how fruitful in great consequences this event was to be—neither the Elders of the Synagogue who forced the rupture, nor the Voltairian father, nor the zealous family friend, nor Mr. Thimbleby, who in Benjamin's case performed the ceremony of baptism. If the gentlemen of the Mahamad had shown less obstinacy or more worldly wisdom—and it was only, we are told, a question of two or three votes—that strange political career which was to fascinate a later generation might well have been impossible.

[1] The well-known historian of Anglo-Saxon England.

Whether it was that the change of religion made a change of school seem desirable, or that, as there is some reason to suspect, the establishment at Blackheath was closed, Benjamin about this time entered on a new stage of his education. He was transferred to 'a school in Epping Forest where there were about 50 or 60 boys, and where,' as he once told Lord Rowton after reading in some hostile article a sneer at his 'un-English Education,' 'the whole drama of public school life was acted in a smaller theatre.' The head of the school was a Unitarian Minister, the Rev. Eli Cogan.

There were two brothers Cogan, the eldest a physician and a man of mark in his day. He was the founder of the Humane Society, having brought the idea from Holland. Dr. Cogan had travelled much and was a member of foreign Universities. He published his travels in Germany and Holland and other works. His brother was not a public character, but Dr. Parr said of him that he was the only Nonconformist who was a Greek scholar.[1] He was a complete one; of the Porson school, and was really intended by Nature for a College Don. My father made his acquaintance at a bookseller's shop, where Cogan purchased always the finest editions in the finest condition. My father assumed for a long time that he was a clergyman. When he discovered that he was a schoolmaster, he thought I should be his pupil. I was thirteen, or about to be thirteen, when I went to him, at Higham Hall, an old manor house, about two miles from Walthamstow. Nothing was thought of there but the two dead languages, but he was an admirable instructor in them as well as a first rate scholar.

I remained there four years, and was quite fit to have gone to a University when I left Cogan—I mean, I did not require any preliminary cramming at a private tutor's. Not that I was more advanced than other boys of my age: not so advanced, and never could reach the first class, which consisted once of only one boy, Stratton, afterwards at Trinity College, Cambridge, and who, it was supposed, was to have carried everything before him there, and everywhere else, but I have never heard of him since. The first class dealt

[1] 'I am almost entirely, and in Greek altogether, self-taught,' says Mr. Cogan himself in a letter to Isaac D'Israeli, 'and have been obliged to acquire without assistance when a man what ought to have been communicated to me when a boy.'

with Æschylus, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Plato, and the Greek Orators. I never could reach this stage, though I listened to many of the interpretations and expositions of the master with interest and admiration. Though a very reserved, shy, calm man, his whole being became animated when he was interpreting a great classic writer. This I fully experienced when I went before him with my Terence. After our dull construing, he would himself interpret the scene. It was acting—full of humor.

However, though I never reached the first class, and was not eminent even in the second, I learnt, or rather read a great deal in those years. In Greek, all Herodotus; much of Thucydides; the greater part of the *Iliad*; something of the *Odyssey*; the *Ajax*, *Œdipus Rex* and *Antigone* of Sophocles; the *Medea*, *Hippolytus* and *Alcestis* of Euripides; Theocritus, the *Idylls* (my copy is now in the Library, with notes)[1]; and Xenophon, the *Retreat* and part of the *Cyropædia*. In Latin he bathed us in Cicero, and always impressed on us that, so far as style was concerned, in lucid arrangement of subject, and power of expression the *Pro Milone* was an education in itself; Cæsar; much of Livy; something of Tacitus; all Virgil and Horace; some of the best things in Catullus and the elegiac poets; the first book of Lucretius; and all Terence.[2]

The accounts which Disraeli gives of his early years, in such fragments of autobiography, letters, notes, and conversations as have come down to us, are not easy to harmonise. Mr. Potticany's school he nowhere mentions, and in later years the memory of Higham Hall seems to have absorbed many of the recollections both of what preceded and what followed in his education. It is probable that his stay at Cogan's was a good deal shorter than he makes it in the account just cited. In another narrative he himself reduces the period to two or three years; and the best conjecture would appear to be that he left in the course of his sixteenth year, and then for twelve months or more continued his education at home,

[1] Perhaps Disraeli had this copy in mind when in a somewhat imaginative piece of autobiography which he once addressed to a correspondent he wrote:—'In the pride of boyish erudition I edited the Adonisian Eclogue of Theocritus, which was privately printed. This was my first production: puerile pedantry.'

[2] Autobiographic note written for Lord Rowton.

probably, as the same narrative informs us, under the guidance of a private tutor. With this version a diary of studies for the year 1820 that has come down to us in a mutilated form would appear best to harmonise; it certainly bears out a further statement that his education was at this time 'severely classical.' Readers of *Vivian Grey* will recollect how the boy when he went to Burnsley Vicarage, 'although more deficient than most of his own age in accurate classical knowledge, found himself in talents, and various acquirements, immeasurably their superior'; and how afterwards when he 'sat down to read' at home, 'twelve hours a day, and self-banishment from society, overcame in twelve months the ill effects of his imperfect education.' The same tale is told in almost the same words of Contarini Fleming, and though we may doubt whether young Disraeli was equally successful in overcoming the defects of early training, it is clear that he made an heroic attempt. In the list of authors which he claims to have read while at Higham Hall there is probably a good deal of anticipation of subsequent study, but the testimony of the diary is all in favour of its virtual accuracy. Questions have been sometimes raised as to the extent of Disraeli's classical acquirements, and he has been accused in this connexion of pretending to knowledge which he did not really possess. The truth would seem to be that he contrived at this time to make himself a fair Latin scholar and retained in after life a moderate familiarity with the great Roman authors; but that his Greek was scanty in the beginning, and, in spite of his efforts after leaving school, remained scanty to the end. A thorough training in the Greek language and a better acquaintance with Greek literature might have been wholesome discipline for a mind that was too apt to be slipshod and a taste that was too apt to be artificial. But the Disraeli that we know would not have been himself if he had received the stamp that a public school education places upon intellect and character. The diary reveals the lack of

that severe grounding in the elements which smooths the approach to the classical authors for the clever public school boy; but it shows also a precocity of mind, a readiness to appraise and criticise, and a confidence in passing judgment that would be no less alien to the public school boy of fifteen than the frequent blunders in Greek accidence by which its pages are disfigured. A few extracts will bring us closer to the mind of the youthful student:—

Monday [May ?].—Lucian—his *Timon* increases in interest. Terence, the *Eunuch*. French—read the sensible preface of M. Marmontel to the *Henriade*. Livy—finished the Speech of Camillus. Writing, ciphering, &c.; prepared my Greek; made Latin verses; grammar.

Friday, June 2nd.—Lucian. Terence—the *Adelphi*, which promises to be an interesting play. *Henriade*. Writing, ciphering. Virgil—2nd book of the *Georgics*, which begins with a splendid invocation to Bacchus; it, however, all vanishes in a sleepy lecture on grafting boughs and lopping trees. Prepared Greek. Read Webb on the Greek metres; the author is not very profound, yet it is an useful work for a Tyro. Grammar, &c.

Lucian, as various entries show, he read with no small relish, and to the impression then produced we are no doubt in part indebted for *Ixion* and *The Infernal Marriage*. The future leader of the agricultural party was at first at all events disappointed with the *Georgics*. He admired indeed the 'extraordinary elegance of the versification,' but thought 'the celebration of ploughshares, of fallow land, and rainy days' but a poor subject for the genius of a great poet. In course of time, however, appreciation grew, and Lucretius from the first filled him with enthusiasm:—

Wednesday.—Demosthenes, *Philipp*. 1. I find it difficult. Lucretius—most beautiful: his invocation to Venus is very elegant and his description of Religion with her head among the clouds is sublime. Apollonius Rhodius. Gibbon, Vol. 12.

Friday.—*Georgics*, Bk. 2nd, 430 line; this glorious passage is evidently imitated from Lucretius; but it is the finest

specimen of versification that any language has ever produced. Horace—read six odes, 1st Bk. with myself.

Saturday.—This evening I again with increased admiration compared the passages of Lucretius and Virgil. I wonder extremely that Lucretius is not a greater favourite. . . .

Friday.—Lucretius—on Death: a sublime chapter, full of original and grand ideas, but the versification is rugged and wants the harmonious flow of Virgil.

An independent attack upon the *Iliad* leads to a curious outburst against his unlucky editor:—

Tuesday.—Euripides—*Alcestis*, to 98 line. Verses. Cicero—the *Oration for Milo*. Latin Exercise. Drawing. Began with myself the *Iliad*, Valpy's Edition; the notes are prolix and numerous, but little information is to be gleaned from them. Valpy rejects the digamma and supports the ridiculous theory of the self-sufficient Professor of Edinburgh. The Doctor and the Professor are equally contemptible. They mistake incapacity for originality, and endeavour to compensate for their moderate talents by rejecting every established rule and advocating every ridiculous system. One libels Heyne and the other criticizes Hermann. Illumined by such stars as these, surely the horizon of classical literature can never be clouded!

Greek metres, 'a dry but, I am afraid, necessary study,' were a sore affliction: but the young student was not easily discouraged.

Friday.—Again at the Greek Metres—bewildered! lost! miserable work, indeed. Writing. Prepared Greek. Read Gibbon, Vol. 9. Homer—the *Iliad*, Bk. 1st by myself.

Saturday.—Read *Literary Character* [his father's essay], three first chapters.

Monday.—Lucian, Εκκλησια θεων [sic]. Tibullus, Lib. 3, Eleg. 6. *Henriade*. Gibbon—Vol. 9. Livy. The Speech of Minutius and Fa. Maximus. Greek metres—a ray of light. Latin verses. Homer with myself.

Wednesday.—Greek metres—tolerable success.

Demosthenes, as we have seen, was not found easy, nor at first did he inspire much admiration.

Whether it is to be ascribed to my difficulty in understanding him or to my deficiency of taste, I know not, but I must

own I rather prefer the elegant and musical Orations of Cicero. I have a prejudice against Demosthenes, and, though his speeches are replete with Virtue, Patriotism and Courage, history tells me he was a Villain, a Partisan, and a Poltroon!

Presently, however, we find the entry, 'Demosthenes, παρα [sic] του στεφανου a most eloquent and irresistible passage'; and a complacent repetition of the blunder makes us suspect that deficiency of Greek as much as deficiency of taste determined the initial want of appreciation. Finally, in spite of every obstacle, the *Crown Oration* arouses real enthusiasm:—

Friday.—Demosth. *Orat. de Corona.* In my lesson of to-day is included that magnificent passage in which the Athenian Orator swears by the warriors of Marathon and the day of Salamis, and a more eloquent and enchanting passage mortal hand never penned, mortal ear never heard. The eloquence of Demosthenes is indeed irresistible, and while we peruse the pages of his genius, we lose our prejudices against the man in our admiration of the orator. At length I must own that Cicero is his inferior. . . . We admire in Cicero the well-turned sentence and the cadenced period, the subtile argument, and the acute remark. But in reading Demosthenes we think not of these, our imagination is fired, our enthusiasm awakened, and even I, I who have been obliged to wade through his beauties, with a hateful lexicon at my side, have often wished to have lived in the olden time, when Philip was King of Macedon and Demosthenes demagogue of Athens.

Pericles, of course, was his favourite among Athenian statesmen, 'the greatest and most accomplished of the characters of antiquity, his policy sound, his judgment unequalled.'

Tuesday.—Read Gibbon—the factions of the Theatre are described with his usual felicity, but I think he has not made the most of the character of Belisarius. He speaks, I think, too slightingly of Justinian, a monarch who, with all his faults and weaknesses, was infinitely superior to the rest of the later Roman Emperors.

Saturday, Sept. 9.—Apollonius Rhodius ['this weak gentleman,' as he elsewhere calls him]. . . . Cicero's *Oration for Milo* ['impressive eloquence, well-timed irony,

and subtle reasoning ']. . . . Gibbon, his chapter on the Doctrine of the Incarnation—as usual

Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer.[1]

Tuesday.— . . . Read Mitford: he is deeply versed in Greek literature, but his style is wretched, nay, scarcely English, a striking contrast to the cadenced periods of the *Decline and Fall.*

Thursday.—Voltaire—Critique on the *Œdipus* of Sophocles. Some just criticism mixed with much frivolity and bad taste. . . .

He then reads the *Œdipe,* but with little satisfaction; and 'a furious denunciation against Oracles and Superstition, brazen pipes and flagitious priests,' which he finds in it moves him to the following reflection: 'This is a *speech worthy of a French Illuminé; but in the heroic* age *Philosophers* did not exist, and the good men were contented to obey and consult those institutions which from their youth upward they were taught to respect and reverence.' An intimate friend of Disraeli's once, in a moment of pique, described him as a Voltairian in religion. The description was not very happy, for, as these boyish jottings alone would show, the Voltairian spirit aroused an instinctive antagonism in a mind cast from the beginning in the Semitic mould. And yet even thus early the subtle contradictions of a most complex character reveal themselves. In a note-book, which is probably not later than the period we have reached, we find this pencil entry in Disraeli's hand: 'Resolution.—To be always sincere and open with Mrs. E. Never to say but what I mean—*point de moquerie,* in which she thinks I excel.' Who 'Mrs. E.' may have been does not appear, but an anecdote that has floated down from the school-days at Cogan's bears witness to her discernment. The boys at Higham Hall who were members of the Church of England had to walk some distance on Sundays to attend morning service; and it resulted from this that they fared rather badly at the

[1] *Childe Harold,* III., 107.

midday dinner, which was usually half over by the time they got back. Disraeli was himself among the victims, and his new religion had as yet aroused in him none of the zeal of a martyr; so he solemnly threw out the suggestion to his Anglican companions that it might be as well if they all became Unitarians for the term of their life at school.

CHAPTER IV.

LAW AND TRAVEL.

1821–1824.

At seventeen, Disraeli tells us, a great change took place in his life. In November, 1821, he was articled to a firm of solicitors in the City—Messrs. Swain, Stevens, Maples, Pearse, and Hunt, of Frederick's Place, Old Jewry.

My father had a great friend, the head of the most eminent solicitors' firm in the City, except Freshfield's, of whom they were the honored rivals. He was very rich (the firm of five partners divided, though in unequal portions, fifteen thousand per annum), a man of considerable taste, with a fine library and collections of art, and one daughter, by no means without charm, either personally or intellectually. This gentleman wished that I should enter into his profession, and, in due course, his firm, and the parents wished and meant something else, also in due course. . . . My father was very warm about this business: the only time in his life in which he exerted authority, always, however, exerted with affection. I had some scruples, for even then I dreamed of Parliament. My father's refrain always was Philip Carteret Webb, who was the most eminent solicitor of his boyhood and who was an M.P.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the two years and more that I was in the office of our friend were wasted. I have often thought, though I have often regretted the University, that it was much the reverse. My business was to be the private secretary of the busiest partner of our friend. He dictated to me every day his correspondence, which was as extensive as a Minister's, and when the clients arrived I did not leave the room, but remained not only to learn my business but to become acquainted with my future clients.

They were in general men of great importance—bank directors, East India directors, merchants, bankers. Often extraordinary scenes when firms in the highest credit came to announce and prepare for their impending suspension; questions, too, where great amounts were at stake; the formation, too, of companies, &c., &c. It gave me great facility with my pen and no inconsiderable knowledge of human nature.

Unfortunately, if indeed I ought to use the word, the rest of my life was not in harmony with this practice and business. I passed my evenings at home, alone, and always in deep study. This developed at last different feelings and views to those which I had willingly but too quickly adopted when I was little more than seventeen. I became pensive and restless, and before I was twenty I was obliged to terminate the dream of my father and his friend. Nothing would satisfy me but travel. My father then made a feeble effort for Oxford, but the hour of adventure had arrived. I was unmanageable. Let me say one word about the lady. She said to me one day, and before I had shown any indication of my waywardness, 'You have too much genius for Frederick's Place: it will never do.'

We were good friends. She married a Devonshire gentleman and was the mother of two general officers, of whom we have heard a good deal of late [Zulu War, 1879], and whom I employed as a Minister! Such is life!

The 'two years and more' in Frederick's Place really stretched out to three. 'Most assiduous in his attention to business and showing great ability in the transaction of it'[1] was the impression he left on the mind of one of the partners; though all the evidence is not equally favourable, and Mr. Maples's recollections may have taken a colour from Disraeli's subsequent fame. In the formal sense his education no doubt had suffered, and we may be inclined to echo his own regret that he missed what Oxford could have given him—not merely the scholastic training, but the other gifts of even higher value which she bestows upon the aspirant to a public career. But 'nature is more powerful than education'; and this maxim, which was given to Contarini Fleming for his guidance, was signally verified in the case of

[1] Froude's *Lord Beaconsfield*, p. 22.

Benjamin Disraeli. Nor in those evenings of deep study at home was the learning of the Universities neglected. He pursued his heroic attacks on the Greek and Latin classics, and presently, like Vivian Grey, he made the discovery 'that there were classics in other languages besides Greek and Latin,' and in his father's library 'was introduced to that band of noble spirits, the great poets and legislators and philosophers of modern Europe.' In the eager pursuit of knowledge he had his father's example to draw him on and his father's experience, no doubt, to guide him; and it was at this time that he acquired the wide, though possibly superficial, acquaintance with books which we find even in his earliest writings, and that he laid the foundations of that really remarkable and highly unconventional knowledge of history, English and other, which he shows in all his works, and upon which he justly prided himself throughout his career. From his multifarious reading even law books were not wholly excluded, or so at least some scraps in the litter of early remains appear to indicate; though more often we find the law profaned by the use of fragments of legal documents for literary notes and verses.

In his enthusiasm for knowledge Vivian Grey narrowly escaped 'being all his life a dreaming scholar,' and a similar danger may have seemed at this time to threaten the young Disraeli. Inherited instinct and his father's example alike pointed in this direction. But though the thirst for knowledge was present in the son as in the father, and the habit of dreaming was there also, and remained there till the end, there was that in the son besides which made it impossible that his father's fate should overtake him. 'Destiny bears us to our lot and destiny is our own will.'[1]

Neither *Vivian Grey* nor *Contarini Fleming* can be used without discrimination as an authority for biographical details. In both, and especially in *Contarini*, which was

[1] *Contarini Fleming*, Pt. III. ch. 11.

written five years later than the other, the events of the author's childhood and youth are viewed through the refracting medium of his subsequent experience; and in both the story takes a colour from his mood at the time of writing. When Disraeli wrote *Vivian Grey* his ambition was turned towards the world of action; and when he wrote *Contarini* he was dreaming of winning fame by literary creation. It is the supreme interest of his character that he combined in such high degree the qualities that make for greatness in either sphere, the brooding temperament and glowing imagination of the poet with the practical energy, compelling will, and daring initiative of the man of action; and the two novels reveal as competing tendencies in the youth powers which were harmonised in the complex character of the man. Judiciously interpreted they supplement each other and abound in touches and incidents that help us to complete the picture of these years of adolescence. But it is to *Contarini* that we must look for the most vivid representation of the internal struggles by which Disraeli's youth, no less than his hero's, must have been torn. In Contarini ambition awakes at a very early age. While still a child he is consumed with desire to be 'something great and glorious and dazzling,' and 'entertains a deep conviction that life must be intolerable unless he be the greatest of men.' Yet he hovers perpetually between the two ideals of the life of glorious action on the one hand and the life of contemplation and literary achievement on the other, and hardly even at the end of the novel has he succeeded in finding rest. At one moment he 'longs to wave his inspiring sword at the head of armies or dash into the very heat and blaze of eloquent faction': at another he feels the delight of composition and grows 'intoxicated with his own eloquence'; he 'begins to ponder over the music of language; he studies the collocation of sweet words and constructs elaborate sentences in lonely walks': and then again, losing confidence in his powers, he falls into 'the agony of doubt and despair

which is the doom of youthful genius.' Affected by the spectacle of 'greatness achieved, moving before him in its quick and proud reality,' he turns with disgust from his 'weak meditations of unexecuted purposes and dreamy visions of imaginary grandeur' and becomes a worldling; or he writes a romance or tragedy and throws it aside dissatisfied. Now he plunges into action; again he finds 'a substitute for the excitement of action in the excitement of thought.' To-day 'in reverie he is an Alberoni, a Ripperda, a Richelieu'; to-morrow he has 'resolved to be a great historical writer,' and expound 'the nature of man and the origin of nations in glowing sentences of oracular majesty.'

Through all these phases or something like them the young Disraeli no doubt passed. Over Vivian Grey and Contarini Fleming indeed he had one great advantage. Amid his wildest day-dreams the constant attendance at Frederick's Place must have been a steadying influence, and have introduced an element of discipline into his life that was lacking to both his heroes. When he was most a bookworm it helped to keep the active instincts within him alive; which was the more fortunate as in his father's house and the society that frequented it he can have found little to feed them or to point the way to his subsequent career. 'Neither the fortune nor the family of Mr. Grey entitled him to mix in any other society than that of what is, in common parlance, termed the middling classes; but from his distinguished literary abilities he had always found himself an honoured guest among the powerful and the great.'[1] If the former part of the sentence is true of Benjamin Disraeli's father, no less than of Vivian Grey's, the latter is not. Isaac D'Israeli was a recluse, and while there is no reason to suppose that he was sought by the powerful and the great, it is certain that he never sought them. The pictures that have been drawn of the young Disraeli's securing early initiation into the world of fashion and politics through the guests

[1] *Vivian Grey*, Bk. I. ch. 8.

whom he met at his father's table are devoid of truth. His father's chosen companions were those with whom his attendance at the British Museum brought him into contact or his studies into sympathy, men like Francis Douce and Sharon Turner, Crofton Croker and Francis Cohen; and, above all, John Murray, his publisher. Murray, indeed, has a place of some importance in our story. Being on terms of closest intimacy with the D'Israeli family, he had seen the eldest son grow up from childhood, and was among the first to note his unusual capacity; so much so that before the youth had completed his eighteenth year we find the shrewd publisher seeking his opinion as to the merits of a tragedy which there was some thought of producing. In recognition of his precocity Benjamin was early admitted to the privilege of accompanying his father to Murray's dinner parties, where he listened with rapt attention to the discourse of Murray's guests, usually literary celebrities, small or great. Of one of these feasts of wit and learning we have a record from his own pen which helps us to realise the character of them all.

November 27th, 1822. Wednesday.—Dined at Murray's. Present Tom Moore, Stuart Newton, John Murray, Walter Hamilton, my father and self. Moore very entertaining. . . .

Moore.—This is excellent wine, Murray.

D'Israeli.—You'll miss the French wines.[1]

M.—Yes; the return to port is awful.

D.—I am not fond of port, but really there is a great deal of good port in England, and you'll soon get used to it.

M.—Oh! I have no doubt of it. I used to be very fond of port—but French wines spoil one for a while. The transition is too sudden from the wines of France to the port of Dover. . . .

D.—Pray is Lord Byron much altered?

M.—Yes, his facing has swelled out and he is getting fat; his hair is gray and his countenance has lost that 'spiritual expression' which he so eminently had. His teeth are getting bad, and when I saw him he said that if ever he came to England it would be to consult Wayte about them.

[1] Moore had recently returned from his long residence abroad.

B. D.—Who is since dead, and therefore he certainly won't come.

M.—I certainly was very much struck with an alteration for the worse. Besides he dresses very extraordinarily.

D.—Slovenly?

M.—Oh, no! no! He's very dandified, and yet not an English dandy. When I saw him he was dressed in a curious foreign cap, a frogged great coat, and had a gold chain round his neck and pushed into his waistcoat pocket. I asked him if he wore a glass and took it out, when I found fixed to it a set of trinkets. He had also another gold chain tight round his neck, something like a collar. He had then a plan of buying land and living in South America. When I saw Scrope Davies and told him that Byron was growing fat he instantly said,—'Then he'll never come to England.'[1]

M.—Rogers is the most wonderful man in conversation that I know. If he could write as well as he speaks he would be matchless, but his faculties desert him as soon as he touches a pen.

D.—It is wonderful how many men of talent have been so circumstanced.

M.—Yes! Curran, I remember, began a letter to a friend thus: 'It seems that directly I take a pen into my hand it remembers and acknowledges its allegiance to its mother goose.'

D.—Have you read the *Confessions of an Opium Eater*?

M.—Yes.

D.—It is an extraordinary piece of writing.

M.—I thought it an ambitious style and full of bad taste.

D.—You should allow for the opium. You know it is a genuine work.

M.—Indeed.

D.—Certainly. The author's name is De Quincey. He lives at the lakes. I know a gentleman who has seen him.

Murray.—I have seen him myself. He came to me on business once. He was the man whom the Lowthers procured to edit a paper against Brougham's party. He read me the prospectus, and the first thing he said was to tell the reader the whole story of his being hired by Lord Lonsdale.

M.—Ha! ha! ha!

[1] See *Vivian Grey*, Bk. IV. ch. 1, where the foregoing conversation *about* Byron is reproduced almost verbatim.

whom he met at his father's table are devoid of truth. His father's chosen companions were those with whom his attendance at the British Museum brought him into contact or his studies into sympathy, men like Francis Douce and Sharon Turner, Crofton Croker and Francis Cohen; and, above all, John Murray, his publisher. Murray, indeed, has a place of some importance in our story. Being on terms of closest intimacy with the D'Israeli family, he had seen the eldest son grow up from childhood, and was among the first to note his unusual capacity; so much so that before the youth had completed his eighteenth year we find the shrewd publisher seeking his opinion as to the merits of a tragedy which there was some thought of producing. In recognition of his precocity Benjamin was early admitted to the privilege of accompanying his father to Murray's dinner parties, where he listened with rapt attention to the discourse of Murray's guests, usually literary celebrities, small or great. Of one of these feasts of wit and learning we have a record from his own pen which helps us to realise the character of them all.

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M.—Ha! ha! ha!

[1] See *Vivian Grey*, Bk. IV. ch. 1, where the foregoing conversation about Byron is reproduced almost verbatim.

Murray.—From this you may judge what kind of man he is, and I need not tell you that there never was a being so ignorant of the world's ways.

M.—I read the confessions in the *London Magazine*, and I had no idea that it was a genuine production.

To the young law clerk these dinners were evidently something of an event; they gave him his earliest glimpses into a greater world; and when in *Vivian Grey* he wanted to reproduce the conversation of men of fashion of the more serious type it was to his recollections of John Murray's dinner parties that he turned for his model, and in part for his material.

As the years rolled by, however, and the boy outgrew his bookworm habits, the social side of his nature must have found room for expansion elsewhere; certainly he developed tastes and manners which neither his father's library nor Murray's dining-room could have suggested. Vivian Grey, we are told, when at the age of nineteen he emerged from the seclusion of his study and began to mingle in society, was 'an elegant lively lad with just enough of dandyism to preserve him from committing gaucheries and with the devil of a tongue'; and at a similar stage of his career the young Disraeli, we may suppose, was much the same. The dandyism at all events was already visible. From the wife of one of the partners of Frederick's Place testimony has come down that even thus early Benjamin Disraeli dressed very differently from other young men: he used to come to her house in 'a black velvet suit with ruffles, and black stockings with red clocks—which in those days was rather conspicuous attire.' Both *Vivian Grey* and *Contarini Fleming* indicate that the love of feminine society, and the susceptibility to feminine influence, which were abiding features of his character, made their appearance early; though beyond his mother and his sister, to whom he was then, as always, devoted, we know nothing of the women who were at this time of his circle. Vivian Grey's 'devil of a tongue' made him popular

with the ladies of his acquaintance, and he in his turn discovered that 'there is no fascination so irresistible to a boy as the smile of a married woman.' The men trembled at Contarini's sarcasms, but 'the women repeated with wonderment his fantastic raillery.' Clever, spirited, and handsome, and with as much assurance and as sharp a tongue as either of his heroes, the young Disraeli no doubt had much the same success.

Meanwhile, as he shed the habits and manners of the scholar, his taste for the profession to which his father had devoted him did not increase. There is a story of a friendly solicitor endeavouring to quicken his flagging interest in the law by installing him for a time in his own office; but when he found the youth reading Chaucer during business hours he came to the conclusion that nature had not intended him to be a lawyer, and advised that he should be allowed to follow his own inclinations and devote himself to literature.[1] To literature at all events he about this time seriously applied himself. The first attempt of which we have any record is curiously indicative of the trend of his subsequent genius. Encouraged by the kindness of John Murray, he submitted for publication in May, 1824, a short manuscript which under the guise of a tale was intended to be a satire on 'the present state of society.' Of society outside Bloomsbury the youthful satirist can have known nothing, except what he had picked up at Murray's dinner parties or a vivid imagination could teach him; and Murray showed so little eagerness to publish that a month later the author asked him to forget the 'indiscretion' and consign the manuscript to the flames.[2] A couple of chapters which had been mislaid when the manuscript was first sent to Albemarle Street have by that accident survived, and they seem to show that the work was a crude anticipation of *Popanilla*, its theme being the adventures of one Aylmer Papillon in a visit to Vraibleusia.

[1] Sir Henry Layard's *Autobiography*, I., p. 47.
[2] Smiles's *Life of Murray*, II., p. 182.

It was characteristic of Disraeli that in spite of disappointment at the first the project, though allowed to sleep, should not have been abandoned. Nearly all his successes in life were founded on previous failures.

To Mr. T. F. Maples.

WINDSOR,
Aug. 2, 1823.

MY DEAR SIR,

A letter which begins with congratulations is generally a pleasant thing, and I therefore feel very grateful for the opportunity of thus happily commencing my epistle to the young stranger who

> porrigens teneras manus
> matris e gremio suae,
> dulce rideat ad patrem,
> semihiante labello.[1]

But to leave Catullus and congratulations for a more matter of fact subject. As no particular time was settled for my return, and as you expressed a wish that I would communicate with you upon it, I am under the necessity of intruding upon you, surrounded of course by crowds of hurrying and eager friends who hail this new accession to the house of Montague, to ask the very uninteresting and business-like question of, when would you wish me to return?

If you can find time to write me half a line upon this subject I shall feel much obliged.

Present my best compliments to Mrs. Maples.

With the wish that every day of your daughter's life may be as sunny as the present and that she may never know the miseries of a wet summer,

I remain, my dear Sir,
Yours sincerely,
B. DISRAELI.[2]

When that letter was written the Disraeli family were spending a summer holiday on the Thames. In their annual excursions they rarely went far afield, but in

[1] Catullus, *Carm.* LXI., 217.

[2] It seems to have been about the beginning of this year, when he was eighteen, that Benjamin dropped the apostrophe in his name. His brothers and sister followed his example, though their father retained the old spelling to the end.

1824, Benjamin, whose travels had hitherto been confined probably within a hundred miles of London, had a notable extension of his experience. His health was already becoming delicate and his father was also ailing; so father and son set forth for a six weeks' tour on the Continent, accompanied by a young family friend called Meredith, who had just taken his degree at Oxford, and whom we shall meet again hereafter. Leaving London towards the end of July, the travellers went by steamer to Ostend, posted through Belgium to Cologne, and ascended the Rhine valley as far as Mannheim and Heidelberg. We have Benjamin's impressions of the tour partly in an unfinished diary and partly in voluminous letters to his sister, which show in the writer, in addition to some merely boyish pertness and vivacity, a keen eye alike for the picturesque and the ridiculous; a good deal of descriptive power; an interest in the fine arts and a knowledge of them, both surprising in one so young; and a no less surprising interest in gastronomy, regarded also as an art and not merely as ministering to a healthy boy's appetite.

To Sarah Disraeli.

BRUGES,
Thursday, July 29, 1824.

MY DEAR SA,

I add a few lines to my father's letter not only out of my great affection for you, but also that you may not misconceive the meaning of his dubious paragraph respecting our triumph. The truth is that we had a very stiff breeze, and almost every individual was taken down stairs save ourselves, who bore it out in the most manly and magnificent manner, not even inclining to indisposition. We came in with a very fresh sea; the night was most magnificent—indeed, I never witnessed a finer night. The governor was most frisky on his landing, and on the strength of mulled claret, &c., was quite the lion of Ostend. This latter place we found sufficiently disgusting, uninteresting for anything with the exception of its fortifications and harbour. We left it at 8 o'clock same morning as we arrived, and proceeded to Bruges in diligence through a flat but richly wooded country

full of *châteaux*, long avenues, and *paysannes* with wooden shoes and rich lace caps. Bruges is the city of cities. Nothing but churches and grand *maisons*—not a hovel in it. The streets the handsomest and widest and the architecture the most varied and picturesque imaginable. I never knew the governor in such fine racy spirits. I see he has hinted at the Hamiltons adventure. Sir John is certainly rather a bore, but

'upon my life
he has two daughters and a ladye wife;'

the first are regular prime girls, both fine women, the youngest devilish pretty, regularly unaffected, full of sketching, and void of sentimentality. He has introduced us with the greatest *sangfroid*, and Meredith and myself intend to run away with them. We have put up at the same inn at Bruges, a capital one by the bye. . . . Meredith and myself talk French with a mixture of sublimity and *sangfroid* perfectly inimitable. We are off to Gand to-morrow by canal after having passed a long and luscious day at Bruges. Give my best love to *ma mère* and the dear young slave drivers.

Yours,

B. DISRAELI.

ANTWERP,
Monday, Aug. 2.

MY DEAR SA,

We have been in Antwerp about two hours and a half, and the post goes off to-morrow morning. My father, as usual emulous of saving postage, positively forbids our writing separate letters, and he has been, of course, the whole two hours and a half writing his half page. I myself am extremely tired, and have not room, even if I had time, enough to write you a letter as long as I could desire, but I trust that by next post my father will sicken of his Sévigné fit, and resign the sheet in my favour. We left Bruges excessively delighted on Friday morning in the barque. The vessel was very full. The Hamiltons, &c. There was an Irishman among the passengers who would have made an inimitable hero for Matthews. It was his début on the Continent, and, with a most plentiful supply of ignorance and an utter want of taste, he was enthusiastically fond of paintings; for many years running he had come up from Dublin on purpose to see the exhibition, and after a discourse with him on Rubens, the Flemish School, &c., on all of which subjects he exhibited the most splendid enthusiasm, he coolly remarked that he

should have enjoyed his journey much more had he not missed the Watercolor Exhibition. I met him two or three times afterwards in different places, and his salutations were exceedingly rich; it was always 'How do you do, Sir; wonderful city this, Sir, wonderful! Pray have you seen the crucifixion by Vandyke, wonderful picture, Sir, wonderful, Sir.'

We arrived at Ghent after a pleasant passage of six hours on Friday at 3. I was agreeably surprised by the place, which I had imagined would have been Bruges on a larger scale. Its character, however, is perfectly different; there seems a great deal of business going on, or at least the numerous canals and the river Scheldt, by which it is intersected, and which are tolerably well filled with shipping, give it that appearance. We of course visited Mr. Schamp's collection, the University, Cathedral, &c., and of course we always thought each thing more wonderful than another, were exceedingly delighted, and tired ourselves to death. At St. Nicholas we took it into our heads to dine, perfectly extemporaneous. We ordered of course something cold, not to be detained. The hostess, however, seemed peculiarly desirous to give us a specimen of her cookery, and there was a mysterious delay. Enter the waiter. A *fricandeau*, the finest I ever tasted, perfectly admirable, a small and very delicate roast joint, veal chops dressed with a rich sauce piquant, capital roast pigeons, a large dish of peas most wonderfully fine, cheese, dessert, a salad pre-eminent even among the salads of Flanders which are unique for their delicate crispness and silvery whiteness, bread and beer *ad lib.* served up in the neatest and purest manner imaginable, silver forks, &c.; cost only six francs, forming one of the finest specimens of exquisite and economic cookery I ever witnessed. We have had a good deal of veal stewed with sorrel, and not bad. The paper in this country is bad, the ink infamous, and the pens wusser. Love to Mère and all.

Your affectionate Brother,

B. DISRAELI.

Sometimes the diary is an interesting supplement to the letters.

BRUGES,
Thursday.

Magnificent city, perpetual palaces, not an ordinary house. The proportions of the town perfect. The Cathedral a very ancient building. The tower a rude shapeless pile, rises like a great leviathan. The bricks of which it is built are of a most diminutive size. This apparently adds to its height.

. . . The city is three times too extensive for its inhabitants, and you may lounge down magnificent parades, bounded on both sides by palaces and churches, without being disturbed by a single sound or meeting a single individual. In its decay, its splendour, its antiquity and its silence, it very much resembles our Winchester.

GHENT,
Sunday.

Cathedral High Mass. Clouds of incense and one of Mozart's sublimest masses by an orchestra before which San Carlo might grow pale. The effect inconceivably grand. The host raised, and I flung myself on the ground.

To Sarah Disraeli.

BRUSSELS,
Friday, Aug. 6.

MY DEAR SA,

The *sermones gubernatorii* are this time rather diminished. We have heard that a post has arrived from England this evening; there is therefore some little chance of a letter; if however we do not receive one we shall be off on Saturday morning. We were more delighted with Antwerp than with any place we have yet been at. We put up at the Grand Laboureur, unfortunately no *table d'hôte*, but capital private feeds; our living for the last week has been the most luxurious possible, and my mother must really reform her table before our return. I have kept a journal of dinners for myself and of doings in general for my father, so I shall leave the account of the churches, cathedrals, and cafés till we come home. We have had a perfect debauch of Rubens, and Meredith and myself have destroyed the reputation of half the cathedrals in Flanders by our mysterious hints of the spuriousness of their Sir Pauls.

On Tuesday morning we set off for Brussels. We dined at Mechlin, and stayed between four and five hours there; dinner good and cathedral magnificent, oysters as small as shrimps, but delicately sweet; hunted up an old bookseller. The entrance to Brussels is very striking. The part in which we reside, the new town, is a perpetual Waterloo Place, a regular succession of grand places and Rue Royales in a magnificent style of architecture.

The governor is particularly well. He has mounted a black stock, and this, added to his former rather military appearance, very materially aided a very pleasant mistake which occurred a short time ago. Our affectionately slang appellation of governor aided by the aforesaid military

appearance has caused him to be lionised over a *maison de force* with regular major-general honors.

We visited the *Comédie* last night; but the performances were meagre and the house ill attended. The King of Holland pays the actors, and, of course, there is no theatrical spirit in Bruxelles. We pass the evenings very agreeably in cafés, where Meredith and myself play dominoes in a most magnificent manner and the governor invents or discovers new ices, lectures on sorbettes and liqueurs, and reads the Flanders papers, which are a copy a week old of the Parisian copies of the English. We then rush home to selzer water and Moselle, sugar and lemon, an invention of a waiter and my father, and which, to use our favorite national phrase, if it is equalled by any cup in Europe, is certainly not excelled. . . .

Brussels is full of English. The Belle Vue crowded. An Irish officer, rather grand, invited me to a picnic party at Waterloo; also told me he thought an Irish gentleman was the completest gentleman in the world when he chose, fancying his brogue did not detect him. We visit the field of Waterloo not so much for the scenery, but, as Mrs. Young says, for the idea.

Yours,

B. DISRAELI.

Some notes on pictures and gastronomy may be added from the diary.

ANTWERP,
Monday.

It is impossible without visiting Antwerp to have any idea of the character and genius of Rubens. It is ridiculous to hear the sage critiques on his particular style and manner. No artist seems to have painted so differently. His style in his large pictures is sometimes sketchy and rapid, while in the Museum are many pictures finished with almost a miniature exactness.

Without a pause, the diarist goes on to a subject that interested him as much as pictures.

The dinner was good. The Grand Laboureur is, as the Clerk of the Police well termed it, *un hôtel pour les riches*. The *vol-au-vent* of pigeons was admirable. The peas were singularly fine. The idiots, imagining they could please our English taste, dressed them *au naturel*! *Peste!*

Tuesday.

Rose at 5,—was at the Museum at 6. The *Député Directeur* a civil fellow. Copied some drolls from an ancient picture of

Hans of Malines. In the midst of my sketching, the D.D. mysteriously beckoned me away and conducted me to a large and curtained picture which when unveiled displayed to my awe-struck vision the Christ between the Thieves, by Rubens. The picture had been lately undergoing an operation and strict orders had been given that it was to be shown to no one. The D., however, with whom we had formed a kind of *mon ami* acquaintance, took advantage of the early morn to display to us the most magnificent painting in the world. This is an additional argument in favour of early rising.

BRUSSELS,
Wednesday.

Table d'hôte at Belle Vue—between 30 and 40 persons. Sufficiently amusing. Dinner excellent—frogs—*paté de grenouilles*—magnificent! Sublime!

To Sarah Disraeli.

COLOGNE,
Saturday, Aug. 14.

DEAR SA,

We are in a city in which there are so many churches to lionise that I am afraid we shall never get out of it. We arrived at Cologne last night. I wrote to you last from Brussels. . . . On Saturday we left Brussels for Waterloo, lionised over the field of battle and the adjoining country by old Shorter himself, a jolly antique. He harangued in a mixture of Dutch, Flemish, French, and English—very rich—forming a kind of Belle Alliance lingo, most likely in compliment to the place. We dined at Genappe most admirably; by the bye, we hired a carriage at Brussels. It is a complete travelling carriage left behind by a Hamburg gentleman at the Belle Vue, perhaps for his bill. We got to Namur by 11 o'clock at night. At Genappe the country rises and the road for about seven leagues is through a bold but highly cultivated country. We left Namur, where there is little to see, on Sunday afternoon. Our road lay through the valley of the Meuse, and after proceeding for about 20 miles we arrived at Huy, a small village most romantically situated amidst lofty hills on the banks of the Meuse. The journey to Huy is a succession of scenery which I think the Rhine can scarcely equal. On Monday morning we continued our journey for about 30 miles, as far as Liège, still through the valley. The scenery if possible even more picturesque than before and the valley considerably wider. . . .

At seven in the morning on Tuesday we set off for Spa. We passed over a mountainous country, and for miles

continued to ascend. The road to Spa is a perfect debauch of gorgeous scenery. We arrived at the far-famed watering place; pen and ink, and particularly the miserable material with which I am scratching, can give you no idea of our rich adventures. We rode on the Spa ponies to the distant springs. They are handsome little galloways; the governor was particularly equestrian. I have become a most exquisite billiard player; we shewed off to great advantage at the Wells and Aix, to which place we were off on Wednesday. We were asleep when we entered the Prussian frontier, and the governor mistook the officer for an innkeeper and kindly informed him that he had taken refreshment at Limburg. The rest of this scene, which was exquisite, when we meet.

Aix is close and inelegant, the pictures we saw *magnifique*. We slept on Thursday at Juliers, and had rich adventures at a country inn, and arrived at the Rhine last night. It is flowing in sight of our windows. Excuse false construction and vicious grammar, as I have lost my English. Everything has gone right except hearing from you. I suppose you missed the English post. We did not sufficiently calculate. As for our own journey, if we find a letter at Mayence, saying dear Mother is well, we may perhaps favor you by not returning at all, as really your manners are so barbarous and your dishes so detestable that, &c. Give my love to all. I trust my Mother and yourself are well. I meant to have written to Ralph, but my father approves of concentrated postage. How is Jem ?

Yours ever,

B. DISRAELI.

On the road between Spa and Aix he notes in the diary:—'The Belgians seem extremely hostile against the Dutch. It may be questioned whether, in case of a war, they might not rebel against the present authorities' —probably his first political observation of which there is record. One of the pictures at Aix which he found so '*magnifique*' leads to a strange rhapsody:—

Head of Christ by Morales, exactly as in the description in the pseudo letter of the Roman Proconsul. Morales well entitled to his surname of Divino. The first painters depicted the Saviour with the common national countenance, always undignified and sometimes vulgar. The great masters, aware of the impropriety, were not bold enough to alter what they

attempted to improve, and in their attenuated and uninteresting figures they have only spiritualized a sad humanity. In the present picture, the auburn locks seem only prevented from growing over the countenance by the moiety of the star which forms the glory: everything which can even be conceived as necessary to the formation of a face of perfect beauty, but nothing earthly in the appearance. You could not mistake the head for an Apollo or an Adonis. The eyes, beaming with human beauty, are nevertheless bright with the effulgence of celestial light, and fixed upon no particular object. They seem looking on the world. The nose is exquisitely formed, and the flesh tints seem immortal.

To Sarah Disraeli.

MAINZ,
Aug. 19.

MY DEAR SA,

We arrived at Mainz yesterday morning, and immediately rushed to the post-office, though we were all convinced of the utter impossibility of receiving a letter. To our great joy one was immediately handed us. It was very clever in you writing to M. The non-receipt of a letter was the only circumstance which threw a cloud over our enjoyment, and to receive it so unexpectedly was quite delightful. My father recovered his spirits in an instant. . . . Since I last wrote from Cologne our adventures have been grand. So much was to be seen at Cologne that we hired a *fiacre*, as we thought, from our host, determined to ride all over the city. To our great surprise a most elegant landaulet with the coachman in military livery stopped at our gate. This, we were informed, was the *fiacre*, and also nearly the only carriage in Cologne. We were almost stopped in our progress by the stares of the multitude, who imagined we were Archdukes at least. We have always put up at the crack hotels, which we find the most reasonable. We travel, as I wrote to you, in a most elegant equipage, and live perfectly *en prince*. The governor allows us to debauch to the utmost, and Hochheimer, Johannisberg, Rudesheimer, Assmannshauser, and a thousand other varieties are unsealed and floored with equal rapidity.

On Sunday we left Cologne early, dined at Bonn —where we stayed some short time—passed Drachenfels and the seven mountains, reached Coblenz early next morning, left it in the afternoon, visited Ehrenbreitstein —for which our landlord got us a ticket—and left for the present the Rhine to proceed on our tour to

the Baths of the Taunus Mountains. We entered the principality of Nassau, and arrived at Ems at five o'clock. The scenery is of a nature baffling all description, the chief feature richly wooded mountains. The baths of Ems are now among the most fashionable of the continent. Spa and those kind of place are now out of date, or visited merely by English. The establishment consists of a mansion which covers nearly an acre of ground and which was formerly a palace of Nassau. It contains upwards of 230 rooms, besides 80 baths, which are similar to those at Aix. The lodgings are a concern of the Prince, and on each door the price of the bed, &c., is affixed. Over this department a *maître d'hôtel* appointed by the Prince presides. The rest of the establishment is perfectly separate, and is constructed by a restaurateur at his own risk. There is a Saloon of an immense length and magnificently furnished, at which there is a *table d'hôte* every day at 1, all other meals and refreshments independent in different parts of the Saloon. Opposite to the mansion are beautiful gardens running by the side of the river Lahn.

Such is a slight sketch of Ems, a most singular, indeed, an unique spot. A watering place without shops and without houses; the very Castle of Indolence. Above all, its situation is, perhaps, one of the most magical in the world, this in a small valley surrounded by ranges of lofty but wooded mountains. The river Lahn winds through them, and walks and gardens are on its banks. Further on the heights and woods of Nassau, studded with old grey ruins, and without a sign of population. The visitors are perfectly in unison with the genius loci. Lounging and lackadaisical, they bask on sunny banks or doze in acacia arbors. Some creep to the woods of Nassau, others are rowed down the river, music perpetual. The ladies patronise superb donkeys. There seems an utter void of all thought and energy, and positively in this place even the billiard room and the gambling table are deserted. Above all, no English. The Hamiltons, whom we met again, the only ones. After this account you will perhaps rejoice to hear that we left this fatal and delicious paradise next day at 12, a glorious morning, passed to and through Nassau, the country, if possible, increasing in loveliness. . . . We are all exceedingly well. Have made many acquaintances, chiefly among the military, the governor being perpetually mistaken for a *général anglais*. His black stock is grand, and he has long left off powder. . . .

Your affectionate Brother,

B. DISRAELI.

HEIDELBERG,
Monday, Aug. 23.

MY DEAR SA,

We arrived at Heidelberg, or, as my father terms it, Heligoland, this morning and received your letter. On Thursday the 19th we left Mainz, crossed again the Rhine, re-entered Nassau, and arrived at Frankfort early. We remained in this city until Sunday morning, and were very much amused. F. is a very populous, busy, and dashing city. The Opera is one of the best in Germany. We went on Thursday night, Cherubini's *Medea*. The house crammed full. The boxes private, as in London, save two in the centre for strangers. We were much amused. We lounged a great deal at Frankfort. Our banker was extremely civil, and gave us a ticket for the Casino, an institution similar to our crack London clubs, and not inferior to them in style or splendor. Here we read all the English newspapers and billiardised. Returning home we discovered at a *confiseur's* something superb beyond conception; we committed an excess, and have talked of the ambrosia ever since. My father has bought some fine prints at F.—Albrecht Dürers, Max Antonios, and many Rembrandts, very magnificent impressions and very reasonable. On Saturday we visited the collection of Mr. Bethmann; in it Dannecker's grand Ariadne on the Lion, which you remember described in Dodd. In the evening we rushed to the Opera, the *Zauberflöte*. . . .

On Sunday, after visiting the Museum, we left Frankfort for Darmstadt, a lounging little city full of new and architectural streets. The Opera is celebrated throughout Europe, and justly so. We attended it in the evening—*Otello*; the scenery is the most exquisite I ever met with, the discipline of the orchestra admirable. The Grand Duke an immense amateur. The Royal Box is a large pavilion of velvet and gold in the midst of the Theatre. The Duke himself, in grand military uniform, gave the word for the commencement of the overture, standing up all the time, beating time with one hand and watching the orchestra through an immense glass with the other.

We left Darmstadt this morning, a very fine day, travelled through a beautiful country at the foot of the Bergstrasse mountains, reached Heidelberg, which is beautifully situated on the Neckar, surrounded and partly built on lofty mountains. We called and delivered our letters to Mrs. Tobin, a cleverish, pleasant woman. She was very civil, pressed us very much to stay at Heidelberg, asked us to meet Lady Davy[1] and Lord Dudley, who are both at H., which we declined, as we set off to-morrow. . . . We rise very early and travel chiefly in the

[1] [Wife of Sir Humphry Davy.—G. E. B.]

early morning. We shall be back, I dare say, in a fortnight, as there are no great cities to visit on our return. We have been only a month coming to Heidelberg, and have done anything but hurry, spending in Brussels and Frankfort alone upwards of a week. . . . Remember me to all, my best love to my mother. . . . I expect no more letters from you, but shall enquire at Mannheim and Mainz and Coblenz before our excursion into Luxembourg. We are now in the Duchy of Baden; have been much disappointed in not seeing the *Freischütz*. It would have been a great treat to have seen it at Darmstadt.

Your affectionate Brother,
B. DISRAELI.

COBLENZ,
Sunday, Aug. 29.

MY DEAR SA,

I wrote to you last from Heidelberg, which pretty place we left on Wednesday last. We had the misfortune of having very rainy weather there, but the new moon has brought us at last the most beautiful weather that I ever remember. We reached Mannheim, a beautiful city—a fête on the birthday of the G. Duke of Baden; the Opera, very elegant house and very fully attended; *Don Giovanni*—very bad. From Mannheim we travelled through Worms and arrived again at Mayence on Friday.

Yesterday having made necessary arrangements for the conveyance of our carriage, we commenced our voyage down the Rhine. So much has been read and written about this descent that I will not bore you with descriptions of a country which you know almost as well as myself. I can only say that the most glowing descriptions do but imperfect justice to the magnificent scenery. It answered my highest expectations, which, after passing over the Bergstrasse and the Taunus, is saying a great deal. We set off at 6 o'clock, stopped at Bingen two hours for dinner, but the time not suiting us we had supplied ourselves with prog. We therefore took a boat during these two hours and made an excursion to the ruined castle of Ehrenfels, near Bingen and opposite the famous tower of Archbishop Hatto. . . .

We landed in the evening again at Coblenz after passing through 60 miles of the most beautiful part of the river. Here we are digesting an excursion into Luxembourg. Our host at Coblenz is a most excellent fellow. My love to my mother and all. The weather continues most

beautiful. Tell Ralph we had two military bands alternately playing while we dined at Mannheim. Jem I hope is prospering.

Our host at Coblenz has discovered since our last visit that the governor is a great author and has coolly informed him this morning he shall be obliged to him for his works. Our dinners, if possible, improve. Game is rushing in in all directions. Partridges abound. The roebuck is superb beyond imagination. At Mannheim we had sour craut, but this is not the season for it.

Yours ever,
B. DISRAELI.

Here Disraeli's own record of his journey comes to an end. From Coblenz the travellers made their way up the valley of the Moselle by Treves to Luxembourg; and thence by Sedan and Valenciennes to Calais. Nine years later, when he had occasion to recall this visit to the Rhine, Disraeli wrote:—'I determined when descending those magical waters that I would not be a lawyer.' His father, forgetful of his own early experience, seems not to have yielded without a struggle: 'a father is, perhaps, the worst judge of his son's capacity; he knows too much—and too little.'[1] But he yielded in the end, and though the connexion with Frederick's Place was not formally severed at once, we soon hear of the son in other fields of activity. 'The hour of adventure had arrived.'

[1] *Vivian Grey*, Bk. II. ch. 3.

CHAPTER V.

FINANCE AND JOURNALISM.

1825.

The law was to be abandoned, but what was to take its place? Conscious of extraordinary powers, and resolved at all hazards to find a field for their exercise, the young Disraeli was not to be bound in the trammels of any of the conventional professions. His first attempt in literature had failed, and his aims, though not yet definitely political, were now clearly directed towards the world of action. We can imagine that, like Vivian Grey—

> In the plenitude of his ambition he stopped one day to enquire in what manner he could obtain his magnificent ends:—'The Bar—pooh! law and bad jokes till we are forty; and then, with the most brilliant success, the prospect of gout and a coronet. Besides, to succeed as an advocate, I must be a great lawyer, and to be a great lawyer, I must give up my chance of being a great man. The Services in war time are fit only for desperadoes (and that truly am I); but, in peace, are fit only for fools. The Church is more rational. Let me see: I should certainly like to act Wolsey, but the thousand and one chances against me! and truly I feel *my* destiny should not be on a chance. Were I the son of a Millionaire, or a noble, I might have *all*. Curse on my lot! that the want of a few rascal counters, and the possession of a little rascal blood should mar my fortunes!'[1]

The rascal blood could not be changed, but the rascal counters might be won, and to win them by some speedy

[1] *Vivian Grey*, Bk. I. ch. 9.

method seemed the easiest solution of the problem. Even before his visit to the Rhine, Disraeli, in partnership with a fellow clerk in Frederick's Place called Evans, had tried his fortune on the Stock Exchange, with what results we do not know, though the stakes were probably small. He now, however, increased them. The English people were at this moment suffering from one of those attacks of speculative mania to which they are subject. Some years of great national prosperity had preceded, and for the capital then accumulated and now seeking investment a new outlet had been found in the revolted colonies of Spain. Canning's foreign policy, of which these colonies were the pivot, helped to give an air of respectability, or even of patriotism, to the schemes of company promoters, and presently all the phenomena of the South Sea Bubble were reproduced. The old stories of the mineral riches of the New World were revived, companies were formed in great numbers to exploit them, and the shares eagerly bought by a credulous public. Disraeli and Evans did not escape the prevalent mania. At the moment when they caught the infection the revolted States were clearly on the eve of receiving formal recognition from England, and the tide of speculation was nearing its height. Having found a confederate in another youth, the son, apparently, of a rich stockbroker, the partners began a series of operations in Spanish American shares, the first recorded transaction being in November, 1824. Their operations were disastrous from the beginning: by the close of the year there was a balance against them of nearly £400; by the end of January, 1825, this adverse balance was nearly £1,000; and by the end of June they had lost about £7,000, of which half had been paid in cash, provided mainly, it would seem, by Evans. It is not clear how the losses were distributed between the partners; the accounts that have been preserved are confused, nor is it worth while to disentangle them. What concerns us is that Disraeli at the age of twenty had incurred a

debt of several thousand pounds, a debt which was not finally liquidated till nearly thirty years later, when he had already led the House of Commons and been Chancellor of the Exchequer. The 'rascal counters' were thrown into the scale against him, and his folly or misfortune on this occasion was the beginning of financial embarrassments by which he was tormented through a great portion of his career.

When they began their operations Disraeli and Evans were speculating for the fall; they reversed their tactics and became 'bulls,' most unluckily just at the moment when the market was losing its buoyancy. Their first instinctive judgment of the financial situation had been sound, though their action had been premature, and the change of view and tactics may have been owing to the influence of a man who now for a time plays an important part in the life of Disraeli. Mr. John Diston Powles was the head of a financial house which had been reaping a rich harvest from the boom, and whose credit was deeply involved in its continuance and justification. The firm had promoted several mining companies with large capital, and to two of these, including one, the Anglo-Mexican Mining Association, which had become the focus of great speculative excitement, Messrs. Swain and Stevens were solicitors. In this way, perhaps, it came about that young Disraeli made the acquaintance of Mr. Powles, and, with an extraordinary power which he already possessed of influencing men, even of years and standing far greater than his own, he appears speedily to have won his way into the counsels and confidence of the financier, and the two formed a close alliance. Disraeli possibly thought he had found the road to a great position in the world of finance and to the fortune of which he was in quest; Powles, on the other hand, no doubt saw that his young confederate's glowing imagination, ready pen, and connexion through John Murray with the world of literature and journalism, a connexion which, we may be sure, lost none of its importance in the setting

forth, were assets that might be turned to valuable account. The speculative fever had risen to such a height that cool observers were beginning to feel alarm; Lord Eldon, the Chancellor, had drawn a parallel between the present mania and the South Sea Bubble; and the air was full of rumours of interference by the Legislature. To avert the danger of such interference and reassure the public, Disraeli's pupil pen was enlisted, and in March the first result of his labours, a pamphlet of nearly a hundred pages, was published by Murray on commission, under the title of 'An Enquiry into the Plans, Progress, and Policy of the American Mining Companies.'

This pamphlet, which was anonymous, seems to have been Disraeli's first appearance as an author. Its ostensible aim was 'to afford the public accurate data for forming an opinion as to the nature of these undertakings,' and so arriving at a decision as to the expediency of legislative interference. In pursuance of this aim our author discourses learnedly of mining methods, sets forth the main facts as to the principal companies, and arrives at the conclusion that 'their general promise is performed,' that 'the profits which have accrued by managing the American Mines in the market are not of an extraordinary nature,' and that 'the value of the shares of the different companies will be found to be relative to the progress which they have made in mining, and to the former reputation of the mines which belong to them.' On the question of policy the line he takes is high. He compares the mining interest in America to the manufacturing interest in England and dwells on the benefits to both countries that must follow from its development; he deprecates in the approved style of nineteenth century thought attempts to control 'the spirit of commercial enterprise'; and concludes with an appeal to 'our lawgivers to pause before they decide, and to enquire before they legislate, and not to be induced by frivolous tales and unfounded fears to restrain or prevent the agency of undertakings which

are not the least conspicuous parts of a system on which mainly depend the wealth, the power, and the glory of our country.' The style becomes more flowing and the tone more declamatory as we proceed, and the dulness of the subject is relieved by occasional passages of picturesque impudence. The pamphlet was dignified with a review in the *Gentleman's Magazine*,'[1] and ran through several editions.

Presumably it realised the expectations of the author and his patrons; for it was shortly followed by another. The second was entitled 'Lawyers and Legislators, or Notes on the American Mining Companies' and dedicated 'without permission' to Canning, who is lauded as 'not more eminent for his brilliant wit and classic eloquence than for that sedate sublimity of conception which distinguishes the practical statesman from the political theorist.' In this the note of declamation rises even higher than before, and in the style there is something also of that vituperative quality which the fashion of the day encouraged and which runs through all Disraeli's earlier political writings and speeches till he refined it into the rapier-like manner of his full maturity. In substance the second pamphlet is a development of the argument of the first against restrictive legislation. The attack on Lord Eldon is pressed home with greater vigour than before. The 'perfect fallacy' of his parallel between the present time and that which had generated the South Sea Bubble is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the writer; the law and policy of his observations in a case which had recently come before the Courts are both impugned, the former with no small ostentation of legal learning; and the so-called Bubble Act of 1720, with the terrors of which the Chancellor had menaced the company promoters, is denounced as a 'disgusting and disgraceful statute,' a 'miserable medley of royal favour and penal legislation, gracious charters and

[1] May, 1825.

terrific *praemunires*.'[1] So much for the lawyers. A couple of legislators, Mr. Alexander Baring[2] and Mr. Hobhouse,[3] who had raised their voices in the House of Commons in condemnation of the prevalent mania, are handled with even more severity; and in one sweeping indictment they and all the other assailants of the mining companies are charged with 'supporting their anathemas by statements which are so utterly unfounded that they might make mendacity blush and so awfully ridiculous that they might make folly grave.' Finally, and not without a certain insight and prescience, the Legislature is invited to deal with the subject of joint stock companies, though not in a hostile spirit, but with the purpose of recognising their existence and making them 'amenable to the law of which under the present system they are forced to be independent.'

Whether that policy will be pursued [our pamphleteer concludes with becoming gravity] it is not for us to divine. These sentiments come not from one who sits in Royal Councils, or mingles in the assemblies of legislative wisdom, but they come from one who has had some opportunity of investigation, some patience for inquiry, whose opinions are unbiased by self-interest, and uncontrolled by party influence, who, whatever may be the result, will feel some satisfaction, perchance some pride, that at a time when warring and inconsistent councils were occasioning the very ruin which they affected to deprecate, when Ignorance was the ready slave of Interest, and Truth was deserted by those who should have been her stoutest champions, there was at least one attempt to support sounder principles and inculcate a wiser policy.

A third pamphlet in the series was issued by Murray on 'The Present State of Mexico'; but it was in the

[1] The Act, or so much of it as related to joint stock companies, was, on the initiative of the Government, repealed later in the Session of Parliament.

[2] Afterwards the 1st Lord Ashburton.

[3] John Cam Hobhouse, the friend of Byron, afterwards Lord Broughton.

main a translation of a report presented to the Mexican Congress by a Minister in high office who was also a subsidised ally of the mining companies. Disraeli, however, contributed some explanatory notes, and introduced the Minister in question in a memoir which has no appearance of doing less than justice to the merits of its subject or the other Mexican statesmen of the day. 'Inconsiderate ignorance,' it is true, was 'daily stigmatising them as weak and unprincipled adventurers.' But 'if they be not pure and practical patriots,' exclaims the indignant biographer in one of his roundest periods, 'we know not what names should be inscribed on the illustrious scroll of national gratitude.'

The brilliant pen of the young pamphleteer, whatever else it may have accomplished, did not avail, as we have seen, to save his private speculations from disaster. He was still undismayed; but as the fortune which was to serve as a main instrument of his ambition had eluded his grasp, it became necessary to frame some new combination, and the materials were soon discovered. In his preoccupation with finance Disraeli had not forgotten nor been forgotten by his old friend John Murray. He seems even to have persuaded Murray into joining him in a speculation in South American shares; and as the mining pamphlets could hardly be regarded as a contribution to literature, Murray in his turn provided his young ally with another opportunity of making an appearance as an author.[1] Having decided to issue for English readers a Life of Paul Jones, based on the same material as the Life by Sherburne, which was on the eve of publication in the United States, Murray entrusted the manuscript to young Disraeli and requested him to prepare it for the press. Immersed in what he no doubt thought was more important business, the editor seems to have discharged his duty in a rather

[1] Smiles, II., pp. 182-194.

perfunctory manner, but the work[1] in due course appeared with a preface[2] from his pen, which is remarkable only for its flatness and banality. Meanwhile, Murray had formed the habit of consulting the precocious youth in the perplexities of his business, had learnt to place a high value on his judgment,[3] and had taken him into his confidence with ever-diminishing reserve. Encouraged by the success of the *Quarterly Review*, Murray had for some time cherished the ambition of establishing a periodical which should appear at more frequent intervals; and in a fateful moment he confided this ambition to his young adviser.[4] Disraeli's eager imagination at once went to work and discovered possibilities latent in the project that Murray had never dreamt of. *The Times* had already taken a commanding position in daily journalism, but it was too independent of party affiliations to suit an ardent Canningite such as Disraeli, with his new world interests, had now become. Why, asked the audacious youth, should it not be possible to establish a daily paper in the Conservative interest which should equal or even surpass *The Times* in influence? And who more fitted than Benjamin Disraeli, with Murray's resources behind him and assistance from his new friends in the City, to be the triumphant organiser? He was without experience, it is true; but 'If a person have imagination, experience appears to me of little use,'

[1] 'The Life of Paul Jones, from original documents in the possession of John Henry Sherburne, Esq., Register of the Navy of the United States. London, John Murray, 1825.' The exact relationship of the English book to the American is not clear; but the former seems also to have been written by an American, and the original manuscript, which has been preserved, shows that Disraeli's share in it was limited to the introduction here and there of a word or phrase where the excision of a passage rendered such amendment necessary.

[2] Dr. Smiles treats this preface as Disraeli's earliest appearance as an author; but the first of the Mining Pamphlets was published in March, and the *Life of Paul Jones* not till September.

[3] It was to Disraeli's advice, for instance, that the publication of Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends of Ireland*, one of the successful books of the time, appears to have been due.

[4] For the story of *The Representative* see Smiles's *Life of Murray*, II. ch. 26; Lang's *Life of Lockhart*, I. ch. 12; and Scott's *Familiar Letters* II., Appendix.

and this heresy of Contarini Fleming's, if heresy it be, was one from which Disraeli was never quite delivered. It was an easy matter to persuade himself of the feasibility of the scheme, and once persuaded he threw himself into it with all the eager enthusiasm of a temperament that was impulsive by nature and, well as the fact was concealed in after years, remained impulsive to the end. The first step was to win Murray's acquiescence, and Murray was pursued, as he afterwards put it, 'with unrelenting excitement and importunity,'[1] till he yielded. Powles was then approached and his support secured. He and Murray were made acquainted by Disraeli's intervention, about the end of July, and on August 3 the three signed an agreement for the establishment of a morning paper under Murray's management, the property in which was to be vested as to one half in Murray and as to the other in equal shares in Powles and Disraeli, the three contributing the capital in like proportions. Where Disraeli's share of the capital was to come from does not appear, and was a subject to which probably that sanguine youth gave little consideration; but Murray, who must have known his want of resources, no doubt regarded Powles as good enough for the share of both.

The paper was to make its first appearance early in the new year, and in the meantime an organisation had to be created and multitudinous details to be arranged. The first problem was to find an editor, and for some reason Murray had fixed on Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law, as the most suitable person for the post. It is not impossible that the suggestion may have come from Canning, with whom Murray was in communication, and to whom apparently he presented, or endeavoured to present, Disraeli.[2] At all events, Murray resolved to

[1] Smiles, II., p. 217. It is well to note, however, that this phrase was used when Murray was smarting from the disappointment of recent failure. At an earlier stage of the enterprise he wrote to Jerdan:—'I have never attempted anything with more considerate circumspection.'—*Ibid.*, p. 205.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

consult Sir Walter, who had given him valuable aid in the establishment of the *Quarterly*; and as the matter was too delicate to be settled by correspondence, Disraeli was despatched to the North to try the effect of his persuasive eloquence in the conduct of the negotiations. He was armed with two letters of introduction to Lockhart—one from Murray, in which he is described as 'my most particular and confidential young friend,' and Lockhart is requested to receive his communications 'as if they were given to you in person by myself'; the other from a Mr. Wright, a barrister, who, by Murray's wish, 'suggests the place of superintendent of the new paper,' and adds his belief that Canning wishes Lockhart to accept.[1] Disraeli's own letters to Murray give a graphic account of the mission, and incidentally show that the young plenipotentiary neither underrated its importance nor failed to take himself as seriously as the occasion required.

The first letter, written apparently on September 17,[2] is from Edinburgh, where he had arrived the night before, having 'slept at Stamford, York, and Newcastle, and by so doing felt quite fresh at the end of my journey. I never preconceived a place better than Edinburgh. It is exactly what I fancied it, and certainly is the most beautiful town in the world.' He has already discovered that Lockhart is at Chiefswood, his country cottage near Abbotsford, and has despatched Wright's letter thither; and he has visited a printing and bookbinding establishment, where his eyes are open for suggestions as becomes a practical man of business. 'I intend to examine the whole minutely before I leave, as it may be useful. I never thought of binding. Suppose you were to sew, &c., your own publications.'

I arrived at York in the midst of the Grand Festival. It was late at night when I arrived, but the streets were crowded and continued so for hours. I never witnessed a city in such an extreme bustle and so delightfully gay. It was a perfect

[1] Lang, pp. 364, 367. [2] Dr. Smiles's dates are obviously inaccurate.

carnival. I postponed my journey from five in the morning to eleven, and by so doing got an hour for the Minster, where I witnessed a scene which must have far surpassed, by all accounts, the celebrated commemoration in Westminster Abbey. York Minster baffles all conception. Westminster Abbey is a toy to it. I think it is impossible to conceive of what Gothic architecture is susceptible until you see York. I speak with the cathedrals of the Netherlands and the Rhine fresh in my memory. I witnessed in York another splendid sight—the pouring in of all the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood and the neighbouring counties. The four-in-hands of the Yorkshire squires, the splendid rivalry in liveries and outriders, and the immense quantity of gorgeous equipages—numbers with four horses—formed a scene which you can only witness in the mighty and aristocratic county of York. It beat a Drawing Room hollow, as much as an oratorio in York Minster does a concert in the Opera House. The delightful stay at York quite refreshed me. . . . I find Froissart a most entertaining companion, just the fellow for a traveller's evening; and just the work, too, for it needs neither books of reference nor accumulation of MS.

Next day he writes from Edinburgh again. Lockhart has invited him to Chiefswood, and he will of course accept the invitation. 'I intend to go to Melrose to-morrow, but as I will not take the chance of meeting him the least tired, I shall sleep at Melrose and call on the following morning.' Then with an impressive air of mystery he gives Murray a code under which, owing to the very delicate nature of the names he will have to mention, he deems it wise to veil them; and, this serious business disposed of, he unbends sufficiently to end his letter with the information, 'I revel in the various beauties of a Scotch breakfast; cold grouse and marmalade find me, however, constant.'

The third letter is worth giving at greater length.

To John Murray.

CHIEFSWOOD,
Sept. [21 ?], 1825.

MY DEAR SIR,

I arrived at Chiefswood yesterday. M. [Lockhart] had conceived that it was my father who was coming. He was

led to believe this through Wright's letter. In addition, therefore, to his natural reserve there was, of course, an evident disappointment at seeing me. Everything looked as black as possible. I shall not detain you now by informing you of fresh particulars. I leave them for when we meet. Suffice it to say that in a few hours we completely understood each other, and were upon the most intimate terms. M. enters into our views with a facility and readiness which were capital. He thinks that nothing can be more magnificent and excellent; but two points immediately occurred: first, the difficulty of his leaving Edinburgh without any ostensible purpose; and, secondly, the losing caste in society by so doing. He is fully aware that he may end by making his situation as important as any in the empire, but the primary difficulty is insurmountable. . . .

The Chevalier [Sir Walter] breakfasted here to-day, and afterwards we were all three closeted together. The Chevalier entered into it excellently. . . . He agrees with me that M. cannot accept an official situation of any kind, as it would compromise his independence, but he thinks *Parliament for M. indispensable*, and also very much to *our interest*. I dine at Abbotsford to-day, and we shall most probably again discuss matters.

Now, these are the points which occur to me. When M. comes to town, it will be most important that it should be distinctly proved to him that he *will* be supported by the great interests I have mentioned to him. He must see that, through Powles, all America and the Commercial Interest is at our back; that Wilmot H[orton],[1] &c., not as mere under-secretary, but as our private friend, is most staunch; that the Chevalier is firm; that the West India Interest will pledge themselves; that such men and in such situations as Barrow,[2] &c., &c., are *distinctly in our power*; and, finally, that he is coming to London, not to be an Editor of a Newspaper, but the Director-General of an immense organ, and at the head of a band of high-bred gentlemen and important interests.

The Chevalier and M. have unburthened themselves to me in a manner the *most confidential* that you can possibly conceive. Of M.'s capability, *perfect complete capability*, there is no manner of doubt. Of his sound principles, and of his real views in life, I could in a moment satisfy you. Rest assured, however, that you are dealing with a *perfect*

[1] Under-Secretary for War and the Colonies in Lord Liverpool's Administration.

[2] Secretary of the Admiralty, afterwards Sir John Barrow; the well-known founder of the Royal Geographical Society.

gentleman. There has been no disguise to me of what has been done, and the Chevalier had a private conversation with me on the subject, of a nature the most satisfactory. With regard to other plans of ours, if we could get him up, we should find him invaluable. I have a most singular and secret history on this subject when we meet.

Now, on the grant point—Parliament. M. cannot be a representative of a Government Borough. It is impossible. He must be free as air. I am sure that if this could be arranged, all would be settled; but it is '*indispensable*,' without you can suggest anything else. M. was two days in company with X. [Canning] this summer, as well as X.'s and our friend, but nothing transpired of our views. This is a most favourable time to make a parliamentary arrangement. What do you think of making a confidant of Wilmot H.? He is the kind of man who would be right pleased by such conduct. There is no harm of Lockhart's coming in for a Tory Borough, because he is a Tory; but a Ministerial Borough is impossible to be managed.

If this point could be arranged, I have no doubt that I shall be able to organise, in the interest with which I am now engaged, a most *immense party*, and *a most serviceable one*. Be so kind as not to leave the vicinity of London, in case M. and myself come up *suddenly*; but I pray you, if you have any real desire to establish a mighty engine, to exert yourself at this present moment, and assist me to your very utmost. Write as soon as possible, to give me some idea of your movements, and direct to me here, as I shall then be sure to obtain your communication. The Chevalier and all here have the highest idea of Wright's *nous*, and think it most important that he should be at the head of the legal department. I write this despatch in the extreme haste.

Ever yours,

B. D.

Before the end of the month he writes again:—

The Abbotsford and Chiefswood families have placed me on such a friendly and familiar footing, that it is utterly impossible for me to leave them while there exists any chance of M.'s going to England. M. has introduced me to most of the neighbouring gentry, and receives with a loud laugh any mention of my return to Edinburgh. I dined with Dr. Brewster the other day. He has a pretty place near Melrose. It is impossible for me to give you any written idea of the beauty and unique character of Abbotsford.

of the said newspaper, receiving for these services £1,500 a year.[1]

On his return to town Disraeli flung himself into the work of organisation with headlong energy. Premises had to be taken, offices to be planned, a printing establishment to be fitted up; reporters and sub-editors had to be interviewed and engaged, contributions to be secured from commercial authorities in the City, and home and foreign correspondents to be appointed and instructed. In all he was indefatigable. He employs his cousin Basevi as architect or arranges for the examination of title when a building has been secured. He writes one day to his host of the previous year at Coblenz, whom he found 'a most excellent fellow,' assures him that the new paper is to be 'the focus of the information of the whole world,' and that 'the most celebrated men in Europe have promised their assistance to Mr. Murray in his great project,' and enlists him as correspondent for the Rhine. 'I have been engaged at the *magnum opus* unceasingly since we parted,' he tells Lockhart on the day following. 'I have received six letters from different correspondents in the Levant and Morea who all appear very intelligent. I have written to them fully.' Or again: 'Much, my dear Lockhart, has happened since we parted, I think of importance. In the first place *Maginn is engaged.* I called upon the Doctor shortly after your departure.' Maginn was a journalist of experience whose services they were anxious to secure, but in this interview with Disraeli he was inclined at first to dismiss the whole project as ridiculous.

As I felt the importance of arguing the question with a man who might fairly be considered a very prosopopoeia of the public press, I thought the experiment might be hazarded

[1] Mr. Lang shows a curious anxiety to minimise the part Lockhart played in connexion with *The Representative*, but there can be no doubt whatever that Lockhart was at first virtually editor, as there can equally be no doubt that he was quite unfitted for the post. It is worth noting that in the agreement between him and Murray, though Disraeli signed as witness, there is nothing to indicate that Murray had partners in his undertaking.

of giving him a slight and indefinite sketch of our intentions. This I did with great caution, and mentioning no names. To give you an idea of the effect I produced is utterly impossible. The Doctor started from his chair like Giovanni in the banquet scene, and seemed as astounded—as *attonitus*—as Porsenna when Scaevola missed him. A new world seemed open to him, and this sneering scribe, this man of vast experience, who had so smiled at our first mentioning of the business, ended by saying that as to the success of the affair doubt could not exist, and that a year could not elapse without our being the very first paper going. . . . In brief, the Doctor goes to Paris.'[1]

In the same letter he transmits to Lockhart 'a sketch of our correspondence at present established.' He has provided for all South America, for the United States and Mexico, for all the Levant, and for every important place in Europe from Constantinople to Paris and from Rome to St. Petersburg. He has been 'very much assisted in this grand coup of Germany by Mrs. Wm. Elliot,[2] who, when devoid of humbug, is very clever.' 'I have no doubt that in a few days I shall get a most excellent correspondent at Cadiz; but I have not yet succeeded in Madrid, which is most important.' 'We have established also at Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, &c., &c.:—actually established.'

About the middle of November Disraeli was at Chiefswood again, and an entry in Sir Walter's journal tells us the object of this second visit. A cabal headed apparently by John Wilson Croker, Secretary to the Admiralty, had been formed among the old contributors to the *Quarterly* against Lockhart's appointment as Editor. Murray, 'the most timorous, as Byron called him, of all God's booksellers,' took fright at their opposition, so 'down comes young D'Israeli to Scotland imploring Lockhart to make interest with my friends in London to remove objections and so forth.' Scott wrote to a couple of his friends, and he also wrote to

[1] Scott's *Letters*, II., p. 408.
[2] A lady of German birth who had married Murray's brother-in-law.

Murray himself 'in something of a determined style.' 'My physic,' he remarks, 'has wrought well, for it brought a letter from Murray saying all was right, that D'Israeli was sent to me not to Lockhart . . . and other incoherencies which intimate his fright has got into another quarter.'[1] The result was that when Disraeli returned to London on November 21 he found himself in disgrace.

To J. G. Lockhart.

Nov. 21, *half-past five o'clock.*

I have arrived after a most fatiguing journey. I went immediately to the Emperor [Murray], and my reception was most unfavourable. I would use a harsher word if I remembered one. . . . He swears that he understood I undertook to go to Sir W. *au secret*, and not to you; that I have ruined and *mêléed* everything, &c.; that he only wanted Sir W. to write a few letters in consequence of the spirit evinced against you, &c., &c. I was too ill to answer him and I trust to the course of events to settle all things. He swears also that I ought not to have mentioned Barrow's name, &c. All these things, I need not tell you, appear to me very extraordinary, as I am not aware of having violated any confidence or instructions whatever.

By the following morning, however, the wearied traveller has recovered his elasticity, and 'three hours' uninterrupted conversation with Murray' puts everything right again.

To J. G. Lockhart.

Nov. 22, 1825.

MY DEAR LOCKHART,

Forget the letter, which, in a moment of great agitation about your business, and utterly exhausted in mind and body I wrote you yesterday evening. I rose this morning, having previously sworn by the God of the Silver Bow to slay the mighty Python of Humbug, whose vigorous and enormous folds were so fast and fatally encircling us. Thank the God, I have succeeded! You will now come to London in *triumph*.—Yours ever,

B. D.[2]

[1] Scott's *Journal*, I., pp. 21, 22. [2] Scott's *Letters*, II., pp. 410, 411.

That he did not overrate his success Murray himself furnishes testimony in a letter to Lockhart on the following day.

> I have yesterday and to-day listened to Mr. Disraeli's admirable details of his conferences with you and Sir Walter, and I can now state with my whole heart that nothing could have proved more completely gratifying; it has put me into complete possession of your views and character, and I can only repeat what I told him to say to you, that after this, Heaven and Earth may pass away, but it cannot shake my opinion.[1]

It was probably at this time that Disraeli first began to feel that dislike of Croker which was to find memorable expression in *Coningsby*. In a letter to Murray he speaks, with obvious reference to Croker and Barrow, of 'the junta of official scamps who have too long enslaved you.' To Lockhart he is even more explicit:—

> I have often complained to you of Murray's inconsistency, vacillation, and indecision. I have done more, I have complained of them to himself. I regret it. Had I had any conception of the intriguing, selfish and narrow-minded officials by whom he has been so long surrounded, I certainly would have restrained my sentiments, and have pitied the noble and generous-minded being who was subjected to such disgusting thraldom. . . . It is impossible in a letter to give you any idea of the agitating and curious scenes which have taken place during these last days. The scales, however, have at length fallen from our friend's eyes, and the walls of the Admiralty have resounded to his firm and bold but gentlemanly tones. . . . Thank God I did not postpone my departure to town one other second![2]

With the obscure intrigues to which this and other letters refer we are not much concerned. Lockhart came to London in the first week of December, and a fortnight later, at Disraeli's suggestion and with the approbation of all, the new paper was named *The Representative*. There, as far as Disraeli is involved, the story abruptly ends. In a letter to Lockhart on

[1] Scott's *Letters*, II., p. 414. [2] *Ibid.*, II., p. 413.

November 28 he alludes to 'the terrific agitation in which the city and the whole commercial interest have been thrown during the last three weeks.' About the middle of December the agitation culminated in panic, and the crash which had for some time been inevitable came, spreading disaster far and wide, and burying Disraeli's hopes in the general ruin. Thenceforth, at all events, his name disappears from the records which tell the story of *The Representative*, and it is probably a safe conjecture to seek the explanation in the bursting of the City bubble, though we know nothing definite.[1] Murray went on with his enterprise, and in due course the paper was published; but, badly managed and badly edited, it was a failure from the beginning, and after a flickering life of half a year and a cost to its proprietor of £26,000 it ceased to exist.

So ended this bold attempt by the young Disraeli to storm the heights to which his ambition aspired. In after years, it would seem, his memory dwelt with little pleasure on the episode. He had more than once to deny statements that he had been the editor of *The Representative*, but as to his real connexion with the enterprise he was silent. There is nothing surprising in this; public men do not love to have their names associated with failure, and Disraeli was no exception. But apart from the failure there is

[1] Dr. Smiles, indeed, definitely states that, when the time came for Murray's partners to contribute their share of the capital, they both of them failed to fulfil their engagements; but this still leaves something unexplained in the story as it affects Disraeli, for Mr. Powles, as the correspondence shows, retained his position in respect of Murray and the newspaper apparently unquestioned for at least a couple of months after Disraeli had disappeared. As some things in the published accounts of these transactions have given offence to the living representatives of Mr. Powles's family, it is only fair to note that his own version of the story is unfortunately not available. Though the crisis of 1826 involved him in bankruptcy, it would appear that he afterwards recovered his position and paid his creditors in full; and his family state that he maintained friendly relations with Murray down to the latter's death. Certainly Disraeli, as his correspondence proves, even after he had become Chancellor of the Exchequer, remained in confidential communication with Mr. Powles, whom he valued both as a leading City Conservative and an authority on subjects in which the City took a special interest.

nothing discreditable to him in the story as far as it can be traced to-day. He had shown amazing energy, amazing self-confidence, and amazing power of winning to his views men older and riper in experience than himself. His faults had been the faults of youth, an over-sanguine temperament, and immaturity of judgment. In trusting so implicitly to his alliance with the mining interests in the City, he had built upon foundations of sand, but older heads than his, before and since, have been guilty of a similar error. It is not clear that the conception of the newspaper was in itself unsound. Until the last moment, in spite of its appearance at a time of severe financial stress, the success of *The Representative* was generally anticipated, and it was only the feebleness of the first few numbers that destroyed its chances. For this Disraeli, who had withdrawn a month before, can hardly be held responsible; if he had remained the result might have been the same, but it is not impossible that his dæmonic energy would have imparted to the paper some of the life and vigour which it so conspicuously lacked.

Murray, it ought to be said, seems to have cherished a feeling that, apart from the loss of his money, he had grounds for indignation against one who, in his own touching words, had received from him 'nothing but the most unbounded confidence and parental attachment'; but that feeling appears to have been of later origin. Whatever the circumstances and explanation of the young Disraeli's withdrawal from *The Representative*, the event at first made not the slightest difference to the intimate relations between the Murray and Disraeli families. A few months later, however, *Vivian Grey* was published, and the situation changed at once.[1] Because the Disraelis had expressed, or were supposed

[1] Sir John Murray expressed his agreement with the view here taken:—'I believe the real cause of my grandfather's resentment was not *The Representative* affair nor the loss of his money, but the feeling that he had been caricatured and that his confidence had been betrayed by Disraeli in *Vivian Grey*. So my father always told me.'

to have expressed, their approbation of this performance, Murray dropped their acquaintance, and his feelings were shown by a letter written later in the year in which he speaks of Benjamin's 'outrageous breach of all confidence and of every tie which binds man to man in social life in the publication' of the novel. *Vivian Grey*, as we shall see, is full of boyish impudence, but there is nothing in it that can be even thought of as giving justification for language such as this. Murray apparently fancied that he had been satirised in the character of the Marquis, though it is not easy to detect the slightest resemblance between them. As Sharon Turner assured him, 'If the author were to swear to me that he meant the Marquis for you, I could not believe him: it is in all points so entirely unlike.' The fact is, Murray's temper, which was naturally far from perfect, was by the time the novel appeared in a state of sore trial. *The Representative* was not succeeding, and Murray found himself committed to a hopeless undertaking and left to bear alone the burden of a heavy weekly loss. It was not consoling to remember that he, a shrewd man of business of no small experience, had been led into the venture by one who was a boy in years; and the boy had made enemies who apparently did not neglect to foster the prejudice against him. Not only did Murray break off relations with the Disraelis, but he seems to have spoken of Benjamin in terms which struck the latter as 'outrageous' and 'inexplicable.' Young Disraeli replied with a menace of legal action, which he conveyed in a letter to Mrs. Murray invoking her interference to avert such a deplorable necessity; and Maria D'Israeli followed with a vigorous and sensible letter of protest addressed to Murray himself. 'I feel your disappointment,' she writes, 'and can forgive your irritability, yet I must resent your late attack on Benjamin'; and she expresses the shrewd opinion that 'the failure of *The Representative* lay much more with the proprietor and his editor than it ever did with my son.' Murray, as

she reminds him, had known the boy from his cradle, and knew his want of resources, and how could he have been deceived? Her son, though 'a clever boy,' was 'no prodigy,' but Murray 'had formed in his versatile imagination a perfect being and expected impossibilities, and found him on trial a mere mortal and a very very young man.' 'What can you mean by saying that our son had divulged and made public your secrets? I must beg an explanation of this enigma.' Isaac D'Israeli also was stirred to unwonted vigour.

Eventually it would appear there was a reconciliation between Murray and the parents; but between Murray and the son, though business relations were resumed, friendship was at an end. How deeply this estrangement was regretted by young Disraeli, who beneath all appearance had a truly affectionate heart, is shown by his subsequent efforts to bring it to an end. When he began to make a name as a novelist it became one of his dearest ambitions to have a book published by Murray, and he never rested till this ambition was achieved. More than a year after his retirement from *The Representative*, when he found himself in possession of a little money, the earnings no doubt of *Vivian Grey*, though his debts on the Stock Exchange swallowed up the greater portion, he contrived to send £150 to Murray in payment for the printing of the mining pamphlets. 'I have never been able,' he explains, 'to obtain a settlement of those accounts from the parties originally responsible, and it has hitherto been quite out of my power to exempt myself from the liability, which, I have ever been conscious, on their incompetency, resulted from the peculiar circumstances of the case to myself.'[1] Murray's heart, however, remained unsoftened. Disraeli seems to have thought, and perhaps not without reason, that Lockhart's influence was used against him; at all events, from this time onwards we find him, whenever occasion offers,

[1] Smiles, II., p. 254.

showing a hearty dislike for Lockhart, who appears indeed from his side to have reciprocated the feeling with no less cordiality.[1]

Among Disraeli's papers there is a reminiscence, written nearly forty years later, of his early visits to Scotland and his intercourse with Sir Walter Scott.

When I was quite a youth (1825) I was travelling in Scotland, and my father gave me a letter to Sir Walter Scott. I visited him at Abbotsford. I remember him quite well. A kind, but rather stately, person: with his pile of forehead, sagacious eye, white hair and green shooting coat. He was extremely hospitable; and after dinner, with no lack of claret, the quaighs and whisky were brought in. I have seen him sitting in his armchair, in his beautiful library, which was the chief rendezvous of the house, and in which we met in the evening, with half a dozen terriers about him: in his lap, on his shoulders, at his feet. 'These,' he said to me, 'are Dandie Dinmont's breed.' They were all called Mustard and Pepper, according to their color and their age. He would read aloud in the evening, or his daughter, an interesting girl, Anne Scott, would sing some ballad on the harp. He liked to tell a story of some Scotch chief, sometimes of some Scotch lawyer.[2]

I was at Abbotsford again later in the year for a day. The *Edinburgh Review* had just arrived. Mr. Lockhart, then about thirty or so, but a very experienced literary man, I remember saying, 'Well, they may say what they like, but no man can write like Jeffrey on poetry. The article on Milton in the new number is the finest thing we have had for years.' As I came down to dinner, Sir Walter was walking up and down the hall with a very big, stout, florid man, apparently in earnest conversation. I was introduced to him before dinner as Mr. Constable—the famous publisher of the *Edinburgh Review* and the Waverley Novels, the authorship of them not then acknowledged; at least, not formally. It struck me, that I had never met before such an ostentatious man, or one whose conversation was so braggart. One would think that he had written the Waverley Novels himself, and certainly that Abbotsford belonged to him. However, he seemed to worship Scott, and to express his adoration.

[1] See for instance Lockhart's remarks on *Coningsby*, Lang, II., p. 199.

[2] [See a speech at Glasgow on 19 November, 1873, in which Disraeli gave a further account of this visit to 'one of the best and greatest of men.'—G. E. B.]

His carriage was announced, while he was at dinner, and he was obliged to go, as he had to return to Edinburgh to transact some business, and then go up to London by the morrow's mail, by which also I was to return.

So we met again, and I sate opposite him. He put a rich velvet cap with a broad gold band on his head, and looked like a great heraldic lion crowned. We had two fellow passengers, I am sure, but I don't recollect anything about them. But I never shall forget Constable's conversation. It was only about Abbotsford and the Waverley Novels. He informed me, that he intended to build a new wing to Abbotsford next year, and you would have supposed from what he said that Sir Walter had only commenced developing a new Eldorado. I never in my life met such a braggart, or a man so full of self-importance. Something had gone wrong on the journey; the guard or the coachman had displeased. He went into an ecstasy of pompous passion. 'Do you know who I am, man? I am Archibald Constable,' &c., &c., &c. This man was on the point of a most fatal and shattering bankruptcy; had gone up to town with some desperate resolve; and in less than a week the crash came.

When he had exhausted Abbotsford and the Waverley Novels, he began bragging about the *Edinburgh Review*: and dilated much on an article on Milton. I, like a youth, repeating at second-hand, ventured to observe, that no one wrote on poetry like Jeffrey. I copied this from Lockhart, but I flatter myself, that if I had read the article, I should not have made the observation; for it always afterwards gave me a very low opinion of Lockhart's literary discrimination. No man with a good nose could have for an instant supposed that Jeffrey had written the article in question. Constable informed me, that it was not by Jeffrey but that it was a secret: but so little was his power of reserve and reticence, or so great the excitement under which he then laboured, that before long I had no difficulty in worming out from him, that it was by a young lawyer of the name of Macaulay, from whom he expected great things. Therefore, I arrived in London with a sort of literary secret.

CHAPTER VI.

VIVIAN GREY.

1826.

Disraeli was never easily discouraged. His twenty-first birthday, which he celebrated on the 21st of December, a few days after the crash in the City, must have been gloomy enough; but, foiled in his practical ambition, he turned again to literature, and within four months had produced a book which became the talk of London and won for him celebrity or notoriety in a measure that few secure when they have barely crossed the threshold of manhood.

In the previous year a novel called *Tremaine* had appeared which was much read and talked about at the time, though it is now forgotten. It was a 'novel of fashionable life' and its popularity had given a certain vogue to this form of literature. The author, Robert Ward, better known by his later name of Plumer Ward, was a person of some prominence in Parliament and society; but his book was published anonymously, and owed not a little of its success to the mystery in which its authorship was for some time carefully wrapt. As it happened, the Disraeli family rented Hyde House, Ward's residence near Amersham, for some months in the autumn of 1825, and here Disraeli always said he wrote *Vivian Grey*, taking the idea from *Tremaine* and completing the book before he was twenty-one. The link between the Disraelis and Ward was Ward's solicitor, Austen, who, living close by in Guilford

Street, had formed an acquaintance with the family in Bloomsbury Square. It was Austen who, according to the very doubtful story, had found Benjamin reading Chaucer in chambers, and decided that he would never make a lawyer; and it was through Austen that Hyde House was taken by the Disraelis. Austen, as Ward's agent, had made the arrangements for the publication of *Tremaine*, and his young and clever wife was also in Ward's confidence, and had played a part in the negotiations. Aware, no doubt, of her relations with Colburn the publisher, Disraeli, who had no longer John Murray to apply to, turned to her for advice and assistance when his own novel was becoming ripe for publication. Sara Austen was well fitted to be the Egeria of a precocious youth of genius. 'She was a woman,' as her nephew Sir Henry Layard describes her, 'of more than ordinary talent and of more than ordinary beauty, very ambitious of shining in society and fond of flattery and admiration. Her accomplishments were many and various. She was a clever musician, a skilful artist, a good judge and critic of literary merit, and an excellent letter-writer. Had she chosen to be an authoress she would probably have been a successful one.'[1] Disraeli's earlier letters to her have unfortunately perished, but enough remain of Mrs. Austen's to help to elucidate our story.

From Mrs. Austen.

Saturday Morning, 25th [*Feb.*,[2] 1826].

MY DEAR SIR,

Patience is not one of my virtues, as I fear you will discover to your cost, and I could just as easily sit without speaking till Tuesday as wait till then to give you my opinion of your MS. I am quite delighted with it, and enter into the spirit of the book entirely. I have now gone through it twice, and the more I read the better I am pleased. I never

[1] Layard's *Autobiography*, I., p. 46.

[2] March 25 was also a Saturday, but as the book was announced for publication at the beginning of April the earlier date must be chosen.

make any professions, but if you can do no better take me as an ally upon trust: at least I will be faithful to your secret and can undertake to manage it exactly in accordance to your wishes in Burlington Street [Colburn's offices]. *Trouble* is an odious word which shall be henceforth banished our vocabulary. I only long to receive my credentials, for indeed you have no time to lose on account of a very extraordinary coincidence,[1] which I dare not explain on paper, but of which you shall know enough the first time we meet to prove the advantage of its going to press immediately. The moment I have your permission and instructions I will write to C[olburn]. Pray send me the remainder of your MS. as soon as possible, for I am in a state of complete excitation on the subject.——I forget Mr. D'I's christian initial so must direct 'Junior.'[2]

Your sincere friend and ally,
S. A.

At Mrs. Austen's instance Colburn accepted the novel for publication, though the secret of the authorship was rigorously withheld from him, as even for a time from Disraeli's own family. That the mystification might be complete, Mrs. Austen copied the whole of the manuscript in her own hand, and her friends believed that she had helped to write the story; but her letters at the time confirm the statement she made more than half a century later: 'She had given him advice and had occasionally induced him to suppress or modify passages which she considered objectionable in taste, but nothing more.'[3] Why Disraeli should have taken so much trouble to preserve the anonymity of the book, or whether he had any more solid reasons than a native love of mystery and a desire to follow the fashion

[1] The reference is without doubt to the approaching appearance of Ward's second novel, *De Vere*.

[2] Sir Henry Layard, writing half a century later of events which happened when he was a child, has, as this letter and others show, antedated the intimacy between the Austens and Disraeli, and has perhaps somewhat exaggerated the part they played in his life. The Chaucer story seems to me of doubtful authenticity, and not less so another story which is often quoted on Sir Henry Layard's authority of his accompanying his aunt in a call on the Disraelis and finding 'Ben' in the middle of a boxing lesson.

[3] Layard, I., p. 46.

which Scott had established and to which lesser lights like Plumer Ward had conformed, we cannot be sure; but the publisher was so far from disliking the mystery thus created that he skilfully availed himself of it for purposes of his own. A master of the art of advertising, Colburn controlled, or was in a position to influence, several of the best-known organs of literary opinion; and presently in the daily journals and in weekly and monthly periodicals hints began to be given of the approaching appearance of a new society novel by an author who for obvious reasons desired to remain anonymous and in whose pages all the leading people of the day were to appear under thin disguises. The book was to be 'extremely satirical,' and was to contain 'portraits of living characters, sufficient to constitute a National Gallery'; it was to be 'a sort of Don Juan in prose,' and the hero was "to become acquainted with every literary and fashionable character in existence.' By arts such as these curiosity was aroused and expectation created, and when towards the end of April *Vivian Grey* appeared in two octavo volumes its success was at once assured. Long reviews were published in many of the leading newspapers and periodicals; society amused itself by endeavouring to identify the originals of the characters; and at the same time speculation, diligently fomented by the ingenious Colburn, raged as to the identity of the author. From their different points of view both publisher and author had every reason to be satisfied with the success they had achieved.

Though we may safely assume that Disraeli was not averse from the prospect of notoriety, there is nothing to show that he had any real responsibility for the puffing arts of Colburn. He only received £200 for the novel,[1] and he was not even in direct communication with his publisher; but in the end he had to pay the penalty for Colburn's delinquencies as well as for his own. As long

[1] That is to say for the novel as it originally appeared. For the Second Part, published in the following year, he received £500 in addition.

as it was supposed that *Vivian Grey* was the work of a man of high position the Press, where it did not praise, was silent; but in spite of Colburn's attempts to connect well-known names with the authorship, or at least to encourage the belief that the author was a 'man of fashion,' some of the critics were from the first suspicious. Jerdan, of the *Literary Gazette*, for instance, was acute enough to observe that 'the class of the author was a little betrayed by his frequent recurrence to topics about which the mere man of fashion knows nothing and cares less,' and that the book 'somewhat smacked of the literary writer'; and presently—it would seem through Jerdan, who had somehow ferreted out the secret, and in spite of the greatest exertions on the part of Mrs. Austen to 'blind' all concerned—the truth leaked out. When it was realised that the author of *Vivian Grey* was only an audacious boy, Colburn's enemies abandoned their reserve. 'Christopher North' in *Blackwood*[1] denounced 'the shameful and shameless puffery' by which the sale of the book had been secured, and dismissed it as 'a paltry catchpenny' by 'an obscure person for whom nobody cares a straw.' Another writer, in an article entitled 'The New Unknown,' revealed the author's identity by name, branded him as having acquired popularity 'by the meanest and most revolting artifices and the total disregard of all honourable feeling'; ridiculed 'his most ludicrous affectation of good breeding'; and even accused Disraeli and Mrs. Austen of having tricked Colburn into paying a high price for the novel by leading him to believe that it was from the pen of Plumer Ward.[2] With all his assurance

[1] July, 1826, p. 98.

[2] *Literary Magnet*, Vol. II., pp. 1 and 129. From the same writer the legends took their origin that Disraeli had been the first editor of *The Representative* and responsible for its failure; and that he had also been editor of *The Star Chamber*, a weekly publication which appeared for a couple of months in the spring of 1826, and author of the 'Dunciad of To-day,' a satirical poem which was printed in *The Star Chamber* and provoked much resentment. The statement about *The Representative*, as we have seen, was not true. As for *The Star Chamber*, it was founded by a certain Peter Hall, a friend of Meredith's at Brasenose, who, through

Disraeli was by nature sensitive, and this was his first taste of the malignant abuse which was to be showered upon him all through life and against which experience was to make him proof. There is an obvious reminiscence of the effect upon the victim's mind in the well-known passage in which Contarini Fleming describes his sensations after reading the review of his novel *Manstein*:—

> With what horror, with what supreme, appalling astonishment, did I find myself for the first time in my life a subject of the most ruthless, the most malignant, and the most adroit ridicule. I was scarified, I was scalped. . . . The criticism fell from my hand, a film floated over my vision; my knees trembled. I felt that sickness of heart that we experience in our first serious scrape. I was ridiculous, it was time to die.

Yet in spite of the critics, perhaps to some extent because of their violence and acerbity, which revived the interest of the public as it began to flag, *Vivian Grey* survived. 'There was little art in my creation,' says Contarini of an early composition, 'but there was much vitality,' and the description exactly fits the first part of *Vivian Grey*. The novel owed its success no doubt in the first instance to Colburn's ingenious puffing, but it had sufficient merit of its own to reward the attention that had been artificially drawn to it. By the beginning of July a second edition had been called for, and a third, with certain modifications, was issued in the following year. Within three years of its first appearance Disraeli had come to reckon *Vivian Grey* among his 'juvenile

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Meredith, had become acquainted with Disraeli. Disraeli contributed some fables with a political application under the title of 'The Modern Æsop,' at least one review, and perhaps other matter. But in later life he expressly denied (*The Times*, Nov. 3, 1871; *Leisure Hour*, Nov. 4, 1871) having been editor, if indeed there ever was an editor; and in the second part of *Vivian Grey* (Bk. V. ch. 1) he declared, with obvious reference to the 'Dunciad,' that he never wrote a single line 'of the various satires in verse' that had been attributed to him, and the internal evidence is in complete agreement with this repudiation.

indiscretions,'[1] and for a quarter of a century, as he wrote in 1853, he refused to reprint it; but in that year, as the book had 'baffled even the efforts of its creator to suppress it,' he submitted it to a severe expurgation and gave it a place in a collected edition of his works. He was careful, however, in a preface, to disarm the critics by anticipating their harshest censure.

> Books written by boys, which pretend to give a picture of manners and to deal in knowledge of human nature, must necessarily be founded on affectation. They can be, at the best, but the results of imagination, acting upon knowledge not acquired by experience. Of such circumstances exaggeration is a necessary consequence, and false taste accompanies exaggeration. . . . Such productions should be exempt from criticism, and should be looked upon as a kind of literary lusus.

In the face of this frank avowal, it would be absurd to embark on any pedantic inquiry into the worth of the book as a permanent contribution to literature. The question that is really interesting is its biographical value—what light, if any, does it throw on the developing mind and character of the author? The scheme of the novel is very simple. A couple of lines from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*—

> 'Why, then the world's mine oyster,
> Which I with sword will open,'

appear as a motto on the title-page. Vivian Grey, the clever and precocious son of a distinguished man of letters, after a stormy career at school and a period of hard study thereafter looks about at the age of twenty for the means to satisfy his already inordinate ambition. Vivian's sword is his wit, and

> at this moment how many a powerful noble wants only wit to be a Minister, and what wants Vivian Grey to attain the same end? That noble's influence. . . . Supposing I am

[1] *Life of Bulwer Lytton*, II., p. 316.

in contact with this magnifico, am I prepared? Now let me probe my very soul. Does my cheek blanch? I have the mind for the conception; and I can perform right skilfully upon the most splendid of musical instruments—the human voice—to make those conceptions beloved by others. There wants but one thing more—courage, pure, perfect courage;—and does Vivian Grey know fear?

He finds his magnifico in the Marquis of Carabas, a weak but vain and ambitious nobleman whom he meets at his father's table. Vivian fascinates him by his ready wit, plays upon his vanity, is invited to his country house, Château Désir, and there proceeds to organise a Carabas party out of the friends of the Marquis, prominent among whom, strange to say, is a Lord Beaconsfield—'a very worthy gentleman, but between ourselves, a damned fool.' The new party will require a leader in the House of Commons, and as Vivian with calculated modesty declines the task, he is at his own suggestion despatched to Wales to win over by his diplomacy a certain Cleveland, a young and once promising politician who had been betrayed by the Marquis and had retired from politics in disgust. The mission is successful, and Vivian carries Cleveland back with him to Château Désir. Now, however, a woman who has long been on the scene, but whose place in the scheme of the novel has hitherto seemed uncertain, begins to play a more definite part. Either from jealousy or from sheer love of mischief, she poisons the mind of the Marquis against Vivian Grey, and the catastrophe speedily comes. Dissension and treachery invade the ranks of the plotters, the house of cards that has been so laboriously constructed suddenly collapses, Cleveland is killed in a duel by Vivian Grey, and the hero retires to Germany discomfited in his ambition and a prey to bitter remorse.

Now that there is a large element of autobiography in the external setting of this fantastic story is soon apparent. Horace Grey is clearly a picture of Isaac D'Israeli; Vivian Grey's early years are, as has already been seen,

described in great part from the author's own experience; the journey to Wales to secure Cleveland's adhesion to the Carabas party is obviously suggested by Disraeli's own mission to Scotland to enlist the services of Lockhart for *The Representative*; and we can trace in the book the influence of nearly every important fact of which we have knowledge in the author's previous history—his father's library, his conversations with literary men at Murray's, his tour in Germany, his intercourse with financial magnates in the City. All this is natural: a man can only write of what he knows, and at twenty-one his experience is so limited that his range of choice is narrow. But a question of greater interest and difficulty remains. Is Vivian Grey's character a reflexion of the author's own? Is his view of life the view which Benjamin Disraeli had deliberately adopted on the threshold of manhood? Are his ideals and ambitions Disraeli's youthful ideals and ambitions, and his adventures in some degree an anticipation of Disraeli's own career? It has generally been assumed that these things are so, and Disraeli's friends, accepting the assumption, have offered the best apology they could, while his enemies have exultantly pointed to the moral. But another theory is possible. A recent critic,[1] while admitting, or rather insisting on, the autobiographic significance of the book, has argued with some plausibility that the story is not an anticipation, but a retrospect; that it embodies not an ideal, but a confession and a warning; that the author is drawing from his own past experience in a very literal sense, and is transposing into the form of fiction the story of *The Representative* and the shipwreck of his own precocious ambitions.

As so often happens, Disraeli himself can be quoted in support of either theory. In a reply he made to his critics in the second part of the novel, he anxiously explained that he had been conscious from the beginning of the moral obliquity of his hero.

[1] Mr. Lucien Wolf in his edition of *Vivian Grey*.

I conceived the character of a youth of great talent, whose mind had been corrupted, as the minds of many of our youth have been, by the artificial age in which he lived. . . . In his whole career he was to be pitied; but for his whole career he was not to be less punished. When I sketched the feelings of his early boyhood, as the novelist, I had already foreseen the results to which those feelings were to lead; and had in store for the fictitious character the punishment which he endured.[1]

This statement appears explicit enough; but it was written a year later when Disraeli was suffering from ill-health and the depression that attends it, and when for the moment he had lost his native buoyancy and self-confidence; and if that be remembered, the explanation ceases to carry conviction. To no reader of the earlier chapters of *Vivian Grey* would it ever occur that the purpose of the novel is to unfold the moral lesson of the consequences to which ambition uncontrolled by moral principle must inevitably lead. The author's sympathies are obviously with his hero, and the reader's sympathies, whether he will or not, are enlisted on the same side. The author no less than the reader may be intellectually aware of the hero's imperfections, but even when the action is well advanced there are few signs of moral reprobation. The catastrophe when it comes is a mere matter of machinery, and hardly affects the *ethos* of the story; it comes only, one feels, because the story had to be ended somehow, and a satisfactory ending was hardly to be found. But we have testimony from Disraeli himself which is more convincing than an apology framed while he was still smarting from the wounds inflicted by the critics. Seven years later he wrote in a diary which till after his death was probably never seen by any eyes but his own: 'Poetry is the safety valve of my passions—but I wish to *act* what I *write*. My works are the embodification of my feelings. In *Vivian Grey* I have

[1] *Vivian Grey*, Bk. V. ch. 1.

portrayed my active and real ambition.' Here again we might seem to have a final settlement of the matter; but even this declaration must not be pressed too far. Disraeli, with his infinitely subtle and elusive mind and character, is a perpetual snare to the unwary who place too literal a construction upon his isolated words and actions. If it is ridiculous on the one hand to pretend that *Vivian Grey* is a confession written in a fit of penitence and remorse, it would be no less ridiculous on the other to pretend that Disraeli was unconscious of or indifferent to the moral obliquity of his hero, or that he deliberately set him up as an example which he afterwards meant to follow.

Though neither of the rival theories is wholly satisfactory, neither is wholly false, and it is not impossible to effect a harmony between them. Disraeli, as has been seen, used in later life to declare that he wrote *Vivian Grey* at Plumer Ward's house, where his family spent the autumn of 1825. It is not easy to see how in the whirl of those crowded months he could have found the leisure necessary for the completion of such a task; and Mrs. Austen's letters seem to imply that a good deal of work was done on *Vivian Grey* after the secret had been confided to her in the following spring. But it is highly probable that a beginning had been made before, either at Hyde House in the month preceding Disraeli's first visit to Abbotsford, or even at an earlier date; and that the story was picked up again after the catastrophe of *The Representative*. No one reading *Vivian Grey*, especially if he read it in the original edition, can fail to be struck by the contrast between the first volume and the second. All the merit of the book lies in the first volume.[1] In the earlier chapters especially we find the author writing from a genuine artistic impulse and with a joyous interest in his subject; and his story has all the coherence that comes from a strong and living conception of the character of the hero. The

[1] Containing the first two books of the ordinary editions.

subordinate actors duly play their parts, though Mrs. Felix Lorraine is, somewhat of an enigma, and is evidently beyond the powers of a boy of twenty-one. The style is light and vivacious, full of sparkle and epigram; and, though faults of taste are numerous, this first volume on the whole is a most amusing blend of cleverness and impudence. Even the flippancy and cynicism are too obviously boyish affectations to cause real offence. If we remember that *Vivian Grey* is only a work of fiction, and a work of fiction with a large element of caricature and exaggeration, and if we make allowance also for that subtle Disraelian irony which pervades all the novels, we may fairly say that in the first volume the hero is Disraeli himself; though just for that reason the work ought to have remained a fragment, as without a further development of the author's personality the story of the hero's adventures could not be carried on in conformity with the original conception.

The second volume opens with the mission to Wales, which bears so close a resemblance in detail to Disraeli's own mission to Scotland that it could hardly have been written except in the light of that experience; but signs of haste and discord at once begin to be apparent, and the remainder of the novel is a continuous descent. Both the narrative and the characters become incoherent, whole chapters of irrelevant padding are introduced, and the author's main preoccupation now appears to be to stretch his story out to a fairly respectable length and then with the least possible trouble in the development of the plot to bring it to some sort of conclusion. Presently we lapse into vulgar and hideous melodrama. Mrs. Felix Lorraine, who before was an enigma, now becomes a monster, and, monster as she is, the hero in his revenge upon her shows himself a fiend. 'As hot and hurried a sketch as ever yet was penned,' is Disraeli's own description of the first part of the novel in his apology a year later, and he probably had in mind the

second volume especially and the conditions under which it was written. It is just such work as we might expect from a boy without experience who, in the reaction after a period of unnatural tension ending in great misfortune, is endeavouring in headlong haste to bring an earlier literary sketch to some sort of conclusion. We now instinctively feel that the artistic impulse has spent itself, that the author is no longer inspired by genuine love of his subject, and that we are dealing with a mere piece of crude and hasty book-making. There is no definite artistic motive, not even the motive of contrition, though the treatment has taken a colour from the author's own misfortunes; and certainly the hero now is as far from reflecting Disraeli's ideals and ambitions as this second volume is from exhibiting his literary power.

So much on the question as to the sense in which Vivian Grey is a portrait of Disraeli himself; on the larger question as to whether the novel as a whole is a gallery of portraits from living originals something remains to be said. Elaborate keys were published at the time, one especially, as it appeared in *The Star Chamber*, being supposed to have the author's sanction. But the key-makers were probably just as well able as the author to affix a name to most of the characters. It required no great penetration to translate Lord Past Century into Lord Eldon or the Duke of Waterloo into the Duke of Wellington. By thin disguises such as these and by the frequent introduction of names of living persons the reader is certainly encouraged in the first part of *Vivian Grey* to search for real characters behind the fictitious names. Disraeli admitted as much himself in a letter which he wrote after the publication of the sequel in the following year. Colburn had made a circuitous attempt to extract from him information as to the prototypes of his characters; and Disraeli's answer well defines his position then and later on the whole question of portraiture from living originals in his novels.

To William Jerdan.

[1827.]

I am very much surprised at Mr. Colburn's request. How my knowledge of the characters in *Vivian Grey* can be necessary to, or, indeed, in the slightest degree assist any one in understanding the work, is to me a most inexplicable mystery. Let it be taken for granted that the characters are purely ideal, and the whole affair is settled. If any collateral information be required in order to understand the work, either *Vivian Grey* is unworthy to be read, or, which is, of course, an impossible conclusion, the reader is not sagacious enough to penetrate its meaning.

Of course, I have no intention of denying that these volumes are, in a very great degree, founded on my own observation and experience. Possibly, in some instances, I may have very accurately depicted existing characters. But *Vivian Grey* is not given to the public as a gallery of portraits, nor have I any wish that it should be considered as such. It will give me great pleasure if the public recognise it as a faithful picture of human nature in general. Whether it be anything further, rests with the author and can only interest him. I cannot prevent surmises; but I shall always take care that from me they shall receive neither denial nor confirmation.

In part of the former volumes, a number of names and characters were introduced which were evident portraits or caricatures. I can understand any reader of those pages being naturally desirous to comprehend their full meaning, and seeking auxiliary means to procure the desired knowledge; but to comprehend the full meaning of the present volumes, the public has only to read them; and if there be anything obscure or unsatisfactory, it is the author's fault—he is a blunderer. All the notes and keys in the kingdom will not make him more intelligible.

The Author of *V. G.*[1]

As a matter of fact, Disraeli's knowledge of the world of politics and society when he wrote the first part of *Vivian Grey* was far too slight for genuine portraiture beyond a very limited circle. The characters which have an obvious reference to originals in high places are names and little more; in the world of letters he

[1] Jerdan's *Autobiography*, IV., p. 78.

was more at home, and the sketch of Theodore Hook in Stanislaus Hoax is a good deal more ambitious; but most of the *dramatis personæ* were merely conventional types, and in many cases we may believe that the key-makers in their zeal traced them to originals of whom the author had never heard.

CHAPTER VII.

A Tour in Italy.

1826.

Twelve months' continual strain and excitement were too much for a constitution that was never really robust. In June we hear of serious illness, and in an opportune hour, when the need of rest and change had become apparent, there came an invitation from the Austens to accompany them in a tour through Switzerland and Northern Italy. The invitation was at once accepted.

To Benjamin Austen.

[*July* (?), 1826.]

Dear Austen,

Having met many women who were too beautiful at the last night's dance, I slept off the memory of their loveliness by an extra three hours of oblivion, and was therefore unable to answer your note immediately; which, however, I am now doing surrounded by a much better breakfast than graced your board this morning.

A devil, though an ugly name, is certainly the wisest style of *déjeuner*—an innocent egg perhaps the silliest: why I say innocent I know not, for certainly if a devilled turkey's leg is the real limb of Satan, the other article may not inaptly be considered the 'yoke of sin.'

According to your advice, I have 'perused your note with attention and considered your offer with care,' and, as the man says who is going to be hired, 'I think the sitiation will suit.' It ill befits any man to dilate on his own excellence, but I may perhaps be allowed to observe that my various, not to say innumerable, accomplishments are not altogether unknown to you; and as for my moral capacities, why, I can have a good character from my last place, which I left on

account of the disappearance of the silver spoons. I defy, also, any one to declare that I am not sober and honest, except when I am entrusted with the key of the wine cellar, when I must candidly confess I have an ugly habit of stealing the claret, getting drunk, and kissing the maids. Nevertheless, I've no doubt but that we shall agree very well. You certainly could not come to any person better fitted for ordering a dinner, and as to casting up accounts, if there's anything in the world I excel in that's the very one—and as I've got into the habit of never attending to the shillings and pence because they make my head ache, I generally detect the *aubergiste* in a super-charge. . . .

B. D.

For this second Continental journey we have the same voluminous material in the shape of letters and journals as for the former. Setting forth in the beginning of August, the travellers crossed from Dover to Boulogne.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

PARIS,
Aug. 9, 1826.

MY DEAR FATHER,

. . . Our journey to Paris was much pleasanter than I expected. We slept the first night at Montreuil, at the inn you mentioned. It was full of English, but the accommodation is as delightful as ever. Being overtaken by a storm in the next day's journey we stopped short at Grandvilliers instead of reaching Beauvais, passing in our way through Abbeville, where we stopped two hours; the next day passing through Beauvais, where we stopped a couple of hours to see the old Cathedral, painted glass, tapestry, &c. We reached Paris Sunday afternoon, and are now in the Rue de Rivoli, the best situation here, having obtained these apartments in a manner which would make an excellent chapter in *Gil Blas*, and beat the adventure of the *Hotel Garni* hollow.

'Paris is delightful.' I never was so much struck with anything in the whole course of my life. I expected another London, but there are no points of resemblance. I did not expect in so short a distance to have met such a contrariety of manners and life. . . . Yesterday I lionised the old City and the Quais, Notre Dame, &c. I was very much struck with the resemblance of the Old Town of Edinburgh to the ancient parts of Paris; indeed, at some times the resem-

blance was perfect. I am going to the Louvre this morning and to the Opera this evening, for we do not leave Paris until Friday. . . .

I have not kept my journal, but of course shall. My fellow travellers will, however, make up for all my negligence; Austen's journal commencing at Guilford Street, with the incidents of wheel-greasing and vail-giving not forgotten, and Mrs. A. having already filled her quarto, although having more modestly commenced only at Dover. . . . God bless you.

Yours most affectionately,
B. DISRAELI.

From Paris they posted by the road through Dijon to Geneva. There are some brightly written letters from Mrs. Austen to Sarah Disraeli, which give us here and there an interesting side-glimpse of her young fellow-traveller. 'The real improvement in your brother's health and looks quite surprises me,' she writes from Dijon. 'He seems to enjoy everything, *pour ou contre*, and has just said high mass for a third bottle of burgundy.' Burgundy was always his favourite wine.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

GENEVA,
Aug. 21.

MY DEAR FATHER,

. . . At the termination of the Jura ridge which bounds one side of the plain of Geneva, did I on Friday morning witness the most magnificent sight in the world—the whole range of the high Alps with Mont Blanc in the centre *without a cloud*[1]; the effect was so miraculous that for a long time I did not perceive the lovely scene under me, the plain and city and lake of Geneva, the latter of ultra-marine blue. Such a view of the Alps has been seen by few persons in this country, and was occasioned by the unparalleled dryness and heat of the season, which, as we are daily informed by travellers, exceeds by much the heat now experienced on the other side of the Alps, in Italy. The heat does not, however, affect me the least. I have not had a day's, nay an hour's, illness since I left England. . . . I take a row on the lake every night with Maurice, Lord

[1] Compare *Contarini Fleming*, Pt. III. ch. 1.

Byron's celebrated boatman. Maurice is very handsome and very vain, but he has been made so by the English, of whom he is the regular pet. He talks of nothing but Lord Byron, particularly if you shew the least interest in the subject. He told me that in the night of the famous storm described in the third Canto of C[hilde] H[arold], had they been out five minutes more the boat must have been wrecked. He told Lord Byron at first of the danger of such a night voyage, and the only answer which B. made was stripping quite naked and folding round him a great *robe de chambre*, so that in case of wreck he was ready prepared to swim immediately. Lord B., he assures me, was out all night without even stockings, and up most of the night to his knees in water. I asked him if he spoke. He said that he seldom conversed with him or any one at any time, but that this night he (Maurice) was so employed in managing the boat and sail, &c., that conversation would have been quite impossible.

One day Byron sent for him and, sitting down in the boat, he put a pistol on each side (which was his invariable practice) and then gave him 300 napoleons, ordering him to row to Chillon. He then had two torches lighted in the dungeon and wrote for two hours and a half. On coming out, the *gendarme* who guarded the castle humbly asked for *quelque-chose à boire*. 'Give him a napoleon,' said his Lordship. '*De trop, milor*,' said Maurice, who being but recently installed in his stewardship was somewhat mindful of his master's interest. 'Do you know who I am?' rejoined the master, 'Give it to him and tell him that the donor is Lord Byron!' This wonderful piece of information must have produced a great effect on the poor miserable tippling *gendarme*. But in the slightest things was Byron, by Maurice's account, most ludicrously ostentatious. He gave him one day five napoleons for a swimming race across the lake. At the sight of the club foot Maurice thought he was sure to win, but his Lordship gained by five minutes. Byron, he says, was not a quick swimmer, but he was never exhausted, by which means he generally won when the distance was great. One morning Maurice called for him very early to swim. Byron brought to the boat his breakfast, consisting of cold duck, &c., and three or four bottles of wine. He scarcely eat anything, but drank all the wine, and then amused himself, while they were sailing to the appointed place, by throwing the provisions gradually into the water. Upon this honest Maurice gently hinted that he had not himself breakfasted, and that he should swim much better if he had some portion of his Lordship's superfluity. 'Friend Maurice,' said B., 'it ill becomes true Christians to think of themselves; I

shall give you none. You see I eat no breakfast myself: do you also refrain, for the sake of the fishes.' He then continued his donations to the pikes (which here are beautiful) and would not bestow a single crumb on his companion. 'This is all very well,' says Maurice, 'but his Lordship forgot one little circumstance. He had no appetite; I had.' He says that he never saw a man eat so little as B. in all his life, but that he would drink three or four bottles of the richest wines for his breakfast. I shall perhaps remember more when we meet.

I have been on the lake at all hours, and seen Mt. Blanc by all lights, twice by sunset, when the whole mighty mountain is quite rosy. The effect is beyond all description. The living at Secheron is most excellent; we much wanted it. Except at Dijon I have scarcely had anything to eat since I left Paris. In the Juras we were literally without a meal. The honey of the Alps, wild strawberries, butter, cheese, and eggs are all very well in romance and certainly are not to be despised as collaterals, but with us they were principals for successive days. Travellers require nourishing food. In the Juras we could not even get a bottle of common wine, and the bread was black and not only sour but acid. . . .

Mrs. A. is very well, and speaks French with even greater rapidity than she does English. I hope to God my mother is better. Love to all. Tell Jim and Ralph I'd give anything for an election.

Your most affectionate son,

B. DISRAELI.

An eloquent passage in the diary supplements this letter:—

GENEVA,
Aug. 20.

I was on the lake again this night. It was partially cloudy; the moon finally gained the ascendency. Swift lightning played opposite her at intervals. In valleys of mountains it is very beautiful to watch the effect of sunrise and sunset. The high peaks are first illumined: the soft yellow light then tips the lower elevations, and the bright golden showers soon bathe the whole valley, except a dark streak at the bottom, which is often not visited by sunlight. The effect of sunset is perhaps still more lovely: the highest peaks are those which the sun loves most. One by one mountains relatively to their elevations steal into darkness; and the rosy tint

is often suffused over the peaks and glaciers of Mt. Blanc, while the whole world below is perfectly in the darkest twilight.[1]

To Isaac D'Israeli.

MILAN,
Sept. 2.

MY DEAR FATHER,

. . . I mentioned that I had been to Ferney in my last letter. . . . Of the situation I had no previous idea, and can give you no present description. It is sublime! placed between two of the most splendid ranges of Alps in the world, with eternal snows, and a gigantic lake, and forest of pines, it should have inspired a more Homeric epic than the *Henriade*, and chastened a more libidinous effusion than the *Pucelle*.

I had my heart's content before I left Geneva—the night before. My friend Maurice sent for me after a very cloudy day to say that there was every prospect of a fine storm upon the lake. As it was just after dinner, and Austen was with me, I was obliged to take a companion, but, as we had discussed a considerable quantity of Burgundy, I was soon freed from his presence, for he laid down in the boat on my cloak, and ere half an hour was passed was fast asleep, never disturbing us save with an occasional request to participate in our brandy bottle. As for myself, I was soon sobered, not by sleep, but by the scene. It was sublime—lightning almost continuous, and sometimes in four places, but as the evening advanced the lake became quite calm, and we never had a drop of rain. I would willingly have staid out all night, but we were to leave the next morning at five, and nothing was packed up. . . .

After the lake we entered the valley of the Rhone and approached the high Alps. The scenery was really painfully sublime. We gazed till our eyes ached, and yet dared not withdraw them from the passing wonders. . . . The passage of the Simplon is the grand crowning scene. We staid one day at Brieg, where the passage commences, on account of the stormy weather, but as it did not abate we set off the next day. Nothing could be more awful than the first part of our passage; the sublimity of the scenery was increased by the partial mists and the gusts of rain. Nothing is more terrific than the near roar of a cataract which is covered by a mist. It is horrible. When we arrived at the summit of the road the weather cleared, and we found

[1] Compare again *Contarini*, Pt. III. ch. 1.

ourselves surrounded by perpetual snow. The scenery here and for a mile or two before was perfect desolation, cataracts coursing down crumbled avalanches whose horrible surface was only varied by the presence of one or two blasted firs. Here in this dreary and desolate scene burst forth a small streak of blue sky, the harbinger of the Italian heaven. During our whole descent down the Italian side, which is by far the most splendid, we enjoyed the sun. We were for a long time, however, very cold. The contrast on descending into Italy is wonderfully striking . . . the purple mountains, the glittering lakes, the cupola'd convents, the many-windowed villas crowning luxuriant-wooded hills, the undulation of shore, the projecting headland, the receding bay, the roadside uninclosed, yet bounded with walnut and vine and fig and acacia and almond trees bending down under the load of their fruit, the wonderful effect of light and shade, the trunks of every tree looking black as ebony, and their thick foliage, from the excessive light, looking quite thin and transparent in the sunshine, the thousand villages, each with a church with a tall, thin tower, the large melons trailing over walls, and, above all, the extended prospect are so striking after the gloom of Alpine passes, are so different in their sunny light from the reflected unearthly glitter of eternal snows that we are constrained to feel that, in speaking of Italy, romance has omitted for once to exaggerate. But you must remember that we are in the most beautiful parts of northern Italy, and that I have not yet entered the plains of Lombardy. I say the most beautiful part, for I have just quitted the Lago Maggiore, and I am about to introduce you to the Lake of Como.

It is a much smaller lake than Maggiore, and yet quite different—wooded mountains green with vineyards and descending immediately into the water without any shore to the lake. It is literally covered with glittering palaces. It is difficult to make you understand the difference between these two magical lakes, but Maggiore, with the exception of Isola Bella, is of a severer kind of beauty. Lago Maggiore is a precious stone and the Lake of Como is a gem; perhaps you now understand me a little better. We were on the lake six or seven hours. We visited the Villa Pliniana, so called, not because it was the residence of a Pliny, but because of a celebrated intermittent spring, the curiosity of which supplied a chapter to the naturalist and a letter to the nephew. I also saw the Villa d'Este, the residence of the late Queen. The apartments are left in exactly the same state as in her lifetime; there is the theatre in which she acted Columbine, and the celebrated statues of Adam and Eve covered with

the yet more celebrated fig-leaves. It is a villa of the first grade, and splendidly adorned, but the ornaments are, without an exception, so universally indelicate that it was painful to view them in the presence of a lady. . . . Here, if they possessed any interest, might you obtain thousands of stories of her late Majesty, but the time is passed, thank God, for them. Our riots in her favor are the laughing stock of Italy. . . .

Dr. Ciceri, to whom Forbes gave me a letter, is of the greatest use to us at Milan. He is a very singular character and of great importance in this city. We find him extremely courteous, and through him see everything here to great advantage. I was yesterday at the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie to see the Last Supper. It is in a much better state than I had imagined. The engraving of Morghen is very unlike. I do not think the expression of any of the countenances is correct. . . . The pride of Ciceri is to be considered an Englishman. He lives among the English nobility who travel through and reside here, and is their factotum on every subject. He lodges in a palace, and dines every day on a beefsteak. He is known to everybody in Italy, and manages the business of all Milan. He is a sort of intellectual Paul Pry, the best of cicerones, of course, and with a little management the most courteous of men, but he is a little surly at first, because he conceives that that is keeping up the English character. However, our acquaintance with him is extremely fortunate. My fellow travellers are very kind and very accommodating. Austen is particularly learned in coins and postilions and exchange. We have met lots of people whom the Austens know, and these occasional *rencontres* are very agreeable. I meant to have written a whole letter about La Scala and the ballet here, which ranks almost with tragedy, but my long letter is full. I shall write from here again when I have received yours, or from Venice, where I shall be on Thursday. We travel slowly, which is delightful. Could you but see a few of our countrymen, how much they do and how little they enjoy and understand! The excitement of idiotism I never witnessed before, and it is very ludicrous, but I must introduce you to characters orally. God bless you all.

Your affectionate son,

B. DISRAELI.

It must have been on this journey through the Alps that Disraeli made an excursion to the Great St. Bernard,

and the visit rewarded him with an incident which he used to recall in later years.

> The Brotherhood on hearing that a young Englishman was in the Hospice expressed an anxious desire to see me, and I waited on the Superior. I found that all the anxiety arose from a desire to hear how the Thames Tunnel had succeeded. I had to confess I had never seen it, and I afterwards reflected that one must travel to learn what really is to be seen in one's country, and resolved at once on my return to supply the omission. But do you know, I have never seen it yet.[1]

In Milan under the guidance of his friend Ciceri Disraeli saw, in addition to Leonardo's great picture, everything notable that there was to be seen: the Cathedral, for which he has only qualified praise; 'it stands alone without a rival, but whether rivalry is desirable is dubious'; the Brera, where strangely enough the two pictures that struck him most were Salvator's 'Souls being delivered from Purgatory' and Guercino's 'Abraham dismissing Hagar'—but those were the days before Ruskin; and the Ambrosian Library, where, more in accordance with modern taste, he notes 'an exquisite Holy Family by Luini—a mannerist who for once is delicious.' Nor had he an eye only for churches and pictures. A visit to the Corso leads to many reflections on the life and manners of the Milanese; and here we come across the original of a sketch in the second part of *Vivian Grey*.

> Count Ciconia is the leader of the *ton* at Milan. He is a dandy of genius, worthy of Brummell. He is about 45, dresses very plainly, has been frequently in England, and pays constant trips there to study. He is young in figure, but his face is long and old, a bachelor with a loud shrill voice. He is curious in horses, drives four-in-hand in perfect style, and was attended always by English grooms till their idleness forced him to give them up. They will not do for Italy. Ciconia is as rapid in the change of his style and dress as in his conceptions. White hats are at Milan the

[1] From a note by Lord Rowton.

rage, which Ciconia introduced. He appeared the last day on the Corso in a black one. This formed the subject of the afternoon's conversation at all the cafés and circles. The dandies are numerous and splendid: Italians, Austrians, Hungarians; mustaches of all colours and descriptions.

From Milan the travellers proceeded to Brescia and thence by Desenzano, 'where we breakfasted on delicious trout on the banks of the Lago di Garda and opposite to the villa of Catullus,' to Verona.

To Isaac D'Israeli.[1]

Verona is full of pictures which have never been painted. Every step excites emotion and gives rise to unaffected reflection. In the course of a short stroll, you may pass by a Roman amphitheatre, still used, then the castle of some petty prince of the Middle Ages, and while you are contrasting the sublime elevation of antiquity with the heterogeneous palace of a Scaliger your eyes light on a gate of Oriental appearance and fantastic ornament erected by the Venetians when they were the conquerors of the most fertile district of Northern Italy. Memorials of this wonderful people are constantly before you. In the market place rises a lofty pillar which evidently once bore some sculptured burden. Ask, it was the winged Lion of St. Mark. Stand in the Piazza dei Signori at Verona. There is the palace of the Council of Sansovino—on another hill is a Saracenic palace, once an office of Venetian administration, three or four perspectives are afforded by various arches which open into streets or other piazzas, and a magnificent tower rises from a corner. The illusion is perfect, the eye rests with pain on the passing citizens in their modern costumes; you look for black velvets and gold chains, white feathers and red stockings. . . .

From Verona through a beautiful country, where the vine is married to the mulberry, we travelled to Vicenza. The famous Palladian palaces are in decay. They are built of brick, sometimes plastered, occasionally *whitewashed*; the red material is constantly appearing and vies in hideous color with the ever offensive roof. It is a miserable thing that a man worthy of Athens or Rome should have worked with such materials. . . .

[1] The descriptions now begin to lag so much behind the journey that we only reach Venice in a letter written from Florence; and I have omitted the date-lines where they might mislead or confuse.

From Vicenza, with its much-appreciated treasures of Palladian architecture, the travellers drove through Padua and along the banks of the Brenta to Venice.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

I entered[1] Venice with a magnificent setting sun on a grand fête day. As we glided in a gondola up the great Lagune we passed St. Mark's, the Campanile, the Palace of the Doges, the Bridge of Sighs, the Prison, before we reached our hotel, once the proud residence of the Bernadinis, a family which has given more than one Doge to the old Republic; the floors of our rooms were of marble, the hangings of satin, the ceilings painted by Tintoretto and his scholars full of Turkish triumphs and trophies; the chairs of satin and the gilding though of two hundred years' duration as brightly burnished as the new mosaic invention. After a hasty dinner we rushed to the mighty Place of St. Mark. It was crowded, two Greek and one Turkish ship of war were from accidental circumstances in port, and their crews mingled with the other spectators with high foreheads and higher caps and elevated eyebrows; then there was the Austrian military band, and the bearded Jew with his black velvet cap was not wanting. Three gorgeous flags waved on the mighty staffs which are opposite the Church in all the old drawings and which once bore the standards of Candia, Crete, and the Morea. Tired with travelling we left the gay scene crowded, but the moon was so bright that a juggler was conjuring in a circle under our window, and an itinerant Italian opera performing by our bridge. Serenades were constant during the whole night; indeed, music is never silent in Venice. I wish I could give you an idea of the moonlights there, but that is impossible. Venice by moonlight is an enchanted city; the floods of silver light upon the moresco architecture, the perfect absence of all harsh sounds of carts and carriages, the never-ceasing music on the waters produced an effect on the mind which cannot be experienced, I am sure, in any other city in the world.

Five days in all were spent in Venice, and they were days of intense enjoyment. To one so deeply imbued with historic feeling and with an innate love of the gorgeous East it could not be otherwise.

[1] On Sept. 8.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

Sailing down the Grand Canal the palaces of Foscari, Grimani, Barberigo, and other names which make the coldest heart thrill rise rapidly before you. . . . The Palace of the Doges is still kept up for public offices, library, &c. Its walls are painted by the greatest masters of the miraculous Venetian school, and its roof is gilt and adorned in a manner which leaves far behind all the magnificence of all the palaces in the world. In every room you are reminded of the glory and the triumphs of the Republic: the door of one chamber once closed upon the Mosque of St. Sophia, the pillars of another graced a temple in the Morea, and even Solomon's Temple is not forgotten, and two pillars of fantastic architecture were carved from large columns of granite which were brought in triumph by a noble Venetian from the ruins of Jerusalem. St. Mark's Church is a pile of precious stones, the walls are of all kinds of the rarest marbles and even of jasper, *lapis lazuli*, and the richest porphyry and Oriental agates, the interior is cased with mosaics of gold, and in the front figure five hundred pillars of all kinds of architecture and colors, some of which are of verd antique. The four brazen horses amble, not *prance*, as some have described, on the front, and five cupolas, hooded cupolas, crown this Christian Mosque. . . . It is vain to write anything here of the pictures, the churches, the palaces, with which this city abounds. According to the common opinion I saw all that ought to be seen, but I never felt less inclined to quit a place. It is in these spots that I wish to stay, for it is in such places that the mind receives that degree of wholesome excitation which is one of the great benefits of travel, I mean an excitation which quickens the feelings and the fancy, and which enables the mind to arrive at results with greater facility and rapidity than we do at home, and in our studies.

But in these sage reflections and in all this enthusiasm for the external splendour of Venice, there is still something wanting, as readers of *Contarini* will feel. We find not a trace of the peculiar excitement and exultation with which the hero of that novel approached the home of his fathers. Clearly Disraeli had not yet evolved the theory of his own Venetian origin; and he does not even seem to have been aware that he had near relations living in the City at the time of his visit. Even his apprecia-

tion of the art treasures of Venice—of 'the miraculous Venetian school'—seems to have been far from perfect. 'Venice,' he writes later from Florence, 'revealed to me the Venetian school, Titian, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Paul Veronese, Palma, &c.' But alas! without a pause he adds, 'Bologna in its public gallery introduced me to perhaps a still more illustrious band, taken altogether, the finest school in Italy, the three Carracci and their four wonderful scholars, Domenichino, Guido, Albani, Guercino; the latter, perhaps the most wonderful, and who from his miraculous and enchanting use of chiaroscuro was called the *magician of art*, is a native of a little town a few miles from Bologna, *Cento*, which perhaps you remember.' Apparently he had no suspicion of the fact that Cento had a place in his own family history.

On the way from Venice to Bologna a pilgrimage was made to the tomb of Petrarch at Arqua, and in Ferrara of course the cell of Tasso was visited. 'The door posts of this gloomy dungeon are covered with the names of its visitors; here scratched with a great nail on the brick wall I saw sprawled "Byron"; "Sam Rogers" printed in pencil in a neat banker's hand was immediately underneath.' Bologna he 'left on the second day with regret,' and crossed the Apennines to Florence. A long letter to his father retails his impressions and adventures during a fortnight's stay in this 'most delightful city.' He has now, after seeing the pictures of the great Florentine masters and 'many of the finest works of Raphael and other painters of the Roman school' in the Uffizi and Pitti Palaces, acquired 'a very tolerable idea of the comparative styles and merits of the great Italian schools.' He has 'gazed upon the Venus de Medici without prejudice and left it with veneration.' He has 'seen enough in Italy to know that we are not setting about the right way in England to form a National Gallery.' At a recent sale in Florence 'the finest pictures were sold for a song. Why had not the National Gallery

an agent on the spot? What is Lord Burghersh paid for?' and so forth.[1]

To Isaac D'Israeli.

FLORENCE,
Sept. 29, 1826.

There are some clever artists and sculptors at Florence. Among the latter, since the death of Canova, Bertolini is reckoned the most eminent in Italy. He is a man of genius. I had the honor of a very long conversation with him, of course upon his art. He is a friend of Chantrey, but the god of his idolatry, and indeed of all the Italians, is Flaxman. Bertolini said that he considered that Flaxman had revived the taste of Europe, that he was a classic, and that he thought that a young man might study his works with as much advantage as the treasures of the Vatican or the Tribune. He asked me to explain the reason of the indifference of the English to this great man, and expressed his surprise at finding him almost unknown to the great number of our travelling countrymen, and little esteemed even by our great artists. He mentioned Wilkie's opinion of Flaxman with his eyes up to the sky. It seems the English Teniers is no great admirer of one whom Bertolini says is the greatest poet that ever lived, though he never wrote a verse. The studios of all these men are open to all travellers, and form the most agreeable and instructive lounges. . . .

In one of my speculations I have been disappointed. In the Pitti Palace there is a most beautiful portrait of Charles 1st by Vandyke, the most pleasing and noble likeness that I have ever seen. It is a picture highly esteemed. I engaged a miniature painter here (a class of artists much esteemed at Florence) to make me an exquisite copy of this picture with which I intended to surprise you. After a week's work he has brought it to-day, but has missed the likeness! And yet he was the Court painter, Signor Carloni. I have refused to take the work and am embroiled in a row, but in this country firmness is alone necessary and the Italians let you do what you like, so I've no fear as to the result. My mortification and disappointment, however, are extreme.

[1] Disraeli's interest in the Christian Middle Age was never great, and in the letters from Florence there is not a single mention of Dante. Of Michael Angelo, as we may gather from the long tirade in *Vivian Grey* (Bk. V. ch. 2), he was 'no extravagant admirer'; even the great monuments in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo he was not able to look upon 'without disappointment.'

We have some agreeable acquaintance here. Among them a very extraordinary man of the name of Saunders. He is the descendant of one of those Scotch families who used so often to emigrate on speculation to Russia. He was the intimate friend of the late Emperor Alexander, and is highly esteemed by the present Emperor . . . is still attached to the Court of Russia, is an Aulic Councillor, &c. He is a deep student, full of philosophy, first principles, and the study of the beautiful, but eloquent and profound. Though of a very close temper, he was so delighted to get hold of some one who had a literary turn that we have become tolerably intimate, and I occasionally visit him at his country villa, which, by the bye, is the *Villa Vespucci*, rented by him of a noble family of that name, the lineal descendants of the famous Americus. He is now engraving the most valuable picture in Italy, the masterpiece of Fra Bartolommeo.[1]

Florence is not only one of the most delightful cities to live in, but is also the cheapest in Europe. Here cheapness, *real* cheapness, is to be found, for here luxuries are cheap. An English family of the highest respectability may live in Florence with every convenience and keep a handsome carriage, horses, liveries, &c., for five hundred a year. I speak here of an average sized family, as ours. On this income you might enter into the best society, and the best society here is excellent. You may live in a palace built by Michael Angelo, keep a villa two miles from the city in a most beautiful situation, with vineyards, fruit and pleasure gardens, &c., &c., keep *two* carriages, have your opera box, and live in every way as the first Florentine nobility, go to Court, have your own night for receiving company, &c., &c., on less than a thousand a year, and this with no miserable managing, but with the enjoyment of every comfort and luxury.

TURIN,
Oct. 10, 1826.

MY DEAR FATHER,

We travelled from delightful Florence through the luxuriant Val d'Arno to Pisa, where the Cathedral and its more wonderful Baptistery, the leaning tower, and the Campo Santo riveted our attention. . . . The country from Pisa to Lucca, and, indeed, the whole of that little state is most lovely. Sated as we were with scenery, and desirous almost to avoid any mention of the subject, yet we have yet scarcely ceased to talk in wonder and admiration of the

[1] The 'Madonna della Misericordia,' now in the public gallery at Lucca.

shores of the Mediterranean. The journey from Spezzia to Genoa baffles all idea. . . . For two days we wandered among the most exquisite and the wildest parts of the Apennines, not the Apennines that we had before been used to, but the Apennines of romance and Mrs. Ratcliffe, with streamy blue distances and unfathomable woody dells and ruined castles, and constant views of the blue Mediterranean and its thousand bays. On the third day we descended nearly to its shore, but what a shore! It required no stretch of the imagination to fancy ourselves in Asia and under an Oriental sky, for aloes, huge everlasting aloes, here grow on the shingles, and groves of olive trees, dates and figs, and clusters of Eastern trees abound upon the green mountains, which descend into the sea, and whose only artificial ornaments are towns of colored marble and amphitheatres of palaces. The shore, as I said before, is broken into innumerable bays, which vie with each other for superiority, until they all yield to their Queen—the gorgeous bay of Genoa, on whose mountain banks rises in a crescent Genoa la Superba, a crowd of palaces, villas, and convents. But I am writing of that which should be seen. However, the scenery of the Mediterranean would alone repay me for twice ten thousand the fatigues I have suffered.

Two days' travelling, during one of which we again crossed the great chain of the Apennines and entered Northern Italy, have brought us to Turin. The mighty chain of the High Alps covered with snow now meets our eyes, and to-morrow we shall cross Mont Cenis. . . . I expect to be on the 24th at Dover. Thus end my travels. I trust I have not travelled in vain. Nature and Art have been tolerably well revealed to me. The Alps, the Apennines, and two seas have pretty well done for the first, and though I may see more cities I cannot see more varieties of European nature. Five capitals and twelve great cities, innumerable remains of antiquity and the choicest specimens of modern art have told me what man has done and is doing. I feel now that it is not prejudice, when I declare that England, with all her imperfections, is worth all the world together, and I hope it is not misanthropy when I feel that I love lakes and mountains better than courts and cities, and trees better than men. That is to say, men in general. Yours I must always be most affectionately. In a fortnight I shall have the inexpressible happiness of joining you.

B. DISRAELI.

To Sarah Disraeli.

LYONS,
Oct. 15, 1826.

DEAREST SA,

We arrived at this city last night. . . . Nothing can have been more prosperous than our whole journey. Not a single *contretemps* and my *compagnons de voyage* uniformly agreeable. Everything that I wished has been realized, and more than I wished granted. I have got all the kind of knowledge that I desired, and much more, but that much more, I am convinced, was equally necessary. To discover new wants and find them instantly gratified, or rather to discover unexpected necessities anticipated, is the most pleasing of all things. From Turin we travelled to Susa and crossed Mont Cenis, which, considering the mountain pass merely, is not to be compared to the Simplon. It is vast without being sublime, and dreary without any of the grand effects of desolation. Some points, however, are wonderful; a small lake at the top of the range in the midst of eternal snow, a small blue lake with banks of white marble, attracted my attentive admiration. It is about half a mile from the road, and I walked there while our trout were cooking. Cenis, however, leads to Savoy, which I prefer to Switzerland. The valley of the Arc is even finer than the valley of the Rhone; it is as sublime, and yet not gloomy. The lofty mountains are covered with firs, and tipped with the snows of centuries; brilliant cascades falling from elevations of 200 to 300 feet contrasted with the variety of autumnal tints, and banished monotony without disturbing reflection. . . .

I am glad that I at last get some account of my mother—my best love to her; we meet soon. My father says that he has been very idle, and I fear from his tone that I am to believe him. I have been just the reverse, but I would throw all my papers into the Channel only to hear that he had written fifty pages. This continued inertia makes me sad, but I have hopes that if we get on without fresh vexations for six months more his spirits may be raised. I had a great row about the portrait of Charles 1st, but was quite successful. The consequence is that I have got a new miniature,[1] in which the likeness is exactly hit, and at a cheaper rate.

With best love to all,

Most affectionately yours,

B. D.

[1] This miniature is still at Hughenden.

On the homeward journey through France Disraeli turned aside with the Austens to see the Layards at school, and Sir Henry Layard, then a boy at school, caught a passing glimpse of his future chief. 'I still retain a vivid recollection of his appearance, his black curly hair, his affected manner, and his somewhat fantastic dress.'[1] Mrs. Austen's letters to Sarah Disraeli testify to his possession of that rare virtue, excellence as a travelling companion. 'Your brother,' she writes, 'is so easily pleased, so accommodating, so amusing, and so actively kind, that I shall always reflect upon the domestic part of our journey with the greatest pleasure.' And, again, more dubiously:—'Your brother has behaved excellently, except when there is a button, or, rather, *buttons to be put on his shirt; then he is violently* bad, and this happens almost daily. I said once, "They cannot have been good at first"; and now he always threatens to "tell my Mother you have abused my linen."'

The methodical Austen kept careful statistics of the journey. They posted more than 2,000 miles, and Disraeli's share of the expenses, including about £20 for prints and other purchases, was £150.

[1] Layard's *Autobiography*, I., p. 18.

CHAPTER VIII.

Illness and Despondency.

1827–1830.

In a letter from Lyons to his sister, Disraeli, as we saw, remarked that he had been the 'reverse of idle' during his Continental journey; a few months after his return a sequel to *Vivian Grey* appeared in three volumes, and we may safely assume that it was at these volumes he had been working. This sequel, or 'second part,' need not long detain us. In Mr. Gladstone's diary for March 20, 1874, we find the entry, 'Finished *Vivian Grey*. The first quarter extremely clever, the rest trash.'[1] Mr. Gladstone was never a sympathetic critic of Disraeli's novels, or of anything else for which Disraeli was responsible, and perhaps at the moment of that entry he was less likely than usual to be in a sympathetic mood. But there is little reason to quarrel with his judgment on the present occasion. What is still worth reading in the five original volumes of *Vivian Grey* is the first. For the second, trash is hardly too strong a word; and of the remaining three volumes almost the best that can be said is that they are void of offence.

After the wreck of his ambitious plans, Vivian Grey, it will be remembered, took refuge in Germany, and his adventures in that country are the subject of the second part. It is a curious illustration of Disraeli's brooding temperament that he should thus have recurred in fancy to the scenes he had visited two years before, leaving

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, II., p. 499.

the impressions of his Italian journey for future use and record. Perhaps the romantic genius of the Rhine was more in harmony with the mood in which he now found himself. Ill-health and the many misfortunes of the last two years had given to his thoughts a melancholy bias; and it is not surprising then to find when we meet Vivian Grey again that he has become a Byronic exile who makes a luxury of the sorrow which he believes to be incurable. But energy is of the essence of the true Byronic manner, and there is an air of languor over these volumes that makes them ineffective. The sparkling and audacious hero whom we knew in the original novel has become tame and lifeless; and, if there is less extravagance now, we feel that the change is owing to loss of vigour by the author rather than to the growth of that conscious self-restraint which comes with maturing power. 'The springiness of my mind is gone,' cries Vivian Grey himself in the agony of remorse that follows the death of Cleveland; and as we read his subsequent adventures we cannot help feeling that the 'springiness' of his creator's mind is gone no less. Now and then we see flashes of the old epigrammatic spirit:—'Though a great liar he was a dull man'[1]; 'Like all great travellers, I have seen more than I remember and remember more than I have seen.'[2] Now and then we hear the welcome note of that subtle ironic laughter which Disraeli has always in store for his own most cherished affectations, and which goes so far to redeem them; as when he mocks at his Byronic enthusiasm:—'The English youth . . . travel now, it appears, to look at mountains and catch cold in spouting trash on lakes by moonlight.'[3] There are isolated episodes that show vigour and invention; there are scenes that show an advance in descriptive power. The picture of life at the little German Court of Reisenberg is cleverly painted, and lacks neither movement nor variety. But the book as a whole is flat and

[1] Bk. VI. ch. 2. [2] Bk. VIII. ch. 5. [3] Bk. V. ch. 8.

dull, and the story leads to nothing. Our interest has no sooner been awakened in a character or a situation than we are whisked away to something else, and the result is a novel which is fragmentary and inconsecutive, and always unsatisfying. The author in fact was not sufficiently recovered from the strain of the previous year for a fresh creative effort.

The most interesting character in the book is Beckendorff, the Prime Minister of Reisenberg, Disraeli's first attempt at a finished portrait of a statesman. Beckendorff is a man of plebeian origin who has raised himself to power by the force of his own 'master-mind.' He is of a type that recurs more than once in Disraeli's other novels, and is made the medium for the exposition of some of Disraeli's favourite doctrines. 'Fate, Destiny, Chance, particular and special Providence—idle words. Dismiss them all, Sir! A man's Fate is his own temper.' 'Man is not the creature of circumstances. Circumstances are the creatures of men. We are free agents, and man is more powerful than matter.' 'No conjuncture can possibly occur, however fearful, however tremendous it may appear, from which a man, by his own energy, may not extricate himself.'[1] In Beckendorff Vivian Grey sees a man with his own principles of conduct, whose ambition has been crowned with success.

> Apparently the philosophy on which Beckendorff had regulated his extraordinary career was exactly the same with which he himself, Vivian Grey, had started in life; which he had found so fatal in its consequences; which he believed to be so vain in its principles. How was this? What radical error had he committed? It required little consideration. Thirty, and more than thirty, years had passed over the head of Beckendorff, ere the world felt his power, or indeed was conscious of his existence. A deep student not only of man in detail but of men in groups . . . when that opportunity, which in this world comes to all men, occurred to Beckendorff, he was prepared. With acquirements equal to his genius, Beckendorff depended only upon

[1] Bk. VI. ch. 7.

himself, and succeeded. Vivian Grey, with a mind inferior to no man's, dashed on the stage, in years a boy, though in feelings a man. Brilliant as might have been his genius, his acquirements necessarily were insufficient. He could not depend only upon himself; a consequent necessity arose to have recourse to the assistance of others; to inspire them with feelings which they could not share; and humour and manage the petty weaknesses which he himself could not experience. His colleagues were at the same time to work for the gratification of their own private interests, the most palpable of all abstract things; and to carry into execution a great purpose which their feeble minds, interested only by the first point, cared not to comprehend. The unnatural combination failed; and its originator fell. To believe that he could recur again to the hopes, the feelings, the pursuits of his boyhood, he felt to be the vainest of delusions.[1]

The passage throws an illuminating flash on some of Disraeli's most cherished ideals of character, and on the significance of *Vivian Grey* in relation to those ideals; and incidentally it makes visible the clouds of despondency which were now settling upon Disraeli's mind as they had settled upon his hero's.

It was many a long day before the clouds finally lifted. The three years that followed the publication of the Second Part of *Vivian Grey* are almost a blank in Disraeli's life. As he had now definitely renounced the intention of becoming a solicitor, it was decided that he should at least formally qualify for the other branch of the legal profession; and in April, 1827, he was entered at Lincoln's Inn with a view, in due course, to being called to the Bar. He seems to have kept his terms regularly for nearly a couple of years, but there is nothing to show that beyond eating his dinners and paying his dues he gave any serious labour to preparation for a barrister's career. During all this time, in fact, a mysterious disease held him in its grip and paralysed his energies. In the summer of 1827 we hear of him seriously ill at Fyfield, in Oxfordshire, where the

[1] Bk. VII. ch. 1.

Disraelis and the Austens were spending their holidays together.* In the summer of 1828 he is ill again and with his family at Lyme Regis, in Dorset. 'I am at present quite idle,' he says in a letter to Sharon Turner in March, 1828, 'being at this moment slowly recovering from one of those tremendous disorganisations which happen to all men at some period of their lives, and which are perhaps equally necessary for the formation of both body and constitution. Whether I shall ever do anything which may mark me out from the crowd, I know not. I am one of those to whom moderate reputation can give no pleasure, and who in all probability am incapable of achieving a great one.' 'My son's life,' writes Isaac D'Israeli to a friend in January, 1829, 'within the last year and a half, with a very slight exception, has been a blank in his existence. His complaint is one of those perplexing cases which remain uncertain and obscure, till they are finally got rid of. Meanwhile patience and resignation must be his lot—two drugs in human life, bitter of digestion, in an ardent and excitable mind.' Ten years later a doctor who had attended him in this illness described the complaint as 'chronic inflammation of the membranes of the brain,' adding that his patient had made a perfect recovery.

To Benjamin Austen.

June 14, 1827.

MY DEAR AUSTEN,

It has given me great pleasure to find that the accounts from you this morning continue favorable, and that you have arranged for a further enjoyment of your native air—the atmosphere of Ramsgate, that glory of Kent and first of watering places and worthy rival of Ems and Wiesbaden. As, however, you have postponed your return, I cannot refrain from writing to you, if it be only to inform you of my existence and that I continue just 'as ill' as ever. Little else have I to tell you, being in the situation of those youthful jackanapes at school who write home to their parents every week to tell them that they have nothing to say. Your good lady, I am aware, sends you daily bulletins, and I am quite

sure that nothing certain or contingent in this odd world can possibly escape the comprehensive circuit of her lively pen. . . .

As I understand you are in want of a book I send you the most amusing in any language—for such I do not hesitate to style the *Memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini*. It is many years since I read it, and I was then enchanted. I should have been entranced with rapture had I then been in Italy. The whole scene lies at Rome, Florence (especially), Milan, Padua, Paris, Fontainebleau, Lyons, &c. You will read it with great delight and sympathise with all his scrapes. The part that will least please you will not be his interesting history of his Perseus—his beautiful Perseus—which you will remember in the more beautiful Palazzo Vecchio at Firenze. . . . I shall be very happy when we are all together again and at Fyfield. . . . Jem is richer than ever and struts about town in a kind of cloth shooting jacket made by the celebrated Hyde of Winchester—almost as celebrated as a tailor as Dr. Chard is as a musician. In this quaint costume, with the additional assistance of a sporting handkerchief, he looks very much like one of those elegant, half blackguard, half gentlemen speculators in horseflesh who crowd Winchester market and dine at the 'good ordinary at two o'clock,' for which great grub, if you remember, the bell rang loud and long as we crossed from the Cathedral. . . .

Your sincere friend,
B. D.

In some interval of comparative health during the first year of his illness, Disraeli recurred to the idea of a satire on contemporary society, which he had attempted to carry into execution in his twentieth year; and 'The Adventures of Mr. Aylmer Papillon,' which had been rejected by John Murray, soon grew into *The Voyage of Captain Popanilla*, which was accepted by Colburn and was given to the world as the work of 'The author of *Vivian Grey*' in the late spring of the year 1828. The main object of the piece is to ridicule the then rising sect of the Utilitarians. Popanilla is a native of the Isle of Fantaisie, an earthly paradise in the Indian Ocean, where men lead lives of careless happiness amid the resources provided by a bountiful nature. Finding on the seashore a box of books crammed with useful knowledge,

he learns from them that his countrymen are nothing more than 'a horde of useless savages'; and full of his new conception of the blessings of civilisation in the Utilitarian sense, he endeavours to make converts of the King and people of the island. He talks to them 'of men in a savage state, the origin of society, and the elements of the social compact in sentences which would not have disgraced the mellifluous pen of Bentham.' He shows them that 'the interests of the body are alone to be considered and not those of the individual, and that a nation might be extremely happy, extremely powerful, and extremely rich, although every individual member of it might at the same time be miserable, dependent, and in debt.' If they will only adopt his principles and carry out his schemes of development, 'no long time could elapse ere, instead of passing their lives in a state of unprofitable ease and useless enjoyment, they might reasonably expect to be the terror and astonishment of the universe, and to be able to annoy every nation of any consequence.'

Finally Popanilla makes himself so much of a nuisance that the King to get rid of him ironically professes himself a convert and appoints him to the command of an expedition for the extension of the international relations of the island. 'As the axiom of your school seems to be that everything can be made perfect at once, without time, without experience, without practice, and without preparation, I have no doubt, with the aid of a treatise or two, you will make a consummate naval commander, although you have never been at sea in the whole course of your life. Farewell, Captain Popanilla!' Popanilla is launched alone upon the waters, but after giving himself up for lost is carried by a storm to the great city of Hubbabub, which is the capital of the island of Vraibleusia, the most famous island in the world, and a paradise of wealth and freedom, and also of competition. Henceforth the piece is a satire on English social life and the English Constitution. It is not very deep, it abounds in crudities

and at times it is a little wearisome; but it is worth reading still as Disraeli's first political essay. In so far as his political faith in the form which it ultimately assumed was the product of temperament, its main features are already visible: on the one hand, the deep-seated popular sympathies and the essentially liberal outlook; on the other, the instinctive aversion of a mind imbued with the historic spirit and full of an imaginative sense of the romance and mystery of life from the hard and self-sufficing dogmatism, the cramped philosophy, and somewhat repellent ideals of the school of thought which was becoming dominant in England. Needless to say, Disraeli was very far from having sounded the depths of Utilitarianism, and made no attempt to do justice to what was best in the teaching of the Benthamites; between them and one of his romantic temper warfare was inevitable, and he struck at them instinctively. Needless also to say, the outlines of his own philosophy are not yet firmly drawn nor his views on questions of party politics consistently elaborated. No one therefore need be surprised to find the future leader of the Protectionists ridiculing the Corn Laws, or the future founder of Imperialism ridiculing the Colonial system; in either case quite heedless of the fact that he was aligning himself with the school which was the immediate object of his ridicule in an attack upon those who were to be his own future allies. John Bright, it is said,[1] greatly admired *Popanilla*, and in these vagaries of the author we may see perhaps in part the reason for his admiration.

Popanilla appeared with a dedication to Plumer Ward, who showed himself no niggard in his appreciation of the compliment. 'Since the days of Swift and Voltaire,' he wrote, 'I have not read anything so witty. Je riais aux éclats and made others do so too. In my opinion it is equal to the *Tale of a Tub* and *Candide*, and superior to

[1] By Mr. George Russell in the *Cornhill Magazine* for January, 1907.

Zadig and *Babouk*.' The critics, however, took a more moderate view of the merits of the piece, and the public, who perhaps expected stronger meat from the author of *Vivian Grey*, gave it little attention.

In the course of many holiday visits the Disraelis had tasted the pleasures of country life in Bucks, and in the summer of 1829 they gave up their London residence altogether and moved out to Bradenham, an old manor house on the slopes of the Chilterns, a few miles to the north-west of the town of High Wycombe. 'The precarious health of several members of my family,' writes D'Israeli the elder to Southey, 'has decided me on this movement, and I quit London with all its hourly seductions. My House is described by the "Nourrisse of Antiquitie," venerable Camden, as built by the Lord Windsor in the reign of Henry VIII—for the salubrity of the soil and air.' In this peaceful spot Isaac D'Israeli spent the remainder of his days. Half a century after it first became their home, when his own life was drawing to a close, his son's thoughts recurred to the scene associated with his father's declining years, and in *Endymion* he sketched it with loving fidelity.

> At the foot of the Berkshire Downs [Chiltern Hills], and itself on a gentle elevation, there is an old hall with gable ends and lattice windows, standing in grounds which once were stately, and where there are yet glade-like terraces of yew trees, which give an air of dignity to a neglected scene. In the front of the hall huge gates of iron, highly wrought, and bearing an ancient date as well as the shield of a noble house, opened on a village green, round which were clustered the cottages of the parish with only one exception, and that was the vicarage house, a modern building, not without taste, surrounded by a small but brilliant garden. The church was contiguous to the hall, and had been raised by the lord on a portion of his domain. Behind the hall and its enclosure the country was common land but picturesque. It had once been a beech forest, and though the timber had been greatly cleared, the green land was still occasionally dotted, sometimes with groups and sometimes with single trees, while the juniper which here abounded, and rose to a great height, gave

a rich wildness to the scene and sustained its forest character.[1]

For nearly twelve months, with rare and brief visits to London, Disraeli lived quietly at Bradenham. In addition to the trials of bad health the burden of his debts weighed heavily upon him. 'I am desperately ill,' he writes to Austen in November, 'and shall be in town in a day or two, incognito of course. . . . Tell Madam I shall call upon her if possible, but I can only call, because I am necessarily betrayed by her and in consequence "the heathen rage most furiously."' The rage of the heathen did not, however, hinder his framing large projects which called for more expenditure. He had somehow conceived the ambition of acquiring an *estate and settling down to the life of a country gentleman*, and at this very moment was pressing the scheme upon his father. But Isaac D'Israeli was frightened by the prevailing agricultural depression, and declined to invest his money on the advice of a son who confesses that he had 'more than once interfered with his affairs and never with any particular success.' The son, however, had another project. A year or more before he had been attracted by the career of David Alroy, the Jewish hero of the twelfth century, and he had begun the novel on this subject which he completed and published some years later; and his awakening interest in the history of his race had aroused in him a passionate longing to seek rest for his troubled mind and body in the East. At first his father would not hear of it.

To Benjamin Austen.

BRADENHAM,
Dec. 8, 1829.

MY DEAR AUSTEN,

. . . I am sorry to say that my other and still more important plan prospers as badly. I have partly broken it, and it was at once fairly knocked on the head in a calmer manner than I should have expected from my somewhat rapid

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 11.

but too indulgent sire. But I will not quite despair. A sanguine temper supports me still. There is yet *time*, and that, according to the great Frederick, is everything. The fact is I am

'Spellbound within the clustering Cyclades'

and go I must, though I fear I must hack for it. A literary prostitute I have never yet been, though born in an age of literary prostitution, and though I have more than once been subject to temptations. . . . Tempting mother Colburn! However, as Frederick says, I have yet *time*, and I may be saved.

Keep this letter to yourself *without exception*, and indeed all I write to you. Though generally accused of uncommunicativeness, I like a gentle chat with a friend provided it be strictly confidential and he be a tried and trusty one like yourself. Women are delightful creatures, particularly if they be pretty, which they always are; but then they chatter —they can't help it—and I have no ambition in case my dearest project fails to be pointed out as the young gentleman who *was* going to Constantinople. Let it be secret as the cave of the winds, and then perhaps a friendly breeze may yet bear me to Syria!

Farewell, *mon ami*,
B. D.

By the bye, I advise you to take care of my letters, for if I become half as famous as I intend to be you may sell them for ten guineas apiece to the *Keepsake* for 1840, that being the price, as *on dit*, at which that delicate creature D[ouglas] K[innaird] furnishes a Byronic epistle to the Annuals.

To Mrs. Austen.

BRADENHAM HOUSE,
March 7, 1830.

MY DEAR MADAME,

Your repeated kind messages require my personal acknowledgment, and deserve something better. With regard to myself, in a word, I cannot be worse. With regard to London, it is of all places the one, in my present situation, least suited to me. Solitude and silence do not make my existence easy, but they make it endurable.

My plans about leaving England are more unsettled than ever. I anticipate no benefit from it, nor from anything else, but I am desirous of quitting England that I may lead even

a more recluse life than I do at present, and emancipate myself from perpetual commiserations. When I was in town last, I consulted secretly many eminent men. I received from them no consolation. Without any exception they approved of Mr. Bolton's treatment, though they were not surprised that it produced no benefit. . . .

I grieve to say my hair grows very badly, and I think more grey, which I can unfeignedly declare occasions me more anguish than even the prospect of death.

Yours ever,
B. D.

In *Popanilla* Disraeli had gone out of his way to ridicule the novel of fashionable life; but this was precisely the novel that Colburn and the public wanted, and the outcome apparently of Disraeli's determination to hack was that he began *The Young Duke*. By the end of March, 1830, he had nearly finished, and he came to town with his manuscript in quest of a publisher. 'It is a series of scenes,' he told his friend Meredith, 'every one of which would make the fortune of a fashionable novel: I am confident of its success, and that it will complete the corruption of the public taste.' If there was anything serious in this, the complacent view of the merits of his work did not long survive. Colburn's reader told him that it was certain to be severely criticised for the egoism and other sins of the writer. Lytton Bulwer, for whom *Pelham* had won celebrity a couple of years before, sounded the same note of warning. Disraeli and he had exchanged volumes in the previous year, and a correspondence had sprung up between them, which somewhere about this time ripened into personal acquaintance. Bulwer was shown the manuscript, and was not sparing of eulogy; but he suggested that the author's judgment was not equal to his genius, that if he had attained more than the excellences of *Vivian Grey* he had not sufficiently avoided its faults, and that the pruning knife might well be applied to the many flippancies and otiose antitheses of the book. The sensitive author was at first so discouraged that he talked of casting aside the work altogether, but

money was needed, and a bargain was soon concluded with Colburn, who gave £500 for the book. What proved even more attractive, he consented to pay by post-dated bills, which were no doubt promptly discounted; and in this way and with the aid of a friendly advance from Austen, the tour in the East at last became possible. Meredith, Disraeli's companion in his visit to the Rhine, and now engaged to his sister, was again to accompany him, and at the end of May the travellers were to set forth on their journey.

An entry in Meredith's diary during Disraeli's visit to London with the manuscript of *The Young Duke* gives us a picture that is worth preserving.

> Mar. 29.—B. D. to dine with me. He came up Regent Street, when it was crowded, in his blue surtout, a pair of military light blue trousers, black stockings with red stripes, and shoes! 'The people,' he said, 'quite made way for me as I passed. It was like the opening of the Red Sea, which I now perfectly believe from experience. Even well-dressed people stopped to look at me.' I should think so! He was in excellent spirits, full of schemes for the projected journey to Stamboul and Jerusalem; full, as usual, also of capital stories, but he could make a story out of nothing.

A note by Disraeli himself deals with another incident which can probably be referred to this same visit to London.

> Just at the commencement of the spring of 1830, if spring it could be called, I made the acquaintance of Lytton Bulwer, and dined with him at his house in Hertford Street. He was just married, or about just married: a year or two. We were both of us then quite youths; about four and twenty. I met three men at dinner of much the same standing; all full of energy and ambition, and all unknown to fame. Bulwer and I had, at least, written something; I *Vivian Grey*, and he two or three years afterwards *Pelham*. The other three were Henry Bulwer, Charles Villiers, and Alexander Cockburn. Writing this, nearly five and thirty years afterwards, it is curious to mark what has been the result of the careers of these five young men. I have been



'The author of 'Vivian Grey'
from a drawing by D. Maclise, R.A.

twice leader of the House of Commons, Edward Bulwer has been Secretary of State, Henry Bulwer is at this moment H.M. Ambassador at Constantinople, Charles Villiers is at this moment a Cabinet Minister, and Alexander Cockburn is Lord Chief Justice of England.[1]

Henry Bulwer has also left his recollections of this occasion. Disraeli, he tells us, 'wore green velvet trousers, a canary coloured waistcoat, low shoes, silver buckles, lace at his wrists, and his hair in ringlets. . . . If on leaving the table we had been severally taken aside and asked which was the cleverest of the party we should have been obliged to say "the man in the green velvet trousers."'[2]

When in the course of his preparations for the long journey before him Disraeli came to review his position and affairs, he bethought him of the unlucky partner of his boyish speculations, and wrote the letter that follows.

To T. M. Evans.

UNION HOTEL, COCKSPUR ST.,
May 9, 1830.

MY DEAR EVANS,

We have been too long silent. It has been my fault, but if you could form the slightest idea of the severe visitation under which I have been long, and am still, suffering, I am confident you would not only accept my excuses, but sympathise with their cause. For the last three years—I will not talk of enjoyment—life has not afforded me a moment's ease; and after having lived in perfect solitude for nearly eighteen months, I am about to be shipped off for the last resource of a warmer climate.

To leave England at all, particularly in the state in which I am, is to me most distressing; to leave it without finally arranging my distracted affairs costs me a pang, which is indeed bitter. But I can assure you at this moment, when so many harrowing interests solicit the attention of my

[1] There is an obvious reminiscence of this party in the dinner given by Mr. Bertie Tremaine and his brother, Mr. Tremaine Bertie, in chapter 37 of *Endymion*.

[2] Article on Lord Beaconsfield in the *Encycl. Brit.* [But, in a letter written on Dec. 4, 1880, Beaconsfield declared that 'I never wore green velvet trousers, nor do I believe that anybody ever did; that I never wore buckles in my shoes except at Court.'—G. E. B.]

weakened mind, there is no subject on which I oftener think, than our past relations, and no person who more constantly occurs to me than yourself.

I assure you, dear Evans, that it would be very difficult to find one who is really more interested in the welfare of another than I am in yours, and although you may perhaps doubt the sincerity of this declaration, I nevertheless make it. It would be a great consolation for me if before my departure I could hear from yourself that you were prospering in the world, a great satisfaction if you could communicate to me with the candor which I wish to be the characteristic of our letters.

Although I have not been fortunate enough in finally arranging my affairs, I flatter myself I have succeeded in making some temporary dispositions. Nothing of importance has been done with M., but he is inclined to wait till my return if possible, and if he cannot, to be silent. I feel less for him than for others, because I now see too well what was the cause of all our errors, and curse the hour he practised, as he thought so cunningly, upon our inexperienced youth. But this only to yourself, for he is after all an object of pity, and I would to God that I could do something for him more than I am bound to do.

For yourself, who—most unintentionally on my part—have suffered from my madness—it is for you I feel, indeed keenly, you, whose generous and manly soul I have ever honored, and credit me, have ever done justice to. All I can say is, that the first step I take, when the power is mine, shall be in your favor, and that sooner, or later, the power will be mine; and that, some day or other, we may look back to these early adventures, rather as matter of philosophical speculation than individual sorrow, I confidently believe.

For there is something within me, which, in spite of all the dicta of the faculty, and in the face of the prostrate state in which I lie, whispers to me I shall yet weather this fearful storm, and that a more prosperous career may yet open to me.

My father has quitted London, and now resides at Bradenham House, near Wycombe, Bucks—a place where I hope some day to see you, though at present I am only the inmate of an unsocial hotel, and preparing for my embarkation in the course of this current month. Anything addressed to me at the Union will reach one who will always consider himself

Your sincere friend,

B. D.

Disraeli at first had thought of making *The Young Duke* an occasion for the resumption of relations with his old friend Murray, and during his visit to London in March he sought an interview with that purpose. 'It has always,' he explained, 'been my wish, if it ever were my fate to write anything calculated to arrest public attention, that you should be the organ of introducing it to public notice. If you feel any inclination to pursue this affair, act as you like, and fix upon any critic you please. I have no objection to Mr. Lockhart, who is certainly an able one, and is, I believe, influenced by no undue partiality towards me.' Murray icily declined the interview, but 'Mr. Disraeli was assured' that if he cared to submit his manuscript 'the proposal would be entertained with the strictest honour and impartiality.' Disraeli took the manuscript to Colburn, but before he left for the East he wrote the following letter:—

To John Murray.

BRADENHAM, BUCKS,
May 27, 1830.

SIR,

I am unwilling to leave England, which I do on Saturday, without noticing your last communication, because I should regret very much if you were to misconceive the motives which actuated me in not complying with the suggestion therein contained. I can assure you I leave in perfect confidence both in your 'honor' and your 'impartiality,' for the first I have never doubted, and the second it is your interest to exercise.

The truth is, my friend and myself differed in the estimate of the MS. alluded to, and while I felt justified, from his opinion, in submitting it to your judgment, I felt it due to my own to explain verbally the contending views of the case, for reasons which must be obvious.

As you forced me to decide, I decided as I thought most prudently. The work is one which, I dare say, would neither disgrace you to publish, nor me to write; but it is not the kind of production which should recommence our connection, or be introduced to the world by the publisher of Byron and *Anastasius*.

I am now about to leave England for an indefinite, perhaps a long period. When I return, if I do return, I trust it will be in my power for the *third time*[1] to endeavour that you should be the means of submitting my works to the public. For this I shall be ever ready to make great sacrifices, and let me therefore hope that when I next offer my volumes to your examination, like the Sibylline Books, their inspiration may at length be recognised.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
B. DISRAELI.[2]

The novel which was thus thought unworthy of presentation by the publisher of Byron is a picture at once flashy and conventional of a society of which Disraeli had little direct knowledge when he wrote. '*The Young Duke*!' exclaimed his father, according to a family tradition, when he first heard of the book. 'What does Ben know of dukes?'[3] The Duke of St. James himself is not wholly uninteresting, for he possesses certain qualities which appear again and again in the heroes of Disraeli's novels, and appear because they are reflected from the author's own personality. 'He was a sublime coxcomb, one of those rare characters whose finished manner and shrewd sense combined prevent their conceit from being contemptible.' But his career of dissipation and prodigality soon grows wearisome, and that in some degree through the unskilfulness of the author. In the well-known gambling scene at Brighton he writes with genuine power; but too often where he endeavours to produce an effect he falls into mere extravagance. The figure of May Dacre, however, partially redeems the book, even as she redeemed the hero. She is one of the most charming of Disraeli's women, a forerunner of Sybil, and

[1] The first attempt, no doubt, had been with the manuscript of *Aylmer Papillon*.

[2] Smiles, II., pp. 332-334.

[3] An attempt indeed has been made to show that Disraeli had shared the life of the young bucks whose dissipations he professes to describe; but there is no real evidence to support the theory, and his own testimony is decisive against it. 'Until my return from the East on the eve of the '32 election,' he once said to Lord Rowton, 'I had lived a very secluded life, and mixed not at all with the world.'

like Sybil, it is worthy of note, an adherent of 'the old faith.' The Young Duke finally wins her heart by a speech in favour of Catholic Emancipation, in which of course she was an enthusiastic believer; and so clearly in 1829 was Disraeli himself. This is not the only indication in the novel of a steady movement of his mind towards an interest in political questions. He treats us in one chapter to a disquisition on eloquence, and illustrates it with miniature literary sketches of the leading orators in Parliament which are both interesting and characteristic in themselves and significant as an index to the preoccupations of the artist's mind.

I like a good debate; and, when a stripling, used often to be stifled in the Gallery, or enjoy the easier privileges of a member's son. I like, I say, a good debate, and have no objection to a due mixture of bores, which are a relief. I remember none of the giants of former days; but I have heard Canning. He was a consummate rhetorician; but there seemed to me a dash of commonplace in all that he said, and frequent indications of the absence of an original mind. To the last, he never got clear of 'Good God, Sir!' and all the other hackneyed ejaculations of his youthful debating clubs. The most commanding speaker that I ever listened to is, I think, Sir Francis Burdett. I never heard him in the House,—but at an election. He was full of music, grace, and dignity, even amid all the vulgar tumult; and, unlike all mob orators, raised the taste of the populace to him, instead of lowering his own to theirs. . . .

Mr. Brougham, at present, reigns paramount in the House of Commons. I think the lawyer has spoiled the statesman. He is said to have very great powers of sarcasm. From what I have observed there, I should think very little ones would be quite sufficient. Many a sneer withers in those walls, which would scarcely, I think, blight a currant-bush out of them; and I have seen the House convulsed with raillery which, in other society, would infallibly settle the rallier to be a bore beyond all tolerance. Even an idiot can raise a smile. They are so good-natured, or find it so dull. . . .

I hear that Mr. Babington Macaulay is to be returned. If he speak half as well as he writes, the House will be in fashion again. I fear that he is one of those who, like the individual whom he has most studied, will 'give up to party what was meant for mankind.' At any rate, he must get rid

of his rabidity. He writes now on all subjects, as if he certainly intended to be a renegade, and was determined to make the contrast complete.

Mr. Peel is the model of a minister, and improves as a speaker; though, like most of the rest, he is fluent without the least style. He should not get so often in a passion either, or, if he do, should not get out of one so easily. His sweet apologies are cloying. His candour—he will do well to get rid of that. He can make a present of it to Mr. Huskisson. . . .

In the Lords, I admire the Duke. The readiness with which he has adopted the air of a debater, shows the man of genius. There is a gruff, husky sort of a downright Montaignish *naïveté* about him, which is quaint, unusual, and tells. You plainly perceive that he is determined to be a civilian; and he is as offended if you drop a hint that he occasionally wears a uniform, as a servant on a holiday, if you mention the word *livery*.[1]

In the matter of party allegiance Disraeli in the same chapter professes himself a Gallio:

Am I a Whig or a Tory? I forget. As for the Tories, I admire antiquity, particularly a ruin; even the relics of the Temple of Intolerance have a charm. I think I am a Tory. But then the Whigs give such good dinners, and are the most amusing. I think I am a Whig; but then the Tories are so moral, and morality is my forte; I must be a Tory. But the Whigs dress so much better; and an ill-dressed party, like an ill-dressed man, must be wrong. Yes! I am a decided Whig. And yet——I feel like Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy. I think I will be a Whig and Tory alternate nights, and then both will be pleased; or I have no objection, according to the fashion of the day, to take a place under a Tory ministry, provided I may vote against them.

The Young Duke is remarkable for its long and frequent digressions of autobiographic interest. It is dangerous indeed, as it always is in Disraeli's case, to interpret these too literally. Some of the personal touches are obviously deliberate mystifications, the pretence, for instance, above that his father was a member of Parliament or elsewhere that he himself was writing the novel in Rome. In others

[1] Bk. V. ch. 6.

there is probably a good deal of Byronic exaggeration. It was the fashion in those days for a clever youth to pose as the victim of despair, and though Disraeli's illness was real enough, 'there certainly is a dark delight in being miserable,' as he says himself in the book, and we need not suppose that he took such a hopeless view of his future as in some passages he would have us believe.

I have lost the power of conveying what I feel, if indeed that power were ever mine. I write with an aching head and quivering hand; yet I must write if but to break the solitude.[1]

The drooping pen falls from my powerless hand, and I feel—I keenly feel myself what indeed I am—far the most prostrate of a fallen race![2]

Where are now my deeds and aspirations, and where the fame I dreamed of when a boy? I find the world just slipping through my fingers, and cannot grasp the jewel ere it falls. I quit an earth, where none will ever miss me, save those whose blood requires no laurels to make them love my memory. My life has been a blunder and a blank, and all ends by my adding one more slight ghost to the shadowy realm of fatal precocity![1]

What I am, I know not, nor do I care. I have that within me, which man can neither give nor take away, which can throw light on the darkest passages of life, and draw, from a discordant world, a melody divine. For it I would live, and for it alone. Oh! my soul, must we then part! Is this the end of all our conceptions, all our musings, our panting thoughts, our gay fancies, our bright imaginings, our delicious reveries, and exquisite communing? Is this the end, the great and full result, of all our sweet society? I care not for myself; I am a wretch beneath even pity. My thousand errors, my ten thousand follies, my infinite corruption, have well deserved a bitterer fate than this. But thou!—I feel I have betrayed thee. Hadst thou been the inmate of more spiritual clay, bound with a brain less headstrong, and with blood less hot, thou mightest have been glorious.[1]

There is more sincerity, we may believe, in the following confession:—

I am one, though young, yet old enough to know, Ambition is a demon; and I fly from what I fear. . . . Think of unrecognised Cæsar, with his wasting youth, weeping over

[1] Bk. III. ch. 18. [2] Bk. IV. ch. 3.

the Macedonian's young career! Could Pharsalia compensate for those withering pangs? View the obscure Napoleon starving in the streets of Paris! What was St. Helena to the bitterness of such existence? The visions of past glory might illumine even that dark imprisonment; but to be conscious that his supernatural energies might die away without creating their miracles—can the wheel, or the rack rival the torture of such a suspicion? Lo! Byron, bending o'er his shattered lyre, with inspiration in his very rage. And the pert taunt could sting even this child of light! To doubt of the truth of the creed in which you have been nurtured, is not so terrific as to doubt respecting the intellectual vigour on whose strength you have staked your happiness.[1]

Or in this apostrophe to his father:—

Oh, my father! . . . our friendship is a hallowed joy:—it is my pride, and let it be thy solace. O'er the waters that cannot part our souls, I breathe good wishes. Peace brood o'er thy lettered bowers, and Love smile in the cheerful hall, that I shall not forget upon the swift Symplegades, or where warm Syria, with its palmy shore, recalls our holy ancestry![2]

Or, even in spite of the dithyrambs, in the following outburst of patriotism:—

Oh, England! Oh, my country—although full many an Eastern clime and Southern race have given me something of their burning blood, it flows for thee! I rejoice that my flying fathers threw their ancient seed on the stern shores which they have not dishonoured:—I am proud to be thy child. Thy noble laws have fed with freedom a soul that ill can brook constraint. Among thy hallowed hearths, I own most beautiful affections. In thy abounding tongue, my thoughts find music; and with the haughty fortunes of thy realm, my destiny would mingle! . . . Few can love thee better than he who traces here these idle lines. Worthier heads are working for thy glory and thy good; but if ever the hour shall call, my brain and life are thine.[3]

In lighter vein, he laughs, as he was always ready to do, at his own faults and foibles:—

I sometimes think I write a pretty style, though spoiled by that confounded puppyism; but, then, mine is the puppy

[1] Bk. II. ch. 7. [2] Bk. III. ch. 8. [3] Bk. III. ch. 18.

age, and that will wear off. Then, too, there are my vanity, my conceit, my affectation, my arrogance, and my egotism; all very heinous, and painfully contrasting with the imperturbable propriety of my fellow-scribblers,—'All gentlemen in stays, as stiff as stones.' But I may mend, or they fall off, and then the odds will be more equal.[1]

But by far the most remarkable of all these asides is the following truly astonishing bit of prescient impertinence:—

One thing is quite clear,—that a man may speak very well in the House of Commons, and fail very completely in the House of Lords. There are two distinct styles requisite: I intend, in the course of my career, if I have time, to give a specimen of both. In the Lower House, *Don Juan* may perhaps be our model; in the Upper House, *Paradise Lost*.[2]

By reason of Colburn's many delays the book did not make its appearance till the year after it was completed, when Disraeli was in the East. It was never a favourite of its author's. Even before publication he had lost interest in it, so far that he was able to write to his sister: 'I don't care a jot about *The Young Duke*. I never staked any fame on it; it may take its chance.' In the General Preface to the novels, written in 1870, when passing his early novels in review, he ignores it altogether, and to the severely expurgated edition issued with his collected works in 1853 he thought it necessary to prefix the apology: 'Young authors are apt to fall into affectation and conceit, and the writer of this work sinned very much in these respects; but the affectation of youth should be viewed leniently, and every man has a right to be conceited until he is successful.' In one quarter it was assured of an admiring welcome from the first.

From Sarah Disraeli.

April 4, '31.

For *The Young Duke*, it is excellent,—most excellent. There is not a dull half page,—not a dull half line. Your story is unparalleled, for though it ends in a marriage which

[1] Bk. III. ch. 18. [2] Bk. V. ch. 6.

one can tell without peeping it grows more exciting as it winds towards its close. Your heroine is fit to be worshipped —your first sight of her is inimitable. The Young Duke is as you say, the noblest animal in the world.' The two scenes of rejection and the Alhambra supper, and the gambling scene all wonderful,—the last so utterly unlike all gambling scenes in novels, no thumping of the table or the forehead, but all so desperate and so cool that it makes your hair stand on end. The *last stake* beats Hogarth. You must expect to be rated for bringing your fair innocent readers into such company as pseudo Mrs. Annesley and pseudo Lady Squib. I say nothing of your moral episodes, for they touch my heart too keenly to let me be at all aware of what effect they will have upon others. One reading has repaid me for months of suspense, and that is saying everything if you knew how much my heart is wrapt up in your fame.

The reception of the book by the critics was at least as good as it deserved, and it at once became popular.

From Sarah Disraeli.

May 1, 1831.

Wherever we go, *The Young Duke* is before us, and its praises for ever resounding. But I know you care nothing for family commendation. . . . Jerdan has at last discovered that its author is gifted with every quality that constitutes a man of splendid genius. The highest power of imagination that creates and combines the most brilliant wit, the keenest sense of the ridiculous, a fullness of knowledge that conveys a characteristic trait in a slight phrase, and a long *etcetera* of truths which I suppose he has acquired from his friend Bulwer. To balance such an extraordinary venture of commendation, he is obliged to find a fault or two. . . . The book is reviewed in all weekly and Sunday papers—all with excessive praise.

Subsequently the admiring sister reports, on the authority of 'some Americans who have just come to England,' that '*The Young Duke* is the text-book of the United States, from which they preach and read, and learn that important requisite, manners.' The one conspicuous exception to the general friendliness of the critics was supplied by the *Westminster Review*, the organ of the Benthamites. 'To parasites, sycophants, toad-

eaters, tuft-hunters, and humble companions,' this paper urbanely remarked, 'it will be a book full of comfort and instruction in their callings.' Disraeli, it must be said, had given much provocation; for not only had ridicule of the Benthamites been the express purpose of *Popanilla*, but in *The Young Duke* itself there is some bitter satire of their 'screw and lever' philosophy. Sarah Disraeli wrote before publication that the book had not been puffed 'in anything to find fault with'; but this was hardly just to Colburn, who was practising his customary arts with his customary activity and address—and that in spite of the fact that the author had tried in the preface to deprive him of one of the most potent weapons in his armoury by expressly disclaiming portraiture.

> The great mass of my readers (if I have a mass, as I hope,) will attribute the shades that flit about these volumes to any substances they please. That smaller portion of society, who are most competent to decide upon the subject, will instantly observe, that however I may have availed myself of a trait, or an incident, and often inadvertently, the whole is ideal. To draw caricatures of our contemporaries is not a very difficult task: it requires only a small portion of talent, and a great want of courtesy.

CHAPTER IX.

Tour in the East.

1830–1831.

The journey on which Disraeli now embarked with his friend Meredith proved a capital event in his life and had marked effects on his whole subsequent career, both literary and political. It not only enlarged his experience beyond that of most young Englishmen of his day, but, what was even more important to one of his peculiar temperament, it helped to give definite purpose and significance to that Oriental tendency in his nature which, vaguely present before, was henceforth to dominate his imagination and show itself in nearly all his achievements. We can see the influence of the Eastern journey in *Contarini Fleming*, in *Alroy*, in *Tancred*, and in *Lothair*; but we can see it not less clearly in the bold stroke of policy which laid the foundations of English ascendancy in Egypt, in the Act which gave explicit form to the conception of an Indian Empire with the Sovereign of Great Britain at its head, and in the settlement imposed on Europe at the Berlin Congress. The letters[1] written to his family during the journey have been published since his death; and after the lapse of eighty years they retain their freshness and interest in a way that is rare with such compositions. Keen observation, a graphic and vivacious style, the power of concentrating a picture

[1] The references here will be to the 1887 edition of *Lord Beaconsfield's Letters*, in which the *Home Letters* and *Lord Beaconsfield's Correspondence with his Sister* are combined in one volume.

into a phrase, and a strain of joyous raillery running through all are the elements of their charm. 'C'est une si jolie chose que de savoir écrire ce que l'on pense,' says Madame de Sévigné, a favourite of Disraeli's, who well knew herself the vivid delight of easy and perfect expression. Meredith, Disraeli's companion, was much better educated, much more methodical, and much more conscientiously laborious in profiting by the opportunities of the journey; but his diary and letters which, with other material beyond what has been already published, are available for this chapter, help one to realise how easily the scenes and incidents to which the man of imagination can lend an abiding interest may become in the hands of another the subject of a prosy and lifeless chronicle.

The travellers left London by steamer on the 28th of May, and, after a week's detention at Falmouth, proceeded by the mail packet to Gibraltar.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

GIBRALTAR,
July 1, 1830.

MY DEAR FATHER,

I write to you from a country where the hedges consist of aloes all in blossom: fourteen, sixteen feet high. Conceive the contrast to our beloved and beechy Bucks. I say nothing of geraniums and myrtles, bowers of oranges and woods of olives, though the occasional palm should not be forgotten for its great novelty and uncommon grace. We arrived here after a very brief and very agreeable passage, passed in very agreeable society. . . . This Rock is a wonderful place, with a population infinitely diversified. Moors with costumes radiant as a rainbow or an Eastern melodrama; Jews with gaberdines and skull-caps; Genoese, Highlanders, and Spaniards, whose dress is as picturesque as that of the sons of Ivor. There are two public libraries—the Garrison Library, with more than 12,000 volumes; and the Merchants', with upwards of half that number. In the Garrison are all your works, even the last edition of the *Literary Character*; in the Merchants' the greater part. Each possesses a copy of another book, supposed to be written by a member of our family, and which is looked upon at Gibraltar as one of the masterpieces

of the nineteenth century. You may feel their intellectual pulse from this. At first I apologised and talked of youthful blunders and all that, really being ashamed; but finding them, to my astonishment, sincere, and fearing they were stupid enough to adopt my last opinion, I shifted my position just in time, looked very grand, and passed myself off for a child of the Sun, like the Spaniard in Peru.

We were presented to the Governor, Sir George Don, a general and G.C.B., a very fine old gentleman, of the Windsor Terrace school, courtly, almost regal in his manner, paternal, almost officious in his temper, a sort of mixture of Lord St. Vincent and the Prince de Ligne, English in his general style, but highly polished and experienced in European society. His palace, the Government House, is an old convent, and one of the most delightful residences I know, with a garden under the superintendence of Lady Don, full of rare exotics, with a beautiful terrace over the sea, a berceau of vines, and other delicacies which would quite delight you. . . . He[1] behaved to us with great kindness, asked us to dine, and gave us a route himself for an excursion to the Sierra da Ronda, a savage mountain district, abounding in the most beautiful scenery and bugs!

We returned from this excursion, which took us a week, yesterday, greatly gratified. The country in which we travelled is a land entirely of robbers and smugglers. They commit no personal violence, but lay you on the ground and clean out your pockets. If you have less than sixteen dollars they shoot you; that is the tariff, and is a loss worth risking. I took care to have very little more, and no baggage which I could not stow in the red bag which my mother remembers making for my pistols. . . . You will wonder how we managed to extract pleasure from a life which afforded us hourly peril for our purses and perhaps for our lives, which induced fatigue greater than I ever experienced, for here are no roads, and we were never less than eight hours a day on horseback, picking our way through a course which can only be compared to the steep bed of an exhausted cataract, and with so slight a prospect of attaining for a reward either food or rest.—I will tell you. The country was beautiful, the novelty of the life was great, and above all we had Brunet. What a man! Born in Italy of French parents, he has visited, as the captain of a privateer, all countries of the Mediterranean: Egypt, Turkey, Syria.

[1] Meredith testifies that Disraeli's lectures on morals and politics had made a great impression on Sir George.

Early in life, as valet to Lord Hood, he was in England, and has even been at Guinea. After fourteen years' cruising he was taken by the Algerines, and was in various parts of Barbary for five or six years, and at last he obtains his liberty and settles at Gibraltar, where he becomes *cazador* to the Governor, for he is, among his universal accomplishments, a celebrated shot. He can speak all languages but English, of which he makes a sad affair—even Latin, and he hints at a little Greek. He is fifty, but light as a butterfly and gay as a bird; in person not unlike English at Lyme, if you can imagine so insipid a character with a vivacity that never flags, and a tongue that never rests. Brunet did everything, remedied every inconvenience, and found an expedient for every difficulty. Never did I live so well as among these wild mountains of Andalusia, so exquisite is his cookery. Seriously, he is an artist of the first magnitude, and used to amuse himself by giving us some very exquisite dish among these barbarians; for he affects a great contempt of the Spaniards, and an equal admiration for the Moors. Whenever we complained he shrugged his shoulders with a look of ineffable contempt, exclaiming, 'Nous ne sommes pas en Barbarie!' Recalling our associations with that word and country, it was superbly ludicrous. . . .

At Castellar we slept in the very haunt of the banditti, among the good fellows of José Maria, the Captain Rolando of this part, and were not touched. In fact, we were not promising prey, though picturesque enough in our appearance. Imagine M. and myself on two little Andalusian mountain horses with long tails and jennet necks, followed by a larger beast of burthen with our baggage, and the inevitable Brunet cocked upon its neck with a white hat and slippers, lively, shrivelled and noisy as a pea dancing upon tin. Our Spanish guide, tall, and with a dress excessively *brodé* and covered with brilliant buttons, walking by the side and occasionally adding to the burthen of our sumpter steed. The air of the mountains, the rising sun, the rising appetite, the variety of picturesque persons and things we met, and the impending danger, made a delightful life, and had it not been for the great enemy I should have given myself up entirely to the magic of the life; but that spoiled all. It is not worse; sometimes I think it lighter about the head, but the palpitation about the heart greatly increases, otherwise my health is wonderful. Never have I been better; but what use is this when the end of all existence is debarred me? I say no more upon this melancholy subject, by which I am ever and infinitely depressed, and often most so when the world least imagines it; but to complain is useless, and to endure almost impossible;

but existence is certainly less irksome in the mild distraction of this various life. . . .

Tell my mother that as it is the fashion among the dandies of this place—that is, the officers, for there are no others—not to wear waistcoats in the morning, her new studs come into fine play, and maintain my reputation of being a great judge of costume, to the admiration and envy of many subalterns. I have also the fame of being the first who ever passed the Straits with two canes, a morning and an evening cane. I change my cane as the gun fires, and hope to carry them both on to Cairo. It is wonderful the effect these magical wands produce. I owe to them even more attention than to being the supposed author of—what is it?—I forget!

These Straits, by-the-bye—that is, the passage for the last ten miles or so to Gib, between the two opposite coasts of Africa and Europe, with the ocean for a river, and the shores all mountains—is by far the sublimest thing I have yet seen. . . . When I beg you to write, I mean my beloved Sa, because I know you think it a bore; but do all as you like. To her and to my dearest mother a thousand kisses. Tell Ralph I have not forgotten my promise of an occasional letter; and my dear pistol-cleaner, that he forgot to oil the locks, which rusted in conveyance. I thank the gods daily I am freed of Louis Clement, who would have been an expense and a bore. Tell [Washington] Irving he has left a golden name in Spain. Few English visit Gibraltar. Tell Lord Mahon, inquiries made after his health. Adieu, my beloved *padre*.

Your most affectionate son,
B. D.[1]

CADIZ,
July 14.

We passed a very pleasant week at Gibraltar, after our return from Ronda. We dined with the Governor at his cottage at Europa, a most charming pavilion, and met a most agreeable party. Lady Don was well enough to dine with us, and did me the honour of informing me that I was the cause of the exertion, which, though of course a fib, was nevertheless flattering. She is, though very old, without exception one of the most agreeable personages that I ever met, excessively acute and *piquante*, with an aptitude of detecting character,

[1] *Letters*, pp. 3-10.

and a tact in assuming it, very remarkable. To listen to her you would think you were charming away the hour with a blooming beauty in Mayfair; and, though excessively infirm, her eye is so brilliant and so full of *moquerie* that you quite forgot her wrinkles. Altogether the scene very much resembled a small German Court. There was his Excellency in uniform covered with orders, exactly like the old Grand Duke of Darmstadt, directing everything; his wife the clever Prussian Princess that shared his crown; the aides-de-camp made excellent chamberlains, and the servants in number and formality quite equalled those of a Residenz. The repast was really elegant and *recherché* even for this curious age. Sir George will yet head his table and yet carve, recommend a favourite dish, and deluge you with his summer drink, half champagne and half lemonade.

After dinner Lady Don rode out with the very pretty wife of Colonel Considine, and the men dispersed in various directions. It was the fate of Meredith and myself to be lionised to some cave or other with Sir George. What a scene, and what a procession! First came two grooms on two barbs; then a carriage with four horses; at the window at which H. E. sits, a walking footman, and then an outrider, all at a funeral pace. We were directed to meet our host at the cave, ten minutes' walk. During this time Sir G. tries one of the Arabians, but at the gentlest walk, and the footman changes his position in consequence to his side; but it is windy, our valiant but infirm friend is afraid of being blown off, and when he reaches the point of destination, we find him again in the carriage. In spite of his infirmities he will get out to lionise; but before he disembarks, he changes his foraging cap for a full general's cock with a plume as big as the Otranto one; and this because the hero will never be seen in public in undress, although we were in a solitary cave looking over the ocean, and inhabited only by monkeys. The cave is shown, and we all get in the carriage, because he is sure we are tired; the foraging cap is again assumed, and we travel back to the Cottage, Meredith, myself, the Governor, and the cocked hat, each in a seat. In the evening he has his rubber, which he never misses, and is surprised I do not play 'the only game for gentlemen! You should play; learn.' However, I preferred the conversation of his agreeable lady, although the charms of Mrs. Considine were puzzling, and I was very much like Hercules between —you know the rest.

I am sorry to say my hair is coming off, just at the moment it had attained the highest perfection, and was universally mistaken for a wig, so that I am obliged to let the

women pull it to satisfy their curiosity. Let me know what my mother thinks. There are no wigs here that I could wear. Pomade and all that is quite a delusion. Somebody recommends me cocoa-nut oil, which I could get here; but suppose it turns it grey or blue or green! I made a very pleasant acquaintance at Gibraltar, Sir Charles Gordon, a brother of Lord Aberdeen, and Colonel of the Royal Highlanders. He was absent during my first visit. He is not unlike his brother in appearance, but the frigidity of the Gordons has expanded into urbanity, instead of subsiding into sullenness—in short, a man with a warm heart though a cold manner, and exceedingly amusing, with the reputation of being always silent. As contraries sometimes agree, we became exceedingly friendly. . . .

The Judge Advocate at Gibraltar is that Mr. Baron Field who once wrote a book, and whom all the world took for a noble, but it turned out that Baron was to him what Thomas is to other men. He pounced upon me, said he had seen you at Murray's, first man of the day, and all that, and evidently expected to do an amazing bit of literature; but I found him a bore, and vulgar, a Storks without breeding, consequently I gave him a lecture on canes, which made him stare, and he has avoided me ever since. The truth is, he wished to saddle his mother upon me for a *compagnon de voyage*, whom I discovered in the course of half an hour to be both deaf, dumb, and blind, but yet more endurable than the noisy, obtrusive, jargonic judge, who is a true lawyer, ever illustrating the obvious, explaining the evident, and expatiating on the commonplace. . . .

I have met here Mr. Frank Hall Standish, once a celebrated dandy, and who wrote a life of Voltaire, you remember. We have heard of the King's death, which is the destruction of my dress waistcoats. I truly grieve. News arrived last night of the capture of Algiers, but all this will reach you before my letter. My general health is excellent. I have never had a moment's illness since I left home, not counting an occasional indigestion, but I mean no fever and so on. The great enemy, I think, is weaker, but the palpitation at the heart the reverse. I find wherever I go plenty of friends and nothing but attention.[1]

The Governor's 'agreeable lady' made a great impression on Disraeli. 'While I remember it,' he wrote

[1] *Letters*, p. 10.

later, 'a copy of *The Young Duke* must be sent to Lady Don. Tell Ralph to attend to it. Write in the title "Lady Don, by desire of the author." . . . You will be surprised at my sending a light novel, and finding a muse in an old lady of seventy; but in truth she is the cleverest and most charming woman I ever met . . . and the only person I know who gives one the least idea of the Madame du Tencins and the other *brillantes*, who flirted with Hénault, chatted with Montesquieu, and corresponded with Horace Walpole.'

The original intention of the two friends had been to hasten on to Malta, but they were so delighted with their first glimpse of Spain that they lingered for a couple of months. 'I travelled through the whole of Andalusia on horseback,' Disraeli wrote to Austen; 'I was never less than ten hours out of the twenty-four on my steed, and more than once saw the sun set and rise without quitting my saddle, which few men can say, and which I never wish to say again. I visited Cadiz, Seville, Cordova, and Granada, among many other cities which must not be named with these romantic towns. I sailed upon the Guadalquivir, I cheered at the bull fights; I lived for a week among brigands and wandered in the fantastic halls of the delicate Alhambra. Why should I forget to say that I ate an *olla podrida*? I will not weary you with tales of men of buckram; they must be reserved for our fireside. I entered Spain a sceptic with regard to their robbers, and listened to all their romances with a smile. I lived to change my opinion. I at length found a country where adventure is the common course of existence.' Leaving Gibraltar he rode in a couple of days to Cadiz, gazing by the way across those 'sublime' Straits, where 'Europe and Africa frown on each other,' at the picturesque beauty of the 'sultry sister.' Cadiz he found brilliant beyond description. '"Fair Florence" is a very dingy affair compared with it. The white houses and the green jalousies sparkle in the sun. Figaro is in every street; Rosina in every balcony.'

To Isaac D'Israeli.

SEVILLE,
July 26.

Cadiz I left with regret, though there is little to interest except its artificial beauty. It is not unlike Venice in its situation, but there the resemblance ceases. Cadiz is without an association—not a church, a picture, or a palace. The family of the Consul is a most agreeable one: you must not associate with this somewhat humble title a character at all in unison. Mr. Brackenbury is great enough for an ambassador, and lives well enough for one; but with some foibles, he is a very hospitable personage, and I owe many agreeable hours to its exercise. You see what a Sevillian *écritoire* is by this despatch. I have already expended on it more time than would have served for writing many letters. I am almost in a state of frenzy from the process of painting my ideas in this horrible scrawl. It is like writing with blacking and with a skewer. Mr. Standish returned to Seville, where he resides at present, and called on me the next day. We dined with him yesterday. He is a most singular character—a spoiled child of fortune, who thinks himself, and who is perhaps now, a sort of philosopher. But all these characters must be discussed over our fireside or on the Terrace.[1]

Fleuriz, the Governor of Cadiz, is a singular brute. When we meet I will tell you how I Pelhamised him. All the English complain that when they are presented to him he bows and says nothing, uttering none of those courtly inanities which are expected on such occasions, and for which crowned heads and all sorts of viceroys are celebrated. Brackenbury had been reading a review of the *Commentaries*[2] in the *Courier* in the morning, and full thereof, announced me to Fleuriz as the son of the greatest author in England. The usual reception, however, only greeted me; but I, being prepared for the savage, was by no means silent, and made him stare for half an hour in a most extraordinary manner. He was sitting over some prints just arrived from England—a view of Algiers, and the fashions for June. The question was whether the place was Algiers, for it had no title. Just fresh from Gibraltar, I ventured to inform his Excellency that it was, and that a group of gentlemen intended to

[1] The Yew Terrace at Bradenham, where Disraeli in these early years was wont to compose his novels or con his speeches as he walked up and down.

[2] His father's *Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles I.*

represent A——— and a couple of his friends, but displaying those extraordinary coats and countenances that Mr. Ackermann offers monthly as an improvement upon Nature and Nugee, were personages no less eminent than the Dey and his two principal *conseillers d'état*. The dull Fleuriz took everything *au pied de lettre*, and after due examination insinuated scepticism. Whereupon I offer renewed arguments to prove the dress to be Moorish. Fleuriz calls a mademoiselle to translate the inscription, but the inscription only proves that they are 'fashions for June';—at Algiers, I add, appealing to every one whether they had ever seen such beings in London. Six Miss Brackenburys, equally pretty, protest they have not. Fleuriz, unable to comprehend *badinage*, gives a Mashallah look of pious resignation, and has bowed to the ground every night since that he has met me. . . .

We came here up the Guadalquivir, and to-morrow proceed by a diligence to Cordova. . . . We have found here a most agreeable friend in Mr. Williams, an English merchant married to a Spanish lady, and considered the greatest connoisseur in paintings in Spain. He has nearly thirty of the finest Murillos. I had a letter to him from Brackenbury. It is astonishing with what kindness he behaves to us. His house is open to us at all times, and we pass our evenings most agreeably sitting in his *patio*, turning over the original drawings of Murillo, while his Spanish sister-in-law, Dolores, sings a *bolero*. It is the mode to call all the ladies here by their Christian name directly you are introduced. So much for Spanish etiquette. On the other hand, my tailor is offended if I do not ask him to take a chair, and always address him Signor. It is all banished to the lower classes. When he brought home my jacket, he told me his whole fortune was at my command.[1]

Disraeli was enchanted with Murillo. 'Run, my dear fellow, to Seville,' he wrote to Austen, 'and for the first time in your life know what a great artist is—Murillo, Murillo, Murillo!' 'The most original of artists,' he says in a letter to Bradenham. 'No man has painted more, or oftener reached the ideal. He never fails. Where can his bad pictures be?'

I parted with my friend Standish at Seville with regret. He is excessively fantastic and odd, but a good fellow. The

[1] *Letters*, p. 14.

Spaniards cannot make him out, and the few English that meet him set him down only as exceedingly affected. He is something more. The man of pleasure, who, instead of degenerating into a *roué*, aspires to be a philosopher, is to my mind certainly a respectable, and I think, an interesting character.[1]

At Cordova Disraeli saw and was impressed by the great Cathedral Mosque, and noted therein the beautiful 'shrine and chapel of a Moorish saint, with the blue mosaic and the golden honeycombed roof as vivid and as brilliant as when the saint was worshipped'; and then he set forth on the long ride to Granada.

To Sarah Disraeli.

What a country have I lived in! I am invited by 'a grand lady of Madrid'—I quote our host at Cordova—to join her escort to Granada: twenty foot soldiers, four servants armed, and *tirailleurs* in the shape of a dozen muleteers. We refused, for reasons too long here to detail, and set off alone two hours before, expecting an assault. I should tell you we dined previously with her and her husband, having agreed to meet to discuss matters. It was a truly Gil Blas scene. My lord in an undress uniform, slightly imposing in appearance, greeted us with dignity; the signora, exceedingly young and really very pretty, with infinite vivacity and grace. A French valet leant on his chair, and a duenna, such as Stephanoff would draw, broad and supercilious, with jet eyes, mahogany complexion, and cocked-up nose, stood by my lady bearing a large fan. She was most complaisant, as she evidently had more confidence in two thick-headed Englishmen with their Purdeys and Mantons than in her specimen of the once famous Spanish infantry. She did not know that we are cowards on principle. I could screw up my courage to a duel or a battle, but I think my life worth five pounds in the shape of ransom to José Maria. In spite of her charms and their united eloquence, which, as they only spoke Spanish, was of course most persuasive, we successfully resisted. The moon rises on our course: for the first two leagues all is anxiety, as it was well known that a strong band was lying in wait for the 'great lady.' After two leagues we began to hope, when suddenly our

[1] *Letters*, p. 27.

guide informs us that he hears a trampling of horses in the distance. Ave Maria! A cold perspiration came over me. Decidedly they approached, but rather an uproarious crew. We drew up out of pure fear, and I had my purse ready. The band turned out to be a company of actors travelling to Cordova. There they were, dresses and decorations, scenery and machinery, all on mules and donkeys, for there are no roads in this country. The singers rehearsing an opera; the principal tragedian riding on an ass; and the buffo, most serious, looking as grave as night, with a cigar, and in greater agitation than them all. Then there were women in side-saddles, like sedans, and whole panniers of children, some of the former chanting an *ave*, while their waists (saving your presence, but it is a rich trait) were in more than one instance encircled by the brawny arm of a more robust devotee. All this irresistibly reminded me of Cervantes. We proceed and meet a caravan (*corsario* they call it, but I spell from sound) of armed merchants, who challenged us, with a regular piquet, and I nearly got shot for not answering in time, being somewhat before my guide. Then come two travelling friars who give us their blessing, and then we lose our way. We wander about all night, dawn breaks, and we stumble on some peasants sleeping in the field amid their harvest. We learn that we cannot regain our road, and, utterly wearied, we finally sink to sound sleep with our pack-saddles for our pillows.[1]

At Granada Disraeli was of course delighted with the Alhambra, which he placed 'with the Parthenon, the Pantheon, and York Minster.'

To Isaac D'Israeli.

The Saracenic architecture is the most inventive and fanciful, but at the same time the most fitting and the most delicate that can be conceived. There would be no doubt about its title to be considered among the first inventions of men if it were better known. It is only to be found in any degree of perfection in Spain. When a man sneers at the Saracenic, ask him what he has seen. Perhaps a barbarous though picturesque building, called the Ducal Palace, at Venice! What should we think of a man who decided on the buildings of Agrippa by the architecture

[1] *Letters*, pp. 23-25.

of Justinian, or judged the age of Pericles by the restorations of Hadrian? Yet he would not commit so great a blunder. . . .

The great efforts of antique architecture are confined to temples or theatres, which at the best can be only a room. The Alhambra is a palace, and the opportunity for invention is, of course, infinitely increased. It is not a ruin, as I expected, scarcely in a state of dilapidation. Certainly, under the patronage of our late monarch, it might have been restored to all its pristine splendour, though I think a compliant Parliament would have been almost as necessary as Sir Jeffrey Wyatville. Everything about it, though exquisitely proportioned, is slight and small and delicate. Murphy makes the Court of Pillars too large and coarse. Around this court are chambers with carved and purple roofs studded with gold, and walls entirely covered with the most fanciful relief, picked out with that violet tint which must have been copied from their Andalusian skies. In these you may sit in the coolest shade, reclining upon cushions, with your beads or pipe, and view the most dazzling sunlight in the court, which assuredly must scorch the flowers if the faithful lions ever ceased from pouring forth that element which you must travel in Spain or Africa to honour. Pindar was quite right.[1] These chambers are innumerable. There is the Hall of the Ambassadors, always the most sumptuous; the Hall of Justice; the rooms of the sultanas and of the various members of the family, quite perfect, not a single roof has given. What a scene! Ah, that you were here! But conceive it in the times of the Boabdils; conceive it with all its courtly decoration, all the gilding, all the imperial purple, all the violet relief, all the scarlet borders, all the glittering inscriptions and costly mosaics, burnished, bright and fresh; conceive it full of still greater ornaments, the living groups with their rich and vivid and picturesque costume, and, above all, their shining arms; some standing in groups conversing, some smoking in sedate silence, some telling their beads, some squatting round a storier. Then the bustle and the rush, and the arming horsemen all in motion, and all glancing in the most brilliant sun.[2]

Meredith records a curious incident of their first visit.

The old lady who showed us over the Alhambra, talkative and intelligent, would have it that Benjamin D. was a Moor,

[1] Αριστον μὲν ὕδωρ—Water is best.
[2] *Letters*, pp. 28, 29.

many of whom come to visit this palace, which they say will yet be theirs again. His southern aspect, the style in which he paced the gorgeous apartments, and sat himself in the seat of the Abencerrages, quite deceived her; she repeated the question a dozen times, and would not be convinced of the contrary. His parting speech, 'Es mi casa,' 'This is my palace,' quite confirmed her suspicions.

From Granada Disraeli wrote a letter to his mother 'on an elephantine sheet, all about Spanish ladies and tomato sauce.' No one would dream that it was from the pen of an invalid to whom 'the least exertion of mind' was instantly painful.

To Maria D'Israeli.

GRANADA,
Aug. 1.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

Although you doubtless assist, as the French phrase it, at the reading of my despatches, you will, I am sure, be pleased to receive one direct from your absent son. It has just occurred to me that I have never yet mentioned the Spanish ladies, and I do not think that I can address anything that I have to say upon this agreeable subject to any one more suitable than yourself. You know that I am rather an admirer of the blonde; and, to be perfectly candid, I will confess to you that the only times which I have been so unfortunate as to be captivated, or captured, in this country were both by Englishwomen. But these Espagnolas are nevertheless very interesting personages. What we associate with the idea of female beauty is not common in this country. There are none of those seraphic countenances, which strike you dumb or blind, but faces in abundance which will never pass without commanding a pleasing glance. Their charm consists in their sensibility; each incident, every person, every word touches the far eye of a Spanish lady, and her features are constantly confuting the creed of Mahomet, and proving that she has a soul: but there is nothing quick, harsh, or forced about her. She is extremely unaffected, and not at all French. Her eyes gleam rather than sparkle, she speaks with quick vivacity but in sweet tones, and there is in all her carriage, particularly when she walks, a certain dignified grace which never leaves her, and which is very remarkable. . . . .

I sat next to a lady of high distinction at a bull-fight at Seville. She was the daughter-in-law of the Captain-General, and the most beautiful Spaniard I have yet met. Her comb was white, and she wore a mantilla of blonde, I have no doubt extremely valuable, for it was very dirty. The effect, however, was charming. Her hair was glossy black, and her eyes like an antelope's, but all her other features deliciously soft; and she was further adorned, which is rare in Spain, with a rosy cheek, for here our heroines are rather sallow. But they counteract this defect by never appearing until twilight, which calls them from their bowers, fresh, though languid, from the late siesta. To conclude, the only fault of the Spanish beauty is that she too soon indulges in the magnificence of embonpoint. There are, however, many exceptions to this. At seventeen a Spanish beauty is poetical, tall, lithe, and clear, though sallow. But you have seen Mercandotti.[1] As she advances, if she does not lose her shape, she resembles Juno rather than Venus. Majestic she ever is; and if her feet are less twinkling than in her first career, look on her hand and you'll forgive them all.

There is calm voluptuousness about the life here that wonderfully accords with my disposition, so that if I were resident, and had my intellect at command, I do not know any place where I could make it more productive. The imagination is ever at work, and beauty and grace are not scared away by those sounds and sights, those constant cares and changing feelings, which are the proud possession of our free land of eastern winds. You rise at eight, and should breakfast lightly, although a table covered with all fruits renders that rather difficult to one who inherits, with other qualities good and bad, that passion for the most delightful productions of nature, with which my beloved sire can sympathise. I only wish I had him here over a medley of grape and melon, gourd and prickly-pear. In the morning you never quit the house, and these are hours which might be profitably employed under the inspiration of a climate which is itself poetry, for it sheds over everything a golden hue which does not exist in the objects themselves illuminated. At present I indulge only in a calm reverie, for I find the least exertion of mind instantly aggravate all my symptoms; and even this letter is an exertion, which you would hardly credit. My general health was never better. You know how much better I am on a sunny day in England; well, I have had two months of sunny days infinitely warmer. I have during all this period

[1] A famous dancer of the day.

enjoyed general health of which I have no memory during my life. All the English I have met are ill, and live upon a diet. I eat everything, and my appetite each day increases. . . . The Spanish cuisine is not much to my taste, for garlic and bad oil preponderate; but it has its points: the soups are good, and *the most agreeable dish* in the world is an olio. I will explain it to you, for my father would delight in it. There are two large dishes, one at each end of the table. The one at the top contains bouilli beef, boiled pork sausage, black-pudding; all these not mixed together, but in their separate portions. The other dish is a medley of vegetables and fruits, generally French beans, caravanseras, slices of melons, and whole pears. Help each person to a portion of the meats, and then to the medley. Mix them in your plate together, and drown them in tomato sauce. There is no garlic and no grease of any kind. I have eaten this every day, it is truly delightful. . . .

After dinner you take your siesta. I generally sleep for two hours. I think this practice conducive to health. Old people, however, are apt to carry it to excess. By the time I have risen and arranged my toilette it is time to steal out, and call upon any agreeable family whose Tertullia you may choose to honour, which you do, after the first time, uninvited, and with them you take your tea or chocolate. This is often *al fresco*, under the piazza or colonnade of the *patio*. Here you while away the time until it is cool enough for the *alameda* or public walk. At Cadiz, and even at Seville, up the Guadalquivir, you are sure of a delightful breeze from the water. The sea breeze comes like a spirit. The effect is quite magical. As you are lolling in listless languor in the hot and perfumed air, an invisible guest comes dancing into the party and touches them all with an enchanted wand. All start, all smile. It has come; it is the sea breeze. There is much discussion whether it is as strong, or whether weaker, than the night before. The ladies furl their fans and seize their mantillas, the cavaliers stretch their legs and give signs of life. All rise. I offer my arm to Dolores or Florentina (is not this familiarity strange?), and in ten minutes you are in the *alameda*. What a change! All is now life and liveliness. Such bowing, such kissing, such fluttering of fans, such gentle criticism of gentle friends! But the fan is the most wonderful part of the whole scene. A Spanish lady with her fan might shame the tactics of a troop of horse. Now she unfurls it with the slow pomp and conscious elegance of a peacock. Now she flutters it with all the languor of a listless beauty, now with all the liveliness of a vivacious one. Now, in the midst of a very tornado, she closes it with

a whir which makes you start, pop! In the midst of your confusion Dolores taps you on the elbow; you turn round to listen, and Florentina pokes you in your side. Magical instrument! You know that it speaks a particular language, and gallantry requires no other mode to express its most subtle conceits or its most unreasonable demands than this slight, delicate organ. But remember, while you read, that here, as in England, it is not confined alone to your delightful sex. I also have my fan, which makes my cane extremely jealous. If you think I have grown extraordinarily effeminate, learn that in this scorching clime the soldier will not mount guard without one. Night wears on, we sit, we take a *panal*, which is as quick work as snapdragon, and far more elegant; again we stroll. Midnight clears the public walks, but few Spanish families retire till two. A solitary bachelor like myself still wanders, or still lounges on a bench in the *warm* moonlight. The last guitar dies away, the cathedral clock wakes up your reverie, you too seek your couch, and amid a gentle, sweet flow of loveliness, and light, and music, and fresh air, thus dies a day in Spain.

Adieu, my dearest mother. A thousand loves to all.[1]

B. DISRAELI.

To Sarah Disraeli.

GIBRALTAR,
Aug. 9.

MY DEAR SA,

We arrived here[2] yesterday tired to death, but very well. The Mediterranean packet is expected hourly, and I lose not a moment in writing to you, which I do in compliment to your most welcome letter which awaited me here, and which, though short enough, was most sweet. The very long one about all the things I want to know makes my mouth water. . . . In regard to any plans, we are certainly off next packet. No farther can I aver. What use are plans? Did I dream six months ago of Andalusia, where I have spent some of the most agreeable hours of my existence? Such a trip! Such universal novelty, and such unrivalled luck in all things! . . .

This is the country for a national novelist. The *al fresco* life of the inhabitants induces a variety of the most picturesque manners; their semi-savageness makes each district retain with barbarous jealousy its own customs and its own costumes. A weak government resolves society into its

[1] *Letters*, p. 17.

[2] They returned from Granada by Malaga and the sea.

original elements, and robbery becomes more honourable than war, inasmuch as the robber is paid and the soldier in arrear. Then a wonderful ecclesiastical establishment covers the land with a privileged class, who are perpetually producing some effect on society. I say nothing, while writing these lines—which afterwards may be expanded into a picture—of their costume. You are awakened from your slumbers by the *rosario*—the singing procession by which the peasantry congregate to their labours. It is most effective, full of noble chants and melodious responses, that break upon the still fresh air and your even fresher feelings in a manner truly magical.

Oh, wonderful Spain! Think of this romantic land covered with Moorish ruins and full of Murillo! Ah that I could describe to you the wonders of the painted temples of Seville! ah that I could wander with you amid the fantastic and imaginative halls of delicate Alhambra! Why, why cannot I convey to you more perfectly all that I see and feel? I thought that enthusiasm was dead within me, and nothing could be new. I have hit perhaps upon the only country which could have upset my theory—a country of which I have read little and thought nothing—a country of which indeed nothing has been of late written, and which few visit. I dare to say I am better. This last fortnight I have made regular progress, or rather felt perhaps the progress which I had already made. It is all the sun. Do not think that it is society or change of scene. This, however occasionally agreeable, is too much for me, and even throws me back. It is when I am quite alone and quite still that I feel the difference of my system, that I miss old aches, and am conscious of the increased activity and vitality and expansion of my blood. Write to me whenever you can, always to Malta, from whence I shall be sure to receive my letters sooner or later. If I receive twenty at a time, it does not signify; but write: do not let the chain of my domestic knowledge be broken for an instant. Write to me about Bradenham, about dogs and horses, orchards, gardens, who calls, where you go, who my father sees in London, what is said. This is what I want. Never mind public news, except it be private in its knowledge, or about private friends. I see all newspapers sooner or later. . . . Keep on writing, but don't *bore* yourself. Mind this. A thousand thousand loves to all. Adieu, my beloved. We shall soon meet. There is no place like Bradenham, and each moment I feel better. I want to come back. . . .

B. D.[1]

[1] *Letters*, p. 22.

From Gibraltar to Malta the two friends had 'a very rough and disagreeable voyage, the wind—a devil of a levanter, and sometimes sirocco—full in our teeth half the time, and not going, even with the steam, more than four knots an hour.' Their ship called at Algiers, and there, 'though they did not land, they 'observed with interest that the tricolor flag was flying,' a reminder that this was the summer of 'the three glorious days of July.' At Malta they found an old acquaintance in James Clay, in later years a well-known member of Parliament and the great authority on whist.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

MALTA,
Aug. 27.

He has been here a month, and has already beat the whole garrison at rackets and billiards and other wicked games, given lessons to their prima donna, and seccatura'd the primo tenore. Really he has turned out a most agreeable personage, and has had that advantage of society in which he had been deficient, and led a life which for splendid adventure would beat any young gentleman's yet published in three vols. post 8vo. Lord Burghersh wrote an opera for him, and Lady Normanby a farce. He dished Prince Pignatelli at billiards, and did the Russian Legation at écarté. I had no need of letters of introduction here, and have already 'troops of friends.' The fact is, in our original steam-packet there were some very agreeable fellows, officers, whom I believe I never mentioned to you. They have been long expecting your worship's offspring, and have gained great fame in repeating his third-rate stories at second-hand: so in consequence of these messengers I am received with branches of palm. Here the younkers do nothing but play rackets, billiards, and cards, race and smoke. To govern men, you must either excel them in their accomplishments, or despise them. Clay does one, I do the other, and we are both equally popular. Affectation tells here even better than wit. Yesterday, at the racket-court, sitting in the gallery among strangers, the ball entered, and lightly struck me and fell at my feet. I picked it up, and observing a young rifleman excessively stiff, I humbly requested him to forward its passage into the court, as I really had never thrown a ball in my life. This

incident has been the general subject of conversation at all the messes to-day![1]

Long afterwards, when Disraeli had become famous, Clay appears to have given a somewhat discrepant account of his friend's popularity with those whom that friend believed to be the admiring audience of his affectations. 'It would not have been possible to have found a more agreeable, unaffected companion when they were by themselves; but when they got into society, his coxcombry was intolerable. . . . He made himself so hateful to the officers' mess that, while they welcomed Clay, they ceased to invite "that damned bumptious Jew boy."'[2] There seems, indeed, at this time to have been hardly any limit to Disraeli's 'buffooneries,' as he has the grace himself to call them. He dined at a regimental mess in an Andalusian dress. He 'paid a round of visits,' writes Meredith, 'in his majo jacket, white trousers, and a sash of all the colours in the rainbow; in this wonderful costume he paraded all round Valetta, followed by one-half the population of the place, and, as he said, putting a complete stop to all business. He, of course, included the Governor and Lady Emily in his round, to their no small astonishment.' The Governor, a brother of Lady Caroline Lamb's, was 'reputed a very nonchalant personage, and exceedingly exclusive in his conduct to his subjects.' Disraeli, however, was undismayed.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

SUNDAY,
Aug. 29.

Yesterday I called on Ponsonby, and he was fortunately at home. I flatter myself that he passed through the most extraordinary quarter of an hour of his existence. I gave him no quarter, and at last made our nonchalant Governor roll on the sofa, from his risible convulsions. Then I jumped up, remembered that I must be breaking into his morning, and

[1] *Letters*, pp. 31, 32.
[2] Sir William Gregory's *Autobiography*, p. 95.

was off; making it a rule always to leave with a good impression. He pressed me not to go. I told him I had so much to do! . . . When I arrived home I found an invitation for Tuesday. . . . Clay confesses my triumph is complete and unrivalled.[1]

To Benjamin Austen.

MALTA,
Sept. 14.

From Gibraltar I arrived here, a place from which I expected little and have found much. Valetta surprises me as one of the most beautiful cities I have ever visited, something between Venice and Cadiz. . . . It has not a single tree, but the city is truly magnificent, full of palaces worthy of Palladio. I have still illness enough to make my life a burthen, and as my great friend the Sun is daily becoming less powerful, I daily grow more dispirited and resume my old style of despair. Had I been cured by this time, I had made up my mind to join you in Italy—as it is, I go I know not where, but do not be surprised if you hear something very strange indeed. . . . The smallpox rages here so desperately that they have put a quarantine of three weeks at Sicily, which has prevented my trip to an island I much desire to visit. . . . Write to me about your movements, in order that, if possible, I may meet you and see the Coliseum by moonlight with Madame, and all that. I was told here by a person of consideration that my father was to be in the new batch of baronets, but I suppose this is a lie. If it be offered I am sure he will refuse, but I have no idea that it will.

To Ralph Disraeli.

MALTA.

MY DEAR RALPH,

Mashallah! Here I am sitting in an easy chair, with a Turkish pipe six feet long, with an amber mouthpiece and a porcelain bowl. What a revolution! But what if I tell you that I not only have become a smoker, but the greatest smoker in Malta. The fact is I find it relieves my head. Barrow,[2] who is here in the 'Blonde,' . . . has given me a meerschaum, and Anstruther a most splendid Dresden green china, set in silver—an extremely valuable pipe; but there is nothing like a meerschaum.

[1] *Letters*, p. 33.
[2] Younger son of Sir John Barrow.

I have spent some weeks here. Ponsonby, the Governor, is a most charming fellow, and has been most courteous to me. His wife is very plain and not very popular, being grand, but I rather like her. . . . Do you remember in ancient days in Windsor, the Royal Fusiliers being quartered there, and James swearing that the two young subs, Liddell and Lord Amelius Paulet, were brothers of his schoolfellows, and all that? How curious life is. That Liddell is now quartered here, and being senior captain on the station in the absence of Fitzclarence, who has gone home to see his papa, he commands the regiment, and has become my most intimate friend. . . . He and another Fusilier, by name Pery, the future Lord Limerick, are my usual companions. They are both men of the world and good company, forming a remarkable contrast to all their brother officers forsooth. A visit to Gibraltar and Malta, our two crack garrisons, has quite opened my eyes to the real life of a *militaire*. By heavens! I believe these fellows are boys till they are majors, and sometimes do not even stop there. . . .

A week ago I knew not what I should do. All is now settled. On Wednesday morning I quit this place, where on the whole I have spent very agreeable hours, in a yacht which Clay has hired, and in which he intends to turn pirate. The original plan was to have taken it together, but Meredith was averse to this, and we have become his passengers at a fair rate, and he drops us whenever and wherever we like. You should see me in the costume of a Greek pirate. A blood-red shirt, with silver studs as big as shillings, an immense scarf for girdle, full of pistols and daggers, red cap, red slippers, broad blue striped jacket and trousers. . . . There is a Mrs. Pleydell Bouverie here, with a pretty daughter, *cum multis aliis*. I am sorry to say among them a beauty, very dangerous to the peace of your unhappy brother. But no more of that, and in a few weeks I shall be bounding, and perhaps seasick, upon the blue Ægean, and then all will be over. Nothing like an emetic in these cases. I find I have very little to tell you, for although each day brings an infinite deal of nothings, which might authorise a record over a wood fire in the old hall, they are too slight to bear any communication but an oral one. So let us hope that may soon take place. I often think of you all. . . . If you hear of my marriage or death, don't believe it, any more than I shall of our father being in the new batch of baronets, which is here currently reported. Clay is immensely improved, and a very agreeable companion indeed, with such a valet, Giovanni[1] by name. Byron died

[1] See Appendix A.

in his arms, and his mustachios touch the earth. Withal mild as a lamb, though he has two daggers always about his person. Our yacht is of fifty-five tons, an excellent size for these seas, with a crew of seven men. She is a very strong sea boat, and bears the unpoetical title of 'Susan,' which is a bore; but as we can't alter it we have painted it out. And now, my dear boy, adieu. . . .

Your very affectionate brother,
B. D.[1]

The 'something very strange' which he had in contemplation when he wrote to Austen from Malta is explained in his next letter.

To Benjamin Austen.

When I wrote to you last I had some thoughts, indeed had resolved, to join the Turkish Army as volunteer in the Albanian war. I found, however, on my arrival at Corfu, whither for this purpose I had repaired instead of going to Egypt, that the Grand Vizier, whilst all your newspapers were announcing the final loss of Albania to the Porte, had proceeded with such surprising energy that the war which had begun so magnificently had already dwindled into an insurrection. I waited a week at Corfu to see how affairs would turn out; at the end of which came one of the principal rebels flying for refuge, and after him some others. Under these circumstances I determined to turn my intended campaign into a visit of congratulation to headquarters, and Sir Frederick Adam gave me a letter, and with Meredith and Clay, our servants, and a guard of Albanians we at last reached Yanina, the capital of the province.

I can give you no idea in a letter of all the Pashas, and all the Silictars, and all the Agas that I have visited and visited me; all the pipes I smoked, all the coffee I sipped, all the sweetmeats I devoured. . . . For a week I was in a scene equal to anything in the *Arabian Nights*—such processions, such dresses, such corteges of horsemen, such caravans of camels. Then the delight of being made much of by a man who was daily decapitating half the Province. Every morning we paid visits, attended reviews, and crammed ourselves with sweetmeats; every evening dancers and singers were sent to our quarters by the Vizier or some Pasha. . . .

[1] *Letters*, p. 34.

I am quite a Turk, wear a turban, smoke a pipe six feet long, and squat on a divan. Mehemet Pasha told me that he did not think I was an Englishman because I walked so slow: in fact I find the habits of this calm and luxurious people entirely agree with my own preconceived opinions of propriety and enjoyment, and I detest the Greeks more than ever. You have no idea of the rich and various costume of the Levant. When I was presented to the Grand Vizier I made up such a costume from my heterogeneous wardrobe that the Turks, who are mad on the subject of dress, were utterly astounded. . . . I had a regular crowd round our quarters and had to come forward to bow like Don Miguel and Donna Maria. Nothing would persuade the Greeks that we were not come about the new King, and I really believe that if I had £25,000 to throw away I might increase my headache by wearing a crown.

Meredith gives details of the costume which produced so great an impression. 'Figure to yourself,' he writes, 'a shirt entirely red, with silver studs as large as sixpences, green pantaloons with a velvet stripe down the sides, and a silk Albanian shawl with a long fringe of divers colours round his waist, red Turkish slippers, and to complete all his Spanish majo jacket covered with embroidery and ribbons.' 'Questo vestito Inglese o di fantasia?' asked a 'little Greek physician who had passed a year at Pisa in his youth.' 'Inglese e fantastico' was the oracular reply.

A long letter written immediately after the return from Yanina gives a highly-coloured account, full of vivid and picturesque detail, of all Disraeli saw and felt during 'this wondrous week' in Albania; it contains among other things an excellent piece of comedy in the description of a festive evening on the journey up from Arta.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

PREVESA,
Oct. 25.

. . . Two hours before sunset, having completed only half our course in spite of all our exertions, we found ourselves at a vast but dilapidated khan as big as a Gothic castle, situated on

a high range, and built as a sort of half-way house for travellers by Ali Pasha when his long, gracious, and unmolested reign had permitted him to turn this unrivalled country, which combines all the excellences of Southern Europe and Western Asia, to some of the purposes for which it is fitted. This khan had now been turned into a military post; and here we found a young Bey, to whom Kalio[1] had given us a letter in case of our stopping for an hour. He was a man of very pleasing exterior, but unluckily could not understand Giovanni's Greek, and had no interpreter. What was to be done? We could not go on, as there was not an inhabited place before Yanina; and here were we sitting before sunset on the same divan with our host, who had entered the place to receive us, and would not leave the room while we were there, without the power of communicating an idea. We were in despair, and we were also very hungry, and could not therefore in the course of an hour or two plead fatigue as an excuse for sleep, for we were ravenous and anxious to know what prospect of food existed in this wild and desolate mansion. So we smoked. It is a great resource, but this wore out, and it was so ludicrous smoking, and looking at each other, and dying to talk, and then exchanging pipes by way of compliment, and then pressing our hand to our heart by way of thanks.

The Bey sat in a corner, I unfortunately next, so I had the onus of mute attention; and Clay next to me, so he and M. could at least have an occasional joke, though of course we were too well-bred to exceed an occasional and irresistible observation. Clay wanted to play écarté, and with a grave face, as if we were at our devotions; but just as we were about commencing, it occurred to us that we had some brandy, and that we would offer our host a glass, as it might be a hint for what should follow to so vehement a schnaps. Mashallah! Had the effect only taken place 1830 years ago, instead of in the present age of scepticism, it would have been instantly voted a first-rate miracle. Our mild friend smacked his lips and instantly asked for another cup; we drank it in coffee cups. By the time that Meredith had returned, who had left the house on pretence of shooting, Clay, our host, and myself had despatched a bottle of brandy in quicker time and fairer proportions than I ever did a bottle of Burgundy, and were extremely gay. Then he would drink again with Meredith and ordered some figs, talking I must tell you all the time, indulging in the most graceful pantomime, examining our pistols, offering us his own golden ones for our inspection, and finally making out

[1] The Governor of Arta.

Giovanni's Greek enough to misunderstand most ludicrously every observation we communicated. But all was taken in good part, and I never met such a jolly fellow in the course of my life. In the meantime we were ravenous, for the dry, round, unsugary fig is a great whetter. At last we insisted upon Giovanni's communicating our wants and asking for bread. The Bey gravely bowed and said, 'Leave it to me; take no thought,' and nothing more occurred. We prepared ourselves for hungry dreams, when to our great delight a most capital supper was brought in, accompanied, to our great horror, by—wine. We ate, we drank, we ate with our fingers, we drank in a manner I never recollect. The wine was not bad, but if it had been poison we must drink; it was such a compliment for a Moslemin; we quaffed it in rivers. The Bey called for the brandy; he drank it all. The room turned round; the wild attendants who sat at our feet seemed dancing in strange and fantastic whirls; the Bey shook hands with me; he shouted English—I Greek. 'Very good' he had caught up from us. 'Kalo, kalo' was my rejoinder. He roared; I smacked him on the back. I remember no more. In the middle of the night I woke. I found myself sleeping on the divan, rolled up in its sacred carpet; the Bey had wisely reeled to the fire. The thirst I felt was like that of Dives. All were sleeping except two, who kept up during the night the great wood fire. I rose lightly, stepping over my sleeping companions, and the shining arms that here and there informed me that the dark mass wrapped up in a capote was a human being. I found Abraham's bosom in a flagon of water. I think I must have drunk a gallon at the draught. I looked at the wood fire and thought of the blazing blocks in the hall at Bradenham, asked myself whether I was indeed in the mountain fastness of an Albanian chief, and, shrugging my shoulders, went to bed and woke without a headache. We left our jolly host with regret. I gave him my pipe as a memorial of having got tipsy together. . . .

In the same letter there is a vivid description of the scene in the Hall of Audience at Yanina.

An hour having been fixed for the audience, we repaired to the celebrated fortress-palace of Ali, which, though greatly battered in successive sieges, is still inhabitable, and yet affords a very fair idea of its old magnificence. Having passed the gates of the fortress, we found ourselves in a number of small streets, like those in the liberties of the Tower, or any other old castle, all full of life, stirring and

excited; then we came to a grand place, in which on an ascent stands the Palace. We hurried through courts and corridors, all full of guards, and pages, and attendant chiefs, and in fact every species of Turkish population, for in these countries one head does everything, and we with our subdivision of labour and intelligent and responsible deputies have no idea of the labour of a Turkish Premier. At length we came to a vast, irregular apartment, serving as the immediate ante-chamber to the Hall of Audience. This was the finest thing I have ever yet seen. In the whole course of my life I never met anything so picturesque, and cannot expect to do so again. I do not attempt to describe it; but figure to yourself the largest chamber that you ever were perhaps in, full of the choicest groups of an Oriental population, each individual waiting by appointment for an audience, and probably about to wait for ever. In this room we remained, attended by the Austrian Consul who presented us, about ten minutes—too short a time. I never thought that I could have lived to have wished to kick my heels in a minister's ante-chamber. Suddenly we are summoned to the awful presence of the pillar of the Turkish Empire, the man who has the reputation of being the mainspring of the new system of regeneration, the renowned Reschid, an approved warrior, a consummate politician, unrivalled as a dissembler in a country where dissimulation is the principal portion of their moral culture.

The Hall was vast, built by Ali Pasha purposely to receive the largest Gobelins carpet that was ever made, which belonged to the chief chamber in Versailles, and was sold to him in the Revolution. It is entirely covered with gilding and arabesques. Here, squatted upon a corner of the large divan, I bowed with all the nonchalance of St. James's Street to a little ferocious-looking, shrivelled, care-worn man, plainly dressed, with a brow covered with wrinkles, and a countenance clouded with anxiety and thought. I entered the shed-like divan of the kind and comparatively insignificant Kalio Bey with a feeling of awe; I seated myself on the divan of the Grand Vizier ('who,' the Austrian Consul observed, 'has destroyed in the course of the last three months,' *not* in war, 'upwards of four thousand of my acquaintance') with the self-possession of a morning call. At a distance from us, in a group on his left hand, were his secretary and his immediate suite; the end of the saloon was lined by lacqueys in waiting, with an odd name which I now forget, and which you will find in the glossary of *Anastasius*. Some compliments now passed between us, and pipes and coffee were then brought by four of these lacqueys;

then his Highness waved his hand, and in an instant the chamber was cleared. Our conversation I need not repeat. We congratulated him on the pacification of Albania. He rejoined, that the peace of the world was his only object, and the happiness of mankind his only wish; this went on for the usual time: He asked us no questions about ourselves or our country, as the other Turks did, but seemed quite overwhelmed with business, moody and anxious. While we were with him, three separate Tartars arrived with despatches. What a life! and what a slight chance for the gentlemen in the ante-chamber![1]

This letter to his father, like the previous letter to Austen, breathes in nearly every line a spirit of intense delight in all the splendour and circumstance of the East. The buzz and bustle of the swarming population, 'arrayed in every possible and fanciful costume'; the brilliant colours of the military chieftains; the scribe with the writing material in his girdle; the call of the muezzin from the minaret; the salute of the passing dervish; the 'wild unearthly drum' that heralds the approach of a caravan and the stately camel that follows at the head of 'an almost interminable procession of his Arabian brethren'—for all such sights and sounds he has eager eyes and ears, and he records them with an exultation that betrays an access of Orientalism. But before the letter closes Europe triumphs over Asia and with perhaps unconscious art he ends with the following palinode:—

I write you this from that Ambracian Gulf where the soft Triumvir gained more glory by defeat than attends the victory of harsher warriors. The site is not unworthy of the beauty of Cleopatra. From the summit of the land this gulf appears like a vast lake walled in on all sides by mountains more or less distant. The dying glory of a Grecian eve bathes with warm light a thousand promontories and gentle bays, and infinite modulations of purple outline. Before me is Olympus, whose austere peak glitters yet in the sun; a bend of the

[1] *Letters*, pp. 40-47. [Much of this letter is reproduced, often word for word, in the description in Part V., chapters 11-13, of *Contarini Fleming*. —G. E. B.]

land alone hides from me the islands[1] of Ulysses and of Sappho. When I gaze upon this scene I remember the barbaric splendour and turbulent existence which I have just quitted with disgust. I recur to the feelings in the indulgence of which I can alone find happiness, and from which an inexorable destiny seems resolved to shut me out.[2]

'I wander in pursuit of health,' he wrote in another letter, 'like the immortal exile in pursuit of that lost shore, which is now almost glittering in my sight. Five years of my life have been already wasted, and sometimes I think my pilgrimage may be as long as that of Ulysses.' Their 'yacht,' he told Austen, was 'the only mode of travel for this sea, where every headland and bay is the site of something memorable, and which is studded with islands that demand a visit.'

To Isaac D'Israeli.

We sailed from Prevesa through the remaining Ionian islands, among which was Zante, pre-eminent in beauty; indeed, they say none of the Cyclades is to be compared to it, with its olive trees touching the waves and its shores undulating in every possible variety. For about a fortnight we were for ever sailing on a summer sea, always within two or three miles of the coast, and touching at every island or harbour that invited. A cloudless sky, a summer atmosphere, and sunsets like the neck of a dove, completed all the enjoyment which I anticipated from roving in a Grecian sea. We were, however, obliged to keep a sharp look-out for pirates, who are all about again. We exercised the crew every day with muskets, and their increasing prowess and our pistol exercise kept up our courage.[3]

They spent a week at Navarino, 'the scene of Codrington's bloody blunder, a superb, perhaps unrivalled harbour, with the celebrated Sphacteria on one

[1] Ithaca and Leucadia. Disraeli no doubt had in mind his Byron (*Childe Harold*, II., 39). It was from

'Leucadia's far projecting rock of woe'

that Sappho, according to the very doubtful story, flung herself into the sea. Lesbos, her island home, was of course far away, off the coast of Asia Minor.

[2] *Letters*, p. 47.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

side and old Pylus on the other. Here we found the French in their glory. They have already covered the scene of Spartan suffering with cafés and billiard rooms and make daily picnics to the grotto of Nestor.' From Napoli, where they also lingered, the travellers made excursions to Corinth, Argos, and Mycenae; and finally, on November 24, they cast anchor in the Piræus.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

ATHENS,
Nov. 30.

On the afternoon of our arrival in Piræus, which is about five miles from the city, I climbed a small hill, forming the side of the harbour. From it I looked upon an immense plain covered with olive woods and skirted by mountains. Some isolated hills rise at a distance from the bounding ridge. On one of these I gazed upon a magnificent temple, bathed in the sunset; at the foot of the hill was a walled city of considerable dimensions, in front of which a Doric temple apparently quite perfect. The violet sunset—and to-day the tint was peculiarly vivid—threw over this scene a colouring becoming its beauty, and if possible increasing its delicate character. The city was Athens; but independent of all reminiscences, I never witnessed anything so truly beautiful, and I have seen a great deal.

We were fortunate. The Acropolis, which has been shut for nine years, was open to us, the first Englishmen. Athens is still in the power of the Turks, but the Grecian Commission to receive it arrived a short time before us. When we entered the city, we found every house roofless; but really, before the war, modern Athens must have been no common town. The ancient remains have been respected; the Parthenon, and the other temples which are in the Acropolis, have necessarily suffered during the siege, but the injury is only in the detail; the general effect is not marred. We saw hundreds of shells and balls lying about the ruins. The temple of Theseus looks at a short distance as if it were just finished by Pericles.[1]

'Of all that I have yet visited,' he wrote to Mrs. Austen, 'nothing has more completely realized all that I imagined and all that I could have wished than Athens.'

[1] *Letters*, p. 49. In *Contarini Fleming* he corrected Pericles into Cimon.

In spite, however, of this momentary enthusiasm, there was not much real sympathy between Disraeli's genius and the pure Hellenic spirit, and education had done little to foster any that nature had implanted in him. 'Pleasant Argos and rich Mycenae, the tomb of Agamemnon and the palace of Clytemnestra,' inspired in Contarini Fleming thoughts that were not unworthy of the scene:—

> The fortunes of the House of Atreus form the noblest of all legends. I believe in that destiny before which the ancients bowed. Modern philosophy, with its superficial discoveries, has infused into the breast of man a spirit of scepticism; but I think that, ere long, science will again become imaginative, and that as we become more profound, we may become also more credulous. Destiny is our will, and our will is our nature. . . . All is mystery, but he is a slave who will not struggle to penetrate the dark veil.[1]

In the legend of the House of Atreus and the tragic idea of destiny that underlies it we are in touch with the Oriental background of Hellenic civilisation, and here Disraeli is at home. Within sight of the Parthenon his thoughts are still turned towards the East. 'In art the Greeks were the children of the Egyptians,' observes Contarini, and there was more originality in the observation in those days than there would be in ours. But Athens stands for literature as well as art, and presently the memory of early sufferings from grammar and lexicon supervenes. 'The Greeks, who were masters of composition, were ignorant of all languages but their own.' Now that every nation has in its own tongue a record of all knowledge, let education be confined to the national literature. To the few who have leisure or inclination to study foreign literatures he would say, 'Why not study the Oriental? Surely in the pages of the Persians and the Arabs we might discover new sources of emotion, new modes of expression, new trains of ideas, new principles of invention, and new bursts of

[1] *Contarini Fleming*, Pt. V. ch. 18.

fancy.' These are Contarini's 'meditations amid the ruins of Athens'; these and one of those defiant outbursts of racial scorn for the Northern barbarians among whom he lived, which became more frequent with Disraeli at a later date:—

With horror I remember that, through some mysterious necessity, civilisation seems to have deserted the most favoured regions and the choicest intellects. The Persian, whose very being is poetry, the Arab, whose subtle mind could penetrate into the very secret shrine of Nature, the Greek, whose acute perceptions seemed granted only for the creation of the beautiful—these are now unlettered slaves in barbarous lands. The arts are yielded to the flat-nosed Franks. And they toil, and study, and invent theories to account for their own incompetence. Now it is the climate, now the religion, now the government; everything but the truth, everything but the mortifying suspicion that their organization may be different, and that they may be as distinct a race from their models as they undoubtedly are from the Kalmuck and the Negro.[1]

The travellers made, of course, an expedition to Marathon, where, however, discomfort seems to have effaced in Disraeli's mind the memory of its heroic past. 'I can give you no idea of the severe hardship and privation of present Grecian travel. Happy are we to get a shed for nightly shelter, and never have been fortunate enough to find one not swarming with vermin. My sufferings in this way are great.' They 'lived for a week on the wild boar of Pentelicus and the honey of Hymettus, both very good,' though the former, apparently, was 'not as good as Bradenham pork': and then early in December they continued their voyage round Sunium, of which they had 'a most splendid view,' and through 'the clustering Cyclades' to Constantinople.

We have reached the Dardanelles, a capital passage—what a road to a great city!—narrower and much longer than the Straits of Gibraltar, but not with such sublime shores. Asia and Europe look more kindly on each other than Europe and her more sultry sister.

[1] *Contarini Fleming*, Pt. V. ch. 19.

The breeze has again sprung up; we have one hundred and thirty miles to Constantinople.

It is near sunset, and Constantinople is in full sight; it baffles all description, though so often described. An immense mass of buildings, cupolas, cypress groves, and minarets. I feel an excitement which I thought was dead.[1]

On a closer view the far-famed city did not disappoint him.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

CONSTANTINOPLE,
Jan. 11, 1831.

I leave Constantinople to your imagination. Cypress groves and mosquish domes, masses of habitations grouped on gentle acclivities rising out of the waters, millions of minarets, a sea like a river covered with innumerable long thin boats as swift as gondolas, and far more gay, being carved and gilt—all these, and then when filled with a swarming population in rich and brilliant and varied costume, will afford you a more lively, and certainly not a more incorrect, idea than half a dozen pages worthy of Horace Smith.

There are two things here which cannot be conceived without inspection—the Bosphorus and the Bazaar. Conceive the ocean not broader than the Thames at Gravesend, with shores with all the variety and beauty of the Rhine, covered with palaces, mosques, villages, groves of cypress, and woods of Spanish chestnuts; the view of the Euxine at the end is the most sublime [and mystical][2] thing I can remember. The Bazaar would delight you more than the Bosphorus. Fancy the Burlington Arcade, or some of the Parisian passages and panoramas; fancy perhaps a square mile of ground covered with these arcades intersecting each other in all directions and full of every product of the empire, from diamonds to dates. The magnificence, novelty, and variety of the goods on sale, the whole nation of shopkeepers all in different dress, the crowds of buyers from all parts of the world, are just to be hinted at.

Here every people have a characteristic costume. Turks, Greeks, Jews, and Armenians are the staple population; the latter seem to predominate. The Armenians wear round and very unbecoming black caps and robes; the Jews a black hat wreathed with a white handkerchief; the Greeks

[1] *Letters*, p. 50.
[2] The words in brackets are from a letter to Mrs. Austen.

black turbans; the Turks indulge in all combinations of costume. The meanest merchant in the Bazaar looks like a Sultan in an Eastern fairy tale. This is merely to be ascribed to the marvellous brilliancy of their dyes, which is one of the most remarkable circumstances in their social life, and which never has been explained to me. A common pair of slippers that you push on in the street is tinged of a vermilion or a lake so extraordinary that I can compare their colour to nothing but the warmest beam of a summer sunset.

We have seen the Sultan[1] several times. He affects all the affable activity of a European prince, mixes with his subjects, interferes in all their pursuits, and taxes them most unmercifully. He dresses like a European, and all the young men have adopted the fashion. You see young Turks in uniforms which would not disgrace one of our crack cavalry regiments, and lounging with all the bitterness of Royal illegitimates. It is on the rising generation that the Sultan depends, and, if one may form an opinion, not in vain. After all his defeats, he has now 60,000 regular infantry excellently appointed and well disciplined. They are certainly not to be compared to French or English line, but they would as certainly beat the Spanish and the Dutch, and many think, with fair play, the Russian. Fair play their monarch certainly had not during the last campaign; the secret history would not now interest, but it was by other means than military prowess that the Muscovites advanced so successfully. The Sultan had to struggle against an unprecedented conspiracy the whole time, and the morning that Adrianople was treacherously delivered up, the streets of Stamboul were filled with dead bodies of detected traitors.[2]

He lingered there for more than a month, lounging daily in the shop of 'Mustapha the Imperial perfumer,' attending 'masquerade balls and diplomatic dinners,' and leading a life of rapturous, but far from inattentive, indolence. The Ambassador, a brother of Lord Aberdeen's, received him 'with a kindness which he should always remember with gratitude'; though in a game of forfeits one day his Excellency showed so little respect for the Oriental gravity which his guest was anxious to cultivate as to make him 'tumble over head and heels. Can you conceive anything more dreadful?' 'My health

[1] Mahmud II., destroyer of the Janissaries.
[2] *Letters*, pp. 53-55.

improved, but my desire of wandering increased. I began to think that I should now never be able to settle in life. The desire of fame did not revive. I felt no intellectual energy; I required nothing more than to be amused.' This was Contarini's mood during his stay in the 'Capital of the East,' and Disraeli's seems to have been not very different. 'All,' as he wrote to Mrs. Austen, 'was like life in a pantomime or Eastern tale of enchantment.'

To Edward Lytton Bulwer.

CONSTANTINOPLE,
Dec. 27, 1830.

I confess to you that my Turkish prejudices are very much confirmed by my residence in Turkey. The life of this people greatly accords with my taste, which is naturally somewhat indolent and melancholy. And I do not think it would disgust you. To repose on voluptuous ottomans and smoke superb pipes, daily to indulge in the luxuries of a bath which requires half a dozen attendants for its perfection; to court the air in a carved caïque, by shores which are a perpetual scene; and to find no exertion greater than a canter on a barb; this is, I think, a far more sensible life than all the bustle of clubs, all the boring of drawing-rooms, and all the coarse vulgarity of our political controversies. And all this, I assure you, is, without any coloring or exaggeration, the life which may be here commanded. A life accompanied by a thousand sources of calm enjoyment, and a thousand modes of mellowed pleasure, which it would weary you to relate, and which I leave to your own lively imagination.

. . . I mend slowly, but mend. The seasons have greatly favoured me. Continual heat. And even here, where the winter is proverbially cold, there is a summer sky.[1]

At the beginning of the year Meredith had parted from 'his amusing but idle' companions and gone overland to Smyrna, and a fortnight later Disraeli and Clay sailed in the 'Susan' for the same place. There they found their companion intent on an expedition to 'the unseen relics of some unheard-of cock-and-a-bull city,' and as

[1] *Life of Bulwer*, II., p. 323.

Disraeli was bent on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, he and Clay continued their voyage to the south.

To Sarah Disraeli.

We found ourselves again in an archipelago—the Sporades —and tried to make Rhodes; but a contrary wind, although we were off it for two days, prevented us. After some days we landed at Cyprus, where we passed a day on land famous in all ages, but more delightful to me as the residence of Fortunatus than as the rosy realm of Venus or the romantic kingdom of the Crusaders. Here we got a pilot to take us to Jaffa.

One morning, with a clear blue sky and an intense sun, we came in sight of the whole coast of Syria, very high and mountainous, and the loftiest ranges covered with snow. We passed Beyrout, Sur, the ancient Tyre, St. Jean d'Acre, and at length cast anchor in the roads of Jaffa. Here we made a curious acquaintance in Damiani, the descendant of an old Venetian family, but himself a perfect Oriental. We had read something about his grandfather in Volney, and as he had no conception of books, he was so appalled by our learning that, had we not been Englishmen, he would have taken us for sorcerers. We found him living among the most delightful gardens of oranges, citrons, and pomegranates, the trees as high and the fruit as thick as in our English apple orchards; himself a most elegant personage in flowing robes of crimson silk, &c., &c. I am obliged to hint rather than describe, and must reserve all detail till our meeting. He wished us to remain with him for a month, and gave us an admirable Oriental dinner, which would have delighted my father— rice, spices, pistachio nuts, perfumed rôtis, and dazzling confectionery.

From Jaffa, a party of six, well mounted and well armed, we departed for Jerusalem. Jaffa is a pretty town, surrounded by gardens, and situated in a fruitful plain. After riding over this, we crossed a range of light hills and came into the plain of Ramle, vast and fertile. Ramle, the ancient Arimathea, is the model of our idea of a beautiful Syrian village; all the houses isolated, and each surrounded by palm trees; the meadows and the exterior of the village covered with olive trees or divided by rich plantations of Indian fig. Here we sought hospitality in the Latin convent, an immense establishment, well kept up, but with only one monk.[1]

[1] *Letters*, p. 58.

The next day they continued their journey towards the east.

In the distance rose a chain of severe and savage mountains. I was soon wandering, and for hours, in the wild, stony ravines of these shaggy rocks. At length, after several passes, I gained the ascent of a high mountain. Upon an opposite height, descending as a steep ravine, and forming, with the elevation on which I rested, a dark and narrow gorge, I beheld a city entirely surrounded by what I should have considered in Europe an old feudal wall, with towers and gates. The city was built upon an ascent, and, from the height on which I stood, I could discern the terrace and the cupola of almost every house, and the wall upon the other side rising from the plain; the ravine extending only on the side to which I was opposite. The city was in a bowl of mountains. In the front was a magnificent mosque, with beautiful gardens, and many light and lofty gates of triumph; a variety of domes and towers rose in all directions from the buildings of bright stone.

Nothing could be conceived more wild, and terrible, and desolate than the surrounding scenery, more dark, and stormy, and severe; but the ground was thrown about in such picturesque undulations, that the mind, full of the sublime, required not the beautiful; and rich and waving woods and sparkling cultivation would have been misplaced. Except Athens, I had never witnessed any scene more essentially impressive. I will not place this spectacle below the city of Minerva. Athens and the Holy City in their glory must have been the finest representations of the beautiful and the sublime; the Holy City, for the elevation on which I stood was the Mount of Olives and the city on which I gazed was JERUSALEM.[1]

The week they spent at Jerusalem was to him 'the most delightful of all our travels.' He visited the Holy Sepulchre of course, and the so-called Tombs of the Kings, and was so fascinated by the Mosque of Omar, standing on the supposed site of the temple of his forefathers, that he 'endeavoured to enter it at the hazard of his life.'

I was detected, and surrounded by a crowd of turbaned fanatics, and escaped with difficulty; but I saw enough to

[1] *Contarini Fleming*, Pt. VI. ch. 4.

feel that minute inspection would not belie the general character I formed of it from the Mount of Olives. I caught a glorious glimpse of splendid courts, and light airy gates of Saracenic triumph, flights of noble steps, long arcades, and interior gardens, where silver fountains spouted their tall streams amid the taller cypresses.[1]

Returning to Jaffa, the two companions continued their voyage thence, and arrived at Alexandria on March 12, 1831. In 'the ancient land of Priestcraft and of Pyramids,' which next to Syria had from the beginning 'formed the most prominent object of his travels,' Disraeli remained for more than four months.

To Sarah Disraeli.

From Alexandria, I crossed the desert to Rosetta. It was a twelve hours' job, and the whole way we were surrounded by a mirage of the most complete kind. I was perpetually deceived, and always thought I was going to ride into the sea. At Rosetta I first saw the mighty Nile, with its banks richly covered with palm groves. A grove of palms is the most elegant thing in nature. From Rosetta five days in a capital boat which the Consul had provided for us, with cabins and every convenience . . . took us to Cairo through the famous Delta. This greatly reminded me of the rich plains in the Pays Bas, quite flat, with a soil in every part like the finest garden mould, covered with production, but more productive than cultivated. The banks of the river studded with villages of mud, but all clustered in palm groves; beautiful moonlight on the Nile, indescribably charming, and the palms by this light perfectly magical. Grand Cairo, a large town of dingy houses of unbaked brick, looking terribly dilapidated, but swarming with population in rich and various costume. Visited the Pyramids, and ascended the great one, from the top of which, some weeks afterwards, a man, by name Maze, whom I had slightly known in Spain, tumbled, and dashed himself to a mummy. Very awful, the first accident of the kind.

A voyage of three weeks in the same boat to Thebes: banks of the river very different. The Delta ceases at Cairo, and Egypt now only consists of a valley, formed by a river running through a desert. The land is, however, equally rich, the soil being formed by the Nile; but on each side at the distance

[1] *Alroy*, note 35.

of three or four miles, and sometimes much nearer, deserts. The Libyan desert on the African side is exactly our common idea of a desert, an interminable waste of burning sand; but the Arabian and Syrian deserts very different, in fact, what we call downs. Landing on the African side, one night, where the desert stretches to the very banks, [I] found a ship of Hadgees emptied on the shore, in the most picturesque groups, some squatting down with their pipes, some boiling coffee, some performing their devotions. It was excessively close, but had been a fine clear day. I walked nearly a mile from the shore; in an instant very dark, with a heat perfectly stifling; saw a column of sand in the distance. It struck me directly what it was. I rushed to the boat with full speed, but barely quick enough. I cannot describe the scene of horror and confusion. It was a simoom. The wind was the most awful sound I ever heard. Five columns of sand, taller than the Monument, emptied themselves on our party. Every sail was rent to pieces, men buried in the earth. Three boats sailing along overturned; the crews swam to shore. The wind, the screaming, the shouting, the driving of the sand, were enough to make you mad. We shut all the windows of the cabin, and jumped into bed, but the sand came in like fire. . . .

As for Dendera and Thebes, and the remains in every part of Upper Egypt, it is useless to attempt to write. Italy and Greece were toys to them, and Martin's inventions commonplace. Conceive a feverish and tumultuous dream, full of triumphal gates, processions of paintings, interminable walls of heroic sculpture, granite colossi of gods and kings, prodigious obelisks, avenues of sphinxes, and halls of a thousand columns, thirty feet in girth, and of a proportionate height. My eyes and mind yet ache with a grandeur so little in unison with our own littleness. Then the landscape was quite characteristic: mountains of burning sand, vegetation unnaturally vivid, groves of cocoa trees, groups of crocodiles, and an ebony population in a state of nudity, armed with spears of reeds.

Having followed the course of the Nile for seven hundred miles, to the very confines of Nubia, we returned. As an antiquary I might have been tempted to advance, to have witnessed further specimens, but I was satisfied, and I wish not to lose time unnecessarily. We were a week at Thebes, with the advantage of the society of Mr. Wilkinson,[1] an Englishman of vast learning, who has devoted ten years to the study of hieroglyphics and Egyptian antiquity, and who

[1] Afterwards well known as Sir Gardner Wilkinson.

can read you the side of an obelisk or the front of a pylon as we would the last number of the *Quarterly*.[1]

By the end of May he is back in Cairo, which, in spite of its dinginess, he finds 'a luxurious and pleasant place.' Clay, however, is ill and likely to leave him, and this is a serious trouble. 'You know that though I like to be at my ease I want energy in those little affairs of which life greatly consists; here I found Clay always ready.' As Clay expressed it to Meredith, Disraeli was one of those people who 'ought never to travel without a nurse.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

CAIRO,
May 28.

I am sorry also to say that his faithful servant Giovanni, better known by the name of Tita (he was Byron's chasseur of renown), who is a Belzoni in appearance and constitution, is also very ill, which is a great affliction. Thus you see the strong men have all fallen, while I, who am an habitual invalid, am firm on my legs; but the reason is this, that I, being somewhat indolent and feeble, live *à la Turque*, while Clay and Giovanni are always in action, have done nothing but shoot and swim from morning to night. As I am on the chapter of domestic troubles, you will hear with regret that my favourite servant, a Greek of Cyprus, gave me warning yesterday, his father being very ill at Alexandria. He leaves me directly, which is a great bore at this moment, especially as I am about to be alone, and would annoy me at all times, because he wore a Mameluke dress of crimson and gold, with a white turban thirty yards long, and a sabre glittering like a rainbow. I must now content myself with an Arab attendant in a blue shirt and slipperless. How are the mighty fallen!

I cannot sufficiently commend your letters; they are in every respect charming, very lively and witty, and full exactly of the stuff I want. If you were only a more perfect mistress of the art of punctuation, you might rival 'Lady Mary' herself. Thank my mother for her remembrance of me. I cannot write to say I am quite well, because the enemy still holds out, but I am sanguine, very, and at any rate quite well enough to wish to be at home. . . . I am quite delighted with my father's progress. How I long to be with

[1] *Letters*, pp. 65-67.

him, dearest of men, flashing our quills together and opening their minds, 'standing together in our chivalry,' which we will do, now that I have got the use of my brain for the first time in my life. Tell Ralph to write as often and as much as he likes, and that I have become a most accomplished smoker, carrying that luxurious art to a pitch of refinement of which he has no idea. My pipe is cooled in wet silken bag, my coffee is boiled with spices, and I finish my last chibouque with a sherbet of pomegranate. Oh the delicious fruits that we have here, and in Syria! Orange gardens miles in extent, citrons, limes, pomegranates; but the most delicious thing in the world is a banana, which is richer than a pineapple.

I don't care a jot about *The Young Duke*. I never staked any fame on it. It may take its chance. I meant the hero to be a model for our youth; but after two years' confinement in these revolutionary times, I fear he will prove old-fashioned. Goethe[1] and *Vivian Grey* of course gratifying. I hear the Patriarch is dead: perhaps a confusion with his son. I saw it in *Galignani*, an excellent publication which keeps me *au jour*. . . . The death of Max[2] has cut me to the heart.[3]

When Disraeli wrote this letter his thoughts, as can be seen, were all directed homeward, and in fact he was 'only waiting for a ship to convey him to Malta'; but 'the more he saw of Oriental life the more he liked it,' and he lingered on that he might return with Meredith, who was now in Upper Egypt. His first glimpse of the redoubtable Mehemet Ali was curious.

Wandering in the gardens of his palace at Shubra, I suddenly came upon him one afternoon, surrounded by his Court, a very brilliant circle, in most gorgeous dresses, particularly the black eunuchs in scarlet and gold, and who ride white horses. I was about to retire, but one of his principal attendants took me by the arm and led me to the

[1] A friend of the Austens and Disraelis had just returned from Weimar and reported that 'the old man himself, and Madame Goethe, his son's wife, were among the warmest admirers of *Vivian Grey*; they had it on their own particular bookshelves, and they spoke enthusiastically of it as being after Scott the first of their English favourites. They could find but one fault, that the author had misconceived the German character in his youthful Princess.' Goethe, according to his daughter-in-law, 'considered that there was more true originality in the work than in any he had seen for years.'

[2] A favourite puppy at Bradenham.

[3] *Letters*, pp. 62-64.

circle. The Pasha is exceedingly fond of the English. His Highness was playing chess with his fool, and I witnessed a very curious scene. I stayed about a quarter of an hour, and had I waited till his game was finished, I am informed that he would have spoken to me; but as I had no interpreter with me, and am pretty sure that he was in the same state, I thought it best to make my bow.[1]

He seems, however, before he left to have had more than one audience of the Pasha, to have succeeded in engaging his attention 'by the readiness or patience of his replies,' and to have had the honour of being consulted as to a scheme his Highness was considering for the introduction of Parliamentary institutions into his dominions. The traveller pointed out the immediate difficulties that occurred to him, and the Pasha listened in silence; but at the next levée he welcomed his visitor with a favouring smile and beckoned to him to advance:—

'God is great!' said Mehemet Ali to the traveller; 'you are a wise man—Allah! Kerim, but you spit pearls. Nevertheless I will have a Parliament, and I will have as many Parliaments as the King of England himself. See here!' So saying, his Highness produced two lists of names.

. . . 'See here!' said he, 'here are my Parliaments; but I have made up my mind, to prevent inconvenience, to elect them myself.'[2]

Meredith arrived in Cairo at the end of June, and the two friends were about to start on their homeward journey when a calamity befell which was a terrible shock to Disraeli at the time and threw a cloud over the whole of his sister's remaining life. Meredith was stricken with smallpox, and, after a short illness, died on the 19th of July.

To Isaac D'Israeli.

CAIRO,
July 20, 1831.

MY DEAREST FATHER,

If you were not a great philosopher as well as a good man, I do not think that I could summon courage to communicate

[1] *Letters*, p. 67. [2] *Vindication of the English Constitution*, p. 103.

to you the terrible intelligence which is now to be imparted by this trembling pen; but I have such confidence in your wisdom as well as in your virtue, that it is your assistance to which I look in the saddest office that has ever yet devolved upon me, because I know that the joint influence of your experience and your benevolent soul will at the same time assist the sufferers in forming a juster estimate of the loss than can perhaps occur in the first pangs of affliction, and offer the only solace which is dear to a refined soul, the sympathy of one as refined.

You have already guessed the fatal truth—our William is lost to us. I feel that I must repeat it. It is too terrible to believe. . . . I would willingly have given my life for his. . . . Oh! my father, why do we live? The anguish of my soul is great. Our innocent lamb, our angel is stricken. Save her, save her. I will come home directly. . . . I wish to live only for my sister. I think of her all day and all night. It is some satisfaction that I was with our friend to the last. Oh! my father, I trust a great deal to you and my dear mother. I do not know what to write, what to think. I have not said anything that I wanted, yet I have said too much. God bless you, my dear father. Embrace them all. I wish that I could mingle my tears with yours.

To Sarah Disraeli.

My own Sa,

Ere you open this page, our beloved father will have imparted to you with all the tenderness of parental love the terrible intelligence which I have scarcely found energy enough to communicate to him. It is indeed true. Yes! our friend of many years, our hope and joy and consolation, is lost to us for ever. He has yielded to his Creator without a bodily or mental pang that pure, and honorable, and upright soul which we all so honored and so esteemed. He has suddenly closed a life unsullied by a crime, scarcely by a weakness. Oh! my sister, in this hour of overwhelming affliction my thoughts are only for you. Alas! my beloved, if you are lost to me where, where am I to fly for refuge? I have no wife, I have no betrothed; nor since I have been better acquainted with my own mind and temper have I sought them. Live then, my heart's treasure, for one who has ever loved you with a surpassing love, and who would cheerfully have yielded his own existence to have saved you the bitterness of this letter. Yes, my beloved, be my genius, my solace, my companion, my joy. We will never part, and if I cannot



Sarah Disraeli
1828
from the drawing by D. Maclise, R.A.
at Hughenden

be to you all our lost friend [was ?], at least we will feel that life can never be a blank while gilded by the perfect love of a sister and a brother.

Disraeli had thought of returning through Italy, that he might see Naples and Rome, but he now abandoned the project, and took what was then the direct route by Gibraltar; though owing to a long detention in quarantine at Malta it was late in October before he reached England. At Bradenham he found a sorrowing household, and the beloved sister on whom the blow had directly fallen almost crushed by its force. 'I cannot trust myself to write of her,' he says in a letter to Meredith's sister on his arrival, 'but her sweet and virtuous soul struggles under this overwhelming affliction.' Sarah Disraeli was a woman, as her letters show her and as she is described by her friends, of intensely loving and sympathetic nature, of real nobility of character, and of no small intellectual capacity. Henceforth her life was dedicated to others; above all to her father and her family, for whom the desolation that had come upon her seemed to have quickened her affection. For her eldest brother especially this affection now became a passion. From the first she had a romantic faith in his coming greatness, which never wavered even in the darkest hour, and her chief solace in her loneliness was to watch the progress of his fame. It is not given to a man in the stress and turmoil of an active life to pay back in kind the self-forgetting devotion of a lonely woman's heart; but Disraeli's affection for his sister remained of rare depth and tenderness. 'I believe,' wrote an intimate friend,[1] 'he never entirely got over his deep sense of suffering at the crushing disappointment of her early hopes, and, amid the many stirring incidents of his eventful life, the death-bed scene at Cairo was not seldom recalled. He rarely spoke either of his sister or of Meredith, but that was his habit where his feelings were

[1] The late Sir Philip Rose.

deeply concerned. Once I remember his describing Meredith to me as a man of great intellectual powers who would certainly have distinguished himself if he had lived; and on the first occasion of his becoming Prime Minister I remember saying to him, "If only your sister had been alive now to witness your triumph what happiness it would have given her"; and he replied, "Ah, poor Sa, poor Sa! we've lost our audience, we've lost our audience."'

CHAPTER X.

CONTARINI FLEMING AND ALROY.

1832–1833.

Disraeli's pen had not been idle during the last few months of his residence in the East or during the voyage home. *Contarini Fleming* was not published till May, 1832, and *Alroy* not till March, 1833; but when he reached Bradenham in November both works, if not complete, must have been far on the road towards completion. In the Preface to the 1845 edition of *Contarini* he speaks of the book as having been composed 'in a beautiful and distant land'; in an unpublished letter of later date he couples *Alroy* with *Contarini* as having been written while he was abroad; and three months after his return, when *Contarini* is already in the hands of the publisher, he tells Austen that he has another work finished in his portfolio, and this can only have been *Alroy*. Whatever the external facts, there is internally, at all events, a close association between the two novels. They are spiritually the product of the same period in Disraeli's life, and that the period of the journey in the East, and they are artistically the most sincere and disinterested of his early works, direct emanations from his own personality and inner experience. 'My works,' he writes in the diary to which reference has already been made, 'are the embodification of my feelings. In *Vivian Grey* I have portrayed my active and real ambition: in *Alroy* my ideal ambition: *The Psychological Romance* is a develop-

ment of my poetic character. This trilogy is the secret history of my feelings—I shall write no more about myself.'

These two novels are therefore, in common with *Vivian Grey*, of first-rate biographic significance, and *Contarini* especially is in some respects the most self-revealing of all Disraeli's works.

> I am desirous of writing a book which shall be all truth: a work of which the passion, the thought, the action, and even the style, should spring from my own experience of feeling, from the meditations of my own intellect, from my own observation of incident, from my own study of the genius of expression.

So the self-discovering hero tells us in the first chapter of the novel, and the author of course intended that we should apply the words to himself. Contarini's father is a Saxon nobleman in the service of a Northern court; his mother was the daughter of a great Venetian house who had died in giving birth to him: he has thus, like Disraeli himself, though surrounded by the snows and forests of the North, the nervous temperament and glowing imagination of the South. We have seen something already of his sensitive and brooding childhood and the perpetual oscillation of his aims between the fields of art and of action: on the one hand 'his imaginary deeds of conquest, his heroic aspirations, his long dazzling dreams of fanciful adventure'; on the other, 'the first indication of his predisposition (as a poet), the growing consciousness of his powers, his reveries, his loneliness, his doubts, his moody misery, his ignorance of his art, his failures, his despair.' 'To feel the strong necessity of fame, and to be conscious that without intellectual excellence life must be insupportable, to feel all this with no simultaneous faith in your own power, these are moments of despondency for which no immortality can compensate.' While in some such mood as this Contarini falls in with one Winter, an artist, a man of philosophic mind and wide

experience, who, in his serene wisdom and penetrating gaze into the hidden springs of character and the deeper realities of life, is of the same family as Horace Grey and Beckendorff in the earliest of the novels, or as Sidonia in the great trilogy of Disraeli's full maturity. Winter recognises the poetic gift of the child, teaches him that before he can hope to be a great artist he must study his art, and leaves him with some talismanic rules which he had 'copied off an obelisk amid the ruins of Thebes':—

> Be patient: cherish hope. Read more: ponder less. Nature is more powerful than education: time will develope everything.

In accordance with this oracular advice the boy determines to be patient and that a book shall be ever in his hand; but the first he reads, a History of Venice, reawakens the love of action that slumbers in him and gives another turn to his aspirations. His 'consular blood demands a sword,' he resolves to be a Doge, and, as a first step, to run away from school and set out for Venice; and so end his schooldays.

After many other youthful adventures and many shiftings of ambition Contarini at length becomes private secretary to his father, and developing into a callous and unscrupulous worldling so much distinguishes himself in his new career that in a few years he is made an Under-Secretary of State. In a conference with the ambassadors of the great powers he, by a sudden stroke of audacity, wins a diplomatic success which seems to open a path to the attainment of his highest ambitions. The passage in which he describes his feelings at this moment of triumph is worth quoting at length as a specimen of Disraeli's style at its best.

> The conference broke up, my father retired with the King, and desired me to wait for him in the hall. I was alone. I was excited. I felt the triumph of success. I felt that I

had done a great action. I felt all my energies. I walked up and down the hall in a frenzy of ambition, and I thirsted for action. There seemed to be no achievement of which I was not capable, and of which I was not ambitious. In imagination I shook thrones and founded empires. I felt myself a being born to breathe in an atmosphere of revolution.

My father came out. Time wore away, and the day died. It was one of those stern, sublime sunsets, which is almost the only appearance in the north in which nature enchanted me. I stood at the window, gazing on the burnished masses that for a moment were suspended in their fleeting and capricious beauty on the far horizon. I turned aside and looked at the rich trees suffused with the crimson light, and ever and anon irradiated by the dying shoots of a golden ray. The deer were stealing home to their bowers, and I watched them till their glancing forms gradually lost their lustre in the declining twilight. The glory had now departed, and all grew dim. A solitary star alone was shining in the grey sky, a bright and solitary star.

And as I gazed upon the sunset, and the star, and the dim beauties of the coming eve, my mind grew calm, and all the bravery of my late reverie passed away. And I felt indeed a disgust for all the worldliness on which I had been late pondering. And there arose in my mind a desire to create things beautiful as that golden sun and that glittering star.

I heard my name. The hall was now darkened. In the distance stood my father. I joined him. He placed his arm affectionately in mine, and said to me, 'My son, you will be Prime Minister of . . .; perhaps something greater.'[1]

A short time before, a fresh encounter with a lady who had been the object of a boyish passion had reawakened the better feelings of the young egoist and made him recoil in disgust from the thought of his present life. The latent poetry of his being revived; he took up his pen and, in the sudden rush of inspiration, produced in seven days a novel which was published anonymously under the title of *Manstein*. The narrative now runs closely parallel to Disraeli's own experience in the case of *Vivian Grey*. *Manstein* is a rapid sketch of

[1] Pt. II. ch. 13.

the development of the poetic character, the hero 'a youth whose mind is ever combating with his situation.' It never strikes Contarini that he is delineating his own character, and this may have been true of Disraeli when he wrote *Vivian Grey*. In the following passage we may assume that we have an exact account of the feelings with which Disraeli regarded his earliest novel five years after its publication:—

> For the work itself, it was altogether a most crude performance, teeming with innumerable faults. It was entirely deficient in art. The principal character, although forcibly conceived, for it was founded on truth, was not sufficiently developed. Of course, the others were much less so. The incidents were unnatural, the serious characters exaggerations, the comic ones caricatures; the wit was too often flippant, the philosophy too often forced; yet the vigour was remarkable, the licence of an uncurbed imagination not without charms, and, on the whole, there breathed a freshness which is rarely found, and which, perhaps, with all my art and knowledge, I may never again afford: and, indeed, when I recall the heat with which this little work was written, I am convinced that, with all its errors, the spark of true creation animated its fiery page.[1]

Manstein proves a decisive influence in Contarini's life. In depicting the scenes of society amid which his hero was forced to move, the bitterness of the author's heart finds vent in slashing satire and malignant personality. The anonymity which shelters him is not long preserved, and there is at once a tremendous outcry. Everybody takes a delight in detecting the originals of his portraits.

> Various keys were handed about, all different; and not content with recognizing the very few decided sketches from life which there really were, and which were sufficiently obvious and not very malignant, they mischievously insisted that not a human shadow glided over my pages which might not be traced to its substance.

[1] Pt. II. ch. 12.

In the storm that now bursts Contarini's chances of a political career are wrecked; and even if it were otherwise his desire for worldly success is gone. Analysing his own character he recognises that he has been 'selfish and affected,' 'entirely ignorant of the principles of genuine morality' and with 'a total want of nature in everything connected with him.' He determines to re-educate himself. Considering himself a poet, he resolves to pursue a course which shall develop and perfect his poetic power; and, as the first step must be to gain an acquaintance with men and nature in all their varieties and conditions, he bids farewell to Scandinavia and sets out upon his travels.

In all this there is much that is of the first importance as a picture of Disraeli's childhood and youth: though whether it equally well depicts the formation of the poetic character is quite another matter. Some of the ingredients that go to the making of the true poet are to be found in Contarini as they are to be found in Disraeli himself. The high imagination, the brooding temperament, the wild ecstasy—even in some degree the creative faculty and the self-devotion of the artist are there; and yet there is an indefinable something which we look for in vain. There are elements, moreover, in Contarini's character—a fierce and ravening ambition, a consuming thirst for power and greatness—which assuredly were present in the young Disraeli also, and have very little to do with the true poetic temperament. In those perpetual oscillations of Contarini's will between the active and literary careers it is the author's artistic purpose to have us believe that poetry is the real vocation, and that the bias for action is factitious. But the impression really left on us is exactly the opposite. We see Contarini in action; we are only told that he is a poet; and we feel that Baron Fleming has truly divined the sentiments both of his son and of the author when he thus gives expression to his own:—

What were all those great poets of whom we now talk so much, what were they in their lifetime? The most miserable of their species. . . . A man of great energies aspires that they should be felt in his lifetime, that his existence should be rendered more intensely vital by the constant consciousness of his multiplied and multiplying power. Is posthumous fame a substitute for all this? . . . Would you rather have been Homer or Julius Cæsar, Shakespeare or Napoleon? No one doubts. . . . We are active beings, and our sympathy above all other sympathies is with great action. . . . Mix in society [is his final advice], and I will answer that you lose your poetic feeling; for in you as in the great majority, it is not a creative faculty originating in a peculiar organization, but simply the consequence of a nervous susceptibility that is common to all.[1]

From the moment when Contarini sets out upon his travels the value of the novel as a biographic document rapidly diminishes. The fact is, just as in *Vivian Grey*, after the first volume, the creative impulse is now spent; the author has given us a picture of his inward experience as far as it has been carried, and he has to resort to book making to bring his story to an end. It is better book making than what we get in the second volume of *Vivian Grey*, but little more can be said in its praise. Contarini first of all finds his way to Venice and there meets and marries his predestined bride, the last of his mother's house. Apart from the descriptions, this part of the tale is merely conventional romance, with even less relation than has generally been supposed to Disraeli's own experience. After a year of intense happiness in Crete the bride dies in childbirth, and in a highly melodramatic scene the hero, maddened by his anguish, flings himself from a peak of Mount Ida. For anything that he ever seems to accomplish he might just as well succeed in his purpose of self-destruction; but he is picked up alive and, after a time, begins a course of wandering which is made an excuse for the introduction of the travel scenes in Disraeli's letters from the East. Falling in again with the philosophic Winter, Contarini receives some excellent advice.

[1] Pt. II. ch. 9.

I tell you what, my friend, the period has arrived in your life when you must renounce meditation. Action is now your part. Meditation is culture. It is well to think until a man has discovered his genius, and developed his faculties, but then let him put his intelligence in motion. Act, act, act; act without ceasing, and you will no longer talk of the vanity of life.

Disraeli himself profited by this advice, but Contarini neglects it. He becomes a mere dilettante, and at the end, having inherited his father's wealth, is found devoting himself to the planning of an earthly paradise at Naples, which is to rival Hadrian's Villa. 'Here let me pass my life in the study and the creation of the beautiful: such is my desire; but,' as the author with prescient scepticism makes him add, 'whether it will be my career is, I feel, doubtful.'

My interest in the happiness of my race is too keen to permit me for a moment to be blind to the storms that lour on the horizon of society. Perchance, also, the political regeneration of the country to which I am devoted may not be distant, and in that great work I am resolved to participate. Bitter jest, that the most civilized portion of the globe should be considered incapable of self-government!

This enthusiasm for the Italian cause proved short-lived in the author, whatever may have been the case with the hero; but in all that is really essential the true completion of *Contarini*, as of *Vivian Grey* before it, and of *Coningsby* and *Tancred* later, is Disraeli's own career.

On nearly every page of *Contarini* the reader who knows Disraeli will find him lifting the veil that hides his own personality. Sometimes in those smaller touches that reveal his tastes and habits: his unaffected joy in woods and trees—'I began to long to be a woodman, to pass a quiet, and contemplative, and virtuous life, amid the deep silence and beautiful scenery of forests'; his love of women's society—'For a long time, I could not detect

the reason why I was so charmed with Egyptian life. At last I recollected that I had recurred, after a long estrangement, to the cheerful influence of women'; the incidents of composition—'After writing a book my mind always makes a great spring.' 'I can write only in the morning. It is then I execute with facility all that I have planned the preceding eve.' 'It is my habit to contrive in my head the complete work before I have recourse to the pen which is to execute it. I do not think that meditation can be too long, or execution too rapid.' Or in the Polonius-like advice of Baron Fleming to his son:—

> Read French authors. Read Rochefoucauld. The French writers are the finest in the world, for they clear our heads of all ridiculous ideas. . . . Do not talk too much at present; do not *try* to talk. But whenever you speak, speak with self-possession. . . . Never argue. In society nothing must be discussed; give only results. . . . Talk to women, talk to women as much as you can. This is the best school. This is the way to gain fluency, because you need not care what you say, and had better not be sensible. They, too, will rally you on many points, and as they are women you will not be offended. Nothing is of so much importance and of so much use to a young man entering life as to be well criticised by women. . . . Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory.

Or, again, in half-conscious utterances of his deeper self: 'There is that within me which may yet mould the mind and fortunes of my race'; 'the breath of man has never influenced me much, for I depend more upon myself than upon others'; 'I contrasted the smiling indifference of his public appearance with the agonies of ambition which it was my doom alone to witness.' Here, too, are many characteristic formulæ from the Disraelian philosophy of life—'There is little mystery, there is much ignorance'; and with no less conviction, 'Everything is mysterious'; 'at the present day we too much underrate the influence of individual character';

'patience is a necessary ingredient of genius'; 'The magic of his character was his patience. This made him quicker, and readier, and more successful than all other men.' The stormy passions, violent impulses, and conflicting aspirations which made Contarini's life so fluctuating and tumultuous were present in Disraeli himself; but in him held in subjection by an all-mastering will, so that if we had to select any single quality as the keynote to his character the choice might best fall on patience—patience and that unbroken continuity of mind and purpose and endeavour which patience renders possible.

In accordance with the promise which he had given to John Murray before departing for the East, Disraeli sent his manuscript to Albemarle Street as soon as he had it ready. On the suggestion of Lockhart, whose own judgment was perplexed between the 'affectations and absurdities' on the one hand and 'the life and brilliancy' of the descriptions on the other, Murray submitted the work to Milman,[1] withholding the name of the author, and obtained a report so favourable that he at once accepted it for publication. 'Very wild, very extravagant, very German, very powerful, very poetical,' wrote Milman. 'It will, I think, be much read, . . . much admired, and much abused. It is much more in the Macaulay than in the Croker[2] line, and the former is evidently in the ascendant. . . . The latter part . . . is a rapid volume of travels, a *Childe Harold* in prose.'[3] Disraeli had called his novel 'A Psychological Romance,' and to this title he reverted in subsequent editions; but at the suggestion of Milman and under pressure from Murray he now consented to change it into 'Contarini Fleming: A Psychological Autobiography.' The work appeared in four volumes and

[1] The well-known historian of Latin Christianity, later Dean of St. Paul's.

[2] Macaulay had just been 'dusting that varlet's jacket' in a number of the 'Blue and Yellow.'

[3] Smiles, II., p. 338.

with nothing on the title-page to indicate the authorship, but the anonymity was only thinly veiled, many of the reviewers mentioning Disraeli by name.

To Sarah Disraeli.

May 26, 1832.

I received your letter yesterday, and the note you enclosed was from Beckford, to whom I had sent a copy of *Contarini*. His answer is short, but very courteous. It commences with four exclamations. 'How wildly original! How full of intense thought! How awakening! How delightful!' This really consoles one for Mr. Patmore's criticism in the *Court Journal*.

May 28.

Amid abundance of praise and blame of *Contarini*, one thing which we all expected is very evident, that not one of the writers has the slightest idea of the nature or purposes of the work. As far as I can learn it has met with decided success. Among others Tom Campbell, who, as he says, never reads any books but his own, is delighted with it; 'I shall review it myself,' he exclaims, 'and it will be a psychological review.' Have you read the review in the *Monthly*, where I am accused of atheism, because I retire into solitude to write novels?

July 5.

Contarini seems universally liked, but moves slowly. The staunchest admirer I have in London, and the most discerning appreciator of *Contarini*, is old Madame d'Arblay. I have a long letter, which I will show you—capital![1]

In the course of the following year Disraeli wrote in the diary from which we have already quoted:—

Beckford was so enraptured when he read *The Psychological* that he sent Clarke, his confidential agent and publisher, with whom alone he corresponds, to call upon me on some pretence or other, and give him a description of the person, converse, &c., of the author of what he was pleased to style 'that transcendent work.' Clarke called accordingly and wrote back to Beckford that Disraeli was the

[1] *Letters*, pp. 76, 77.

most conceited person he had ever met in the whole course of his life. B. answered and rated C. roundly for his opinion, telling him that what 'appeared conceit in D. was only the irrepressible consciousness of superior power.' Some time after this, when Clarke knew me better, he very candidly told me the whole story and gave me a copy of B.'s letter.

I shall always consider *The Psychological* as the perfection of English prose and a chef d'œuvre. It has not paid its expenses. *Vivian Grey*, with faults which even youth can scarcely excuse, in short, the most unequal, imperfect, irregular thing that indiscretion ever published, has sold thousands, and eight years after its publication a new edition is announced to-day—so much for public taste.

In fact, in spite of the comparative friendliness of the critics and the praise it received from some of those whose praise was best worth having, *Contarini* was a failure.

I published *Contarini Fleming* anonymously and in the midst of a revolution. It was almost still-born, and having written it with deep thought and feeling, I was naturally discouraged from further effort. Yet the youthful writer who may, like me, be inclined to despair, may learn also from my example not to be precipitate in his resolves. Gradually *Contarini Fleming* found sympathising readers; Goethe[1] and Beckford were impelled to communicate their unsolicited opinions of this work to its anonymous author, and I have seen a criticism on it by Heine, of which any writer might be justly proud.[2]

The criticism by Heine is worthy of citation as the judgment of the only Hebrew contemporary with Disraeli who might dispute with him the primacy in genius:—

Modern English letters have given us no offspring equal to *Contarini Fleming*. Cast in our Teutonic mould, it is nevertheless one of the most original works ever written: profound, poignant, pathetic; its subject the most interesting, if not

[1] Disraeli must have been thinking of the incident already related (p. 180) in connexion with *Vivian Grey*; Goethe died in March, 1832, a month or more before *Contarini* was published.

[2] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

the noblest, imaginable—the development of a poet; truly psychological; passion and mockery; Gothic richness, the fantasy of the Saracens, and yet over all a classic, even a death-like, repose.[1]

One of the most discerning critics[2] of Disraeli's novels has noted the excellence of his style in early life as compared with what we find after the habits of Parliamentary oratory had grown upon him; and though we may not be able to adopt his own too complacent judgment that *Contarini* is 'the perfection of English prose,' his style perhaps is here at its best. It has a rhythm and swing that carry us along, and is full of sparkle and vitality; and though it is deficient in some of the finer graces of consummate prose, in the unerring instinct of the scholar for the most appropriate word, in tenderness, in delicacy, in all that prose may legitimately borrow from poetry, there is no lack of any rhetorical excellence. At times the fervour of the rhetoric carries us to real heights of imaginative eloquence, and it is not often that the eloquence degenerates into bombast or that the glitter of the style becomes merely meretricious; while we find comparatively little of the affected prettiness or careless verbiage that are too frequent in the later novels. On the other hand, there is a curious absence in *Contarini* of the special qualities which give to the novels their peculiar flavour. Disraeli is here so full of his high poetic theme that we seldom see the familiar ironic smile playing over his features or catch that note of mocking laughter which is heard so often in his other works.

Alroy, the second direct product of the Eastern journey, though, as already noted, not published till March, 1833, was begun two years earlier during Disraeli's visit to Jerusalem: indeed, in later life Disraeli ascribed to it an even earlier origin.

[1] I am indebted for this passage to Dr. F. C. Brewster's work *Disraeli in Outline*, but have not succeeded in tracing the original reference.

[2] Sir Leslie Stephen: *Hours in a Library*, II., p. 139.

I had commenced *Alroy* the year after my first publication, and had thrown the manuscript aside. Being at Jerusalem in the year 1831, and visiting the traditionary Tombs of the Kings, my thoughts recurred to the marvellous career which had attracted my boyhood, and I shortly after finished a work which I began the year after I wrote *Vivian Grey*.[1]

The novel appeared as '*The Wondrous Tale of Alroy*, by The Author of *Vivian Grey* and *Contarini Fleming*,' and with a dedication to Sarah Disraeli; and like *Vivian Grey* and *The Young Duke* it was published by Colburn. Murray, 'out of heart with the frightful aspect of coming events,' and 'his incessant ill luck in the publication of works of fiction,' and not encouraged by the comparative failure of *Contarini Fleming*, had returned the manuscript unread when the author submitted it.

The period of the novel is the twelfth century, when the Caliphate was in a state of rapid decay and the empire of Western Asia was divided among the Seljuks: its purpose, in Disraeli's own words, 'the celebration of a gorgeous incident in the annals of that sacred and romantic people from whom I derive my blood and name.'[2] The real David Alroy appears to have been little better than a vulgar impostor, but Disraeli has idealised him into a figure worthy to be compared with Judas Maccabaeus. A scion of the House of David and one of those Hebrew rulers who under the title of 'Princes of the Captivity' exercised a certain authority over their own people by the tolerant permission of the Mahomedan conquerors, Alroy conceives the idea of winning back the independence of Israel and restoring her departed glory. The slaying of a Seljuk chief, who has offered violence to his sister, compels him to fly from his home, and encouraged by a visit to Jabaster, a priest who had been the mentor of his youth, and who had diligently

[1] General Preface to the Novels.
[2] Preface to *The Revolutionary Epick*, 1834.

fostered his high ideals and ambitions, he sets out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to win the token of his election. There, after manifold sufferings and adventures, he arrives; and there in the Tombs of the Kings, amid incidents of supernatural awe, he receives the sceptre of King Solomon from the hands of his great ancestor himself. With full assurance of his mission, and supported by Jabaster, he now raises the standard of revolt and sweeps through Western Asia on a tide of victory and conquest. But with constant success his belief in himself grows overweening, and he begins to dream of other things than Jabaster's lofty but narrow aim of re-establishing the theocracy.

> The world is mine; and shall I yield the prize, the universal and heroic prize, to realise the dull tradition of some dreaming priest and consecrate a legend? . . . Is the Lord of Hosts so slight a God, that we must place a barrier to His sovereignty, and fix the boundaries of Omnipotence between the Jordan and the Lebanon? . . . Universal empire must not be founded on sectarian prejudices and exclusive rights.[1]

Convincing himself by such reasoning as this, he makes Bagdad the centre of his kingdom, and is there ensnared by a Delilah in the form of the daughter of the Caliph. Jabaster and the more fanatical spirits presently rise in revolt, and the friend of Alroy's youth falls a victim to the vindictive hatred of the Sultana. From that moment Alroy's good fortune is at an end; his enemies begin to close upon him; and a crushing defeat in battle at the hands of the Sultan of Karasmé causes his mushroom empire to disappear. Taken captive Alroy redeems his fame, and wins the crown of martyrdom by refusing life and liberty as the reward of apostasy from his faith. His epitaph is written in the words with which his beloved sister Miriam—a character modelled on Disraeli's own

[1] Pt. VIII. ch. 1.

sister—endeavours to console him in his failure and remorse:—

> You have shown what we can do and shall do. Your memory alone is inspiration. A great career, although baulked of its end, is still a landmark of human energy. Failure, when sublime, is not without its purpose. Great deeds are great legacies, and work with wondrous usury. By what Man has done, we learn what Man can do; and gauge the power and prospects of our race.[1]

Did the young Disraeli himself ever dream that the legacy of Alroy had descended to him, or feel the inspiration of his memory as a motive not merely to literary effort, but to an active career? It is probable enough. As he stood in the Tombs of the Kings at Jerusalem, or gazed on Mount Zion, the thought may have passed through his mind that the true aim of the political ambition which was beginning to shape itself within him should be to win back the Holy Land for the chosen people and restore the sceptre to Judah. To any young Hebrew of genius such thoughts would naturally—nay, inevitably—occur; and in no other way can Disraeli's own declaration that *Alroy* represented his 'ideal ambition' be construed. Men of great achievement have often, in addition to the imaginative aims which are the inspiration of their practical careers, their merely visionary fancies which they never realise, which they never seriously try to realise, and which are perhaps neither capable nor deserving of realisation, but which cling to them through life and, though they may not seriously deflect their energies, give a certain bias to their character and colour to their outlook. With all his dreaminess Disraeli's genius was far too practical to permit him to devote his life to the pursuit of a mere phantom; but it is probable that these early visions never wholly forsook him. They had a soil of genuine racial sentiment from which

[1] Pt. X. ch. 19.

perennially to spring, and though it would be easy to exaggerate their significance, yet to know them is to get a glimpse into the inmost recesses of Disraeli's mind. Therein lies the value of *Alroy* for us now. Before the novel was published Disraeli boasted to a lady of evangelical turn, who inquired after his spiritual welfare, that it would show he read his Bible. He read his Bible, indeed, though less to edification as his pious friend would have interpreted the word than as a record of exclusive interest to the race to which he belonged. In this esoteric sense *Alroy* is saturated with the language and spirit of the Old Testament; and more than any of Disraeli's works, more even than *Tancred*, it reveals the Hebraic aspect of his many-sided nature.

Apart from this biographic interest not much can be said in commendation of the novel. We are impressed, in the dialogue especially, by the quickness and success with which Disraeli has caught the spirit of the East, but this story as a story never really grips us. The East may give us pictures or the embryonic tales which are little more than pictures; but where events lead to nothing and life is a troubled sea with no definite current setting through it, an historical novel is impossible. The remoteness and unreality of the surroundings destroy the interest for Western readers, and the effect of unreality is increased by the author's too faithful adherence to his Eastern models in the things in which they are least deserving of imitation. In his descriptions he falls into a mechanical magnificence and in his action into a mechanical hyperbole which are certainly in harmony with the spirit of the East, but no less certainly wearisome and absurd; and he needlessly introduces a crude supernatural machinery which we like none the better for being told in the preface that it is 'cabalistical and correct.' Disraeli had to pay for the faults of his education, and the mysticism which was such a marked feature of his character, and which on its higher and imaginative side was a source of power and insight,

too often degenerated into a taste for mere hocus-pocus.

But the most obvious defect of the novel is the style in which it is written. In *Contarini* we had a strain of fervid rhetoric rarely without distinction. In *Alroy* we get in its place a sort of prose poetry which the author only adopted, as he tells us in the preface to the original edition, 'after long meditation and a severe examination of its qualities.' His tale is 'essentially dramatic,' and therefore he introduces 'occasional bursts of lyric melody for that illustrative music without which all dramatic representations are imperfect.' His subject is essentially poetical and therefore

> I never hesitate although I discard verse to have recourse to rhythm whenever I consider its introduction desirable, and occasionally even to rhyme. There is no doubt that the style in which I have attempted to write this book is a delicate and difficult instrument for an artist to handle. He must not abuse his freedom. He must alike beware the turgid and the bombastic, the meagre and the mean. He must be easy in his robes of state, and a degree of elegance and dignity must accompany him even in the camp and the market house. The language must rise gradually with the rising passions of the speakers and subside in harmonious unison with their sinking emotions.

Whether it would ever be possible to use such an instrument with effect it is not necessary to inquire; suffice it to say that Disraeli has not succeeded. When he tries to be most impressive he is often simply grotesque, and at times we ask in amazement if his sense of the ridiculous has wholly deserted him. Take for instance such a piece of intolerable bombast as the following:—

> Pallid and mad he swift upsprang, and he tore up a tree by its lusty roots, and down the declivity, dashing with rapid leaps, panting and wild, he struck the ravisher on the temple with the mighty pine.

That fantastical genius Beckford was enchanted with it all, and wished 'the truly wondrous tale had been extended to twenty volumes'; this in spite of some distress at the discovery that 'Disraeli and company were smoking away like vulgar factories.' Disraeli wrote[1] to his sister immediately after publication:—

> Of *Alroy* I hear golden opinions, and I doubt not of its success. . . . I hear no complaints of its style, except from the critics. The common readers seem to like the poetry and the excitement. Mrs. Jameson told Otley that 'reading it was like riding an Arab.' Slade, the traveller, said 'it was the most thoroughly Oriental book he had ever read.'

In spite, however, of these encouraging pronouncements, the author's hopes were hardly realised: the subject was too remote and, his own opinion notwithstanding, the style presented too easy a mark for ridicule[2]; so that the book, if not a failure, had at best only a moderate success.

With *Alroy* was published a short story entitled *The Rise of Iskander*, which Disraeli appears to have written while he was on a visit to Bath with Bulwer. Iskander is the Scanderbeg of Gibbon, the Albanian prince who won his independence in the days of Mahommed the Conqueror; and the piece was designed to provide a contrast to *Alroy* 'by setting forth 'the history of a Christian hero placed in a somewhat similar position but achieving a very different end.' It is a pretty tale, as

[1] March 26, 1833; *Letters*, p. 81.

[2] There was an amusing parody by Maginn, Disraeli's old acquaintance of *Representative* days:—'O reader dear! do pray look here, and you will spy the curly hair and forehead fair, and nose so high and gleaming eye of Benjamin Dis-ra-e-li, the wondrous boy who wrote *Alroy*, in rhyme and prose, only to show, how long ago victorious Judah's lion-banner rose,' &c. There is a good deal of this prose poetry in *The Young Duke*, and Disraeli never wholly lost the habit. Even in his last novel we find him in the middle of a passage of ordinary prose suddenly breaking into verse: 'And now and then was heard a silver laugh, and now and then was breathed a gentle sigh.' (*Endymion*, ch. 2.)

the author claimed, and it shows to what good account he could turn his brief visit to Albania; but apart from this it has nothing that is peculiar to Disraeli nor any special significance in the story of his inner development.

CHAPTER XI.

Entry into Politics.

1832–1833.

'Poetry is the safety valve of my passions, but I wish to act what I write.' Disraeli was not the man to degenerate into a dilettante recluse like Contarini or to waste his life in fanciful dreams of Hebrew conquest after the manner of Alroy. The journey to the East had restored him to health and vigour. He arrived in England 'in famous condition—better indeed than I ever was in my life and full of hope and courage in spite of the overwhelming catastrophe'; so he wrote to Austen. One of his first acts was to withdraw his name from the books of Lincoln's Inn; he would not even pay the tribute to convention of cloaking his vague ambitions under the dress of an acknowledged profession. His debts were a heavy burden, but he had one tangible asset in his literary reputation. 'Mr. Disraeli, Sir, is come to town—young Mr. Disraeli,' said Colburn to Bulwer. 'Won't he give us a nice light article about his travels?' In his pen Disraeli had a permanent source of income; but during his absence he had developed new ambitions that were more likely to increase expenditure than income. In the East, as health and courage returned, his thoughts had begun to dwell on the attractions of an active political career. Even before he left England Parliament seems to have been in his mind. 'I should have liked you,' writes Austen in July, 1830, 'to have had a picking out of this general

election; it would be a famous opening and lots to say.' During his sojourn in the East, Disraeli had been a diligent reader of *Galignani*, and he used in later life to say that it was in studying a file of that 'excellent publication' during his long detention in quarantine at Malta that he first began to understand politics.[1] Through *Galignani* he was able to follow the fortunes of the Reform movement, and he followed them with the keenest interest. 'What a confusion you are all in,' he wrote to Austen from Constantinople, when he read of that 'bold act of cowardice'[2] on the part of the Wellington Ministry, the postponement of the King's visit to the City in November, 1830. 'I have just got through a batch of *Galignanis*. What a capital Pantomime it would make: "The Lord Mayor's Day or Harlequin Brougham"'; and the fancy pleased him so much that by a habit that was already forming he repeated it in almost the same words in letters to his father and Bulwer, adding to Bulwer, 'Oh for the days of Aristophanes, or Foote, or even Scaramouch! Damn the Licenser!' 'The wonderful news which meets me here in a pile of *Galignanis* has quite unsettled my mind,' he writes from Cairo on reading of the introduction of the first Reform Bill. 'I am of course very anxious to hear of the progress of the Bill. I have heard up to the majority of one.'

Disraeli arrived in England on the day that Parliament was prorogued after the rejection of the second Reform

[1] *Life of Jowett*, p. 109.

[2] The phrase was Lord Wellesley's. Disraeli has an interesting note on this occurrence, written in 1836:—

'Sir Robert Peel told me that Hume was the real cause of the King's not going into the City. They had received many warnings and much information, when suddenly Joseph sought a confidential interview at the Home Office and told Peel he was in possession of information of an extraordinary character and that an insurrection was certain. Afterwards Joseph had the impudence to make a speech in the House of Commons abusing the Ministers for not letting the King go, and declaring that it was his solemn belief that the outcry was all an alarming invention of their own. "I might have risen and crushed him, the impudent dog," said Peel. Why did he not? The interview was certainly confidential, but the speech absolved the Minister, in my opinion.'

Bill by the Lords. A fortnight later, during the riotous weeks that followed the prorogation, he writes to Austen in the spirit of an old Tory: 'The times are damnable. I take the gloomiest view of affairs, but we must not lose our property without a struggle.' 'In the event of a new election,' he adds, 'I offer myself for Wycombe.' No new election, however, came at present, and he spent the greater part of the winter at Bradenham 'working like a tiger,' no doubt at *Contarini*. By the middle of February he is in London, 'most comfortably located in Duke Street,' and enjoying his first real taste of the pleasures of London society. Through his friend Bulwer, already at the height of his fame, Disraeli at once found his way into the charmed circle of Mayfair, and in his letters to his sister he has left us a graphic and vivacious record of his adventures in this paradise.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Feb. 18, 1832.

We had a very brilliant *réunion* at Bulwer's last night. Among the notables were Lords Strangford[1] and Mulgrave,[2] with the latter of whom I had a great deal of conversation; Count D'Orsay, the famous Parisian dandy; there was a large sprinkling of blues—Lady Morgan, Mrs. Norton, L.E.L., &c. Bulwer came up to me, said 'There is one blue *who insists upon an introduction.*' '*Oh, my dear* fellow, I cannot really; the power of repartee has deserted me.' 'I have pledged myself, you must come'; so he led me up to a very sumptuous personage, looking like a full-blown rose, Mrs. Gore. Albany Fonblanque,[3] my critic, was in the room, but I did not see him. . . . The Mr. Hawkins who made a wonderful speech, and who, although he squinted horribly, was the next day voted a Cupidon, and has since lost his beauty by a failure, and many others, whom in this hurry I cannot recall—Charles Villiers, Henry Ellis, &c. I avoided L.E.L., who looked the very

[1] 6th Viscount (1780-1855): A diplomatist of some distinction who had been for many years Minister at Lisbon and afterwards for some years Ambassador at Constantinople.

[2] Afterwards 1st Marquis of Normanby.

[3] Editor of the *Examiner*.

personification of Brompton—pink satin dress and white satin shoes, red cheeks, snub nose, and her hair *à la* Sappho.

Feb. 22.

I am writing a very John Bull book, which will quite delight you and my mother. I am still a Reformer, but shall destroy the foreign policy of the Grey faction. They seem firmly fixed at home, although a storm is without doubt brewing abroad. I think peers will be created, and Charley Gore has promised to let me have timely notice if Baring[1] be one. He called upon me, and said that Lord John often asked how I was getting on at Wycombe. He fished as to whether I should support them. I answered, 'They had one claim upon my support; they needed it,' and no more.

April 28.

The *soirée* last night at Bulwer's was really brilliant, much more so than the first. There were a great many dames there of distinction, and no blues. I should, perhaps, except Sappho, who was quite changed; she had thrown off Greco-Bromptonian costume and was perfectly *à la Française*, and really looked pretty. At the end of the evening I addressed a few words to her, of the value of which she seemed sensible. I was introduced, 'by particular desire,' to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, a pretty little woman, a flirt, and a rattle; indeed, gifted with a volubility I should think unequalled, and of which I can convey no idea. She told me that she liked 'silent, melancholy men.' I answered 'that I had no doubt of it.' . . .

I had a long conversation with Lord Mulgrave, and a man talked to me very much who turned out to be Lord William Lennox. In the course of the evening I stumbled over Tom Moore, to whom I introduced myself. It is evident that he has read or heard of *The Young Duke*, as his courtesy was marked. 'How is your head?' he enquired. 'I have heard of you, as everybody has. Did we not meet at Murray's once?' He has taken his name off the Athenæum, 'really Brooks is sufficient; so I shall not see your father any more. . . .' I remained in Hertford Street after the breaking up, smoking. Colonel Webster, who married Boddington's daughter, said to me, 'Take care, my good fellow; I lost the most beautiful woman in the world by smoking. It has prevented more *liaisons* than the dread

[1] Sir Thomas Baring, father of the first Lord Northbrook, and at this time M.P. for Wycombe.

of a duel or Doctors' Commons.' Then I replied, 'You have proved that it is a very moral habit.' W., you know, although no Adonis, is a terrible *roué*.

May 15.

I very much fear that the Whigs are again in, and on their own terms. Such, indeed, is the report, but that is only a shot founded on last night's debate; but it is, I apprehend, a conjecture that will turn out to be a prophecy. I dined at [Lord] Eliot's[1] on Saturday, and met Colonel and Captain A'Court, brothers of Lord Heytesbury, and Lord Strangford. We had some delightful conversation and remained till a late hour. Strangford is an aristocratic Tom Moore; his flow is incessant and brilliant. The A'Courts very unaffected, hearty fellows.

Yesterday I dined at Eliot's—a male party consisting of eight. I sat between Peel and Herries,[2] but cannot tell you the names of the other guests, although they were all members of one or other House; but I detected among them Captain Yorke,[3] whom I had met in the Levant. Peel was most gracious. He is a very great man, indeed, and they all seem afraid of him. By-the-bye, I observed that he attacked his turbot most entirely with his knife, so Walker's story is true. I can easily conceive that he could be very disagreeable, but yesterday he was in a most condescending mood and unbent with becoming haughtiness. I reminded him by my dignified familiarity both that he was ex-Minister and I a present Radical. Herries—old, grey-headed, financial Herries—turned out quite a literary man—so false are one's impressions. The dinner was sumptuous, and we broke up late.[4]

The 'John Bull book,' of which he wrote in February and which was to 'destroy the foreign policy of the Grey faction,' was published by Murray in April under the title of 'England and France; or a Cure for the Ministerial Gallomania.' It appeared anonymously and with an ironical dedication to the Prime Minister as 'the most eminent Gallomaniac of the day.' 'With regard to the authorship of this work,' Disraeli wrote to Murray, 'I should never be ashamed of being considered the

[1] Afterwards 3rd Earl of St. Germans.
[2] Chancellor of the Exchequer in Goderich's Ministry.
[3] [Afterwards 4th Earl of Hardwicke.—G. E. B.]
[4] *Letters*, pp. 70-75.

author. I should be proud to be; but I am not. It is written by Legion, but I am one of them, and I bear the responsibility.'[1] His chief coadjutors appear to have been Baron d'Haussez, a legitimist exile, who had been Minister of Marine in the last Ministry of Charles X., and Baron de Haber, 'a mysterious German gentleman of Jewish extraction,' as Dr. Smiles describes him.[2] 'Beware, my dear, of secret agents,' wrote Isaac D'Israeli to his son, who had told him that he was about to startle Europe; 'beware of forgeries and delusions.' His son had all his life a certain weakness for mystery and intrigue, and disregarded the warning; but Murray, who, as publisher, bore the real responsibility, was less disposed to be venturesome, and insisted, to Disraeli's great annoyance, on the proofs being read by Croker. 'I have no desire,' writes the irritated author, 'to thrust my acquaintance on your critic. More than once I have had an opportunity to form that acquaintance, and more than once I have declined it.' It will be remembered that at the time of *The Representative* affair Disraeli had found reason for resenting Croker's interference, and the prejudice which had slumbered in his mind since then had just been reawakened by an incident of the present year. A few weeks before the letter to Murray Disraeli had failed in an attempt to secure election[3] to the Athenæum, a club of which his father was one of the original members and Croker practically the founder; and rightly or wrongly the Bradenham family laid the failure to the charge of Croker. We shall hear again of the antipathy which these things combined to foster.

The pamphlet, or book—for it runs to 300 pages—is a violent diatribe against the foreign policy of Palmerston

[1] Smiles's *Life of Murray*, II., p. 344.

[2] [Haber appears from other sources of information to have belonged to a wealthy firm seated first at Carlsruhe and afterwards at Frankfort, and to have spent almost the whole of his fortune in financing Don Carlos. —G. E. B.]

[3] Under the rule allowing the committee to elect annually a limited number of persons 'of distinguished eminence in science, literature, or the arts, or for public services.' Disraeli did not become a member till 1866.

and against the friendly understanding with France upon which this policy was for the moment based. The alliance between the two countries is, we are assured, 'unnatural,' and their friendship 'fictitious.' Their 'permanent interests are incompatible from natural passions and prejudices, if from no other reasons.' 'The resolution to be supreme, and the consequent hatred of England, are rooted in the breast of every Frenchman.' Louis Philippe and his Government are attacked with a bitterness for which d'Haussez no doubt was responsible; and with a great parade of secret information the writer professes to set forth the true history of 'that mean and monstrous incident which hitherto we have been pleased to style a Glorious Revolution.'

> I have endeavoured to show that the English Minister, in sacrificing all the ancient principles of our policy to ally himself with our hereditary foe, has not even succeeded in the object for which he has thus imprudently and previously paid the dearest price; and that we have, in fact, deserted Portugal and outraged Holland, not for the friendship of the French nation, but for a mere transient connexion with two individuals—the French King and the French Minister; one of whom that nation despises and the other of whom that nation detests.[1]

Disraeli afterwards became a personal friend and admirer of Louis Philippe's, and a consistent supporter of the policy of friendship with France through all her many changes of Government. No one would dream of turning to this hastily-written pamphlet, in which he made his pen the instrument for setting forth the views of others, in order to obtain light on his real and permanent convictions in the region of foreign affairs. Both at the time of publication and afterwards he was unusually silent as to his connexion with the book. 'I am anxious,' he wrote to Mrs. Austen, 'that my name should not be mentioned in reference to the work you have been lately reading. . . . You are so familiar with my writings

[1] *Gallomania*, p. 255.

that you will not give me credit for every idiotism you meet in its columns.' What is of real interest now is the choice of subject for his first venture in the domain of practical politics. Though it was not until near the end of his career that he was able to assert himself effectively in the field of foreign affairs, he had early divined the truth that it is in this field far more than in the noisy and exaggerated strife of parties over questions of internal politics that history is really made. 'There is no subject,' he writes in the *Gallomania*, 'on which, as a society, we are so misinformed as our foreign policy. . . . To my mind it is of primary, of paramount, importance: upon our foreign policy the safety as well as the glory of this country as a great Empire depends.' After the experience of a lifetime his judgment remained the same. 'Real politics,' says Lady Montfort to Endymion, 'are the possession and distribution of power. I want to see you give your mind to foreign affairs.'

One passage of the *Gallomania*, which is clearly not the outcome of any extraneous inspiration, has a curious and picturesque interest.

> An Englishman recently resident in Egypt discovered by an accident that a secret agent in the employ of France was in the habit of being honoured with private interviews by the Pasha. It was immediately after the events of July. As the Englishman was well cognisant of the constant intrigues of the French in Egypt—a country of which we may some day hear, although it is not at present much thought of at the Foreign Office—he resolved to ascertain the nature of their conferences. By what means he succeeded, it matters not at present. . . . Let it suffice that he did ascertain that, in the event of any collision with England, a French army was to be received in Egypt and that India was to be threatened. . . . The feelings of the Moslem population of India were to be excited, and even the Hindus were to be reminded that the most ancient temples of their creed rose on the palmy banks of Nile. . . . We possess no diplomatic agent in Egypt. A Consul-General, indeed, resides there, but his residence is the seaport of Alexandria. . . . But it so happened that about this time an eminent

person[1] distinguished by his talents and by the confidence of our Sovereign, was travelling in Egypt, and the Englishman seized this opportunity of impressing upon that eminent person his conviction of the French intrigues. The eminent person was not deficient in that frankness which we flatter ourselves to be characteristic of our nation. . . . He took an opportunity in an early interview to communicate to the Pasha his apprehensions. 'God is great!' exclaimed his Highness, as he drew his pipe from his mouth. 'It is an infamous falsehood.' . . . 'It is an infamous falsehood,' repeated the eminent person to his informant on the first opportunity. 'His Highness declares that we are the greatest nation in the world and dear to him as his own children. Depend upon it, he is devoted to us. Has he not presented me during my visit with his finest palace? Does not his European band, by his special command, play every day under my window during my dinner? Does he not always proffer me the pipe of honour? And has he not condescended to accept from my hands the finest shawl that Cashmere ever produced?' The reasoning was unanswerable, and the solitary Englishman, who was rather a poet than a politician, proceeded on his pilgrimage.[2]

The pamphlet received the honour of a leading article in *The Times*,[3] in which recognition was freely given to the cleverness and curious information of the authors; though it was also broadly hinted that the real motive which animated them was hostility to the Reform Bill. The third Reform Bill had now been launched, and as it proceeded on the perilous voyage which eventually was to carry it into port, Disraeli's sympathy with the cause whose fortunes it carried seemed rapidly to cool. 'I am still a Reformer,' he wrote, as we have seen, in the last week of February; but a fortnight later he pronounced the Bill to be in a most crazy state, and added that he 'would not be overwhelmed if it failed altogether.' Yet he erased some passages in the *Gallomania* that were adverse to Reform, and, when Croker wanted to restore them, he entered an emphatic protest.

[1] Some erased words in the original MS. show that the 'eminent person' was Sir John Malcolm.

[2] *Gallomania*, p. 40.

[3] April 20, 1832.

To John Murray.

March 30, 1832.

It is quite impossible that anything adverse to the general measure of Reform can issue from my pen or from anything to which I contribute. Within these three months I have declined being returned for a Tory borough, and almost within these four days, to mention slight affairs, I have refused to inscribe myself a member of 'The Conservative Club.' I cannot believe that you will place your critic's feelings for a few erased passages against my permanent interest.[1]

That curious phrase, 'the general measure of Reform,' is not without significance. It seems to suggest that Disraeli's attitude on the question was already not far different from that which he was soon openly to adopt—sympathy with the movement for broadening the electorate and bringing the House of Commons into touch with popular aspirations combined with deep distrust of the motives by which the Whigs were animated and of the principles on which they were founding their reconstruction of the constituency. His political creed, however, was still somewhat vague, and in the matter of party allegiance his position was still wholly unsettled. 'I am neither Whig nor Tory,' he explains in the *Gallomania*. 'My politics are described by one word, and that word is England.' His political stock-in-trade consisted, in fact, of a sincere and ardent patriotism, genuine popular sympathies, a strong and apparently instinctive antipathy to Whiggery, and an hereditary disposition to Toryism derived from his father with an imaginative interest in its romantic aspects that was native to himself. These apparently conflicting principles and elements had not yet been fused into the popular or democratic Toryism for which his name stands in history, and by the eccentricity of his views and his rather light-hearted detachment from party he was to get himself and his friends into no small amount of trouble. 'I, too, have read the *Gallomania*,' writes his

[1] Smiles, II., p. 344.

sister, ' and I long to see you that you may read me many riddles. The principal one is, how you will reconcile your constituents to your politics.' His ' constituents,' indeed, were sorely perplexed by the behaviour of their candidate.

From Sarah Disraeli.

You can imagine the astonishment and consternation of old and young Wycombe. Huffam [Disraeli's chief supporter] is in a great fright that you are going to betray him by proving yourself a Tory after he has for so many months sworn to all Wycombites that you were not one. What will happen ? I should be sorry to give up the plan of regenerating Wycombe and turning them all unconsciously into Tories.

' You are probably acquiring an European name,' writes his father in the same connexion, ' but invention and imagination are not the qualities for a representative of our modern patriots.'

High Wycombe, or Chepping Wycombe, as it was alternatively called, a few miles from Bradenham on the London side, was a typical close borough of the time before the Reform Act, returning to Parliament two members whose election rested exclusively with the Corporation and burgesses. The sitting members were the Hon. Robert Smith, the son and heir of the local magnate, Lord Carrington, and Sir Thomas Baring, both supporters of the Grey Ministry. When Disraeli began to cast eyes on the borough there was the possibility of an election with the old constituency owing to a dissolution in the course of the struggle over the Reform Bill, and there was also the certainty of an election with the new constituency, and at no distant date, if the Reform Bill passed. The Royal assent was given to the Bill on June 7, and a few days before Disraeli posted down from London to begin his canvass. ' I start on the high Radical interest,' he wrote to Austen, ' and take down strong recommendatory epistles from O'Connell, Hume, Burdett, and *hoc genus*. Toryism

is worn out, and I cannot condescend to be a Whig.' Edward Bulwer, himself a member of Parliament and a Reformer of the Radical type, had procured the letters from O'Connell and Hume, and to him O'Connell's was addressed. It regretted that the writer had 'no acquaintance at Wycombe to whom he could recommend Mr. Disraeli.'

I am as convinced as you are of the great advantage the cause of genuine Reform would obtain from his return. His readiness to carry the Reform Bill into practical effect towards the production of cheap government and free institutions is enhanced by the talent and information which he brings to the good cause. I should certainly express full reliance on his political and personal integrity, and it would give me the greatest pleasure to assist in any way in procuring his return, but that, as I have told you, I have no claim on Wycombe, and can only express my surprise that it should be thought I had any.

Hume was more explicit; but his knowledge of Disraeli and of the situation at Wycombe seems to have been extremely meagre, and he presently discovered that he had lent the use of his name against 'his best friend' Baring, and another staunch Reformer, whereas, by some confusion between Wycombe and Wendover, he had believed that Disraeli was opposing a couple of anti-Reformers. A letter of explanation which he wrote to Smith and Baring, and in which he expressed a hope that their seats would not be disturbed, was of course published by their agents, and gave something of a check to Disraeli at the opening of his campaign. But Disraeli was not easily discouraged, and he persevered with his candidature.

To Benjamin Austen.

RED LION, WYCOMBE.

I write you a hurried note after a hard day's canvass. Whigs, Tories, and Radicals, Quakers, Evangelicals, Abolition of Slavery, Reform, Conservatism, Cornlaws—here is hard work for one who is to please all parties. I make an excellent canvasser, and am told I shall carry it if the borough be opened.

His canvass had at first for its objective the new constituency of ten-pound householders; but before it had proceeded many days the situation was suddenly changed. A chance vacancy occurred for one of the seats in Hampshire, and in order to contest it Sir Thomas Baring resigned his seat at Wycombe, thus precipitating a single election under the unreformed system. Bulwer tried hard to secure his friend from opposition, but they seem to have had no love for Disraeli at the Whig headquarters in London, and Bulwer's efforts were in vain.

To Mrs. Austen.

[*June* 10, 1832.]

We are hard at it. Sir Thomas you know has resigned. His son was talked of; I have frightened him off and old Pascoe Grenfell and Buxton. Yesterday the Treasury sent down Colonel Grey with a hired mob and a band. Never was such a failure. After parading the town with his paid voices, he made a stammering speech of ten minutes from his phaeton. All Wycombe was assembled. Feeling it was the crisis, I jumped up on the portico of the Red Lion and gave it them for an hour and a quarter. I can give you no idea of the effect. I made them all mad. A great many absolutely *cried*. I never made as many friends in my life or converted as many enemies. All the women are on my side and wear my colors, pink and white. Do the same. The Colonel returned to town in the evening absolutely astounded out of his presence of mind, *on dit* never to appear again. If he come I am prepared for him.

B. D.

There is some reason for suspecting that the terror inspired in 'old Pascoe Grenfell' and others by Disraeli's prowess was purely imaginary, and that they had never had any thought of standing; and certainly the official candidate, however astounded he may have been, soon reappeared. Colonel Grey was the second son of the Prime Minister, and was afterwards to be well known to Disraeli and the world as Private Secretary to Queen Victoria. In the brief and stammering speech which he delivered from his phaeton he admitted that he had never

addressed a public meeting before. The same may have been true of Disraeli, but in his case there was none of the diffidence or hesitation of the beginner. Tales are still told in Wycombe of that famous first speech from the portico of the Red Lion. The youthful orator was now at the height of his dandyism, and his 'curls and ruffles' played no small part in the election. Standing on the top of the porch beside the figure of the lion, with his pale face set off by masses of jet-black hair and his person plenteously adorned with lace and cambric, he must have seemed to the spectators better fitted for his *rôle* of fashionable novelist than for that of strenuous politician. Great, then, was their surprise when this 'popinjay,' as a hostile newspaper called him, began to pour forth a torrent of eloquence with tremendous energy of action and in a voice that carried far along the High Street. He had an instinct for the dramatic effects which hold the attention of a mob. 'When the poll is declared, I shall be there,' he exclaimed, according to a Wycombe tradition, pointing to the head of the lion, 'and my opponent will be there,' pointing to the tail. By the admission even of the opposite party the speech was a complete success and his popularity with the crowd was thenceforth assured.

In the days of unreformed constituencies, however, elections were not to be won by popularity alone. The official Whigs and Reformers of course opposed him, and their county organ[1] gave him a first taste of that malignant and rancorous abuse of which he was to have such full measure throughout his political career and which a certain cynical truculence on his own part no doubt did much to provoke. The Tory organ,[2] on the other hand, welcomed him as an independent in preference to the official Whig, and gave him a qualified blessing. He had placed his interests in the hands of one Nash, the local representative of the great county magnate, the Duke of Buckingham, whose son, Lord Chandos, was the leader

[1] The *Bucks Gazette.* [2] The *Bucks Herald.*

of the Buckinghamshire Tories; and though Disraeli declared on the hustings that he had never had any communication with Lord Chandos, his choice of an agent gave no little point to the charge with which the Whigs persistently assailed him that whatever his Radical protestations he was all the time a Tory at heart. What is really of interest now is the undoubted fact that in this his first election he succeeded in effecting an alliance between Radicals and Tories, between the popular elements in the constituency and the supporters of privilege and tradition. When the day of nomination came he explained his position in a long speech on the hustings. He wore, he declared, the badge of no party; if the Tories had supported him the people had supported him first; as regards the Reform Act, it was only a means to a great end; he expected to derive from it financial, ecclesiastic, and legal reform: he would seek the amelioration of the condition of the poor; the happiness of the many must now be preferred to the happiness of the few: and as regards himself he had never received one shilling of the public money and he belonged to a family who never had; he was sprung, moreover, from the people and had none of the blood of the Plantagenets in his veins. But in spite of this popular programme and these many popular qualifications he speedily found it useless to persevere, the poll at its close on June 26 being—

Grey, 20.
Disraeli, 12.

The defeated candidate consoled himself with another lengthy speech, in which he fiercely assailed the Corporation and poured the vials of his wrath on all his enemies. He ended, according to his opponents, with the words, 'The Whigs have cast me off and they shall repent it'; but in a letter to *The Times*[1] Disraeli repudiated this version.

[1] Nov. 12, 1832.

Whatever may be the disposition of the Whigs to me they never could have cast me off since I never had the slightest connexion with them. I believe that the phrase I did use, and I am sanctioned in my recollection by every person to whom I have applied, was the following:—'The Whigs have opposed me, not I them, and they shall repent it.' I am in no wise ashamed of this observation and I adhere to it.

The defiant note in the hour of defeat was highly characteristic; but the speech very nearly involved him in a duel. As he flung his gibes and sarcasms right and left he pointed to Lord Nugent,[1] and retorting to the charge that he himself was a Tory in disguise declared that the nearest thing to a Tory in disguise was a Whig in office. Lord Nugent construed these words as a personal affront and sent a challenge; but when the seconds met they agreed that the affair was absurd and arranged for such an interchange of explanations as averted a meeting.[2]

To Sarah Disraëli.

[London,]
July 5, 1832.

Giovanni[3] called on me (announced by the servant as *Don Giovanni*). He has left Clay and brought me a lock of Byron's hair from Venice, which he cut himself off the corpse at Missolonghi. I have been very idle, the natural consequence of former exertion, but shall soon buckle to among our beeches.

Aug. 4.

Town is fast emptying. I have been lately at the House of Commons, and one night had a long conversation with my late antagonist and present representative. We are more than friendly.

Aug. 8.

On Friday I shall pitch my tent in the green retreats of Bradenham, and Bulwer accompanies me. He wants absolute retirement, really, to write, and all that. He is to do what

[1] Younger brother of the 1st Duke of Buckingham and author of those *Memorials of Hampden* which gave occasion for one of Macaulay's Essays.

[2] Lord Ebrington acted as Lord Nugent's second and Captain Angerstein of the Grenadier Guards as Disraeli's. A notice containing the explanations agreed upon and signed by them is to be seen in the *Bucks Gazette* for July 7, 1832.

[3] See above, p. 161.

he likes, and wander about the woods like a madman. I am anxious that he and my father should become better acquainted. Our sire never had a warmer votary. . . . I saw Tita to-day, who suggests that he shall return with me to Bradenham, and try our place.[1]

The general election could not long be delayed, and the campaign at Wycombe proceeded almost without intermission. The unreformed Parliament was not actually dissolved till December 3, but on October 1 Disraeli issued a fresh address which is interesting as the first full and authentic exposition of his political opinions that has survived the chances of time. He comes forward again 'wearing the badge of no party and the livery of no faction.' He is 'prepared to support that ballot which will preserve us from that unprincipled system of terrorism with which it would seem we are threatened even in this town.' He is 'desirous of recurring to those old English triennial Parliaments of which the Whigs originally deprived us; and by repealing the taxes upon knowledge' he 'would throw the education of the people into the hands of the philosophic student, instead of the ignorant adventurer.' He is already occupied with that great question of the condition of the people in which he took an abiding interest.

> While I shall feel it my duty to enforce on all opportunities the most rigid economy, and the most severe retrenchment, to destroy every useless place and every undeserving office, and to effect the greatest reduction of taxation consistent with the maintenance of the public faith and the real efficiency of the Government, I shall withhold my support from every Ministry which will not originate some great measure to ameliorate the condition of the lower orders—to rouse the dormant energies of the country, to liberate our shackled industry, and reinstate our expiring credit.
>
> With regard to the Corn Laws,
>
> I will support any change the basis of which is to relieve the customer without injuring the farmer; and for the Church I am desirous of seeing effected some commutation which,

[1] *Letters*, p. 77.

while it prevents the tithe from acting as a tax on industry and enterprise, will again render the clergy what I am always desirous of seeing them, fairly remunerated, because they are valuable and efficient labourers, and influential, because they are beloved.

And then in a fine rhetorical conclusion he appeals for support in his struggle

> Against that rapacious, tyrannical, and incapable faction, who, having knavishly obtained power by false pretences, sillily suppose that they will be permitted to retain it by half measures, and who, in the course of their brief but disastrous career, have contrived to shake every great interest of the Empire to its centre. Ireland in rebellion, the colonies in convulsion, our foreign relations in a state of such inextricable confusion, that we are told that war alone can sever the Gordian knot of complicated blunders; the farmer in doubt, the shipowner in despair, our merchants without trade, and our manufacturers without markets, the revenue declining, and the army increased, the wealthy hoarding their useless capital, and pauperism prostrate in our once-contented cottages. Englishmen, behold the unparalleled Empire raised by the heroic energies of your fathers; rouse yourselves in this hour of doubt and danger; rid yourselves of all that political jargon and factious slang of Whig and Tory—two names with one meaning, used only to delude you—and unite in forming a great national party which can alone save the country from impending destruction.

At a dinner given to him by his supporters in the course of the campaign he elaborated his programme, leaning on this occasion somewhat more towards the Tory side of the argument, probably because there were a good many Tories among his hosts and audience as certainly there was a Tory in the chair. He is still, indeed, defiantly independent. 'I care not for party. I stand here without party. I plead the cause of the people, and I care not whose policy I arraign': but he rejoices that 'the Tories have joined the popular party' in that town, and it is now that, for the first time, we are taken back to the principles of primitive Toryism and introduced to 'Sir William Wyndham and my

Lord Bolingbroke,' of whom we shall hear a good deal in future. A Whig organ had denounced Disraeli as 'a destructive Radical.' A few short months ago, he retorted, they had described him as 'a disappointed Tory candidate.' 'I need scarcely say to you that I have undergone no change. I am as I ever was in motive, principle, and determination.' In advocating triennial Parliaments he was only supporting 'the true principles, the just spirit of our admirable constitution.' They had been advocated by the Tory Party in 'the most laudable period of its career,'—by Sir William Wyndham 'in a speech which for sound argument, keen research, close reasoning, and bitter invective, is, I think, unequalled,' and by Lord Bolingbroke, 'one of the ablest men who ever lived': and he was not ashamed to be 'as great and as destructive a Radical as Sir William Wyndham and my Lord Bolingbroke.' The ballot again was decidedly a Conservative measure, and he supported it as much against the passions of the many as the prejudices of the few. He was, in fact, 'a Conservative to preserve all that is good in our constitution, a Radical to remove all that is bad.' As the people had been invested with power, he wished to see them fitted for its exercise; therefore, he wished to see the taxes on knowledge repealed and the Press really free. In the matter of foreign affairs 'he shewed how the policy of the present Administration must lead to an ultimate loss of the sovereignty of the seas, the destruction of our commerce, and finally of our country. Peace is now the policy of England. We have gained everything: now it is our duty to preserve.' He was a sincere friend of the slave population, but he was not 'one of those precious politicians who wish to deliver the Colonies of England to the United States of America.' Finally, Free Trade was a theory which 'as a theory he much admired,' but a word of warning was necessary as to its practical application.

I cannot resist the conviction that if we have recourse to any sudden alteration of the present system, we may say farewell to the county of Bucks, farewell to the beautiful Chilterns. . . . You will ask is bread, then, always to be dear? By no means, but it is surely better to have dear bread than to have no bread at all. Reduce the burdens that so heavily press upon the farmer, and then reduce his protection in the same ratio. That is the way to have cheap bread. I do not doubt that when the question of tithes is eventually settled, when the poor laws are brought back to the system of 1795, and when we employ our surplus revenue in relieving the agricultural interest instead of sending forth fantastic expeditions to attack our ancient allies—I do not doubt that then we may have the blessing of cheap bread without destroying the interest which is the basis of all sound social happiness.[1]

'If I gain my election I think I have doubled the Cape of my destiny,' Disraeli wrote to Evans, his old comrade of the solicitor's office. He was not to gain his election. The Whigs put forth all their efforts to defeat him, and on the hustings he angrily declared that 'the secret of their enmity was that he was not nobly born.' When the poll closed on Dec. 12 the figures were—

Smith, 179.
Grey, 140.
Disraeli, 119.

To Benjamin Austen.

Sunday.

Had my agent attended to our registration, which for various reasons he did not, I should have succeeded at Wycombe, as upwards of 18 ratted from Grey, but the rates of many of my old supporters were not paid up. The election, or rather contest, did not cost me £80, the expense of hustings, &c., and Grey not short of £800. Had I let money fly I should have come in. I make no doubt of success another time.

[1] This speech is preserved in the *Wycombe Sentinel* (Nov. 30), a weekly publication, of which eight numbers were issued gratis by the Disraeli party during the campaign. There is also a report in the *Bucks Herald* of Dec. 1.

Beaten at Wycombe, he on the same day issued an address to the electors of the county.

I come forward as the supporter of that great interest which is the only solid basis of the social fabric, and, convinced that the sound prosperity of this country depends upon the protected industry of the farmer, I would resist that spirit of rash and experimental legislation which is fast hurrying this once glorious Empire to the agony of civil convulsion.

Lord Chandos[1] was the only Tory in the field, opposed to two Reformers; but when Disraeli arrived at Aylesbury on the day after the issue of his address he found that he had been anticipated, and he at once withdrew his own pretensions, and appeared on the hustings as a supporter of the second Tory candidate. The incident marked a distinct advance towards formal alliance with the Tory Party. As the hostile journal put it, having been beaten at Wycombe as a Tory Radical he endeavoured to come forward for the County as a Radical Tory.

To The Rev. Alfred Beaven.

HUGHENDEN MANOR,
Jan. 17, 1874.

. . . On the loss of my election in 1832 I started for the County, and issued my address on the same day that Mr. Scott Murray, unknown to me, agreed to become a candidate. I acted throughout the Wycombe election and on this occasion entirely with the approval and under the advice of Lord Chandos, then one of the principal leaders of the Tory party. We felt it would not do for me to stand in the way of Mr. Scott Murray, a gentleman of large estate. He was an amiable man, totally unfit to be a County candidate in those stormy days, and lost his election, which seemed difficult, as there was no doubt, from the enthusiasm of the farmers in my favour, I should have been returned by five or six hundred majority.

Though it is now a mere point of historical curiosity, I must observe, that I advocated the ballot in 1832 because it was part of the Tory scheme of a century before; and for the same reasons as it was suggested by Sir W. Wyndham, and particularly Sir John Hinde Cotton, almost as distin-

[1] Afterwards 2nd Duke of Buckingham.

guished a leader of the Country party, in the days of the first Georges. It seemed to me, that the Borough constituency of Lord Grey was essentially, and purposely, a dissenting and low Whig constituency, consisting of the principal employers of labour—and that the ballot was the only instrument to extricate us from these difficulties. . . .

Political history is not sufficiently known now, but when I started in life, it is not an exaggeration to say, that the mind of the country, even in the Houses of Parliament, was a complete blank upon it. The Tory party had lost all their traditions, and this led to their fall: to the mess they made about the Roman Catholics, and Parliamentary Reform. I have, for forty years, been labouring to replace the Tory party in their natural and historical position in this country. I am in the sunset of life, but I do not despair of seeing my purpose effected.

To General The Hon. Charles Grey.[1]

10, Downing-street, Whitehall,
Nov. 30, 1868.

My dear General,

I reciprocate all your feelings, and shall cherish your friendship, which I highly esteem. Your conduct to me, during my tenure of Office, has been admirable, and in quitting my post, it is a consolation to me to know that Her Majesty has near her a gentleman in whose abilities, experience, judgment, honor, and devotion she may place implicit reliance.

Let me know when Her Majesty would wish to receive me to-morrow; and believe me,

Yours sincerely,
B. Disraeli.

Meanwhile during those autumn months at Bradenham, in the intervals of electioneering, *Alroy* had been completed; and early in the new year Disraeli was at Bath writing *The Tale of Iskander*.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Bath,
Jan. 19, 1833.

Bulwer and I arrived here on Monday, and have found the change very beneficial and refreshing. Such is the power of novelty, that the four or five days seem an age. . . . We

[1] His antagonist at Wycombe.

are great lions here, as you may imagine, but have not been anywhere, though we have received several invitations, preferring the relaxation of our own society, and smoking Latakia, which as a source of amusement, I suppose, will last a week. I like Bath very much. Bulwer and I went in late to one public ball, and got quite mobbed.

LONDON,
Jan. 29.

I dined with Bulwer *en famille* on Sunday, 'to meet some truffles'—very agreeable company. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Wheeler, was there; not so pleasant, something between Jeremy Bentham and Meg Merrilies, very clever, but awfully revolutionary. She poured forth all her systems upon my novitiate ear, and while she advocated the rights of woman, Bulwer abused system-mongers and the sex, and Rosina played with her dog.

Feb. 7.

Went to the House of Commons to hear Bulwer adjourn the House; was there yesterday during the whole debate—one of the finest we have had for years. Bulwer spoke, but he is physically disqualified for an orator; and, in spite of all his exertions, never can succeed. He was heard with great attention, and is evidently backed by a party. Heard Macaulay's best speech, Sheil and Charles Grant. Macaulay admirable; but, between ourselves, I could floor them all. This *entre nous*; I was never more confident of anything than that I could carry everything before me in that House. The time will come. . . . Grey spoke highly of my oratorical powers to Bulwer, said he never heard 'finer command of words.' *Ixion* is thought the best thing I ever wrote.[1]

Ixion in Heaven was one of several short pieces which he contributed about this time to the *New Monthly*, a magazine owned by Colburn, of which Bulwer was the editor. A companion piece *The Infernal Marriage* was published in the following year. Light, satirical dialogues conceived in the manner of Lucian, they are reminiscences, as has been noted before, of Disraeli's schoolboy admiration for that author, though they surpass even Lucian in the audacity of their persiflage. There was an element of sheer irreverence in Disraeli strangely mingled, as

[1] *Letters*, pp. 79, 80.

in Heine, with the more obvious characteristics of the Semitic temperament—a spirit of revolutionary mockery ever struggling in both with the mysticism of the Hebrew, so that they both of them appear to be the most impossible compounds of Spinoza and Voltaire; and nowhere has Disraeli given more perfect expression to this side of his complex nature than in these dialogues, because nowhere else is its expression so genial and inoffensive. His father thought them the most original of all his writings; and more than one critic since, charmed by their wit and vivacity and sparkle, their entire freedom from malice, and the spirit of innocent mischief which breathes through them, has repeated the contemporary judgment, and pronounced them to be the best things that their author ever wrote.

To Sarah Disraeli.

April 8.

I have agreed to stand for Marylebone, but I shall not go to the poll unless I am certain, or very confident; there is even a chance of my not being opposed. In the *Town* yesterday, I am told, 'some one asked Disraeli, in offering himself for Marylebone, on what he intended *to stand*. "On my head," was the reply.'

I have heard nothing more from ———, who appears to have pocketed more than I should like to do. It was impossible to pass over attacks from such a quarter in silence. The only way to secure future ease is to take up a proper position early in life, and show that you will not be insulted with impunity.[1]

The allusion in this passage is to a correspondence with Dashwood, the Whig member for Bucks, who in a speech at Wycombe had elaborately depicted a type of political profligacy in language that had been interpreted as applying to the late candidate for the borough. More perhaps in a spirit of calculation than out of real sensitiveness or irritability Disraeli was in these years something of a fire-eater, ready to fly out at every fancied

[1] *Letters*, p. 82.

insult; in marked contrast to his contemptuous disregard in later days of the shower of venomous abuse that unceasingly descended on him. He succeeded on this occasion in intimidating his critic, but at the expense of alarming his family.

The candidature for Marylebone began and ended with the issue of an address. Appealing to an urban constituency, Disraeli stands forth again as a militant democrat, the comparative Toryism of his views on Church and land fading into the background. 'Supported by neither of the aristocratic parties,' he appears before the electors 'as an independent member of society who has no interest, either direct or indirect, in corruption or misgovernment, and as one of a family untainted by the receipt of public money.' He asks for their votes 'as a man who has already fought the battle of the people and as one who believes that the only foundation on which a beneficent and vigorous government can now be raised is an unlimited confidence in the genius of the British nation.' And then he repeats the principal items of his Wycombe programme: triennial Parliaments, election by ballot, the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, reduction of the public burdens, and the elevation of the moral and improvement of the physical condition of the people.

The vacancy did not occur, and Disraeli had recourse to his pen in order to explain and, at the same time, draw attention to his somewhat anomalous political position. A short pamphlet presently appeared entitled '"What is He?" By the Author of *Vivian Grey*'; the title finding its explanation in the legend beneath it—'"I hear that * * * * is again in the field; I hardly know whether we ought to wish him success. 'What is he?'"—*Extract from a letter of an Eminent Personage.*' The 'Eminent Personage' was supposed to be Lord Grey, the Prime Minister, but he is just as likely to have been a figment of Disraeli's imagination. The pamphlet is an argument in favour of a National Party and an

explanation of the principles on which it should be founded.

> The Tories have announced [it begins] that they could not carry on the government of this country with the present state machinery; every day the nation is more sensible that the Whigs cannot. . . . The first object of a statesman is a strong Government, without which there can be no security. . . . By what means are we to obtain a strong Government? We must discover some principles on which it can be founded. We must either revert to the *aristocratic* principle, or we must advance to the *democratic*. . . . The moment the Lords passed the Reform Bill, from menace instead of conviction, the aristocratic principle of government in this country, in my opinion, expired for ever. From that moment, it became the duty of every person of property, talents, and education, unconnected with the unhappy party at present in power, to use his utmost exertions to advance the democratic principle, in order that the country should not fall into that situation, in which, if I mistake not, it will speedily find itself—absolutely without any Government whatever.
>
> A Tory and a Radical, I understand; a Whig—a democratic aristocrat, I cannot comprehend. If the Tories indeed despair of restoring the aristocratic principle, and are sincere in their avowal that the State cannot be governed with the present machinery, it is their duty to coalesce with the Radicals, and permit both political nicknames to merge in the common, the intelligible, and the dignified title of a National Party. He is a mean-spirited wretch who is restrained from doing his duty by the fear of being held up as insincere and inconsistent by those who are incapable of forming an opinion on public affairs. . . . A great mind, that thinks and feels, is never inconsistent and never insincere. . . . The insincere and the inconsistent are the stupid and the vile. Insincerity is the vice of a fool and inconsistency the blunder of a knave.

What then in practice are 'the easiest and most obvious methods by which the democratic principle may be made predominant'? The answer, it must be confessed, is somewhat disappointing. They are, we are told, 'the instant repeal of the Septennial Act, the institution of Election by Ballot, and the immediate dissolution of Parliament.' We feel at once that the current of thought

has lost itself in the shallows of formula, and we hasten on with some impatience to the much-quoted passage which brings the tract to an eloquent conclusion.

> It is wise to be sanguine in public as well as in private life; yet the sagacious statesman must view the present portents with anxiety, if not with terror. It would sometimes appear that the loss of our great Colonial Empire must be the necessary consequence of our prolonged domestic dissensions. Hope, however, lingers to the last. In the sedate but vigorous character of the British nation, we may place great confidence. Let us not forget also an influence too much underrated in this age of bustling mediocrity—the influence of individual character. Great spirits may yet arise to guide the groaning helm through the world of troubled waters; spirits whose proud destiny it may still be at the same time to maintain the glory of the Empire and to secure the happiness of the People!

'Who will be the proud spirit?' was Isaac D'Israeli's pointed query when he read the pamphlet; but his son vouchsafed no answer. The whole performance is a characteristically Disraelian blend of eloquence and bathos, of sincerity and pose, of insight and fantasy.

April 30, 1833.

> There is an attack in the *Morning Herald* on *What is He?* where the author is advised to adhere to the region of romance. Such attacks are not very disagreeable, for you have no idea of the success of the pamphlet, which is as much a favourite with the Tories as the Rads. The recent *exposé* of the Whigs proves me a prophet.[1]

In spite of this complacent view the world was as far as ever from an answer to the question which supplied a title to the pamphlet. A year had now elapsed since Disraeli's first appearance on the stage of practical politics, and he had done little more than win for himself the reputation of a political adventurer with unintelligible opinions. As he became more famous, controversy began to rage around the details of these first campaigns and it has never wholly died away; pamphleteering biographers

[1] *Letters*, p. 82.

striving with one another—some eager to prove that he was a consistent Tory from the beginning, others no less eager to convict him as an unscrupulous time-server, careless of everything but his own advancement. The outlines of the truth will now begin to be apparent. Disraeli in 1832 was impatiently eager to get into Parliament; but his opinions were the opinions of a man in complete isolation from the ordinary schools of political thought and he was almost cynically indifferent to the conventions of party allegiance. Experience soon taught him that this indifference could not be maintained; he learnt in due course to pay the necessary tribute to convention, and as time went on he acquired some of the freedom which is the privilege of greatness. But in these early days his extreme detachment in the matter of opinion and allegiance was ascribed by the multitude of humdrum politicians to absence of political convictions. That he was without political convictions, however, was the exact opposite of the truth. He was a man overburdened with political convictions, not yet fully elaborated or harmonised into a system, but dear to him as the product of original and independent thought. If he had been content to wear the livery of either party he could with half the energy and ability he showed have speedily forced his way into Parliament. But it was not in his nature to accept a political creed or programme ready made or to stifle the instinct of criticism which was so strong within him. He was a political free-thinker at the beginning of his career, as he remained a political free-thinker to the end.

Born in a library and trained from early childhood by learned men who did not share the passions and the prejudices of our political and social life, I had imbibed on some subjects conclusions different from those which generally prevail, and especially with reference to the history of our own country. How an oligarchy had been substituted for a kingdom, and a narrow-minded and bigoted fanaticism flourished in the name of religious liberty, were problems long to me insoluble, but which early interested me. But what most attracted my

musing, even as a boy, was the elements of our political parties, and the strange mystification by which that which was national in its constitution had become odious, and that which was exclusive was presented as popular.[1]

We are not bound to suppose that the Disraeli of 1832 would have set forth his difficulties in the precise manner in which the Disraeli of 1870 set them forth in retrospect: the language of the foregoing extract is the language of his finished political creed, of the *Vindication* or of *Coningsby*; but even in 1832 all the elements of his finished political creed can already be detected. His faith in democracy on the one hand, his reverence for tradition and our traditional institutions on the other; his dislike of the selfish Whig oligarchy; his desire to secure a modification of the Corn Laws, but without the sacrifice of agriculture; his interest in the condition of the people, and that, too, at a time when the subject had not become fashionable; these are all to be found in the speeches and writings of Disraeli's first year in politics precisely as they run through his subsequent political life. If we study his first campaigns in the light of what followed, putting aside party prepossessions and ignoring party labels, what they demonstrate is not any tendency to mental fickleness in the man, but an amazing continuity, not to say rigidity, of thought in the principles which underlie his whole political career. We need never look in Disraeli for the self-conscious consistency of the moral precisian; but there is no lack of the far deeper consistency which has its roots in a highly original mind, in a strong intellectual grasp of certain cardinal ideas, in a temperament of marked idiosyncrasy, and in a character of exceptional persistence.

[1] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

CHAPTER XII.

Life in London.

1833–1834.

In *Endymion* we are shown the contrast between the social world of London as Disraeli first knew it in his youth and the same world as he saw it half a century later.

> The great world then, compared with the huge society of the present period, was limited in its proportions, and composed of elements more refined though far less various. . . . There were then, perhaps, more great houses open than at the present day, but there were very few little ones. The necessity of providing regular occasions for the assembling of the miscellaneous world of fashion led to the institution of Almack's, which died out in the advent of the new system of society, and in the fierce competition of its inexhaustible private entertainments. The season then was brilliant and sustained, but it was not flurried. People did not go to various parties on the same night. They remained where they were assembled, and, not being in a hurry, were more agreeable than they are at the present day. Conversation was more cultivated; manners, though unconstrained, were more stately; and the world, being limited, knew itself much better.[1]

On his return from the East Disraeli had, as we have seen, at once found admission to a society which, if not the highest, stood in close relationship to the highest —a curious blend of literature, fashion, politics, and bohemianism; and here and in even more Olympian

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 5.

circles he made rapid headway from the first. He had all the qualities that enable a man to shine in such an atmosphere: he was by instinct a social artist, as his earliest novels prove; in those days dandyism was in fashion, and he was a dandy by nature, practice, and conviction; he was 'at that time a very handsome young man, with a countenance in which beauty of feature and intellectual expression were strikingly combined'[1]; and he could when he liked be so brilliant in conversation as to extort admiring testimony even from unsympathetic listeners.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Feb. 21, 1833.

Yesterday I dined with the Nortons; it was her eldest brother's birthday, who, she says, is 'the only respectable one of the family, and that is because he has a liver complaint.' There were there her brother Charles and old Charles Sheridan, the uncle, and others. The only lady beside Mrs. Norton, her sister Mrs. Blackwood,[2] also very handsome and very Sheridanic. She told me she was nothing. 'You see Georgy's the beauty, and Carry's the wit, and I ought to be the good one, but then I am not.' I must say I liked her exceedingly; besides, she knows all my works by heart, and spouts whole pages of 'V.G.' and 'C.F.' and the 'Y.D.' In the evening came the beauty, Lady St. Maur, and anything so splendid I never gazed upon. Even the handsomest family in the world, which I think the Sheridans are, all looked dull. Clusters of the darkest hair, the most brilliant complexion, a contour of face perfectly ideal. In the evening Mrs. Norton sang and acted, and did everything that was delightful. Ossulston came in—a very fine singer, unaffected and good-looking. Old Mrs. Sheridan—who, by the bye, is young and pretty, and authoress of *Carwell*—is my greatest admirer; in fact, the whole family have a very proper idea of my merits! and I like them all.[3]

Many years later Lady Dufferin gave a description of the appearance presented at this dinner party by her sister's fantastic guest. He wore, she said, 'a black

[1] Sir Henry Layard in the *Quarterly Review* for Jan., 1889.
[2] Afterwards Lady Dufferin. [3] *Letters*, p. 80.

velvet coat lined with satin, purple trousers with a gold band running down the outside seam, a scarlet waistcoat, long lace ruffles, falling down to the tips of his fingers, white gloves with several brilliant rings outside them, and long black ringlets rippling down upon his shoulders.'[1] Lady Dufferin protested that there was not the slightest exaggeration in this picture; but we may at least suspect or hope that time had not deprived it of any of its colour. It may have been to the same occasion that she referred in a well-known anecdote.

He was once dining with my insufferable brother-in-law, Mr. Norton, when the host begged him to drink a particular kind of wine, saying he had never tasted anything so good before. Disraeli agreed that the wine was very good. 'Well,' said Norton, 'I have got wine twenty times as good in my cellar.' 'No doubt, no doubt,' said Disraeli, looking round the table; 'but, my dear fellow, this is quite good enough for such *canaille* as you have got to-day.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

April 25, 1833.

I have done nothing but go to the play lately, one night with Mrs. Norton to see Sheridan Knowles's new play, which was successful. Public amusements are tedious, but in a private box with a fair companion less so.

May 22.

There was a review in Hyde Park, and the Wyndham Lewis's gave a *déjeuner*, to which I went. By the bye, would you like Lady Z—— for a sister-in-law, very clever, £25,000 and domestic? As for 'love,' all my friends who married for love and beauty either beat their wives or live apart from them. This is literally the case. I may commit many follies in life, but I never intend to marry for 'love,' which I am sure is a guarantee of infelicity.[2]

The meeting with this lady was at the Opera, and an entry in her diary gives us a glimpse of Disraeli in the company of a clever and romantic girl.

[1] Motley's *Correspondence*, I., p. 264. [2] *Letters*, p. 82.

The younger Disraeli was in the box. He and I soon got acquainted. He is wild, enthusiastic, and very poetical. He told me he thought Southey the greatest man of the age; he was really a great man, he said. . . . The brilliancy of my companion infected me, and we ran on about poetry and Venice and Baghdad and Damascus. He tells me that repose is the great thing and that nothing repays exertion. Yet noise and light are his fondest dreams, and nothing could compensate him for an obscure youth—not even glorious old age. It was beautiful to hear him talk of Southey.

The girl was herself a great admirer of Southey's, but her companion's enthusiasm, we may suspect, began and ended in that opera box. 'Lady Z.' presently found a less poetical husband, and nearly fifty years later Disraeli had the satisfaction of recommending her son for a peerage. Marriage at this time was a good deal in his thoughts, and in the letters from Bradenham there are frequent allusions to a matrimonial scheme to which, though probably having its origin less in his own feelings than in the wishes of his family, he seems seriously for a time to have given his attention. The lady was a sister of his lost friend Meredith, but whether through her own reluctance or her suitor's lack of zeal the project came to nothing.

To Sarah Disraeli.

June 29.

My table is literally covered with invitations, and some from people I do not know. I dined yesterday with the St. Maurs, to meet Mrs. Sheridan. An agreeable party: the other guests, Lady Westmorland, very clever; Mrs. Blackwood, Lord Clements, and Brinsley. Lord St. Maur, great talent, which develops itself in a domestic circle, though otherwise shy-mannered. In the evening a good *soirée* at Lady Charleville's. I met Lady Aldboro', but the lion of the evening was Lucien Bonaparte, the Prince of Canino. I went to the Caledonian Ball after all, in a dress from my Oriental collection. Particulars when we meet. Yesterday, at Mrs. Wyndham's, I met Joseph Bonaparte and his beautiful daughter.

July 20.

I am putting my house in order and preparing for a six months' sojourn and solitude amid the groves of Bradenham. . . . London is emptying fast, but gay. Lady Cork[1] had two routs. 'All my best people, no blues.' At a concert at Mrs. Mitford's I was introduced to Malibran, who is to be the heroine of my opera. She is a very interesting person.

Aug. 4.

My letters are shorter than Napoleon's, but I love you more than he did Josephine. I shall be down to-morrow.[2]

'I wish,' wrote his father on some occasion, 'that your organization allowed you to write calmer letters, and that you could sober yourself down to a diary before you went to bed.' To a diary in the ordinary sense Disraeli never did succeed in sobering himself down, but in these quiet autumn months at Bradenham he began a document which has unfortunately not escaped the ravages of time and is known to those who have engaged in the exploration of his papers as the 'Mutilated Diary.'

Sept. 1, 1833.

I have passed the whole of this year in uninterrupted lounging and pleasure—with the exception of offering myself for Marylebone and writing a pamphlet, but the expected vacancy, thank God, did not occur: and one incident has indeed made this year the happiest of my life. How long will these feelings last? They have stood a great test, and now absence, perhaps the most fatal of all. My life has not been a happy one. Nature has given me an awful ambition and fiery passions. My life has been a struggle, with moments of rapture—a storm with dashes of moonlight—Love, Poetry
* * * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * achieve the difficult undertaking.

[1] Mary Countess of Cork (1746-1840), widow of the 7th Earl, who died in 1798. Before her marriage she was the Miss Monckton whom we meet in Boswell; whose 'vivacity enchanted the sage'; and whom Johnson crushed in argument with the retort, 'Dearest, you're a dunce,' adding, when she reproached him afterwards, 'Madam, if I had thought so, I certainly should not have said it.' She was a lion-hunter all her life and, beside the members of Johnson's circle, had known the Prince Regent, Castlereagh, Canning, Byron, Scott, and a hundred other celebrities. We shall find her appearing in *Henrietta Temple* as Lady Bellair.

[2] *Letters*, pp. 83, 84.

With fair health I have no doubt of success, but the result will probably be fatal to my life.

My disposition is now indolent. I wish to be idle and enjoy myself, muse over the stormy past and smile at the placid present. My career will probably be more energetic than ever, and the world will wonder at my ambition. Alas! I struggle from Pride. Yes! It is Pride that now prompts me, not Ambition. They shall not say I have failed. It is not Love that makes me say this. I remember expressing this feeling to Bulwer as we were returning from Bath together, a man who was at that moment an M.P., and an active one, editing a political journal and writing at the same time a novel and a profound and admirable philosophical work. He turned round and pressed my arm and said in a tone the sincerity of which could not be doubted: 'It is true, my dear fellow, it is true. We are sacrificing our youth, the time of pleasure, the bright season of enjoyment—but we are bound to go on, we are *bound*. How our enemies would triumph were we to retire from the stage! And yet,' he continued in a solemn voice, 'I have more than once been tempted to throw it all up, and quit even my country, for ever.'

All men of high imagination are indolent.

I have not gained much in conversation with men. Bulwer is one of the few with whom my intellect comes into collision with benefit. He is full of thought, and views at once original and just. The material of his conversation and many a hint from our colloquies he has poured into his *England and the English*, a fine series of philosophic dissertations. Lockhart is good for *tête-à-têtes*, if he like you, which he did me *once. His mind is full of literature, but no great power* of thought. He is an overrated man. But the man from whom I have gained most in conversation is Botta,[1] the son of the Italian historian, whom I knew in Egypt, travelling as a physician in the Syrian dress—the most philosophic mind that I ever came in contact with. Hour after hour has glided away, while, *chibouque* in mouth, we have disserted together upon our divan, in a country where there are no journals and no books. My mind made a jump in these high discourses. Botta was wont to say that they formed also an era in his intellectual life. If I add to these my father, the list comprises the few men from whose conversation I have gained wisdom. I make it a rule now never to throw

[1] Paul Emile Botta, 1805-1870. He was afterwards French Consul at Mosul, and shares with Layard the honour of founding Assyrian archæology.

myself open to men. I do not grudge them the knowledge I could impart, but I am always exhausted by composition when I enter society, and little inclined to talk, and as I never get anything in return, I do not think the exertion necessary. In the conversation of society the most brilliant men I know are perhaps Spencer (now in Paris) and Tom Moore. As a lively companion, of ceaseless entertainment and fun, no one perhaps equals Charles Mathews, the son of the comedian, but far excelling his father, who is, I understand, jealous of him. James Smith, though gouty, will nevertheless not easily find a rival as a *diseur des bons mots*; I met him at General Phipps's this year, and he divided mankind into those who walked to get an appetite for their dinner and those who walked to get a dinner for their appetite. *Jeemes* Smith, as the good old General (who, by the bye, gives as pleasant little dinners as anybody in town) ever calls him. 'General,' says Lady Cork, 'when am I to dine with you?' 'Name your day and your party, Lady Cork.' 'Well then, the 20th, and you may ask whom you like—only not Jeemes Smith or Jekyll, I am tired of them.'

But I am not Lady Cork, and was very much amused with Jeemes. Jekyll has his faculties, but is deaf, like Lady Aldboro'. I cannot bear deaf people. I feel for them so much, and I never can repeat what I say, not even to Princes.

The world calls me *conceited*. The world is in error. I trace all the blunders of my life to sacrificing my own opinion to that of others. When I was considered very conceited indeed I was nervous and had self-confidence only by fits. I intend in future to act entirely from my own impulse. I have an unerring instinct—I can read characters at a glance; few men can deceive me. My mind is a continental mind. It is a revolutionary mind. I am only truly great in action. If ever I am placed in a truly eminent position I shall prove this. I could rule the House of Commons, although there would be a great prejudice against me at first. It is the most jealous assembly in the world. The fixed character of our English society, the consequence of our aristocratic institutions, renders a career difficult. Poetry is the safety-valve of my passions, but I wish to act what I write. My works are the embodification of my feelings. In *Vivian Grey* I have portrayed my active and real ambition. In *Alroy* my ideal ambition. The *Psychological Romance* is a development of my poetic character. This trilogy is the secret history of my feelings. I shall write no more about myself.

The Utilitarians in politics are like the Unitarians in religion; both omit imagination in their systems, and imagination governs mankind.

Oct. 21.

Seven weeks ! and not a line in my book.

These strange rhapsodies show that Disraeli's mind was in a state of unusual exaltation and excitement, and prepare us for that which followed. In the course of the autumn months at Bradenham he embarked on a literary venture which is one of the most curious enterprises of an enterprising life. The habit of verse-making, apart from any genuine poetic impulse, was more in fashion among the educated in those days than now; Isaac D'Israeli was much addicted to it, and his son hardly less, in spite of his discovery proclaimed in *Contarini*, and repeated in *Alroy*, that the age of versification was past. Full of a vague consciousness of power, which had hardly yet been directed into definite channels, he was now seized, as he wrote to Austen, by 'an unconquerable desire of producing something great and lasting,' and he seems to have indulged for a moment in the dream that he might become a supreme poet. He had achieved already no small reputation as a writer of prose fiction; in imagination, at all events, he had scaled the steepest heights of political ambition; and turning his thoughts to poetry he characteristically aimed at the highest. Let him tell the tale himself.

It was in the plains of Troy that I first conceived the idea of this work. Wandering over that illustrious scene, surrounded by the tombs of heroes and by the confluence of poetic streams, my musing thoughts clustered round the memory of that immortal song, to which all creeds and countries alike respond, which has vanquished Chance, and defies Time. Deeming myself, perchance too rashly, in that excited hour a Poet, I cursed the destiny that had placed me in an age that boasted of being anti-poetical. And while my Fancy thus struggled with my Reason, it flashed across my mind like the lightning which was then playing over Ida, that in those great poems which rise, the pyramids of

poetic art, amid the falling and the fading splendour of less creations, the Poet hath ever embodied the spirit of his Time. Thus the most heroick incident of an heroick age produced in the *Iliad* an Heroick Epick; thus the consolidation of the most superb of Empires produced in the *Aeneid* a Political Epick; the revival of learning and the birth of vernacular genius presented us in the *Divine Comedy* with a National Epick; and the Reformation and its consequences called from the rapt lyre of Milton a Religious Epick.

And the spirit of my time, shall it alone be uncelebrated?

Standing upon Asia, and gazing upon Europe, with the broad Hellespont alone between us, and the shadow of night descending on the mountains, these mighty continents appeared to me, as it were, the rival principles of government that, at present, contend for the mastery of the world. 'What!' I exclaimed, 'is the revolution of France a less important event than the siege of Troy? Is Napoleon a less interesting character than Achilles? For me remains the Revolutionary Epick.'[1]

To the development of this great conception he now accordingly applied himself. 'I live here like a hermit,' he writes to Mrs. Austen from Bradenham, 'and have scarcely seen my family. I rise at seven, and my day passes in study and composition.' A little later he is at Southend, staying 'at an old grange with gable ends and antique windows,' 'living solely on snipes and riding a good deal,' but still 'passing his days in constant composition.' By the beginning of December he is far enough advanced to set forth his argument.

To Mrs. Austen.

Dec. 1, 1833.

Since the revolt of America a new principle has been at work in the world to which I trace all that occurs. This is the Revolutionary principle, and this is what I wish to embody in the *Revolutionary Epick*. I imagine the Genius of Feudalism and the Genius of Federalism appearing before the Almighty Throne and pleading their respective and antagonistic causes. The pleading of the Feudal Genius, in which I say all that can be urged in favour of the aristocratic system of society, forms

[1] Preface to the *Revolutionary Epick*.

the first book: the pleading of the Federal, the second: the decree of the Omnipotent is mystical. It declares that a man is born of supernatural energies and that whichever side he embraces will succeed, or to that effect. The man is Napoleon just about to conquer Italy. The spirits descend to earth to join him. He adopts the Federal or Democratic side. The Feudal stirs up the Kings against him. Hence my machinery! The next two books contain the conquest of Italy, very little vulgar fighting but highly idealised. This is all—about 4,000 lines—that I shall now venture to print; the whole of it is matured in my mind, though probably it could not be completed under 30,000 lines. What do you think of it? The conception seems to me sublime. All depends on the execution. I have finished the three first books. The two first cost me much the most trouble; the rest is play work.

Mrs. Austen was still his literary Egeria. 'You appear,' he tells her, 'to be the only person in the world except myself who have any energy. What would I give to have you always at my right hand?' When he wants a description of Josephine he appeals to her. 'Are you sure that a Creole is dark? No matter, I will make her brunette. . . . I was introduced to the King of Spain and the Prince of Canino (Lucien) last year, but do not like to write to them.' Or again,

I have got a grand simile about a S. Wester, I think they call it: and am perfectly ignorant of the geography of the wind and have no atlas here. I mean that wind that blows, I think, about the Cape and knocks the Honourable Company's ships about. Daniel has a famous picture about it, consisting of one ship and one wave. Is it a S. Wester that I mean, and whence does it blow, and all about it? Get it up for the 16th.

On the 16th of January he was to dine with the Austens, and he promised to put a canto of his work in his bag and if they were alone 'to perform the part of the Importunate Author and bore them with a grand recitation.' They were not alone, but the grand recitation was given all the same. 'There was something irresistibly comic,' writes an eye-witness[1] of the scene that followed, 'in the young man dressed in the fantastic, coxcombical costume

[1] Sir Henry Layard in the *Quarterly Review* for January, 1889.

that he then affected—velvet coat of an original cut thrown wide open, and ruffles to its sleeves, shirt collars turned down in Byronic fashion, an elaborately embroidered waistcoat whence issued voluminous folds of frill, and shoes adorned with red rosettes—his black hair pomatumed and elaborately curled, and his person redolent with perfume—announcing himself as the Homer or Dante of the age.' Thus arrayed, and standing with his back to the fire, our poet unfolded in grandiloquent language his great conception; and he then declaimed in pretentious tones the whole of his first canto. But unfortunately for the effect produced he had no sooner left the room than Samuel Warren,[1] who was present, recited in perfect mimicry of style and voice and manner a number of heroic verses improvised for the occasion; and the company, which had no doubt been hovering between admiration and amusement, hardly knowing whether to regard the poem as a work of genius or of coxcombry, settled the question at once by going into fits of laughter.

The *Epick* was published in the spring of 1834, the first book separately in March, the second and third together in June. 'My poem turns out a terrible labor,' he wrote to Austen on the eve of publication, but presently added with some complacency:—

> I have executed the work to my satisfaction and, what is of more importance, to the satisfaction of my father, a critic difficult to please. I await the great result with composure, though I am not sanguine of pleasing the million. I feel that I have now done enough for my reputation and that I am at length justified in merely looking to my purse.

The preface showed more becoming diffidence:—

> I have ventured to submit to the public but a small portion of my creation, and even that with unaffected distrust and sincere humility. Whatever may be their decision I shall bow to it without a murmur; for I am not one who find con-

[1] Author of *Ten Thousand a Year*.

solation for the neglect of my contemporaries in the imaginary plaudits of a more sympathetic posterity. The public will then decide whether this work is to be continued and completed; and if it pass in the negative, I shall, without a pang, hurl my lyre to Limbo.

The reading public gave the would-be successor of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton no encouragement, and with or without a pang he accordingly 'hurled his lyre to Limbo'; though not, it would seem, at once. Thirty years later, when the poem had long been buried, the stress of political controversy brought it to the light again. In debate in the House of Commons in 1864 Disraeli had occasion to denounce certain well-known opinions of Mazzini's; whereupon Mr. Bright retorted that if what he had somewhere read was true Disraeli himself in one of his earlier works had propounded doctrines not dissimilar in tendency. The statement was at once denied and the denial accepted: but some lines of swelling rhetoric were subsequently quoted in the newspapers from the *Revolutionary Epick* and eagerly repeated to prove that in his youth the Conservative leader had advocated regicide. Disraeli might very well have followed his usual practice and laughed at the charge, the more so as the lines in question,[1] occurring in the rival pleadings before the throne of Demogorgon, could no more be held with justice to incriminate the author than Milton could be held responsible for every sentiment of the fallen spirits in the debate in *Paradise Lost*: but

[1] They have a double dramatic shelter in their place in the poem, being quoted by Lyridon as the utterance of the maiden Opinion. In the original edition the passage runs:—

> Pharaoh's doom
> Shall cool those chariot wheels now wet with blood,
> And blessed be the hand that dares to wave
> The regicidal steel that shall redeem
> A nation's sorrow with a tyrant's blood.

In the edition of 1864 this became

> Dark Pharaoh's doom
> Shall cool your chariot wheels, and hallowed be
> The regicidal steel that shall redeem
> A nation's woe. —Bk. II. sect. 22.

he chose instead to make the incident the occasion for a new edition of the poem with substantial variations from the original, and in a dedicatory address to Lord Stanley prefixed to this edition he thus explained the variations:—

> The *Revolutionary Epick* is printed from the only copy in my possession, and which, with slight exceptions, was corrected in 1837, when, after three years' reflection, I had resolved not only to correct but to complete the work. The corrections are purely literary. The somewhat sudden accession of her Most Gracious Majesty occasioned in that year a dissolution of Parliament, and being then returned to the House of Commons, in which I have since sat without an interval, these dreams for ever vanished.

No one who has read *Contarini* will think it strange that the dreams should have visited him. Disraeli was indeed something of a poet, though his proper medium was neither the prose poetry of *Alroy* nor the heroic verse of the *Revolutionary Epick*. 'I am only truly great in action'; when he wrote that, his insight into character did not fail him. He carried into the field of action, indeed, a good deal of the spirit of the poet and the artist, but action was his true province all the same. For supreme greatness in the field of creative literature he had neither the self-restraint nor the self-devotion that are needed; and though he could make verses, he had none of the peculiar and divine gift which gives to verses the quality of lasting poetry. No one need be surprised then at the failure of the *Epick*. The conception, if not, according to his own word, sublime, has a certain largeness which a happier execution might have raised to the pitch of grandeur, and which even as it is gives an air of spaciousness to the poem. But the execution, on which, as he saw, all would depend, falls far short of the conception. Disraeli's verse is fluent, but where we look for poetry we find only the dull and cloudy rhetoric into which a man invariably falls who writes poetry not because he must, but because he thinks

it a fine thing to do. There is a brave pretence of poetic rapture, but rarely any gleam of genuine inspiration; a succession of brilliant fancies clothed in eloquent language, image piled upon image with gorgeous though bewildering prodigality; but nowhere the passionate thought that goes direct to the heart, or the inevitable phrase that lingers by its beauty in the memory. Where we find merit in the verse it is usually a merit that reflects the writer's studies in poetry rather than his own native gift. Take, for instance, the following description of Athens from the second book:—

> A city like the dream of youthful bard,
> Reposing in the shade of summer trees,
> And pressing to his eyes his magic hand,
> To call up visions of a fairer world:
> Blue ocean, bowery plain, and azure sky,
> And marble walls, and free-born citadel,
> Glittering with snowy columns in the sun;
> Statues of ivory, tablets like the blaze
> Of the far-flashing twilight of the land;
> And choral theatres, where the Poet's voice
> Blends with the whisper of the delicate air,
> The messenger of nature to his soul;
> And gardens of delight, in whose green glades
> And fragrant groves, or by the mossy verge
> Of sparkling fountain or serener stream,
> Conversing Sages teach to genial youth
> Ennobling precepts; to be wise and free,
> Refined and virtuous, is their theme sublime;
> Or for the high and passionate hour prepare,
> When from the Bema's all-subduing throne
> A voice may sway the fortunes of a world!
> Divine Equality, thou art a God
> Omnipotent indeed! Thy sacred fire
> Burns now in later temples, not to fall
> Like thine old shrines; yet who can e'er forget,
> Whose soul indeed thy noble faith inflames,
> Thy broken altar on Athena's hill!

We feel at once that our poet has studied his Milton and is engaged in a vain endeavour to mimic him. Original as was his genius, Disraeli was always a liberal

borrower, both from others and himself; and here, whether he is at his best or at his worst, he is invariably imitative. He had early been a devoted student of Shelley, and if the diction and versification of the poem are feebly reminiscent of Milton, the matter and machinery, and often even the sentiment, are still more reminiscent of Shelley, though unfortunately of Shelley in his least inspired moments. The word Demogorgon, which meets us in the opening lines, recalls Shelley at once, and in the first two books we have not only Demogorgon and the rival genii Magros and Lyridon, but a bewildering mixture of subordinate agents, Faith and Fealty, Religion and Loyalty, the Monster Change, the beautiful maiden Opinion, daughter of Physical and Moral Strength, and so forth—all vague impersonations in the Shelleyan manner, but not, alas! the manner of *Prometheus* or *Adonais*.

'Standing upon Asia and gazing upon Europe, . . . these mighty continents appeared to me as it were the Rival Principles of Government that at present contend for the mastery of the world.' What is still of profound interest in the poem to the student of Disraeli is the development of this contention between Asia and Europe which forms its essential subject. In his choice of the poetical form for the clothing of his thoughts there was no doubt a large element of pose, with the result that he produced poetry which is rhetorical, imitative, and, in a sense, insincere. But in his choice of the subject itself there was no insincerity. The conflict between Asia and Europe and all that they symbolise ran through Disraeli's life, as it runs through the poem, and never wholly found an issue in the triumph of either principle or in their harmonious reconcilement. 'My mind is a revolutionary mind': that was true, and perhaps especially true when it was written and when the *Revolutionary Epick* was conceived. Disraeli had been fascinated by the great drama in which the modern spirit was unfolding itself, and hence we get in the *Epick* the triumph of the

'Federal' side and the apotheosis of Napoleon. The third book closes with Napoleon's entry into Milan; but if the poem had been continued one wonders how the action could ever have been brought to a climax or to any natural conclusion. It is safe indeed to assume that even if Disraeli had received the encouragement which he looked for, he could never have completed the *Epick*; as in the case of *Vivian Grey* or *Contarini Fleming*, the impulse of creation must before long have spent itself and the current of his story have lost itself in shallows. He was able to remain at ease with his revolutionary theme through the space of a book or more, but he could not long have pursued it without acute spiritual discomfort. Revolutionary as he really was on one side of his complex nature, there was another side which is exposed in the first book of the *Epick* and which was to be the front presented to the world in his subsequent career. Reverence for the past, a Semitic feeling for religion, an instinct for the positive, for order, for tradition, for everything that Carlyle embodies in the phrase 'the everlasting yea'—all these things were strong within him, and it was in their development and expression and not in the *rôle* of revolutionary leader that his mission really lay. Yet to the end the revolutionary side was there; and it is just because Disraeli never lost his sympathy with the modern spirit, never felt any of that timorous shrinking from new political ideals which afflicts Conservatives of a narrower type, that his conservatism is so sane, so robust, and so fruitful; without forgetting the things which are behind he is always found reaching forth unto the things which are before.

To Sarah Disraeli.

THE GRANGE, SOUTHEND,
Thursday. [*Feb.* 13, 1834.]

MY DEAR CHILD,

Although I have only half a sheet in my desk, you shall not be a loser thereby. I continue here quite alone, my only companion little Eva, who with her golden locks and rosy

cheeks is a most beautiful child, and prattles without ceasing. The Sykes have not returned, and their return is indefinite, for the Baronet is very unwell, and confined to his room.

Solitude at this moment suits me very well. The book surpasses all my hopes, but so little of the original sketch remains that you will scarcely recognise it. Assure my father that it is not now at all like Pye, which he seemed to fear. I think of dedicating it to the Duke in a long political prose; if so, I shall request his permission; but upon this dedication I have not determined.

Montagu Gore has accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, and asked me to stand for Devizes, which I have refused. Any place but Parliament at present. The time will, however, come, and is coming speedily. Gore, according to his address, resigns for two reasons; his health, and also because he has recanted and turned Tory! His health and head seem equally weak. He is an ass, who has terminated an asinine career with a very characteristic bray.

I hunted the other day with Sir Henry Smythe's hounds, and although not in scarlet was the best mounted man in the field, riding Lady Sykes's Arabian mare, which I nearly killed, a run of 30 miles, and I stopped at nothing. I gained great *kudos*. The only Londoner I met was Henry [? Charles] Manners Sutton, who had come over to cover from Mistley Hall. He asked me to return with him, but as Lady Manners was not there, I saw no fun, and refused.

Write directly. Love to all,

Your affectionate D.

I told you, I believe, that Mrs. Norton had given me her portrait.

From the Duke of Wellington.

STRATHFIELDSAYE,
March 7, 1834.

SIR,

I am really much flattered by your desire to dedicate to me by permission your Epic Poem.

Unfortunately I found myself under the necessity twenty years ago of determining that I would never give a formal permission that any work should be dedicated to me. I will not trouble you with the reasons for this determination. They were founded upon a sense of the necessity for this course, or for the adoption of another—viz., that I should peruse every work which it was wished that I should give permission that it should be dedicated to me, before I should grant the required permission. This last alternative was

impracticable; and I have found myself under the painful necessity in many instances, as in this, of declining to give such formal permission.

If, however, you should think proper to dedicate your poem to me without such formal permission, you are at full liberty to take that course[1]; assuring you at the same time that I feel greatly flattered by the expression of your desire that I should permit it,

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,
WELLINGTON.

The *Epick* off his mind, Disraeli plunged with renewed zest into the dissipations of society.

May, 1834.

On Monday I dined with Lady Blessington—the Prince of Moskova, Charles Lafitte, Lords Castlereagh, Elphinstone, and Allen, Mr. Talbot, myself; and Lord Wilton was the absent guest, having to dine with the King, but he came in the evening. He is very handsome. Hope's ball on Monday was the finest thing this year—supped off gold and danced in the sculpture gallery. To-day is the Drawing-room; but nobody thinks of anything but politics. I dine with O'Connell on Saturday.[2]

Disraeli, as has been seen, had met Count D'Orsay, 'the famous Parisian dandy,' at a reception at Bulwer's a couple of years before, but this is the first time we hear of an acquaintance with Lady Blessington. Still in the fulness of her mature beauty, she had now been a widow for several years, and her house in Seamore Place, though shunned by the great ladies of society, had become a meeting ground for most of the social, literary, and political celebrities of the day. D'Orsay, the husband of her step-daughter, had succeeded after an interval to the empire of Brummell and was now at the height of his fame as leader of the dandies, arbiter of fashion, and gambler and spendthrift. With both him and Lady Blessington Disraeli soon formed an intimate and enduring friendship.

[1] The poem appeared without a dedication.

[2] *Letters*, p. 85.

June 4, 1834.

I was at Lady Dudley Stuart's on Sunday—a pleasant circle—and made the acquaintance of Lord Hertford.[1] I dine with Lady Cork to-day, to meet the Mulgraves, Tavistocks, and Lincolns.

June 16.

I made Beckford's acquaintance at the Opera on Thursday. Conversation of three hours [he adds in the Mutilated Diary]; very bitter and *malin*, but full of warm feelings for the worthy.

I dined yesterday with Lady Blessington, and Durham among the guests, and he talked to me nearly the whole evening; afterwards to Lady Salisbury's.[2]

A gossiping American journalist was one of the guests at this last dinner and wrote an account of it in his paper a few years later when Durham had crossed the Atlantic for his memorable work in Canada.

The guests dropped in, announced but unseen, in the dim twilight, and when Lord Durham came, I could only see that he was of middle stature, and of a naturally cold address. Bulwer spoke to him, but he was introduced to no one—a departure from the custom of that *maison sans gêne*, which was either a tribute to his Lordship's reserve or a ruse on the part of Lady Blessington to secure to Disraeli the advantage of having his acquaintance sought: successful, if so, for Lord Durham after dinner requested a formal introduction to him. But for D'Orsay, who sparkles, as he does everything else, out of rule, and in splendid defiance of others' dullness, the soup and first half hour of dinner would have passed off with the usual English fashion of earnest silence. . . . Bulwer and Disraeli were silent altogether. I should have foreboded a dull dinner if in the open brow, and clear sunny eye, and unembarrassed repose of the beautiful and expressive mouth of Lady Blessington I had not read the promise of a change.

It came presently. With a tact of which the subtle ease and grace can in no way be conveyed into description, she gathered up the cobweb threads of conversation going on at different parts of the table, and, by the most apparent accident, flung them into Disraeli's fingers. It was an appeal to his opinion on a subject he well understood, and

[1] The 'Lord Monmouth' of *Coningsby* and the 'Lord Steyne' of *Vanity Fair*.

[2] *Letters*, p. 86.

he burst at once, without preface, into that fiery vein of eloquence which, hearing many times after, and always with new delight, has stamped Disraeli in my mind as the most wonderful talker I have ever had the fortune to meet. He is anything but a declaimer. You would never think him on stilts. If he catches himself in a rhetorical sentence, he mocks at it in the next breath. He is satirical, contemptuous, pathetic, humorous, everything in a moment. Add to this that Disraeli's is the most intellectual face in England—pale, regular, and overshadowed with the most luxuriant masses of raven-black hair, and you will scarce wonder that meeting him for the first time Lord Durham was impressed. . . . Disraeli and he formed at the moment a finely-contrasted picture. Understanding his game perfectly, the author deferred constantly and adroitly to the opinion of his noble listener, shaped his argument by his suggestions, allowed him to say nothing without using it as the nucleus of some new turn to his eloquence, and all this with an apparent effort against it, as if he had desired to address himself exclusively to Lady Blessington, but was compelled by a superior intellectual magnetism to turn aside to pay homage to her guest. . . . Without meaning any disrespect to Disraeli, whom I admire as much as any man in England, I remarked to my neighbour, a celebrated artist, that it would make a glorious drawing of Satan tempting an archangel to rebel.

Well, Disraeli is in Parliament, and Lord Durham on the last round but one of the ladder of subject greatness. The Viceroy will be Premier, no doubt, but it is questionable if the author of *Vivian Grey* does more than carry out the moral of his own tale. Talking at a brilliant table, with an indulgent and superb woman on the watch for wit and eloquence, and rising in the face of a cold, commonsense House of Commons on the look out for froth and humbug, are two different matters. In a great crisis, with the nation in a tempest, Disraeli would flash across the darkness very finely, but he will never do for the calm right hand of a Premier.[1]

This testimony as to Disraeli's powers of conversation is confirmed in a less exuberant manner by another witness. 'I frequently met Mr. Disraeli at Lady Blessington's,' writes her biographer.

[1] N. P. Willis—known among his countrymen, for reasons which any reader of the above excerpt will understand, as 'Namby Pamby' Willis—in the *New York Mirror* for Aug. 11, 1838.

Though in general society he was habitually silent and reserved, he was closely observant. It required generally a subject of more than common interest to produce the fitting degree of enthusiasm to animate him and to stimulate him into the exercise of his marvellous powers of conversation. When duly excited, however, his command of language was truly wonderful, his power of sarcasm unsurpassed; the readiness of his wit, the quickness of his perception, the grasp of mind that enabled him to seize on all the parts of any subject under discussion, those only would venture to call in question who had never been in his company at the period I refer to.[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

June 19, 1834.

I was at the Duchess of St. Albans on Monday, but rather too late for the fun. It was a most brilliant *fête*. The breakfast a real banquet; but I missed the Morris dancers, &c. In the evening at Lady Essex, where the coterie consisted of the new Postmaster-General and his lady, the Chesterfields, George Ansons, and Albert Conynghams, and Castlereagh. Tuesday after the Opera I supped with Castlereagh, who gave a very *recherché* party. Ossulston,[2] myself, Massey Stanley, and a Forester, not Cecil. Wednesday a good dinner at Lady Sykes: to-night, after paying my respects to their Majesties at the Opera, I am going to the Duchess of Hamilton's.

I have had great success in society this year in every respect. . . . I make my way easily in the highest set, where there is no envy, malice, &c., and where they like to admire and be amused. Yesterday Lord Durham called upon me, being the first day he has been in town since we met. I was not at home; but this Lady Blessington told me. I am also right in politics as well as society, being now backed by a very powerful party, and I think the winning one.

A good story! On Monday, I think, Lady Sykes was at Lady Cork's, and Lord Carrington paid her a visit.

Lady C.: Do you know young Disraeli?
Lord C.: Hem! Why? Eh?
Lady C.: Why, he is your neighbour, isn't he, eh?
Lord C.: His father is.
Lady C.: I know that. His father is one of my dearest friends. I dote on the Disraelis.

[1] Madden's *Countess of Blessington*, III., p. 81.
[2] Castlereagh was afterwards 4th Marquis of Londonderry and Ossulston 6th Earl of Tankerville.

Lord C.: The young man is a very extraordinary sort of person. The father I like; he is very quiet and respectable.

Lady C.: Why do you think the young man extraordinary? I should not think that *you* could taste him.

Lord C.: He is a great agitator. Not that he troubles us much *now*. He is never amongst us now. I believe he has gone abroad again.

Lady C., *literatim*: You old fool! Why, he sent me this book this morning. You need not look at it; you can't understand it. It is the finest book ever written. Gone abroad, indeed! Why, he is the best *ton* in London! There is not a party that goes down without him. The Duchess of Hamilton says there is nothing like. Lady Lonsdale would give her head and shoulders for him. He would not dine at your house if you were to ask him. He does not care for people because they are lords; he must have fashion, or beauty, or wit, or something: and you are a very good sort of person, but you are nothing more.

The old Lord took it very good-humoredly, and laughed. Lady Cork has read every line of the new book. I don't doubt the sincerity of her admiration, for she has laid out 17s. in crimson velvet, and her maid is binding it. . . .

D.

Monday morning. [*July* 7.]

My Dearest,

I have quite recovered, but I am taking quinine and shall yet for a few days. I was very unwell unto Friday evening. I had promised to join a water party in Sir Frank's yacht, which has returned without its master, to witness the Royal embarkation on Saturday morning, and the exertion, which I dreaded, cured me. It was almost the only party of pleasure that ever turned out pleasant. Lady Sykes and Sir M. and Lady Georgiana Cholmely, the Burdett daughters, Castlereagh, Ossulston, and myself. The day was beautiful. The ladies went off the night before. Ossulston drove me down in his cab. We arrived just in time, half past 9, in spite of a long debate on tithes, which had kept him and Cas. up till 2. Cas. rode down and arrived covered with dust and sulky, but just in time also; and regained his good humor after breakfast. After the show we breakfasted, and sailed up to Greenwich. After lionising the hospital and sentimentalising in the Park, we had a magnificent banquet on deck, and had nothing from shore except whitebait piping hot. Ossulston

was our minstrel, and a most musical one; and we all arrived in town in time for the ballet. I never knew a more agreeable day, and never drank so much champagne in my life. I woke, quite well, and, after a very dull dinner party at the Wyndham Lewis's, went to Lady Salisbury's. So you see I am on my legs again. I am sorry for dear Jem, but he has many fellow-sufferers. The influenza, however, is not so severe as last year.

My love to all.

Your own D.

Ossulston asked me to allow him to put me up for Crockford's. I told him that I was sure I should be black-balled; but he was sanguine of the reverse, and is to consult his friends.

Disraeli was not elected to Crockford's, the famous gaming house in St. James's Street, till 1840, a few years before the dissolution of the club. Another social institution of the day was Almack's, a periodical subscription ball held at Willis's Rooms and presided over by an oligarchy of fashionable ladies, who wielded their powers with a jealous and vigilant exclusiveness.

To Sarah Disraeli.

July 11, 1834.

I made my *début* at Almack's with a subscription from Lady Tankerville,[1] but it was not a very brilliant *réunion*. Yesterday I met Lord Lyndhurst, whom I like very much. The next time he goes the Norfolk circuit he is to sleep at Bradenham. He says the Duke of Wellington never reads any book but the *Commentaries*,[2] and assured me it was a positive fact!

July 23.

I still adhere to my plan of being down with you in a week or ten days, and tell Tita to get my pipes in order, as I look forward to a batch of smoking with great zest.

[1] Daughter of Antoine Duc de Gramont and sister of the Duc de Gramont, who married Count Alfred D'Orsay's sister.

[2] [Is the reference to Cæsar's *Commentaries*—a work well known to be a favourite of the Duke's—or to Isaac D'Israeli's *Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles the First*, as Disraeli seems to suggest to his sister?—G. E. B.]

I go every day to fêtes and water parties. Lady Tavistock's at Richmond on Saturday. Monday, another party to Blackwall with D'Orsay. To-morrow to Lord Hertford's. I find the end of the season more fatiguing than the beginning, owing to the morning festivities.

The water party at the 'Cedars' most delightful. We embarked at five o'clock, the heavens very favourable, sang all the way down, wandered in beautiful gardens worthy of Paul Veronese full not only of flowers, but fountains and parroquets: the dinner first-rate and much better than cold, miserable picnics, in which all bring the same things. People are still in town, but Goodwood will, I think, clear us.[1]

'You give me the same advice as my father ever has done,' he wrote on some occasion to Lady Blessington, 'about dotting down the evanescent feelings of youth; but, like other excellent advice, I fear it will prove unprofitable. I have a horror of journalising, and indeed of writing of all description. With me execution is ever a labour and conception a delight. Although a great traveller, I never kept a diary in my life.' His book of jottings and reflections, if we are not to call it a diary, had been forgotten since October, but in the seclusion of Bradenham he returned to it once more.

BRADENHAM,
Aug. 4, 1834.

And now nearly a year has elapsed. And what an eventful one! Let me sketch it. The end of 1833 and spring of 1834 passed in Essex, writing the three first books of the *Revolutionary Epick*: returned to Bradenham before Easter, then to town and remained there until this moment. A season of unparalleled success and gaiety. What a vast number of extraordinary characters have passed before me or with whom I have become acquainted. Interviews with O'Connell, Beckford, and Lord Durham, three men all making a great noise. Will they be remembered when this book turns up, if ever it do? Perhaps O'Connell. The first [he added in a letter to his sister] is the man of the greatest genius; the second of the greatest taste; and the last of the greatest ambition.

Conversation of three hours with O'Connell, next whom

[1] *Letters*, pp. 87, 88.

I sat at dinner. Very communicative. Said that from being the son of a gentleman farmer he had raised himself to be *une des puissances du monde* (his very words). Said that the Clare Election was the most nervous moment of his life. I think he said he did not sleep a wink for three days. Had he failed he would have been ridiculous for life. Did not determine on the step until he had tried every country gentleman favorable to the Catholics. Two days after the election a legal flaw was detected in the registration of his voters by which, had it been discovered in time, his majority, and much more, would have been cut off.

How sorry I am that I did not keep some record of the last four months. I revived my acquaintance with the Sheridans, with whom I was so intimate last year, Mrs. Norton, Helen Blackwood, Lady Seymour—three matchless sisters, and the mother and Lady Graham.

Mrs. Norton's house was the scene of the famous encounter with Lord Melbourne, of which the story has been so often told.

It was in 1834 that I met Lord Melbourne at Storey's Gate and was introduced to him. Lord Melbourne asked how he could advance me in life, and half proposed that I should be his private secretary, enquiring what my object in life might be. 'To be Prime Minister.' It was then that Lord Melbourne, with a gravity not common with him, set to work to prove to me how vain and impossible to realise, in those days, was this ambition. It was a long speech, and I think I could repeat every word of it still.

So Disraeli himself told the story to Lord Rowton, and Melbourne's biographer supplies what is missing. Lord Grey, it will be borne in mind, had not yet resigned, and Melbourne was still Home Secretary. Disraeli was presented to him after dinner, and the two had a long conversation.

The Minister was attracted more and more as he listened to the uncommonplace language and spirit of the youthful politician, and thought to himself he would be well worth serving. Abruptly, but with a certain tone of kindness which took away any air of assumption, he said, 'Well now, tell me, what do you want to be?' The quiet gravity of

the reply fairly took him aback—'I want to be Prime Minister.' Melbourne gave a long sigh, and then said very seriously: 'No chance of that in our time. It is all arranged and settled. Nobody but Lord Grey could perhaps have carried the Reform Bill; but he is an old man, and when he gives up, he will certainly be succeeded by one who has every requisite for the position, in the prime of life and fame, of old blood, high rank, great fortune, and greater ability. Once in power, there is nothing to prevent him holding office as long as Sir Robert Walpole. Nobody can compete with Stanley. I heard him the other night in the Commons, when the party were all divided and breaking away from their ranks, recall them by the mere force of superior will and eloquence: he rose like a young eagle above them all, and kept hovering over their heads till they were reduced to abject submission. There is nothing like him. If you are going into politics and mean to stick to it, I daresay you will do very well, for you have ability and enterprise; and if you are careful how you steer, no doubt you will get into some port at last. But you must put all these foolish notions out of your head; they won't do at all. Stanley will be the next Prime Minister, you will see."[1]

There is a sequel to the story which is not so well known. Melbourne lived till near the close of 1848; and when, after the death of Lord George Bentinck in the autumn of that year and shortly before his own, he heard of Disraeli's approaching elevation to the leadership of the Tory party in the House of Commons, he exclaimed in some excitement, 'By God! the fellow will do it yet.'

I have become this year [the diary resumes] very popular with the dandies. D'Orsay took a fancy to me, and they take their tone from him. Lady Blessington is their muse, and she declared violently in my favor. I am as popular with first-rate men as I am hated by the second-rate: D'Orsay, Massey Stanley, Talbot, Marquis of Worcester. Revived my acquaintance with Angerstein,[2] who thought I meant to cut him—an error! I am very blind.

What a happy or rather amusing society H[enrietta][3] and myself commanded this year. What delicious little

[1] Torrens's *Life of Melbourne*, p. 275.
[2] His second, it will be remembered, in the affair with Lord Nugent.
[3] See below, p. 343.

suppers after the Opera! Castlereagh ever gay, a constant attendant, and Ossulston, the pet of all the women, with his beautiful voice. What a singular character is Ossulston. He requires studying. Then we made it a point always to have some very pretty women. Charles Mathews ever there. Inimitable mime! His animal spirits are extraordinary. Landseer (Edwin), Grantley Berkeley, Seymour de Constant. This last hero reminds me of that extraordinary woman Lady Dudley Stuart,[1] and she again of her family—most of whom I know, Lucien Prince of Canino, Joseph Count of Survilliers. Lady Dudley's little son, like the Emperor. And Lord Dudley must not be forgotten with his handsome melancholy face, and then Lady Tankerville and her lovers. How much I could write of this singular coterie! But this is a mem. which will recall them perhaps to my memory.

Old Lady Salisbury and old Lady Cork. Met the Duke of Wellington at Lady Cork's in his blue ribbon the eve of the day Lord Grey resigned. 'He always wears his blue ribbon when mischief is going on,' whispered Ossulston to me.

Rogers hates me. I can hardly believe, as he gives out, that V. G. is the cause. Considering his age I endeavoured to conciliate him, but it is impossible. I think I will give him cause to hate me. When Shee was elected P.R.A. Rogers (his friend) said it was the greatest compliment ever paid to *Literature*.

Lord Wilton and his Italian. The story I thought too good but I believe *true*.

{Come sto Signor Rubini
{Come sta Signora Grisi

Dined with him at Lady B.'s.

Lady Blessington and Lady Manners Sutton [her sister]. The Speaker appeared to me a *bête* when I was introduced to him by his wife.

Long conversation with Lord Lyndhurst. He said that if he were to choose a career *now* it would be to be at once editor and proprietor of a first-rate newspaper.

To Lady Blessington.

BRADENHAM HOUSE,
Aug. 5. [1834.]

I was so sorry to leave London without being a moment alone with you; but although I came to the Opera last night on purpose, Fate was against us. I did not reach this place until Sunday, very ill indeed from the pangs of parting. Indeed,

[1] Daughter of Lucien Bonaparte.

I feel as desolate as a ghost, and I do not think that I ever shall be able to settle to anything again. It is a great shame, when people are happy together, that they should be ever separated; but it seems the great object of all human legislation that people never should be happy together.

My father I find better than I expected, and much cheered by my presence. I delivered him all your kind messages. He is now very busy on his History of English Literature, in which he is far advanced. I am mistaken if you will not delight in these volumes. They are full of new views of the history of our language, and indeed of our country, for the history of a State is necessarily mixed up with the history of its literature.

For myself, I am doing nothing. The western breeze favors an *al fresco* existence, and I am seated with a pipe under a spreading sycamore, solemn as a pasha.

I wish you could induce Hookham to entrust me with *Agathon*,[1] that mad Byronic novel.

What do you think of the modern French novelists, and is it worth my while to read them, and if so, what do you recommend me? What of Balzac, is he better than Sue and Geo: Sand Dudevant and are these inferior to Hugo? I ask you these questions because you will give me short answers, like all people who are masters of their subject.

I suppose it is vain to hope to see my dear D'Orsay here; I wish indeed he would come. Here is a cook by no means contemptible. He can bring his horses if he like, but I can mount him. Adieu, dear Lady Blessington, some day I will try to write you a more amusing letter; at present I am in truth ill and sad.[2]

BRADENHAM HOUSE,
Friday, Aug. 15. [1834.]

MY DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,

I have been very unwell, or I should sooner have acknowledged the receipt of your kind letter. I can assure you that your friendship is a great consolation to me. The change of life was too sad and sudden. Indeed I am quite at a loss how to manage affairs in future as I find separation more irksome than even my bitterest imagination predicted. God however is great, and the future must regulate itself, for I can't. I have done nothing but scribble one day a third part of *The Infernal Marriage* with which fantasy Colburn pretends now to be much pleased. I suppose your letter is at the bottom of his rapture.

[1] A translation from the German of Wieland.

[2] From Mr. Alfred Morrison's collection of autograph letters.

I am delighted with *Agathon*. It left me musing, which is a test of great work. I invariably close one in a reverie. Wieland indeed always delights me. I sympathise with him much. There is a wild Oriental fancy blended with his Western philosophy which is a charming union. I like a moral to peep out of the wildest invention, to assure us that, while we have been amused, we have also all the time been growing a little wiser. The translation of the *Agathon* is very clumsy. I wish I could read it in the original, but I have no talent for languages and invariably lose my command over English in an exact proportion as I gain any hold over another tongue. . . . My kind regards to his Highness, King Alfred: a wise man though not a Saxon.

Your faithful
D.

From Lady Blessington.

Aug. 20, 1834.

I am very sorry indeed to hear that you have been ill and sad; we are all but poor machines, easily put out of order, when the mind, or the heart, or both—for they always like true friends sympathise—are deranged or chagrined. What poor philosophers even the wisest of us are proved to be, when influenced by some master passion, and authors who, like yourself, can make others think, are among those who can the least govern their own thoughts, when once under the rule of love. Genius is, and must ever be, accompanied by passions proportionately strong, and I therefore reserve all my sympathies for its calamities, which is exactly the reverse of the practice of the world.

From Count D'Orsay.

[*Undated.*]

C'est une injustice que fait le cher Disraeli que de supposer qu'il ne peut approcher son ami que comme un Pacha à trois queues, chargé de présents orientaux. Ces chevaux arabes, ces sabres damas, ne sont que des présents matériels, mais lorsqu'il s'agit de dons spirituels, de ceux qu'une belle Nature seule peut engendrer, c'est alors qu'il regrette de ne pas voir celui qui possède toute la vivacité et le feu du coursier arabien dans le caractère et le tranchant dans l'esprit du damas. Ces richesses sont les seules dont l'homme ait le droit de se glorifier et le cher Disraeli a donc extrêmement tort, d'être injuste envers cette belle Nature, qui a été si généreuse à son égard.

Son ami affectionné,
D'Orsay.

To Lady Blessington.

BRADENHAM,
Friday. [*Oct.* 17, 1834.]

MY DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,

. . . I sympathise with your sufferings; my experience unhappily assures me how ably you describe them. This golden autumn ought to have cured us all. I myself, in spite of the sunshine, have been a great invalid. Indeed, I know not how it is, but I am never well save in action, and then I feel immortal. I am ashamed of being 'nervous.' Dyspepsia always makes me wish for a civil war. In the meantime I amuse myself by county politics. . . .

My father sends his kindest regards. As for myself, I am dying for action, and rust like a Damascus sabre in the sheath of a poltroon.

Adieu! dear friend, we shall meet on your return.

B. DISRAELI.[1]

To Benjamin Austen.

BRADENHAM,
Oct. 24, 1834.

I have been prevented in bringing out a novel [*Henrietta Temple*] in November by a strange illness which kept me to my sofa exactly two months. It was something of the kind of attack you experienced at Fyfield—great pain in the legs and extraordinary languor. It came upon me suddenly. I struggled against it for some time, but mounting my horse one day, I had a slight determination of blood to my head, and was obliged to throw myself on the floor of the hall. This frightened me, remembering old sufferings, and I laid up. Quiet, diet and plenteous doses of ammonia (heavenly maid!) not only restored me, but I have felt better and more hearty this last fortnight than I long remember.

[1] From Mr. Alfred Morrison's collection.

CHAPTER XIII.

JOINS THE CONSERVATIVES.

1834–35.

The last letters prepare us for another period of mainly political activity. Nearly two years had now elapsed since the second Wycombe election, and during that interval, while the politician slumbered in Disraeli, public events had been moving swiftly on. 'There is nothing more remarkable,' he writes in *Endymion*,[1] 'than the sudden break-up of the Whig party after their successful revolution of 1832. It is one of the most striking instances on record of all the elements of political power being useless without a commanding individual will.' Durham, whose place was at the extreme left of the party, had abandoned the Grey Ministry in March, 1833; Stanley and Graham at the extreme right had followed in May, 1834; and Lord Grey himself retired a couple of months later. Melbourne succeeded as Prime Minister; but in November his position was weakened by the succession of Lord Althorp to the peerage, and his consequent withdrawal from the House of Commons, of which he had been leader; and King William IV. seized the opportunity of dismissing his Ministers to make way for Peel and Wellington. During the crisis that followed the retirement of Stanley and Graham, Disraeli had anticipated the course of events with curious prescience.

[1] Ch. 14.

To Sarah Disraeli.

June 4, 1834.

There is a lull in the storm; it is supposed the session will now be hurried over quietly, and then something must be determined on. The Whigs cannot exist as a party without taking in Lord Durham, and the King will not consent to it. Durham is not in a hurry, and becomes each day more violent in his demands. Triennial Parliaments to be a Cabinet measure, and an extension of the constituency, the ballot to stand on its merits—in short, a revolution; for this must lead to a fatal collision with the House of Lords. The Tories will not take office unless the Whigs give it up in despair. My own opinion is, that in the recess the King will make an effort to try and form a Conservative Government with Peel and Stanley; but the Tories think that Durham will have his way. I fear a dissolution must be the end of it.[1]

Incidentally this letter reveals a growing estrangement on the part of the writer from the Radicalism of his first political campaigns: triennial Parliaments and the ballot, the nostrums which had figured so prominently in his earlier political programmes, had now come to spell 'a revolution.' Disraeli's acquaintance with Durham may have checked for a moment the progress of his conversion; but Durham's influence was soon overshadowed by the influence of another and more congenial spirit. At the end of the season, as has been seen, he had met Lord Lyndhurst, and their acquaintance soon ripened into a friendship which became a capital fact in Disraeli's life. Lyndhurst was already over sixty, but he had still nearly thirty years of life before him, and he was still in the full vigour of those splendid faculties which might have given him an even higher place among his contemporaries and in the eyes of posterity than that to which he attained, if he had only possessed in larger measure the power of inspiring confidence, which is so essential to the success of a statesman in England. But he suffered from a certain lack

[1] *Letters*, p. 86.

of seriousness, and the crowning gifts of lofty purpose and severe integrity were denied him.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Nov. 4, 1834.

I dined on Saturday with Lyndhurst *en famille*. A more amiable and agreeable family I never met. The eldest daughter, 'Sa,' is just like her mother, and, although only thirteen, rules everything and everybody—a most astounding little woman. Yesterday I went to see the new actor, Denvil. He is deplorable, has not the slightest feeling, nor one physical or mental qualification for the stage. I saw Chandos to-day, and had a long conversation with him on politics. He has no head, but I flatter myself I opened his mind a little. . . . D'Orsay has taken my portrait.[1]

Lord Chandos, as has been seen, was one of the members for Bucks; but, as the author or reputed author of the famous clause in the Reform Bill which enfranchised the agricultural occupiers, and as the recognised spokesman for the farmers in the House of Commons, he was a person of more than local importance. With his genius for intrigue Disraeli was not long in devising a plot in which his county member and his new friend Lyndhurst might be usefully combined. Let him tell the tale himself.[2]

I became acquainted with Lord L. at the latter end of the summer of 1834. We took to each other instantly. I sat next to him at dinner at Henrietta's. He went abroad in the autumn with a family party which he asked me to accompany, but I refused. On his return we again met with much intimacy. It was the latter end of October that he first began to speak to me in confidence on political affairs. It was his opinion at that moment that the end of Whiggism was at hand. The secession of the Stanley party, the subsequent intrigues of the Whigs with O'Connell and the consequent retirement of Lord Grey on their discovery

[1] *Letters*, p. 88.

[2] What follows is from a memorandum inscribed over date 'Hughenden, 1863'—the year of Lyndhurst's death—'I cut this out of an old paper book. It was written at Bradenham in 1836, and is very authentic.' Its accuracy in certain points of detail is confirmed by contemporary letters from Lyndhurst and Chandos themselves.



Benjamin Disraeli
1834
from a portrait by Count D'Orsay

had reduced the mighty reform Parliament in spite of their apparently overwhelming majority to a very low ebb in public opinion; but the nation at large was impressed with an idea that from their reconstruction of the constituency they were our masters for life. I had then no political relations, though I had had overtures from Durham, who offered to return me to Parliament. I had conversation with him, but he appeared to me to have no definite plan. Lord L. thought the time had arrived when the movement might be stopped. He was looking about for a party to put in motion which might not seem factious. After some consultation he resolved that the Ministers should be thrown in a minority on some agricultural amendment at the meeting of Parliament, and I agreed to see Lord Chandos, with whom I had a county acquaintance, on the subject.

I went into the country therefore to attend some meeting of our agricultural committee. We agreed to petition Parliament on the Malt Tax, and I was requested to prepare the county petition to the House of Commons, which I did. After business was over I took Lord C. aside and it was settled that I should go over with him to Wotton and talk over affairs. The result of our conference was this—being, I think, the 11th November—that he undertook to organise a country party and throw the Government in a minority on Parliament meeting by an agricultural amendment on the address. He required for himself the First Lord of the Admiralty, but told me then that he was assured, from some communication he had received, that the Duke would recommend Peel as Premier. He made no terms for any other country leader except Knatchbull, who, he stipulated, should have a seat in the Cabinet.

In the evening of the 12th I arrived in town on my return and immediately had an interview with L. who told me the Duke of W. had arrived that day and that Lord Spencer was dead, which, by-the-bye, I had heard at Wotton as I was departing, Chandos hurrying my departure, as he said he thought this was the last blow to the Cabinet. Lord L. immediately wrote to the D. requesting an interview, and afterwards appointed me to meet him at his private room in the Exchequer[1] the morning of the 14th, at 2 o'clock, to hear the result. The Duke fixed the evening of the 13th for the interview, and I wrote to Lord C. accordingly.

Lord L. had accordingly his interview with the D. on the evening of the 13th, and opened his plan; but the D. threw cold water upon it. The interview finished thus:—

1. Lyndhurst was Chief Baron.

'At this moment I will make no movements—to-morrow morning I depart for Strathfieldsaye. If the King is well advised he will now send for me—but I will not even be in London.' In spite of what occurred Lord L. does not believe that the D. was at the time in any communication with the Court. The D. accordingly departed for Strathfieldsaye the following morning, and I wrote to Lord C. notifying his Grace's refusal to concur in our plan, of which I had been apprised by Lord L. on the morning of the 14th. On the same day (the 14th) the Ministry were dismissed at Brighton, and a messenger arrived for the Duke at Apsley House. The letter was, I believe, brought up by Lord Melbourne himself. It was immediately forwarded to Strathfieldsaye.

15th Nov.—Dismissal of the Ministry publicly announced. The Duke at Brighton—whence he wrote to Lyndhurst, informing him that he had recommended H.M. to send for Peel, and requesting him to meet his Grace the following morning at Apsley House. This L. communicated to me in the evening. After that interview I met L. The Duke was in good spirits. He said 'It will be a month perhaps before he comes. All that we have got *to do now is to get the Government of the country into our hands.* I shall sit at the Treasury and take all the Secretary's seals; you must take the Great Seal—you and I must be the government of the country. Things are quiet, the people will not murmur.' Thus the government of the country was efficiently carried on, L. retaining his C[hief] B[aron]y and sitting also in the Chancery. Nobody murmured. The general opinion was that the Tories would succeed. Bonham calculated we might just get a Tory majority, but the chief hope was in the goodness of our measures and the impossibility of the Conservative Whigs *à la* Grey, &c., coalescing with Papists and Republicans. Lord L. was, however, in the habit of saying to me 'You will see that there will be a coalition of all parties against us.' 'You will see that these fellows will coalesce.'

Great was the suspense until Peel arrived. At last one evening we were informed that he had indeed come. The messenger, Mr. Hudson, a King's page, reached him at Rome, about to depart for Naples. P. immediately had an audience of the King and undertook the Government, and then interviews with the D. and L. He immediately offered the F. Secretary to the Duke and the Great Seal to L., who accepted it, though at a sacrifice. He then wrote to Lord Stanley offering him four places in the Cabinet, at his choice, with the above exceptions. Never was such an offer before —never will it be made again. The refusal of Lord Stanley

was expected, but it was not expected that the reason would have been his unwillingness to act with the D. on account of foreign policy. This was frivolous. Sir J[ames] G[raham] was inclined to join, but, of course, went with Lord S.

From this moment P. only consulted Goulburn, which astonished all and disgusted many. Sir H[enry] H[ardinge] was dissatisfied at being offered Ireland, which, however, he accepted. G[oulburn] was Secretary for Home; a very unpopular appointment. Lord Ashburton accepted the Board of Trade on the condition of being Lord Ashburton—a good name, but Mr. B[aring] has had no success in the Upper House. The man who gained most was Scarlett—a Chief [Barony of the Exchequer] and a peerage [as Lord Abinger] after having been apparently shelved. Chandos, entangled in our agricultural intrigues and pledged to the repeal of the Malt Tax, was obliged to decline office, as Peel would not consent to his panacea. Knatchbull was less nice and deserted the Country party.

The Cabinet was necessarily a weak one, and contained many feeble and some odious names. And yet never did a Cabinet mature such admirable and comprehensive measures! But all was owing to P. and L. The law appointments were excellent and popular. To the astonishment of Lord L. Sugden accepted the Irish Chancellorship. Before he offered it to him L. was prepared for an indignant refusal. Pollock was Attorney, a weak man but the leader of his circuit: the Solicitor, Follett, who had great success in the House as well as at the Bar, though the youngest Solicitor, I believe, ever appointed. So excellent were the projected measures of the Cabinet that with 300 Tories or Conservatives—for the Stanley section of 25 votes was counted among them—Lord L. became sanguine and thought that they had weathered the storm. The vote on the Speakership, however, opened all eyes, and after that no one could hesitate about the ultimate fate of the Cabinet. Had Lord S. joined, the movement would have been arrested: this junction would have been a golden bridge for rats, of which there were numbers who only wanted a leader.

This memorandum has anticipated—anticipated both in the order of the events which it narrates and still more in the point of view from which they are surveyed. When it was written, nearly two years later than the time our narrative has reached, Disraeli had definitely

taken his place in the Tory ranks; at present all was confusion and unsettlement both for him and others.

It was a lively season, that winter of 1834! What hopes, what fears, and what bets! From the day on which Mr. Hudson was to arrive at Rome to the election of the Speaker, not a contingency that was not the subject of a wager! People sprang up like mushrooms; town suddenly became full. Everybody who had been in office, and everybody who wished to be in office; everybody who had ever had anything, and everybody who ever expected to have anything, were alike visible. All of course by mere accident; one might meet the same men regularly every day for a month, who were only 'passing through town.' ....

But, after all, who were to form the government, and what was the government to be? Was it to be a Tory government, or an Enlightened-Spirit-of-the-Age Liberal-Moderate-Reform government; was it to be a government of high philosophy or of low practice; of principle or of expediency; of great measures or of little men? A government of statesmen or of clerks? Of Humbug or of Humdrum? Great questions these, but unfortunately there was nobody to answer them. They tried the Duke; but nothing could be pumped out of him. All that he knew, which he told in his curt, husky manner, was, that he had to carry on the King's government. As for his solitary colleague, he listened and smiled, and then in his musical voice asked them questions in return, which is the best possible mode of avoiding awkward inquiries. It was very unfair this, for no one knew what tone to take; whether they should go down to their public dinners and denounce the Reform Act or praise it; whether the Church was to be remodelled or only admonished; whether Ireland was to be conquered or conciliated.[1]

Disraeli, unlike the majority, was in no doubt at all as to his opinions; but he was still in great doubt as to his party affiliations, and, decided only in his hostility to the Whigs, was still straddling between the extremes of Toryism on the one side and Radicalism on the other. The formation of the Peel Government had made a general election a certainty, and he was of course anxious to obtain a seat. 'I saw your son yesterday,' writes Bulwer

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 4.

to Isaac D'Israeli one day in the middle of November, 'restless and ambitious as usual: such dispositions always carve out their way.' The son was indeed determined to carve out his way, and restlessness and ambition marked all his conduct at this time of crisis. His first appeal appears to have been addressed to a high Radical quarter.

To Lord Durham.

BRADENHAM HOUSE, HIGH WYCOMBE,
Monday, Nov. 17, 1834.

MY DEAR LORD DURHAM,

My electioneering prospects look gloomy. The squires throughout my own county look grim at a Radical, and the Liberal interest is split and pre-engaged in our few towns, [so] that I fear I shall fail. At present I am looking after Aylesbury, where young Hobhouse was beat last time, and will be beat this, if he try, but where, with my local influence, your party would succeed. If you have influence with Hobhouse, counsel him to resign in my favour, and not of another person, as 'tis rumored he will. At the same time, if Nugent return, he will beat us all. So my dear Lord, my affairs are black; therefore, remember me and serve me if you can. My principles you are acquainted with; as for my other qualifications, I am considered a great popular orator.

What do you think of the Tories! at a moment when decision and energy would be pearls and diamonds to them, they have formed a provisional Government! 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the—Lords.' Such is Wellington's solitary cry; a Baptist worthy of such a Messiah as—Peel.

In great haste,
Dear Lord Durham,
Your faithful,
BENJ. DISRAELI.[1]

Durham's reply was sympathetic. He had not, indeed, sufficient acquaintance with Hobhouse to justify his interference at Aylesbury; but, he added, 'these are times which require the presence in Parliament of every true and honest politician. I trust and hope, therefore, that you will find your way there yet. If an occasion

[1] Reid's *Life of Durham*, I., p. 408.

offers when I can forward your views I shall not fail to do so.' Disraeli, however, was in quest of something more substantial, and he soon turned to his friends at the opposite pole of politics.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Nov. 28, 1834.

The Duke and the Chancellor are besetting old Carrington in my favour, that they say he must yield. I am not sanguine, but was recommended to issue the address.[1] D'Orsay is working Bob Smith very hard. The Duke wrote a strong letter to the chairman of election committees, saying that, if Wycombe were not insured something else must be done for Disraeli, as 'a man of his acquirements and reputation must not be thrown away.' L. showed me the letter, but it is impossible to say how things will go. *Entre nous*, Parliament will not be dissolved as speedily as is imagined, which is all in my favour, both as regards Wycombe or any other place. It is impossible for anyone to be warmer than the Duke or Lyndhurst, and I ought to say the same of Chandos.[2]

In spite of all these blandishments Lord Carrington and his son remained courteously obdurate, and Lyndhurst, foiled in this quarter, employed his good offices elsewhere, as the following entries in Greville's *Diary* show:—

Dec. 6, 1834.—The Chancellor called on me yesterday about getting young Disraeli into Parliament (through the means of George Bentinck) for Lynn. I had told him George wanted a good man to assist in turning out William Lennox, and he suggested the above-named gentleman, whom he called a friend of Chandos. His political principles must, however, be in abeyance, for he said that Durham was doing all he could to get him by the offer of a seat, and so forth; if therefore he is undecided and wavering between Chandos and Durham, he must be a mighty impartial personage. I don't think such a man will do, though just such as Lyndhurst would be connected with.

Dec. 7.—Disraeli he [George Bentinck] won't hear of.

[1] To the electors of High Wycombe.

[2] *Letters*, p. 88.

Eventually Disraeli decided to enter on a third contest at Wycombe, the other candidates being his old opponents Smith and Grey. To Wycombe accordingly he repaired, and delivered[1] a long speech on the situation which he at once reissued as a pamphlet under the title of 'The Crisis Examined.' This speech has an important place in the story of Disraeli's political development. He begins with the usual assurance of the fixity of his principles. Since he last addressed them 'great revolutions have occurred—revolutions of government and revolutions of opinion: I can, however, assure you that I remain unchanged.' But as he cannot condescend to obtain even the honour of a seat in Parliament 'by Jesuitical intrigue or casuistical cajolery,' as he 'cannot condescend at the same time to be supported by the Tories because they deem me a Tory, and by the Liberals because they hold me a Liberal,' he proceeds to unfold his programme as adapted to the new circumstances which have arisen. In the foreground stands relief for the agricultural interest, which is suffering from severe depression. 'We may hope that the Exchequer may grant them at least the partial relief of the malt tax, although I recommend them to petition for the whole. I would not at the same time make a request and intimate a compromise.' The popular cry of the country is Church Reform; but he dislikes that 'cant phrase,' and hopes to hear less of Church reform and more of Church improvement. Pluralities must be abolished, the great evil of non-residence must be terminated, and to achieve these all-important objects there must be an increase in 'the value of the lesser livings and the incomes in general of the inferior clergy.' Church reform leads him on to Ireland.

> I deem it absolutely necessary, even for the existence of the Protestant Establishment itself, that the question of the Irish Church should be forthwith grappled with; that it

[1] On Dec. 16.

should be the object of a measure in its nature as final, in its operation as conclusive, as human wit can devise. It is now impossible to avoid, and too late to postpone it; it must be met immediately—the question is, how may it be met efficiently? Twelve months, therefore, must not pass over without the very name of tithes in that country being abolished for ever; nor do I deem it less urgent that the Protestant Establishment in that country should be at once proportioned to the population which it serves. But, gentlemen, I for one will never consent that the surplus revenues of that branch of our Establishment shall ever be appropriated to any other object save the interests of the Church of England, because experience has taught me that an establishment is never despoiled except to benefit an aristocracy. . . . I know the love that great lords, and especially Whig lords, have for abbey lands and great tithes: I remember Woburn, and I profit by the reminiscence.

Then there are the claims of the Dissenters.

In my opinion these are claims which must not be eluded by any Government that wishes to stand. I would grant every claim of this great body that the spirit of the most comprehensive toleration required, consistent with the established constitution of the country. Therefore, I think that the registration and the marriage claims should be conceded. As for the question of the church-rate, it is impossible that we can endure that every time one is levied, a town should present the scene of a contested election. The rights of the Establishment must be respected, but, for the sake of the Establishment itself, that flagrant scandal must be removed. These are concessions which, I think, are due to a numerous and powerful portion of our fellow-subjects; due, I repeat, to their numbers, their intelligence, and their property, and consistent, in my opinion, with the maintenance of an Established Church, a blessing with which I am not prepared to part, and which I am resolved to uphold, because I consider it a guarantee of civilisation, and a barrier against bigotry.

In the matter of the Municipal Corporations he is also in favour of reform; but what is to be his attitude to the Government that had just been constituted? If they will adopt and carry measures similar to those he has enumerated, he indicates that he will be ready

to support them; though, as Peel had not yet explained his policy, he is careful not to commit himself. 'I am for measures, gentlemen, and not men, and for this simple reason, that for four years we have had men and not measures, and I am wearied of them.' It was said, however, that they ought not to accept any measures from the hands of those who had opposed the Reform Bill. But he shows at length how little claim the Whigs themselves can lay to consistency even in the matter of reform, and how little right they have to call other men renegades and apostates: and then, in a famous and daring passage, he expounds his doctrine of consistency.

> The truth is, gentlemen, a statesman is the creature of his age, the child of circumstances, the creation of his times. A statesman is essentially a practical character; and when he is called upon to take office, he is not to inquire what his opinions might or might not have been upon this or that subject; he is only to ascertain the needful and the beneficial, and the most feasible measures are to be carried on. The fact is, the conduct and the opinions of public men at different periods of their career must not be too curiously contrasted in a free and aspiring country. The people have their passions, and it is even the duty of public men occasionally to adopt sentiments with which they do not sympathise, because the people must have leaders. Then the opinions and prejudices of the Crown must necessarily influence a rising statesman. I say nothing of the weight which great establishments and corporations, and the necessity of their support and patronage, must also possess with an ambitious politician. All this, however, produces ultimate benefit; all these influences tend to form that eminently practical character for which our countrymen are celebrated. I laugh, therefore, at the objection against a man, that at a former period of his career he advocated a policy different to his present one. All I seek to ascertain is whether his present policy be just, necessary, expedient; whether at the present moment he is prepared to serve the country according to its present necessities.

If on Peel and his Ministry he suspends judgment, to the Whigs he gives no quarter. He has always believed that they intended to make themselves masters for life,

and they would certainly have gained their object if they had succeeded in overpowering the House of Lords as they have succeeded in packing the House of Commons. What then would have become of the liberties of England?

> I will allow for the freedom of the Press; I will allow for the spirit of the age; I will allow for the march of intellect; but I cannot force from my mind the conviction that a House of Commons, concentrating in itself the whole power of the State, might—I should rather say would—notwithstanding the great antagonistic forces to which I have alluded, establish in this country a despotism of the most formidable and dangerous character.

He reminds his hearers of the consequences of such an arrangement in the reign of Charles I.

> Looking at such consequences I think we may feel that we have some interest in maintaining the prerogative of the Crown and the privileges of the Peers. I, for one, shall ever view with jealous eye the proceedings of any House of Commons, however freely chosen.

Already he sees symptoms of jobbery and servility in the Reformed Parliament, and what of the Reform Ministry? 'The Reform Ministry indeed! Why scarcely an original member of that celebrated Cabinet remained' at the time of their dismissal. And then we have the famous Ducrow simile, a characteristic specimen of Disraeli's early political eloquence, full of the broad humour which appeals effectively to the mob and yet with the indefinable quality which suggests the born man of letters.

> *The* Reform Ministry! I dare say, now, some of you have heard of Mr. Ducrow, that celebrated gentleman who rides upon six horses. What a prodigious achievement! It seems impossible; but you have confidence in Ducrow. You fly to witness it; unfortunately, one of the horses is ill, and a donkey is substituted in its place. But Ducrow is still admirable; there he is, bounding along in a spangled jacket and cork slippers! The whole town is mad to see Ducrow riding at

the same time on six horses. But now two more of the steeds are seized with the staggers, and lo! three jackasses in their stead! Still Ducrow persists, and still announces to the public that he will ride round the circus every night on his six steeds. At last all the horses are knocked up, and now there are half-a-dozen donkeys. What a change! Behold the hero *in the amphitheatre, the spangled jacket thrown on one side,* the cork slippers on the other. Puffing, panting, and perspiring, he pokes one sullen brute, thwacks another, cuffs a third, and curses a fourth, while one brays to the audience, and another rolls in the sawdust. Behold the late Prime Minister and the Reform Ministry—the spirited and snow-white steeds have gradually changed into an equal number of sullen and obstinate donkeys; while Mr. Merryman, who, like the Lord Chancellor, was once the very life of the ring, now lies his despairing length in the middle of the stage, with his jokes exhausted and his bottle empty!

One can imagine how this kind of thing was relished by his audience. 'I stand astonishingly well at Wycombe,' he wrote to Austen, 'and may beat the Colonel yet. Had I the money, I might canter over the county, for my popularity is irresistible.' On the day following the speech at Wycombe he spoke again at Aylesbury at an agricultural dinner where he was introduced to the audience as a firm friend of the agricultural interest, and where he declared that his confidence in the present Administration was greatly abated by the exclusion of Lord Chandos from office. The Duke of Buckingham was in the chair, so this declaration was not only good politics for the audience, but a courtly compliment which, however touched with irony, was in the style Disraeli loved. His presence at such a gathering marked a distinct advance towards identification with the Tories; and in sending the reprint of the Wycombe speech to Durham, whom he had described in it as the only man of any decision of character in the Reform Ministry, he shows a consciousness of the widening of the interval between them.

As for the opinions contained in these pages [he writes] they are those I have ever professed, and I should grieve if your

Lordship's juncture with the Whigs and [my ?] continued resistance to a party which has ever opposed me, even with a degree of personal malignity, should ever place me in opposition to a nobleman whose talents I respect, and who, I am confident, has only the same object in view with myself—to maintain this great Empire on a broad democratic basis, which I am convinced is the only foundation on which it can now rest.[1]

Radicals and Whigs, as usual, were drawing closer to each other in opposition, and Disraeli, resolute in his detestation of the Whigs, was moving in the opposite direction; but in Wycombe at all events he still clung to his Radical friends, and this third election was fought on the old basis of an alliance between Radicals and Tories. On the day of nomination, 'it is not enough to say of Mr. Disraeli,' writes a hostile witness, 'that he delivered himself with his usual ability; the difficulties he had to encounter were most ably met and judiciously avoided; to steer between the shoals of Toryism on the one hand and the quicksands of Radicalism on the other (for he was supported by the two parties) required his utmost skill, and well did he acquit himself.'[2] All his adroitness, however, did not avail to carry the election. When the poll closed on January 7 the figures were—

Smith, 289.
Grey, 147.
Disraeli, 128.

'It would be injustice to Mr. Disraeli,' the same writer adds, 'not to say that he conducted himself throughout the whole proceedings in the handsomest manner: there was a total absence of those personalities which disgraced the last election; and in his concluding speech the unfortunate candidate admitted that he had had fair play, and no cause to complain.' A fortnight later, at a Conservative dinner at Wycombe with Chandos in the chair, the unfailing note of hopefulness and faith was sounded.

[1] Reid's *Life of Durham*, I., p. 371.
[2] From a letter in the *Bucks Gazette* for Jan. 16, 1835.

I am not at all disheartened. I do not in any way feel like a beaten man. Perhaps it is because I am used to it. I will say of myself like the famous Italian general, who being asked in his old age why he was always victorious, replied, it was because he had always been beaten in his youth.

To the Duke of Wellington.

[*Jan.* 7, 1835.]

I have fought our battle and I have lost it by a majority of 14.[1] . . . Had Lord Carrington exerted himself even in the slightest degree in my favour I must have been returned; but he certainly maintained a *neutrality* — a neutrality so strict that it amounted to a blockade. . . . Grey made a violent anti-Ministerial speech, and I annihilated him in my reply; but what use is annihilating men out of the House of Commons. . . . I am now a cipher; but if the devotion of my energies to your cause, *in* and *out*, can ever avail you, your Grace may count upon me, who seeks no greater satisfaction than that of serving a really great man.[2]

From the Duke of Wellington.

Jan. 10, 1835.

The Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to Mr. Disraeli, and has received his letter of Wednesday night, for which he is much obliged. He very much regrets the result of the election at Wycombe.

The failure of this third attempt at Wycombe seems finally to have convinced Disraeli that he could not hope for a political career unless he definitely identified himself with one or other of the two great parties; and there could no longer be any doubt as to which he would choose. The formation of the Peel Government entirely changed the problem for him, and thousands of others who were still unsettled in their political allegiance. When he published his Wycombe speech of December 16 as a pamphlet, he told Austen that he was acting by 'the Minister's desire'; and if Peel read the speech at all his

[1] This does not agree with the figures given above, but those were the days of open voting, and Disraeli may have written before the final figures were available.

[2] Maxwell's *Life of Wellington*, II., p. 305.

could hardly have failed to read it with approval. On the very day after its delivery Peel himself submitted to his Cabinet the draft of the address to his constituents which has become famous in history as the Tamworth manifesto, and there is a very remarkable coincidence, for it can hardly have been more, between the policy of moderate reform therein unfolded and the practical measures upon which Disraeli had insisted in his speech. The Tamworth manifesto was too opportunist in its spirit, too much of a programme and too little of a creed, long to satisfy Disraeli; but at all events it showed that Toryism had ceased to spell reaction or—a thing even more repugnant to one of his temperament—stagnation, and was in process of adapting itself to the spirit of the age. The greatest obstacle in the way of his entering the Tory camp had now been removed, and not many weeks after the Wycombe election he was nominated[1] at his own request as a candidate for the Carlton Club, which had been founded a few years before by the Duke of Wellington and his friends, and had at once become the recognised social citadel of Toryism. The decisive step had now been taken. He had been exactly three years in politics, and his apparent course in those years had been that of a political comet, highly eccentric and irregular. Henceforward his place in the political firmament is fixed, or his orbit at all events conforms to the accepted laws of political motion.

It is no accident that there is a certain ambiguity about the party affiliations of nearly all our greater statesmen: Chatham, Pitt, Burke, Canning, Peel, Palmerston, Disraeli, and Gladstone—none of these has an absolutely consistent party record; and, indeed, a man with such a record would be more likely to win distinction as a good partisan than as a great statesman. If we are to measure consistency by ideas, Disraeli is the most consistent of them all, and yet more than any of the others

[1] Lord Strangford proposer and Lord Chandos seconder.

he was to suffer throughout his career from the reputation of political time-server and adventurer acquired in these early and errant years. In one sense this reputation was wholly unjust; in another it had not been unprovoked nor, indeed, wholly undeserved. In his guiding principles and ideas he had changed far less than most of his judges and critics, but the world, which looks only to externals, saw that he had been in communication, if not in co-operation, with men at the opposite poles of politics, and drew its conclusions accordingly. He had been too eager in his desire for tangible and immediate success, too reckless in his disregard for the conventions of political life; and he had thus aroused in many a distrust which he was never wholly to allay, and which to the very end of his days was to be a cause of weakness to himself and a formidable weapon at the disposal of his enemies.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Jan. 20, 1835.

Last Saturday a dinner by the Chancellor to Lord Abinger and the Barons of the Exchequer. There were also George Dawson, myself, Praed, young Gladstone, Sir M. Shee, Sir J. Beresford, and Pemberton: rather dull, but we had a swan very white and tender, and stuffed with truffles, the best company there.[1]

In 'young Gladstone's' recollections of this dinner apparently neither the swan nor Disraeli found a place; but he noted for his future guidance some counsel given them by Lyndhurst: 'Never defend yourself before a popular assembly, except with and by retorting the attack; the hearers, in the pleasure which the assault gives them, will forget the previous charge'[2]—a piece of wisdom which, if Disraeli failed to note it at the time, he was afterwards, as Lord Morley reminds us, to make his own, compressing it into one of his most effective phrases, '*Never complain and never explain.*'

[1] *Letters*, p. 90.

[2] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, I., p. 122.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Feb. 20, 1835.

About last night's debate [on the election of the Speaker], Peel did not speak well; Stanley with great point and power. . . . O'Connell is so powerful that he says he will be in the Cabinet. How can the Whigs submit to this? It is the Irish Catholic Party that has done all the mischief.

Feb. 26.

Here there is only one topic, the division on the Address. Peel made a powerful speech; Stanley constrained and qualifying. His way is evidently not clear; I cannot understand the game he is playing. On the Speakership he had no party. Now fifty men meet at his house every morning. Lyndhurst squabashed Brougham on Tuesday.

April 1.

I do not doubt myself that the Government will be in a minority on the present question, but this is not the cause of the *malaise* of the Tories. The fact is, their chief is worried by his wife, and she is nervous lest he should fight and all that. There is no more reason now that the Tories should go out than two months ago, and I cannot help believing that they will not. On Sunday I dined at the Chancellor's, and ever since I have had a severe cold and been nowhere.

April 4.

I have not seen the Chancellor since Thursday. Peel is much firmer and the King quite so, but his Majesty cannot sleep. The decisive battle is to be fought on the Irish Tithe Bill, and we expect to win. Everybody has got the influenza; the Lord Chancellor has had an attack; and, as you rightly expected, myself, though mine was much modified to former years.[1]

The decisive battle, however, was lost, and Peel resigned. We are now admitted to some knowledge of a curious episode in unwritten political history.

In April, 1835, when Sir R. P[eel] resigned and great difficulties and time experienced in forming a Government by the Whigs, my old friend Mrs. Norton opened a communica-

[1] *Letters*, pp. 90-92.

tion with me in order to form a coalition between the constitutional Whigs and Sir R. P. Melbourne was her prompter, and he and she wished the affair to be arranged by Lord L[yndhurst]. Lord M. would, I think, have thrown over the Appropriation Clause. He expressed, according to her, an absolute horror of O'Connell—with whom, he said, nothing should induce him to form a connexion. He had authorised none of the intrigues.

I had several conferences with her, prompted by L., and paid her visits sometimes of two hours (though our acquaintance otherwise had quite ceased). Admitting the possibility of arranging the Appropriation Clause, which of course rested with M., I enquired whether M. would serve under P. She assured me he had positively agreed to do so, and that he would throw over Brougham as Chancellor for L.

I think the idea of throwing over B. occurred in this manner, as I know the resolution was taken lately. Although our negotiation failed, very friendly feelings subsisted at that time between M. and L., and when all was over M. consulted L. through Mrs. Norton as to putting the Seals in commission. The difficulty was to communicate to B. that he was thrown over. At last M. resolved to do it himself, which he did. What an interview![1]

To Isaac D'Israeli.

Good Friday Morn [*April 17th*], 1835.

MY DEAREST FATHER,

The Whigs cannot form a Government. It is impossible to describe to you the extraordinary state of affairs. On Wednesday Mrs. N. sent for me, and I was closeted with her from 3 until 5. Lords Grey, Melbourne, and all the old constitutional aristocratic Whigs are desirous of forming a coalition with Peel, Lyndhurst, &c. They will have nothing to do with the Radicals, and a considerable section of the Opposition, headed by Lord Seymour, no doubt acting under the auspices and instigation of Mrs. N., back them. They (Melbourne, &c.) will have nothing to do with O'Connell and the English and Scotch Rads., and will not make Brougham Chancellor or anything. Melbourne disapproved of the attack on Manners Sutton and Londonderry and the whole course of John Russell's career on the Irish Church. From Mrs. N. I went to the Lord Chancellor's, with whom I remained in close conference until half-past 7, so I could

[1] From the Memorandum of 1836, already quoted.

not write to you. Yesterday I was obliged to be at the House of Commons until half-past 5, then to see Lord Seymour, and afterwards with the Chancellor again until 8 o'clock, so it was impossible to write again. There seem great, I fear, insuperable, difficulties in the way of an immediate coalition, though eventually it must take place.

I cannot say now whether Peel will immediately resume office or Melbourne form an Administration of his friends by way of blind, and which may last a few months. But at present the Whigs have absolutely not advanced a jot. I need not say that we are all in the highest spirits, and that the excitement is unparalleled. I think myself Peel will be again sent for by the King. If there be any more this morning and I have an opportunity to write by post, I will. That we shall win in the long run, and triumphantly, I have no doubt. You now know all the secrets of affairs which not ten people do in the realm, and you must burn this letter when read. Mulgrave and the more useful and desperate Whiglings are for pushing on to Durham. . . . I intended to have come down to Bradenham to-day or to-morrow, but can say nothing of my movements now, as all is on my shoulders.

Love to all,

B. D.[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

April 13, 1835.

As *coalition*, or, as the Whigs call it, *amalgamation*, is at the present moment impossible, Lord Melbourne has, I understand, formed his Cabinet, and some of the writs will be moved for this evening. It is purely Whig, and consists entirely of the old hacks—Palmerston, Auckland, Duncannon, &c. Granville Somerset[2] sent for me to the Woods and Forests this morning to say, if there was a fair opening the Tories would start me, &c. I was astonished at his courtesy and strong expressions of desire to see me in.[3]

The fair opening soon presented itself. Mr. Henry Labouchere, the member for Taunton, vacated his seat on his appointment as Master of the Mint in the new Melbourne Government, and at the last moment Disraeli was sent down by the Tories to oppose his re-election.

[1] From an original in the possession of Mr. Walter V. Daniell.

[2] [Lord Granville Somerset, M.P. for Monmouthshire, 2nd son of the 6th Duke of Beaufort.—G. E. B.]

[3] *Letters*, p. 92.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Wednesday night [*April* 22].

There is no place like *Taunton*, not that I can win this time, for Labouchere, who was twenty-four hours in advance of me, has picked up many blues (my color); but come in at the general election I must, for I have promises of two-thirds of the electors. I live in a rage of enthusiasm; even my opponents promise to vote for me *next time*. The fatigue is awful. Two long speeches to-day, and nine hours' canvass on foot in a blaze of repartee. I am quite exhausted, and can scarcely see to write.

CASTLE, TAUNTON,
April 27.

The county gentlemen for ten miles round flock to me every day, but I am obliged to decline all their invitations. As for Taunton itself, the enthusiasm of Wycombe is a miniature to it; and I believe in point of energy, eloquence, and effect I have far exceeded all my former efforts. Had I arrived twenty hours sooner the result might have been in my favour. . . . It is astonishing how well they are informed in London of all that passes here, and how greatly they appreciate my exertions. They have opened a subscription for me at the Carlton, headed by Chandos, who has written twice to me in the warmest manner. To-morrow is nomination day.[1]

An eye-witness of the election scenes has recorded his impressions of the candidate's appearance.

Never in my life had I been so struck by a face as I was by that of Disraeli. It was lividly pale, and from beneath two finely-arched eyebrows blazed out a pair of intensely black eyes. I never have seen such orbs in mortal sockets, either before or since. His physiognomy was strictly Jewish. Over a broad, high forehead were ringlets of coal-black, glossy hair, which, combed away from his right temple, fell in luxuriant clusters or bunches over his left cheek and ear, which it entirely concealed from view. There was a sort of half-smile, half-sneer, playing about his beautifully-formed mouth, the upper lip of which was curved as we see it in the portraits of Byron. . . . He was very showily attired in a dark bottle-green frock-coat, a waistcoat of the most extravagant pattern, the

[1] *Letters*, p. 93.

front of which was almost covered with glittering chains, and in fancy-pattern pantaloons. He wore a plain black stock, but no collar was visible. Altogether he was the most intellectual-looking exquisite I had ever seen.[1]

Now that he had definitely emerged as a Tory, Disraeli heard, of course, a good deal about the ambiguity of his previous performance.[2] 'It is absolutely essential,' wrote D'Orsay on the eve of the election, 'for you to explain to them that though a Tory you are a reforming one; because it is generally understood that you committed yourself in some degree with the other party.' In his speech on nomination day Disraeli essayed the task thus proposed to him.

Gentlemen, if there be anything on which I pique myself it is my consistency. I shall be ready to prove that consistency either in the House of Commons or on the hustings at Taunton. Every man may be attacked once; but no one ever attacked me twice. Gentlemen, here is my consistency. I have always opposed with my utmost energy the party of which my honorable opponent is a distinguished member. That party I have opposed for reasons I am prepared to give and to uphold. I look upon the Whigs as an anti-national party. When I first entered political life I found the high places of the realm filled by the party of which my opponent is a member. I found they had an immense majority in the House of Commons, acquired by a system of nomination not less equivocal than that of the boroughmongers they affected to destroy. Believing that the policy of the party was such as must destroy the honour of the kingdom abroad and the happiness of the people at home, I considered it my duty to oppose the Whigs, to ensure their discomfiture, and, if possible, their destruction.

Let me recall to your recollection the extraordinary characteristic of the political world when I entered

[1] *Pen and Ink Sketches of Poets, Preachers, and Politicians.* London, 1846.

[2] There was much pother then and subsequently about a certain Westminster Club of which Disraeli had been nominally a member, and which after his resignation assumed a political character and became the Westminster Reform Club; but it is now fortunately unnecessary to enter on the details of a tiresome controversy from which Disraeli emerges quite unscathed. 'Life is too short,' as he said himself in connexion with this affair, 'to refute every misrepresentation of every malicious fool.'

it. Gentlemen, the great safeguard of our liberties, the balance of parties, was destroyed. There was then no constitutional Opposition to keep the Government in check. The great Tory party, now so strongly constituted, was a shattered, a feeble, and a disheartened fragment, self-confirming their own inability to carry on the King's Government, and announcing an impending revolution. Had I been a political adventurer I had nothing to do but to join the Whigs; but, conscientiously believing that their policy was in every respect pernicious, I felt it my duty to oppose them. But how were they to be opposed? Where were the elements of a party to keep the Government in check and to bring back the old constitutional balance? I thought they existed in the Liberal Tories, and in those independent Reformers who had been returned to Parliament independent of the Whigs. I laboured for the union, and I am proud of it. Gentlemen, remember the Whig policy. They had a packed Parliament. They had altered the duration of Parliaments once before. They had the whole power of the State in their hands. I believed, and I still believe, that we were nearer to a Long Parliament than we imagined. I wished to break the strength of the Whigs by frequent elections, and by frequent appeals to a mis-governed people; therefore I advocated a recurrence to those triennial Parliaments which it was once the proudest boast of the Tories to advocate. I wished to give the country gentlemen a chance of representing the neighbouring towns, where they are esteemed, instead of the nominees of a sectarian oligarchy; therefore I proposed the adoption of the ballot, in the only constituencies willing to assume it. . . .

Had the Whigs remained in power—and it seemed to me, and the wisest men in England shared my conviction, that they were our masters for life—had, I repeat, they remained in power I considered the dismemberment of the Empire inevitable; and, therefore, I tried to root them out. But, Gentlemen, great, ay, almost illimitable as was my confidence in Whig incapacity, I confess they far surpassed even my most sanguine expectations. The mighty Whig party which had consented to a revolution to gain power fell to pieces; the vessel of the State righted itself; and now there is no necessity to cut away its masts. Gentlemen, the object for which I laboured is attained; the balance of parties is restored; and I do no longer advocate the measures in question, simply because they are no longer necessary. Is this an answer? Is this inconsistency?[1]

[1] *Dorset County Chronicle*, April 30, 1835.

To Sarah Disraeli.

April 28.

I have just left the hustings, and have gained the show of hands, which no blue candidate ever did before. This, though an idle ceremony in most places, is of great account here, for the potwallopers of Taunton are as eloquent as those of Athens, and we gain votes by such a demonstration.[1]

In spite, however, of this demonstration, when the poll was closed on the second day the figures were—

Labouchere	452
Disraeli	282
	170

Disraeli did not perhaps overrate the popularity he had acquired during the election. 'His undaunted spirit, his eloquence, his wit, his courtesy and kindness,' says a writer in the local paper in words that appear to be charged with something more than conventional eulogy, 'have acquired him the respect and admiration of all parties and the entire confidence of his own.' After the election the Conservatives of the district made him the central figure in an elaborate festival culminating in a banquet, and great appears to have been the enthusiasm. The writer quoted on pages 285-6 was present at the banquet, and has given us a minute description of the manner of Disraeli's oratory.

He commenced in a lisping, lackadaisical tone of voice. . . . He minced his phrases in apparently the most affected manner, and, whilst he was speaking, placed his hands in all imaginable positions; not because he felt awkward, and did not know, like a booby in a drawing-room, where to put them, but apparently for the purpose of exhibiting to the best advantage the glittering rings which decked his white and taper fingers. Now he would place his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and spread out his fingers on its flashing surface; then one set of digits would be released and he would lean affectedly on the table, supporting himself

[1] *Letters*, p. 93.

with his right hand; anon he would push aside the curls from his forehead. . . . But as he proceeded all traces of this dandyism and affectation were lost. With a rapidity of utterance perfectly astonishing he referred to past events and indulged in anticipations of the future. The Whigs were, of course, the objects of his unsparing satire, and his eloquent denunciations of them were applauded to the echo. In all he said he proved himself to be the finished orator—every period was rounded with the utmost elegance, and in his most daring flights, when one trembled lest he should fall from the giddy height to which he had attained, he so gracefully descended that every hearer was wrapt in admiring surprise. . . . His voice, at first so finical, gradually became full, musical, and sonorous, and with every varying sentiment was beautifully modulated. His arms no longer appeared to be exhibited for show, but he exemplified the eloquenee of the hand. The dandy was transformed into the man of mind, the Mantalini-looking personage into a practised orator and finished elocutionist.

Disraeli's speech[1] on this occasion is full of interest. It is the first in which we find the main lines of his creed of democratic Toryism firmly drawn.

He had told them once before that the Conservative party was the really democratic party in the country who surrounded the people with the power of the Throne to shield them from the undue power of the aristocracy. . . . The point to which they were arrived in the history of the country was this: whether the establishments of the realm should be supported or destroyed. The question was between an hereditary monarchy on one side and an elective executive on the other. . . . He was in favour of an hereditary monarchy because a King whose power and authority were so judiciously limited as those of the King of England was in effect the great leader of the people against an usurping aristocracy.

He was, he told them also, a steadfast supporter of the Established Church against

that misty, ambiguous, and impalpable thing, that spectre of unsubstantiality, rising confusedly from the realm of darkness, that nameless thing called by some 'the voluntary

[1] There is a report in the *Dorset County Chronicle* for June 4, 1835.

system.' Now when he who was a lover of toleration avowed that he was opposed to this system, he declared that he was so opposed because he regarded it as an essentially aristocratic system devoted to the few and not to the many. It was a system that amounted to this, that no man should be saved who could not pay for salvation. Let them ask whether this was the way by which to instruct a nation. The same system that cared not for the unrepresented many in politics cared little for the unrepresented many in religion.

Incidentally he gives unstinted praise to the policy and achievements of the late Administration.

Nowhere in history could there be found an instance of a council of statesmen who in so short a period had matured a series of measures so vast in their character, so beneficent in their nature, so conducive to the prosperity and the glory of the country, as those which had been brought forward by the late Ministers. He confessed that, great as was his confidence in that great man who stood at the helm, and in his colleagues, sanguine as were his hopes, he was utterly astonished at what they did.

The Taunton election involved Disraeli in a quarrel which became too celebrated. The Peel Ministry had been overthrown by a combination between the Whigs and O'Connell, and it was only by virtue of the same combination that Melbourne could hope to maintain himself in office. Inevitably of course the new alliance between politicians who had been so recently at war became the great mark for invective with Tory orators and writers, and Disraeli could be trusted not to be behindhand. Alluding to the subject in his speech on the hustings, he was reported in the summarised version which appeared in the London papers to have described O'Connell as an incendiary and a traitor. Disraeli then and ever afterwards maintained that the summary misrepresented him, and that he had only quoted from the Whigs the language in which they had but recently denounced their present ally; and his explanation is in full accord with the speech as reported in all the local

papers.[1] The unlucky version, however, came before the eyes of O'Connell and much incensed him; and he seized the opportunity of a meeting in Dublin a few days later to take a savage revenge on his supposed assailant.

I must confess, that some of the attacks made on me, particularly one, by a Mr. Disraeli, at Taunton, surprised me. Anything so richly deserving the appellation of superlative blackguardism, or at all equal to that in impudence and assurance, I never before met with. The annals of ruffianism do not furnish anything like it. He is an author, I believe, of a couple of novels, and that was all I knew about him until 1831, or 1832, when he[2] wrote to me, being about to stand for High Wycombe, requesting a letter of recommendation from me to the electors. He took the letter with him to the place, got it printed and placarded all over the place. The next I heard of him was his being a candidate for Marylebone; in this he was also unsuccessful. He got tired of being a Radical any longer after these two defeats, and was determined to try his chance as a Tory. He stands the other day at Taunton, and by way of recommending himself to the electors he calls me an incendiary and a traitor. Now, my answer to this piece of gratuitous impertinence is, that he is an egregious liar. He is a liar both in action and words. What! shall such a vile creature be tolerated in England? Shall the man be received by any constituency who after coming forward on two separate occasions as the advocate of certain opinions, now boldly and unblushingly recants those principles by which his political life had been apparently regulated? He is a living lie: and the British Empire is degraded by tolerating a miscreant of his abominable description. The language is harsh, I must confess; but it is no more than deserved, and if I should apologise for using it, it is because I can find no harsher epithets in the English language by which to convey the utter abhorrence which I entertain for such a reptile. He is just fit now, after being twice discarded by the people,

[1] The best report is that in the *Dorset County Chronicle* for April 30, 1835, reprinted in Kebbel's *Selected Speeches of Lord Beaconsfield*. Here the word 'incendiary' does not occur at all, and the only mention of 'traitor' is in a passage in which the Whigs are described as 'that weak aristocratic party in the state who could only obtain power by leaguing themselves with one whom they had denounced as a traitor.'

[2] This was inaccurate. The application, as has been seen, was made through Bulwer.

to become a Conservative. He possesses all the necessary requisites of perfidy, selfishness, depravity, want of principle, &c., which would qualify him for the change. His name shews that he is of Jewish origin. I do not use it as a term of reproach; there are many most respectable Jews. But there are, as in every other people, some of the lowest and most disgusting grade of moral turpitude; and of those I look upon Mr. Disraeli as the worst. He has just the qualities of the impenitent thief on the Cross, and I verily believe, if Mr. Disraeli's family herald were to be examined and his genealogy traced, the same personage would be discovered to be the heir at law of the exalted individual to whom I allude. I forgive Mr. Disraeli now, and as the lineal descendant of the blasphemous robber, who ended his career beside the Founder of the Christian Faith, I leave the gentleman to the enjoyment of his infamous distinction and family honours.[1]

Vituperation so picturesque was of course irresistible, and 'this terrible philippic,' as the reporter well described it, found its way into nearly every newspaper. Having once killed an antagonist in a duel, O'Connell had taken a vow that he would never fight another; but this self-denying ordinance had not been accompanied by the practice of any similar self-denial in the matter of his language; and the papers had just been full of a quarrel between him and Lord Alvanley, a Tory peer, to whom he had alluded as 'a bloated buffoon.' A duel had resulted, in which Morgan O'Connell, the Liberator's son, had acted in the interest of his father's honour; and as soon, therefore, as Disraeli saw his 'crucifixion' in *The Times* of May 5 he wrote the following letter:—

To Mr. Morgan O'Connell, M.P.

31A, PARK ST., GROSVENOR SQUARE,
Tuesday, May 5.

SIR,

As you have established yourself as the champion of your father, I have the honour to request your notice to a very scurrilous attack which your father has made upon my conduct and character.

[1] This, from the *Courier* of May 6, 1835, was the version of O'Connell's speech adopted by Disraeli himself in an explanatory address to the electors of Taunton.

Had Mr. O'Connell, according to the practice observed among gentlemen, appealed to me respecting the accuracy of the reported expressions before he indulged in offensive comments upon them, he would, if he can be influenced by a sense of justice, have felt that such comments were unnecessary. He has not thought fit to do so, and he leaves me no alternative but to request that you, his son, will resume your vicarious duties of yielding satisfaction for the insults which your father has too long lavished with impunity upon his political opponents.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
B. DISRAELI.

Morgan O'Connell very reasonably replied that he was not answerable for what his father might say, and that he had only challenged Lord Alvanley because he conceived the latter had purposely insulted his father. Thereupon Disraeli sent the following letter to the newspapers.

To Mr. Daniel O'Connell, M.P. for Dublin.

LONDON,
May.

MR. O'CONNELL,

Although you have long placed yourself out of the pale of civilisation, still I am one who will not be insulted, even by a Yahoo, without chastising it. When I read this morning in the same journals your virulent attack upon myself, and that your son was at the same moment paying the penalty of similar virulence to another individual on whom you had dropped your filth, I thought that the consciousness that your opponents had at length discovered a source of satisfaction might have animated your insolence to unwonted energy, and I called upon your son to re-assume his vicarious office of yielding satisfaction for his shrinking sire. But it seems that gentleman declines the further exercise of the pleasing duty of enduring the consequences of your libertine harangues. I have no other means, therefore, of noticing your effusion but this public mode. Listen, then, to me.

If it had been possible for you to act like a gentleman, you would have hesitated before you made your foul and insolent comments upon a hasty and garbled report of a speech which scarcely contains a sentence or an expression as they

emanated from my mouth; but the truth is, you were glad to seize the first opportunity of pouring forth your venom against a man whom it serves the interest of your party to represent as a political apostate.

In 1831,[1] when Mr. O'Connell expressed to the electors of Wycombe his anxiety to assist me in my election, I came forward as the opponent of the party in power, and which I described in my address as 'a rapacious, tyrannical, and incapable faction'—the English Whigs, who in the ensuing year denounced you as a traitor from the Throne, and every one of whom, only a few months back, you have anathematised with all the peculiar graces of a tongue practised in scurrility. You are the patron of these men now, Mr. O'Connell: you, forsooth, are 'devoted' to them. I am still their uncompromising opponent. Which of us is the most consistent?

You say that I was once a Radical, and now that I am a Tory. My conscience acquits me of ever having deserted a political friend, or ever having changed a political opinion. I worked for a great and avowed end in 1831, and that was the restoration of the balance of parties in the state, a result which I believed to be necessary to the honour of the realm and the happiness of the people. I never advocated a measure which I did not believe tended to this result, and if there be any measures which I then urged, and now am not disposed to press, it is because that great result is obtained.

In 1831 I should have been very happy to have laboured for this object with Mr. O'Connell, with whom I had no personal acquaintance, but who was a member of the Legislature, remarkable for his political influence, his versatile talents, and his intense hatred and undisguised contempt of the Whigs.

Since 1831 we have met only once; but I have a lively recollection of my interview with so distinguished a personage. Our conversation was of great length; I had a very ample opportunity of studying your character. I thought you a very amusing, a very interesting, but a somewhat overrated man. I am sure on that occasion I did not disguise from you my political views: I spoke with a frankness which I believe is characteristic of my disposition. I told you I was not a sentimental, but a practical politician; that what I chiefly desired to see was the formation of a strong but constitutional Government, that would maintain the Empire, and that I thought if the Whigs remained in office they would shipwreck the State. I observed then, as was my

[1] A slip, of course, for 1832.

habit, that the Whigs must be got rid of at any price. It seemed to me that you were much of the same opinion as myself; but our conversation was very general. We formed no political alliance, and for a simple reason—I concealed neither from yourself, nor from your friends, that the repeal of the Union was an impassable gulf between us, and that I could not comprehend, after the announcement of such an intention, how any English party could co-operate with you. Probably you then thought that the English Movement might confederate with you on a system of mutual assistance, and that you might exchange and circulate your accommodation measures of destruction; but even Mr. O'Connell, with his lively faith in Whig feebleness and Whig dishonesty, could scarcely have imagined that in the course of twelve months his fellow-conspirators were to be my Lord Melbourne and the Marquis of Lansdowne.

I admire your scurrilous allusions to my origin. It is quite clear that the 'hereditary bondsman' has already forgotten the clank of his fetter. I know the tactics of your Church; it clamours for toleration, and it labours for supremacy. I see that you are quite prepared to persecute.

With regard to your taunts as to my want of success in my election contests, permit me to remind you that I had nothing to appeal to but the good sense of the people. No threatening skeletons canvassed for me; a death's-head and cross-bones were not blazoned on my banners. My pecuniary resources, too, were limited; I am not one of those public beggars that we see swarming with their obtrusive boxes in the chapels of your creed, nor am I in possession of a princely revenue wrung from a starving race of fanatical slaves. Nevertheless, I have a deep conviction that the hour is at hand when I shall be more successful, and take my place in that proud assembly of which Mr. O'Connell avows his wish no longer to be a member. I expect to be a representative of the people before the repeal of the Union. We shall meet at Philippi; and rest assured that, confident in a good cause, and in some energies which have been not altogether unproved, I will seize the first opportunity of inflicting upon you a castigation which will make you at the same time remember and repent the insults that you have lavished upon

BENJAMIN DISRAELI.

The newspapers of those days were anything but squeamish, and most of them published this letter; and

as soon as it appeared, Disraeli wrote again to Morgan O'Connell:—

I deduce from your communication that you do not consider yourself responsible for any insults offered by your father, but only bound to resent the insults that he may receive. Now, Sir, it is my hope that I *have* insulted him; assuredly it was my intention to do so. I wished to express the utter scorn in which I hold his character, and the disgust with which his conduct inspires me. If I failed in conveying this expression of my feelings to him, let me more successfully express them now to you. I shall take every opportunity of holding your father's name up to public contempt. And I fervently pray that you, or some one of his blood, may attempt to avenge the unextinguishable hatred with which I shall pursue his existence.

To Sarah Disraeli.

May 6, 1835.

There is but one opinion among *all* parties—viz., that I have *squabashed* them. I went to D'Orsay immediately. He sent for Henry Baillie for my second, as he thought a foreigner should not interfere in a political duel, but he took the management of everything. I never quitted his house till ten o'clock, when I dressed and went to the Opera, and every one says I have done it in first-rate style.

May 9.

This morning as I was lying in bed, thankful that I had kicked all the O'Connells and that I was at length to have a quiet morning, Mr. Collard, the police officer of Marylebone, rushed into my chamber, and took me into custody. . . . We all went in a hackney coach to the office, where I found that the articles were presented by a Mr. Bennett, residing in some street in Westminster, and an acquaintance of the O'Connells. We were soon dismissed, but I am now bound to keep the peace in £500 sureties. As far as the present affair was concerned, it was a most unnecessary precaution, as if all the O'Connells were to challenge me I could not think of meeting them *now*. I consider and every one else that they are lynched. It is very easy for you to criticise, but I do not regret the letter: the expressions were well weighed, and without it the affair was but clever pamphleteering. Critics you must always meet. W. told me the last letter was the finest thing in the English language, but that the letter to

Dan was *too long*; others think that perfect. One does not like the Yahoo as coarse, others think it worthy of Swift, and so on. . . . The general effect is the thing, and that is, that all men agree I have shown pluck.[1]

His father and sister had been much alarmed by the ferocity and vindictiveness of the second letter to Morgan O'Connell, and perhaps Disraeli himself may in calmer moments have suspected that his violence had been excessive.

I have no ambition [he wrote[2] to the electors of Taunton] to be considered either ferocious or vindictive. . . . I am, I believe, of a mild and tolerant disposition, not too easily nettled, and quite ready to subscribe to a considerable latitude in the gladiatorial encounter between political opponents. . . . If in those hot and hurried letters I indulged in expressions which my calmer reason may disapprove, I am sure no candid and generous spirit, whatever may be his party, would scan with severity the words of one who had been subjected, without the prospect of redress, to such unparalleled outrage; I am sure no candid and generous spirit but must sympathise with one, who young, alone, supported only by his own energies, and the inspiration of a good cause, dared to encounter, in no inglorious struggle, the most powerful individual in the world who does not wear a crown.

The general effect, however, was the thing, and judged by this test the result was not unsatisfactory. 'Row with O'Connell in which I greatly distinguish myself' is the complacent entry in the Mutilated Diary a year later. The incident had at least made him notorious, and notoriety to Disraeli was at this time as the breath of his nostrils. Some observers may have thought the taste of his letters questionable. D'Orsay declared that they were perfection and added that everybody agreed with him; and one of Disraeli's supporters at Wycombe was so impressed by their eloquence that 'neither he nor his old father could sleep all the night' after their perusal. 'Scarcely a day has elapsed,' Disraeli wrote[3] a month

[1] *Letters*, p. 94. [2] Address of May 12.
[3] Letter to the electors of Taunton, June 13, 1835.

later, 'on which I have not received letters from some part of the United Kingdom congratulating me on my conduct.'

The charge of ingratitude, skilfully exploited by his adversaries, is what did him most injury, both then and afterwards; and it is worth while repeating his own defence:—

> Whatever may be Mr. O'Connell's errors, he has an instinctive horror of blockheads. The man who talks or writes of my *ingratitude* to Mr. O'Connell only perverts our language and makes himself ridiculous. Mr. O'Connell, not at my written request, as he has been falsely represented to have stated, but at the verbal request of a third person, wrote a commonplace letter to the electors of Wycombe in my favour *when opposed to Colonel Grey, the son of the Whig Prime Minister*. The letter did me no good, but the reverse, but it was one of those slight courtesies of life, whatever might be its motives, of which a gentleman would always be prepared to show his sense by courtesies as slight. When therefore, long after, I for the first and only time met Mr. O'Connell, *who, in the meantime, had become a Repealer*, I thanked him for his courtesy, and however we differed in politics, I seized with pleasure that opportunity of being civil to him; and very recently when I met his most intimate friend, Mr. Ronayne,[1] . . . I wished to show by the tone of my conversation that, however I was opposed to him or his friend in public life, I was far from desirous of conducting myself towards them in a hostile spirit when we met in serener situations than the hustings or the House of Commons. . . . In the tone of courtesy I then used I should have ever spoken of Mr. O'Connell, had not he, from the intentional misrepresentations of some busy fools in London, thought proper to make his notorious attack upon me in Dublin.[2]

The following note, written in the early sixties, though it anticipates, may be given here as an epilogue.

[1] In a letter to the *Morning Chronicle* dated May 3, 1835, this gentleman declared that Disraeli 'had within the last month spoken to him in terms of the most extravagant admiration of O'Connell,' to whom also he had asked him 'to communicate his kind remembrances.'

[2] Letter to the electors of Taunton, June 13, 1835.

Croker, Peel, and O'Connell sent me, I may say, messages of peace before they died—literally O'Connell. He was so delighted with my smashing of Peel, and so glad, perhaps, that he had escaped what I once threatened and he now found I could do, that he sent me a message that it had always been heavy on his heart that there should have been a misunderstanding between us, and that he had long known that he had been misinformed and misled in the matter. I sent him a very courteous reply: but avoided any personal communication. He always made me a very reverential bow afterwards.

To Dawson Turner.[1]

May 29, 1835.

All this vulgar electioneering bustle is not worth a few calm hours in your magnificent library among those collections of which you have good cause to be proud; but we are the creatures of circumstances, and as far as Destiny and tobacco are concerned I am a decided Orientalist.[2]

[1] Botanist and Antiquary. His library and collection of manuscripts were famous.

[2] From a letter in Mr. Alfred Morrison's collection.

CHAPTER XIV.

Political Writings.

1835–36.

During the next couple of years Disraeli's political activity was mainly with the pen. He had a mind of the complexion that will not allow a man to feel at ease in a fresh position till he has framed a theory to account for it; and now that he had become a Tory it was necessary for him to justify his faith both to himself and to the world. The times and the Tory party alike called for guidance: in his own words, it was 'a perplexed, ill-informed, jaded shallow generation.' The reaction which followed the high idealism and strenuous efforts of the French Revolutionary era had produced the Benthamite philosophy and the Ricardian political economy, and when Disraeli entered public life these systems had just emerged from their period of struggle as the peculiar possession of an unpopular sect, and attained to that position of dominating influence over the mind of England, and especially over the mind of the English middle class, which they were to retain for nearly fifty years. It was only in the eighth decade of the century, after Disraeli himself had overthrown the ascendancy of the middle class, and when for the greater part of the decade he was Prime Minister of England, that the authority of these systems began seriously to be shaken. His active career coincides closely with the period of their dominion, and in his life, his writings, and his achievements he stands for all that is their spiritual antithesis, at war with them throughout

the whole range of their influence. Not that he was the only or even the first antagonist in the field. The Reform Act of 1832 had marked the triumph of the commercially-minded middle class with their unimaginative ideals. In the summer of 1833 Newman, with 'fierce' thoughts against the Liberals,[1] hastened home from the Mediterranean, writing 'Lead, kindly Light' in the orange boat that carried him from Palermo to Marseilles, to begin the Oxford movement; and in the winter of the same year the book which Carlyle had 'hawked' round the publishers of London appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* under the title of *Sartor Resartus*. Newman, Carlyle, and Disraeli were far different figures; but, little as they may have known it, they were in a sense spiritual brethren, engaged in a desperate fight against a common enemy, working in their several ways with a common purpose. Beneath a thousand superficial differences they had all three the same romantic temperament; all three had in them something of the artist; and all three were deeply imbued with that historical sentiment which is the fatal enemy of Benthamism, as of every kind of system-mongering. Disraeli's sphere of operations being primarily political, in his case the prophet and the teacher had to wear the livery and submit to the routine of the practical politician and statesman; but, though it may have happened not infrequently that in appearance at all events he postponed the higher to the lower, he was nevertheless, in the conflict in which all were engaged, not the least potent and effective of the three.

Politically the Utilitarian doctrines were throughout the period of their prevalence an appanage of the Liberal party; and in the political sphere accordingly the problem of resistance was to recreate the Tory party so as to make it a bulwark against all that was devastating in

[1] *Apologia*, p. 33, 'It was the success of the Liberal cause which fretted me inwardly. I became fierce against its instruments and its manifestations.'

the philosophy of the hour. This was the problem that presented itself to Peel after the Reform Bill, and his assumption of office in 1834 is therefore a critical event in the history of English parties.

> In 1834 England, though frightened at the reality of Reform, still adhered to its phrases; it was inclined, as practical England, to maintain existing institutions; but, as theoretical England, it was suspicious that they were indefensible. No one had arisen, either in Parliament, the Universities, or the Press, to lead the public mind to the investigation of principles; and not to mistake, in their reformations, the corruption of practice for fundamental ideas. It was this perplexed, ill-informed, jaded, shallow generation, repeating cries which they did not comprehend, and wearied with the endless ebullitions of their own barren conceit, that Sir Robert Peel was summoned to govern. It was from such materials, ample in quantity, but in all spiritual qualities most deficient; with great numbers, largely acred, Consoled up to their chins, but without knowledge, genius, thought, truth, or faith, that Sir Robert Peel was to form a 'great Conservative party on a comprehensive basis.'[1]

Disraeli, as we have seen, in his last speech at Taunton praised in the highest terms the policy and measures of the Peel administration; but his maturer view, the view of *Coningsby*, was that the whole attempt was premature, precipitated by 'the tactics of those short-sighted intriguers who persisted in looking upon a revolution as a mere party struggle, and would not permit the mind of the nation to work through the inevitable phases that awaited it.' The result was that Peel, though he did his work of reconstructing the Tory party like a 'dexterous politician,' failed to realise 'those prescient views of a great statesman in which he had doubtless indulged, and in which, though still clogged by the leadership of 1834, he may yet find fame for himself and salvation for his country.' These last words are probably nothing more than conventional homage to a

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 4.

leader whom the writer still acknowledged, and one seems to detect in them that note of grave irony which is so often heard from Disraeli. When they were written in 1844 Disraeli was well aware that Peel was not the man for a great constructive work such as the formation of a Conservative party on a comprehensive basis. He had already come to see that the Tamworth manifesto was an attempt to construct a party without principles; its basis 'Latitudinarianism'; its inevitable consequence 'Political Infidelity.'

> There was indeed a considerable shouting about what they called Conservative principles; but the awkward question naturally arose, what will you conserve? The prerogatives of the Crown, provided they are not exercised; the independence of the House of Lords, provided it is not asserted; the Ecclesiastical estate, provided it is regulated by a commission of laymen. Everything, in short, that is established, as long as it is a phrase and not a fact.[1]

Peel, in fact, was a political opportunist, disinterested and therefore with a certain nobility in his opportunism, but still essentially an opportunist, a man who lived without ideas. Disraeli, if any one will have it so, may in the stress of practical politics have sunk at times to an opportunism that was less disinterested than Peel's, and consequently more ignoble; but he was never without ideas or the courage to follow their guidance. He had what Peel signally lacked, the creative mind, and for him therefore was reserved the task at which Peel so disastrously failed.

Between men so different in temperament and in mental constitution antagonism from the first was perhaps almost inevitable. A division of tendency soon declared itself in the reconstituted Tory party, and Disraeli not many months after his enrolment found himself in the opposite camp to his newly accepted leader. It was a case in which Peel's policy seemed to

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 5.

him to be 'the conservation of the independence of the House of Lords provided it is not asserted.' The principal measures of the Melbourne Government in the Session of 1835 were the Irish Tithes Bill and the Municipal Corporations Bill. Both parties were agreed as to the policy of the conversion of the Irish tithes into a rent-charge; but through the clumsy strategy of the Whig leaders the Peel Ministry had been overthrown, not on a vote of want of confidence nor on any question that was worth fighting for, but on a motion asserting the barren principle of the appropriation of the surplus revenues of the Irish Church to secular purposes. Eventually, in 1838, the difficulty was settled exactly on the lines of Peel's original proposals, but for the present the Whig Ministers clung to this principle of appropriation with what even the Whig historian is constrained to call 'factious folly.'[1] In the present Session they carried through the House of Commons a Tithe Bill in which, in spite of the protests of Peel, appropriation found a place, and when the House of Lords, under the guidance of Lyndhurst, expunged the offensive clauses, Ministers abandoned the Bill. On the question of the English municipal corporations the two Houses again came into sharp collision. In his speech at Taunton in June Disraeli had spoken contemptuously of the Bill as 'a measure of such utter insignificance that he hoped the Conservatives would not condescend to oppose it'; but he soon found himself strenuously supporting Lyndhurst in a campaign for converting the Government proposals into 'a conservative arrangement.' Under Lyndhurst's direction the Bill was drastically amended in the House of Lords; but Peel, who had approved of its main principles during its passage through the House of Commons, was known to have little sympathy with the action of his late Chancellor, and when the measure came back to the Commons he separated himself from the Lords on some important points, though duly laying

[1] Walpole's *History*, III., p. 312.

stress on their privileges and independence. Ultimately a compromise was arranged which, while making large concessions to the wishes of the Upper House, secured the adoption of the Government plan in most of its important features; but the compromise did not prevent a good deal of angry declamation against the Lords during the Parliamentary recess or an attempt on the part of the Radicals to revive the old Reform cry of 'the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill.' The country, however, refused to respond, and in spite of the Radicals, and to some extent in spite of Peel, the session had for result that the Lords, whose prestige had been almost destroyed by the passage of the Reform Act, had now successfully vindicated the independence of their chamber and reasserted its rights as an organic part of the working constitution.

It appears to be the case that during this crisis the King, who was still eagerly seeking for a way in which to rid himself of his hated Whig Ministers, applied to Lyndhurst to assist him if Peel should refuse; and the terms on which Lyndhurst was to become Prime Minister were discussed and informally arranged. Throughout these events Disraeli was in the closest touch with Lyndhurst, and his account[1] of the transaction is to be found in a fragment among his papers written in the following year.

It was in this session [1835] that Lord L[yndhurst] first formed his great plan of stopping the movement. Tried upon the English Municipal Reform Bill as a basis. His triumphant and able career in the House of Lords. Jealousy of Peel. Lyndhurst determines to accept the Premiership if offered, having received hints from Windsor. His plan to make Brougham Chancellor—to demand from his party

[1] See also the remarkable memoir of Lyndhurst that appeared in *The Times* of Oct. 13, 1863, the day after his death. The disclosures of this memoir were commonly attributed to Disraeli, who was known to have been in Lyndhurst's confidence during the events in question; but though in full agreement with his own account, they surprised Disraeli himself, and were most probably derived from Barnes, who was Editor of *The Times* in 1835, and in close communication with Lyndhurst.

10 seats in the Commons, which were to be given to 10 young men whom he should select. I was one, Bickham Escott another, Thesiger a third. The Commons to be led by Sir James Graham, whom he had sounded, and Sir William Follett, in whom he had great confidence. Peel came up from Drayton and threw him over, and a party in the Lords, led by Wharncliffe, frightened at not being supported in the Commons, receded from their engagement at a meeting at Apsley House at the end of August or beginning of September.

The D[uke] of W[ellington] would have been firm in spite of Peel and accepted office if Wharncliffe and his friends had not seceded. The secession was only private. L.'s final speech at the close of the business, and Brougham's complimentary oration to him, surprised everybody, but the truth is there was an understanding between B. and L. After the debates they generally went home together, and once B. said: 'You and I, Lyndhurst, can rule this country if we like.' Before L.'s final speech B. took him aside and shook hands with him with great feeling and said: 'Let us embrace. We are both Ex-Chancellors and have both been thrown over by our party.'

The consequence of Peel's conduct was the inevitable demonstration apparently in favour of the Whigs by the corporation elections in November. This alone saved the Cabinet. They had become so unpopular in the country, and the H[ouse] of L[ords] had so rallied, even in spite of Peel, and had done so much that in the autumn all the elections went against the Whigs. Ten days or so before the municipal elections was the death of Lord Milton and the Northamptonshire election. The blow was so great that I heard from a good authority that the Ministers did not intend to meet Parliament.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Saturday. [*June* 27, 1835.]

. . . . Nothing has been talked of since your departure but the great fancy ball which came off last night, and exceeded in splendor anything ever known in London. My dress was admirable, with some additions, such as a silken shirt with long sleeves, lent me by Henry Baillie. D'Orsay, H[enry] B[ulwer], myself, Massey Stanley, Talbot, Herbert, and Regina went in a party with the Chesterfields, Ansons, and Worcesters—we flattered ourselves by far the most distinguished: Lady Chesterfield was a Sultana, and Mrs. Anson a Greek, with her own hair lower than the calf of her

leg. She was the most brilliant in the room. Lady Burghersh, Lady Fitzroy Somerset, and Lady Sykes wore powder —the two first Louis XIV., the last a complete copy of a Sir Joshua, with a white damask dress and large brocade flowers. I never saw her look so well. Lady Londonderry,[1] as Cleopatra, was in a dress literally embroidered with emeralds and diamonds from top to toe. It looked like armor and she like a rhinoceros. Castlereagh introduced me most particularly to her by her desire, and I was with her a great déal. Mrs. Norton and Mrs. Blackwood beautiful Greeks; but the finest thing is that at half-past 2 Lyndhurst gave a supper in George Street to eighty of the supremest *ton* and beauty. You can conceive nothing more brilliant than his house illuminated with a banquet to a company so fancifully dressed. . . . This great secession rather knocked up the ball, however, and everybody looked blue who was not going to Lord L.'s. . . . Lyndhurst looked like a French marshal. Wilton was Philip IV., and the Duke lent him his Golden Fleece set in diamonds for the evening. . . . The D[uke] of W[ellington] spoke to me at the ball and said he did not know I was in London. He asked after my father.

[*July.*]

I have since dined at Rosebank with the Londonderrys. 'Tis the prettiest baby-house in the world—a pavilion rather than a villa, all green paint, white chintz, and looking-glass. The grounds, however, are considerable, and very rich, bordering the Thames. The dinner was admirable, but no plate; porcelain, fresh as the room, with a bouquet by every guest, and five immense pyramids of roses down the table. . . . Lyndhurst was quite delighted with his visit, and certainly Bradenham never looked to greater advantage. Yesterday he and I went to Richmond.

Aug. 5.

I can hardly trust myself to write about politics; the debate[2] was dashing in the extreme. Lyndhurst's speech by far the crack one—most bold and triumphant, and received with tumultuous cheering. I can give you no idea of the excited and at the same time depressed state of

[1] Daughter and heiress of Sir Henry Vane-Tempest and second wife of the 3rd Marquis of Londonderry.

[2] Of August 3 in the Lords, on the motion that the House should go into Committee on the Municipal Corporations Bill. An amendment was moved from the Tory benches that the House, which had already heard counsel in behalf of the corporations, should now receive evidence, and this amendment, supported by Lyndhurst, was carried against the Government.

Melbourne. He seemed quite wild and scared. Brougham spoke very well, but his conduct is perplexing. He rather assists us than the reverse. The course taken was kept secret, and perfectly confounded the Whigs. It is an awful crisis whatever may be the result. I cannot think of the hot weather or anything else.

Aug. 12.

Lyndhurst has been very ill, and unable to go to the Lords, where he ought not to be absent a moment, as all depends upon him. However, Saturday and Sunday's nursing brought him round. The Duke has formally resigned to him the leadership of the House of Lords, and there is every probability of his being Prime Minister; his own disinclination alone stands in the way. To-morrow the war begins in the Lords. The speeches of counsel made a great impression; the evidence was capital, the Lords united, and Lyndhurst has with his own hand drawn up their counter project. . . . But for him all would have been lost, and now everybody praises the stand the Lords have made, and the Whigs have entirely failed in getting up a crisis.

Aug. 14.

There was a sharp engagement in the House of Lords last night. Melbourne is evidently so annoyed that I cannot help fancying he will come down to-night and withdraw the Bill. . . . Brougham was terribly tipsy. He shook his fist at Lord Wicklow, and quoted Ciceronian braggadoccios. . . . After all this is over, Lyndhurst will like to come down with me for a quiet week at Bradenham.[1]

Aug. 20.

I have sent you the *Morning Post* every day, which is the only paper now read, and in whose columns some great unknown has suddenly risen, whose exploits form almost the sole staple of political conversation, and all conversation is now political. The back numbers for the last week cannot be obtained for love or money, and the sale has increased nearly one-third. All attempts at discovering the writer have been baffled, and the mystery adds to the keen interest which the articles excite.[2]

The mystery, if any mystery there be, is solved by another entry in the Mutilated Diary: 'Write the M.P.

[1] 'Lord Lyndhurst's visits this year to Bradenham and our increasing friendship' is the corresponding entry in the Mutilated Diary.

[2] *Letters*, pp. 95-98. [The letter describing the ball was much curtailed by the editor, and is partially restored here.—G.E.B.]

during the English Municipal Bill for L.—three leading articles a day for nearly a month.' The articles, which have been preserved in a book of cuttings, are in the strain of reckless vituperation which was then the fashion even in responsible journals, with only here and there a flash of wit or a happy phrase to redeem the personalities. That 'meagre-minded rebel Roebuck'[1] has something perhaps of the true Disraelian touch; but what would be thought to-day of a newspaper that described a great officer of State as 'this shrewd, coarse, manœuvring Pict,' 'this base-born Scotchman,' 'this booing, fawning, jobbing progeny of haggis and cockaleekie,' the pleasant labels affixed in the articles to the Attorney-General, Campbell.[2] For argument there is a great deal of the doctrine that the House of Commons is no more representative of the people than is the House of Lords; but the constitutional theories which Disraeli was now evolving we shall find more systematically set forth in a work which was shortly to appear and which must presently engage our attention.

To Lady Blessington.

BRADENHAM,
Oct. 4 [1835].

I see by the papers that you have quitted the shores of the 'far-resounding sea' and resumed your place in the most charming of modern houses. I therefore venture to recall my existence to your memory, and request the favour of hearing some intelligence of yourself, which must always interest me. Have you been well, happy, and prosperous? And has that pen, plucked assuredly from the pinion of a bird of paradise, been idle or creative? My lot has been as usual here, though enlivened by the presence of Lady Sykes, who has contrived to pay us two visits, and the presence of Lord Lyndhurst, who also gave us a fortnight of his delightful society. I am tolerably busy, and hope to give a good account of myself and doings when we meet, which I trust will be soon. How goes that 'great lubber' the Public, and how fares that mighty hoax, the World? Who of our

[1] The 'meagre-minded rebel' before his death was made a Privy Councillor on Disraeli's recommendation.

[2] Afterwards Lord Campbell.

friends has distinguished or extinguished himself or herself? In short, as the hart for the waterside, I pant for a little news, but chiefly of your fair and agreeable self. . . . How is the most delightful of men and best of friends, the Admirable Crichton? . . . How and where is Bulwer? How are the Whigs and how do they feel? All here who know you send kind greetings, and all who have not that delight, kind wishes. Peace be within your walls and plenteousness within your palace. *Vale.*

Yours affectionately,
DIS.[1]

In December of this year there was published as a volume of 200 pages a tract entitled a 'Vindication of the English Constitution in a Letter to a Noble and Learned Lord, by Disraeli the Younger,' the noble and learned Lord being, of course, Lyndhurst. This tract is the most important of Disraeli's early political writings, and the fullest exposition of his political creed that preceded *Coningsby*; while even *Coningsby*, as we shall see, added little that is essential to the statement. There is little in the *Vindication* itself, perhaps, that may not be found in germ in the speeches, letters, and articles of the few preceding years, but all is now brought together, and this is one of the cases where the whole is something more than the mere aggregate of the parts. The *Vindication* gave Disraeli what his fugitive efforts could never have given him, a recognised position as a political writer and thinker, and it not only helped to fix and clarify his own ideas, but, appearing at a moment when party boundaries were shifting and principles in a state of flux, it from the first exerted no inconsiderable influence over the development of political thought.

From Isaac D'Israeli.

Dec. 23, 1835.

Your vulgar birthday was, it seems, last Monday, but your nobler political birth has occurred this week, and truly, like the fable of old, you have issued into existence armed

[1] Mr. Alfred Morrison's collection. In the reprint the year is wrongly given as 1837.

in the full panoply of the highest wisdom. You have now a positive *name* and a *being* in the great political world, which you had not ten days ago. It is for you to preserve the wide reputation which I am positive is now secured. I never doubted your powers—they were not latent to me. With more management on your side they would have been acknowledged long ere now—universally. You never wanted for genius, but it was apt in its fullness to run over. You have now acquired, what many a great genius never could, *a perfect style*, and that's a pickle which will preserve even matter less valuable than what you, I doubt not, will always afford the world. You have rejected the curt and flashy diction which betrayed perpetual effort. All now flows in one continuous stream of thought and expression—at once masculine and graceful. . . . All that now remains for you to do is to register 'a vow in Heaven' that you will never write anything inferior to what you have now written, and never to write but on a subject which may call forth all your energies. Should you ever succeed in getting into Parliament I well know that your moral intrepidity and your rapid combinations of ideas will throw out many 'a Vindication' in the brilliancy and irresistible force of your effusions. No man thinks more deeply, while he delights even common eyes by the beauties of his surface. . . . Take care of your health—that is the only weak part which I fear about you.

Disraeli begins the *Vindication* with an attack on his old enemies the Utilitarians. He had not only the instinctive antipathy of the born romantic to their unimaginative creed, but by training as well as by temperament he had all the intolerance of Burke for their practice of indulging in 'barren assertions of abstract rights,' of dabbling in '*a priori* systems of politics,' and of framing 'new constitutions on the abstract principles of theoretic science.' There are, indeed, frequent passages in the *Vindication* which sound like echoes of Burke, and show that Disraeli was deeply penetrated with the spirit and sentiment of Burke's later writings. 'Nations have characters as well as individuals, and national character is precisely the quality which the new sect of statesmen in their schemes and speculations either deny or overlook.' 'This respect for precedent,

this clinging to prescription, this reverence for antiquity, which are so often ridiculed by conceited and superficial minds . . . appear to me to have their origin in a profound knowledge of human nature.' Disraeli had read widely, if not deeply, in history; and, like Burke, indeed like Bolingbroke, in a still earlier generation, and, above all, like Bolingbroke's friend Montesquieu, he carried into his investigation of political problems the spirit of that pregnant historical method which, already triumphant in Germany, was in a subsequent generation to overthrow the pretensions of the dominant school of thinkers in England and present their so-called philosophy in its true historical perspective as a mere insular anachronism in the œcumenical history of thought.

The argument of the *Vindication* is largely based on a favourite doctrine of Disraeli's, the representation in Parliament of separate estates of the realm and the dependence of the balance of the constitution on the maintenance of their several rights. The assailants against whom he was vindicating the constitution were the Radicals, who, as has been seen, had attempted during the recess to stir up agitation against the House of Lords, and O'Connell, who, in a pilgrimage of passion through the north, had especially distinguished himself in this endeavour. With a considerable display of learning the author traces the origin and development of our institutions, and arrives at the conclusion that 'the House of Commons is no more the house of the people than is the House of Lords.' To the Radical conception of the people he opposes his conception of the nation as a living and organized whole; but not even in the narrower or in any reasonable sense of the term can the House of Commons be regarded as the house of the people or its members as the representatives of the people. 'The Commons form still only an estate of the realm, a privileged and limited order of the nation, in numbers a fraction of the mass,' the constituency

even since its enlargement by the Reform Act comprising no more than three or four hundred thousand persons. The House of Lords, on the other hand, though not elective, is truly representative, 'the most eminent existing example of representation without election.'

The House of Lords represents the Church in the Lord Bishops, the law in the Lord Chancellor, and often the Lord Chief Justice, the counties in the Lord Lieutenants, the boroughs in their noble recorders. This estate, from the character of the property of its members, is also essentially the representative chamber of the land; and, as the hereditary leaders of the nation, especially of the cultivators of the land, the genuine and permanent population of England, its peasantry.[1]

'In a hasty and factious effort to get rid of representation without election, it will be as well if eventually we do not discover that we have only obtained election without representation.' But if the Lords are representative, what of their responsibility? They are in fact in no greater degree irresponsible than the Commons.

Is a privileged order of three hundred thousand individuals, represented by their deputies, likely to be more responsible than a privileged order of three hundred individuals appearing by themselves? On the contrary, every one sees and feels in an instant that, as far as the nation is concerned, the more limited order, who appear for themselves, and are more in the eye of the world, are in fact in a moral point of view much more responsible to the general body of the people than the more numerous and more obscure class, who shuffle off that moral responsibility on their representatives.[2]

'If I were called upon,' he declares in words which sound like an echo of an often-quoted dictum of Alexander Hamilton's, 'to construct a constitution *a priori* for this country, of which a senate, or superior chamber, was to be a constituent part, I am at a loss to conceive

[1] P. 129. [2] P. 145.

where I could obtain more suitable materials for its construction than in the body of our hereditary peerage.' The tree, his argument runs, shall be known by its fruit. The hereditary peerage has formed an active and powerful branch of our legislature for five centuries, and no statesman can doubt that its peculiar character has mainly contributed to the stability of our institutions. Throughout that period it has given us a senate not inferior in capacity to the elective chamber, and now, as he contends, the hereditary assembly manifestly excels the elective, not only 'in the higher accomplishments of statesmen, in elevation of thought and feeling, in learning and in eloquence,' but also in 'those very qualities, for the possession of which at first sight we should be most disposed to give a House of Commons credit, that mastery of detail and management of complicated commonplaces which we style in this country "business-like habits."'

You cannot, he is careful to observe, obtain a substitute for the House of Lords by merely collecting all the clever men of the country and giving them the august title of a senate. A nation will not allow three hundred men, however ingenious, to make laws for them, just because the sovereign power of the state chooses to appoint that such a number of its subjects shall possess this privilege. 'The King of England may make peers, but he cannot make a House of Lords.'

> The order of men, of whom such an assembly is formed, is the creation of ages. In the first place, they must really be an estate of the realm, a class of individuals who from their property and personal influence alone form an important section of the whole nation. . . . Their names, office, and character, and the ennobling achievements of their order, must be blended with our history and bound up with our hereditary sentiment. They must be felt and recognised as the not unworthy descendants or successors of a class that has always taken the lead in civilisation and formed the advance guard in the march of national progress.[1]

[1] Pp. 159, 161.

Be it observed, moreover, that at the root of the permanence and popularity of our hereditary peerage is its essentially democratic character. The basis of our social fabric is the principle of civil equality. It is this principle which has 'prevented the nobility of England from degenerating into a favoured and odious sect.' It is this principle which has placed the Peers at the head of the people and filled the House of Commons with members connected with the Peers by the most intimate ties of birth and blood.

> The English nation, to obtain the convenience of monarchy, have established a popular throne, and to enjoy the security of aristocracy, have invested certain orders of their fellow subjects with legislative functions: but these estates, however highly privileged, are invested with no quality of exclusion; and the Peers and the Commons of England are the trustees of the nation, not its masters. The country where the legislative and even the executive office may be constitutionally obtained by every subject of the land, is a democracy, and a democracy of the noblest character. . . . Neither ancient ages, nor the more recent experience of our newer time, can supply us with a parallel instance of a free government, founded on the broadest basis of popular rights, yet combining with democratic liberty, aristocratic security, and monarchical convenience.[1]

Incidentally Disraeli sets forth his theory of the origin and genius of our English parties—a curious blend of insight and paradox, of which perhaps the paradox will seem less startling when our history has been truly interpreted and freed from the bias it has received from the great Whig historians. The Whigs, according to Disraeli, have always been an anti-national party, always striving to upset the balance of the constitution, always making war on the national institutions in the interest of their own aggrandisement. The party had its origin in the latter part of the 17th century in a combination between the Peers and the Puritans,

[1] P. 207.

the former animated by hostility to the monarchy, the latter by hatred of the establishment. A republican sentiment united the two; but the republican model of the House of Russell was Venice; of their plebeian allies, Geneva. 'Their cry was civil and religious Freedom . . . that is, a doge and no bishops: advocating the liberty of the subject, the Peers would have established an oligarchy; upholding toleration, the Puritans aimed at supremacy.' The Tory party, on the other hand, is the national party, the really democratic party in England. 'It supports the institutions of the country, because they have been established for the common good, and because they secure the equality of civil rights, without which, whatever may be its name, no government can be free.' When the Peers and the Puritans raised their cry of civil and religious liberty as a pretext for the destruction of the Monarchy and the Church—

> The mass of the nation still smarting under the sequestrations and imprisonments of parliamentary committees, and loathing the recollection of the fanaticism and the hypocrisy of the Roundhead apostles of the tub, clung to the national institutions. The clergy, jealous of the Nonconformists, and fearful of another deprivation, exaggerated the power and character of the Crown, in which they recognized their only safeguard. Hence divine right and passive obedience resounded from our Protestant pulpits, echoed with enthusiasm by a free and spirited people who acknowledged in these phrases only a determination to maintain the mild authority of their King and of their Church.[1]

Such was the origin of the Tory party in this country. The position long remained preposterous and paradoxical. 'An oligarchy sought to establish itself by the plan of public freedom; a nation struggled to maintain its rights on the principles of arbitrary power.'

There are periods when the titles and watchwords of political parties become obsolete; and when by adhering

[1] P. 177.

to an ancient and accustomed cry, a party often appears to profess opinions less popular than it really practises, and yields a proportionate advantage to its more dexterous competitor. In times of great political change, and rapid political transition, it will generally be observed that political parties find it convenient to re-baptize themselves. Thus, in the present day, Whigs have become Reformers, and Tories Conservatives. In the early part of the last century, the Tory party required a similar reorganization to that which it has lately undergone; and as it is in the nature of human affairs that the individual that is required shall not long be wanting, so in the season of which I am treating, arose a man remarkable in an illustrious age, who, with the splendour of an organizing genius, settled the confused and discordant materials of English faction, and reduced them into a clear and systematic order. This was Lord Bolingbroke.

Gifted with that fiery imagination, the teeming fertility of whose inventive resources is as necessary to a great statesman or a great general, as to a great poet, the ablest writer and the most accomplished orator of his age, that rare union that, in a country of free parliaments and a free press, insures to its possessor the privilege of exercising a constant influence over the mind of his country, that rare union that has rendered Burke so memorable; blending with that intuitive knowledge of his race which creative minds alone enjoy, all the wisdom which can be derived from literature, and a comprehensive experience of human affairs;—no one was better qualified to be the minister of a free and powerful nation than Henry St. John; and destiny at first appeared to combine with nature in the elevation of his fortunes. Opposed to the Whigs from principle, for an oligarchy is hostile to genius, and recoiling from the Tory tenets, which his unprejudiced and vigorous mind taught him at the same time to dread and to contemn, Lord Bolingbroke, at the outset of his career, incurred the commonplace imputation of insincerity and inconsistency, because, in an age of unsettled parties with professions contradictory of their conduct, he maintained that vigilant and meditative independence which is the privilege of an original and determined spirit. It is probable that in the earlier years of his career he meditated over the formation of a new party, that dream of youthful ambition in a perplexed and discordant age, but destined in English politics to be never more substantial than a vision. More experienced in political life, he became aware that he had only to choose between the Whigs and the Tories,

and his sagacious intellect, not satisfied with the superficial character of these celebrated divisions, penetrated their interior and essential qualities, and discovered, in spite of all the affectation of popular sympathy on one side and of admiration of arbitrary power on the other, that this choice was in fact a choice between oligarchy and democracy. From the moment that Lord Bolingbroke, in becoming a Tory, embraced the national cause, he devoted himself absolutely to his party: all the energies of his Protean mind were lavished in their service; and although the ignoble prudence of the Whig Minister restrained him from advocating the cause of the nation in the Senate, it was his inspiring pen that made Walpole tremble in the recesses of the Treasury, and in a series of writings, unequalled in our literature for their spirited patriotism, their just and profound views, and the golden eloquence in which they are expressed, eradicated from Toryism all those absurd and odious doctrines which Toryism had adventitiously adopted, clearly developed its essential and permanent character, discarded *jure divino*, demolished passive obedience, threw to the winds the doctrine of non-resistance, placed the abolition of James and the accession of George on their right basis, and in the complete re-organisation of the public mind laid the foundation for the future accession of the Tory party to power, and to that popular and triumphant career which must ever await the policy of an administration inspired by the spirit of our free and ancient institutions.[1]

Disraeli had steeped himself in the politics of the age of Anne and the early Georges, had studied Bolingbroke both in his career and in his writings, and drawn freely from the fund of political ideas which he found in him. The English Alcibiades has received something less than justice from the Whig writers who have given us our history, but whether he wholly deserved Disraeli's glowing eulogy is not now the question. It is not as an historical judgment on the character and achievements of Henry St. John that the passage really interests us, but as a statement of the ideal and an anticipation of the career of Benjamin Disraeli. The writer proceeds at once to show the need for another Bolingbroke in the

[1] Pp. 185-188.

circumstances of the hour. The Tories had just carried England through a perilous age of war and revolution, and were burdened in consequence with an accretion of those accidental qualities which are inseparable from all political parties that have long been in power.

> If the Whigs at this moment be pursuing the same desperate and determined policy that they prosecuted so vigorously a century back, it will be well for their rivals to adopt the same cautious yet energetic system of conduct which, developed at the same period by the genius of a Bolingbroke, led in due season to the administration of a Pitt. In the conduct of the Tory party at this moment, it appears to me that there are three points to the furtherance of which we should principally apply ourselves: 1st. That the real character and nature of Toryism should be generally and clearly comprehended: 2ndly. That Toryism should be divested of all those qualities which are adventitious and not essential, and which, having been produced by that course of circumstances which are constantly changing, become in time obsolete, inconvenient, and by the dexterous misrepresentation of our opponents even odious: 3rdly. That the efficient organisation of the party should be secured and maintained.[1]

There surely is a statement of the task Disraeli proposed to himself. 'I do not think,' he adds, 'there ever was a period in our history when the English nation was so intensely Tory in feeling as at the present moment; but the Reform Act has placed the power of the country in the hands of a small body of persons hostile to the nation, and therefore there is no due proportion between the social and the political power of the national party.' To this partial and sectarian character of the constituency of 1832 he is never tired of recurring. 'I am not one of those,' he tells us elsewhere in a passage that ought to be remembered, 'who believe that the safety of the constitution is consulted by encouraging an exclusive principle in the formation of the constituency of our third estate. It is not the supposed democratic character which it has assumed under the new arrange-

[1] P. 192.

ment—I wish I could call it settlement—that fills me with any apprehensions. On the contrary, I wish it were even more catholic, though certainly not more Papist.[1] It is its sectarian quality in which I discover just cause of alarm.'[2] In genuine Toryism there is no shrinking from democracy.

It is curious to observe that so difficult is it to destroy the original character and eradicate the first principles of human affairs, that those very members of the Tory party who were loudest in upbraiding the Whig Reform Act as a democratic measure were simultaneously, and have ever since been, urging and prosecuting measures infinitely more democratic than that cunning oligarchical device. . . . No sooner was the passing of the Whig Reform Act inevitable, than the Tories introduced a clause into it which added many thousand members to the estate of the Commons. No sooner was the Whig Reform Act passed, and circumstances had proved that, with all their machinations, the oligarchy was not yet secure, than the Whigs, under the pretence of reforming the corporations, attempted to compensate themselves for the democratic increase of the third estate, through the Chandos clause, by the political destruction of all the freemen of England; but the Tories again stepped in to the rescue of the nation from the oligarchy, and now preserved the rights of eighty thousand members of the third estate. And not content with adding many thousands to its numbers, and preserving eighty thousand, the Tories, ever since the passing of the oligarchical Reform Act of the Whigs, have organised societies throughout the country for the great democratic purpose of increasing to the utmost possible extent the numbers of the third estate of the realm. The clause of Lord Chandos, your Lordship's triumphant defence of the freemen of England, and the last registration, are three great democratic movements, and quite in keeping with the original and genuine character of Toryism.[3]

[1] Disraeli's language in this tract is coloured in many places by the Protestant feeling which the Whig attack on the revenues of the Irish Church had aroused into activity; and his reconstruction of history had not yet been carried to the stage which we shall find it reaches in *Sybil*. James II. is still 'the Popish tyrant'; Lord Somers is held up to us as the model of a wise statesman; and the Revolution of 1688 is regarded as salutary and inevitable.

[2] P. 100.

[3] Pp. 201-3.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Jan., 1836.

The letter that was sent on to me was from Sir Robert Peel. I sent him a copy, late and grudgingly, with a cold dry note, convinced that he would never notice or even confess to having heard of it, being, as you well know, by reputation the most jealous, frigid, and haughty of men. This is what he says:—'I beg to return you my best thanks for that copy of your recent work respecting the House of Lords for which I am indebted to your kind attention and consideration. It is not the only one in my possession, for, attracted as well by your name as by some extracts from the work in the public papers, which struck me as very forcibly written, I had taken the first opportunity of procuring a copy, and was gratified and surprised to find that a familiar and apparently exhausted topic could be treated with so much of original force of argument and novelty of illustration.

'I thank you, both for the work itself and the satisfaction which the reading of it has afforded me.

'I have the honour to be,

'Your faithful and obedient servant,

'ROBERT PEEL.'

Lyndhurst thinks this is *much*, considering the writer.[1]

'A masterly union of learning, skill, and eloquence,' was Lyndhurst's own judgment.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Jan. 9.

The sale of the *Vindication* continues, and, though not quite so brisk, is in daily demand. I received to-day a letter from Eliot, which, from its length and the extreme warmth of its feeling, would quite surprise you. His copy did not reach him till the 6th. He says, among other things, 'In reading your sketch of Bolingbroke I could not help thinking that if opportunities are not withheld you may become what he might have been.' He wants to know, by the bye, why I call the Orleans branch the House of Valois. I am sure I don't know. Pray find out for me, and write your answer, if you catch one, as soon as possible.

[1] *Letters*, p. 108.

On Tuesday I dined at Lyndhurst's, and met Lords Roden, Lowther, and Rosslyn, Sir E. Sugden,[1] Sir H. Hardinge, Courtenay, Alderson, &c., and Lockhart, whom L. asked, that he might review the *Vindication*. Chance! he never spoke a word. He is known in society by the name of 'The Viper,' but if he tries to sting me, he will find my heel of iron.[2]

The beginning of the year had found him engaged in an angry quarrel which afforded him abundant opportunity for displaying his 'heel of iron.' 'The letters to *The Times* have made a great sensation,' he wrote[3] to his father. 'I am the first individual who silenced the Press with its own weapons.' The *Globe*, then a Whig organ, in an abusive notice of the *Vindication*, had revived the old business of Hume, O'Connell, and the first Wycombe election; and a lengthy controversy ensued conducted on Disraeli's side in the columns of *The Times*. His letters add nothing of moment to our knowledge, but one passage is, perhaps, worth preserving, both as a specimen of the manner in which the 'heel of iron' was applied and as an illustration of the controversial methods of the day.

The editor of the *Globe* has been pleased to say that he is disinclined to continue this controversy because it gratifies my 'passion for notoriety.' The editor of the *Globe* must have a more contracted mind and paltrier spirit than even I imagined if he can suppose for a moment that an ignoble controversy with an obscure animal like himself can gratify the passion for notoriety of one whose works at least have been translated into the languages of polished Europe, and circulate by thousands in the New World. It is not then my passion for notoriety that has induced me to tweak the editor of the *Globe* by the nose, and to inflict sundry kicks upon the baser part of his base body; to make him eat dirt, and his own words, fouler than any filth; but because I wished to show to the world what a miserable poltroon, what a craven dullard, what a literary scarecrow, what a mere thing, stuffed with straw and rubbish, is the *soi-disant* director of public opinion and official organ of Whig politics.[4]

[1] Afterwards Lord St. Leonards and Lord Chancellor.
[2] *Letters*, p. 100. [3] On Jan. 4.
[4] *The Times*, Jan. 9, 1836.

'It is a great thing to have such an organ for response as *The Times*,' wrote Disraeli to his father. Under the guidance of John Walter, second of the name, *The Times* had already taken a place far ahead of all its rivals; and, though it had supported the Reform movement and been friendly to the Grey Ministry, it was now in open opposition to Melbourne and bitterly hostile to the alliance between the Whigs and O'Connell. In the previous summer, it will be remembered, Disraeli had used the *Morning Post* as his journalistic medium, but he now transferred his flag to *The Times* and formed a close alliance with Barnes, the Editor. The alliance soon bore fruit. In *The Times* of January 19 there appeared a scathing philippic against the Government and its members in the form of a letter addressed to Lord Melbourne, and written in the style of Junius over the signature of 'Runnymede.' This letter was the first of a series of nineteen[1] in all which appeared in the course of the four months that followed. Three are addressed to Melbourne, two to Peel and Stanley, and most of the others to the leading members of the Government.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*Jan.*, 1836.

The *Letters of Runnymede* are the only things talked of in London, especially the latter ones. The author is unknown, and will probably so remain. One or two papers have foolishly ascribed them to me. There is certainly some imitation of my style, and the writer is familiar with my works.

Feb. 5.

The *Letters of Runnymede* are still making a great sensation. They are considered as rising regularly in power, and the two last, the characters of Lord J[ohn] R[ussell] and O'C[onnell], are generally esteemed the most powerful. *Fraser*, which is making some noise, is the highest eulogy I ever received,

[1] A few more letters appeared over the same signature in the following year.

saying: 'Swift observes, the appearance of a great genius in the world may always be known by the virulence of the dunces, and that this has been singularly illustrated in my case,' &c. Peel told Lyndhurst the last letter was the most powerful of all; so it is generally esteemed.[1]

That the letters were immensely effective at the time of their appearance there is no room for doubt, but their style is hardly such as to win appreciation now or to act as a salt to preserve them for posterity. Urbanity was certainly not in those days a characteristic of Disraeli's controversial methods any more than it was a characteristic of the journalism of the time; and whatever wit or wisdom the letters may contain, their tone is too personal, their invective too unmeasured, and even their praise, when they praise, too little under restraint for the taste of the present day. The abuse of O'Connell, for instance, in the letter which Peel thought so powerful exceeds all bounds in its savagery:—'He is a systematic liar and a beggarly cheat, a swindler, and a poltroon. . . . His public and his private life are equally profligate; he has committed every crime that does not require courage.'[2] In the case of O'Connell there was of course personal animus to add venom to the shaft, but others who were guiltless of provocation are made to suffer hardly less. 'You have a most surprising disdain for the law of libel,' wrote Barnes on some occasion, and the law of libel was evidently less of a terror to newspapers in those days than now. Disraeli never till the end of his life acknowledged the authorship of the letters, and probably he was deterred by a feeling of remorse for the rough handling he had given to men with whom he was afterwards on terms of friendship. Lord John Russell, for instance, is 'a feeble Catiline'; 'an individual, who, on the principle that good vinegar is the corruption of bad wine, has been metamorphosed from an incapable author into an eminent politician.' In all his conduct 'it is not

[1] *Letters*, pp. 100 and 102. [2] Letter VIII. To the People.

difficult to detect the workings of a mean and long-mortified spirit suddenly invested with power,—the struggles of a strong ambition attempting, by a wanton exercise of authority, to revenge the disgrace of a feeble intellect.' Palmerston is the 'Lord Fanny of diplomacy,' endowed with a dexterity 'which seems a happy compound of the smartness of an attorney's clerk and the intrigue of a Greek of the lower Empire.' 'The leader of the Whig Opposition was wont to say that your Lordship reminded him of a favourite footman on easy terms with his mistress': that was of course said in Palmerston's Tory days, but those days had been ended by his expulsion from the Duke of Wellington's Cabinet 'for playing a third-rate part in a third-rate intrigue.' 'Our language commands no expression of scorn which has not been exhausted in the celebration of your character; there is no conceivable idea of degradation which has not been, at some period or another, associated with your career.' Spring Rice, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has the reputation of 'a man of business'; 'and, indeed, shrewd without being sagacious, bustling without method, loquacious without eloquence, ever prompt though always superficial, and ever active though always blundering, you are exactly the sort of fussy busybody who would impose upon and render himself indispensable to indolent and ill-informed men of strong ambition and weak minds.' Melbourne himself, in a happy phrase, is accused of 'sauntering over the destinies of a nation, and lounging away the glory of an Empire.'

I think the Cabinet might take to cricket—they are a choice eleven. With their peculiarly patriotic temperaments, and highly national feelings, they might venture, I think, to play against 'All England.' Lord Palmerston and Lord Glenelg, with their talent for keeping in, would assuredly secure a good score. Lord John, indeed, with all his flourishing, will probably end in knocking down his own wicket; and as for Sir Cam,[1] the chances certainly are that he will be 'caught

[1] Sir John Cam Hobhouse, afterwards Lord Broughton.

out,' experiencing the same fate in play as in politics. If you could only engage Lord Durham to fling sticks at the seals of the Foreign Office, and the agile Mr. Ellice to climb a greasy pole for the Colonial portfolio, I think you will have provided a very entertaining programme of Easter sports.[1]

The letter to Peel is throughout a piece of highly-pitched glorification that reads strangely in the light of subsequent events. 'In your chivalry alone is our hope. Clad in the panoply of your splendid talents and your spotless character we feel assured that you will conquer.'

What a contrast does your administration as Prime Minister afford to that of one of your recent predecessors! No selfish views, no family aggrandisement, no family jobs, no nepotism. . . . Contrast the serene retirement of Drayton, and the repentant solitude of Howick; contrast the statesman, cheered after his factious defeat by the sympathy of a nation, with the coroneted Necker, the worn-out Machiavel, wringing his helpless hands over his hearth in remorseful despair, and looking up with a sigh at his scowling ancestors. . . .

You have an addition to the scutcheon of your fame in the emblazoned memory of your brief but masterly premiership. They cannot taunt you now with your vague promises of amelioration: you can appeal to the deeds of your Cabinet, and the plans which the applause of a nation sanctioned, and the execution of which the intrigues of a faction alone postponed. Never, too, since the peace of Paris, has the great national party of this realm been so united as at the present moment. It is no exaggeration to say, that among its leaders not the slightest difference of opinion exists upon any portion of their intended policy. Pitt himself, in the plenitude of his power, never enjoyed more cordial confidence than that which is now extended to you by every alleged section of the Conservative ranks.

A similar strain of panegyric runs through the letter to Stanley.

When the acerbities of faction have passed away, posterity will do justice to your disinterestedness and devotion. . . . Less than three years ago the Whigs, and loudest among

[1] Letter XV.

them my Lord Melbourne, announced you as the future Prime Minister of England. Young, of high lineage, of illustrious station, and of immaculate character, and unquestionably their ablest orator,—among your own party you had no rival. . . . You, my Lord, preferred your honour to your interest, the prosperity of your native land to the gratification of your ambition. You sacrificed without a pang the proudest station in your country, to prove to your countrymen that public principle was not yet a jest. You did well. The pulse of our national character was beating low. We required some great example to re-brace the energies of our honour. From the moment that you denounced the disgusting thraldom and the base expedients of your chicaning colleagues, a better feeling pervaded England, and animated Englishmen. . . .

The time is ripe for union and fair for concord. When, some days back, in my letter to Sir Robert Peel—a letter, let me observe in passing, written by one whose name, in spite of the audacious licence of frantic conjecture, has never yet been even intimated, can never be discovered, and will never be revealed—I announced the fact that the great Conservative party was at length completely united, it was a declaration equivalent to England being saved. . . . In a Peel, a Stanley, a Wellington, and a Lyndhurst, the people of England recognise their fitting leaders. Let the priestly party oppose to these the acrid feebleness of a Russell, and the puerile commonplace of a Howick, Melbourne's experienced energy, and Lansdowne's lucid perception!

From Lord Lyndhurst.

[*Feb.*, 1836.]

MY DEAR DISSY,

Lord John is a great, very great success. B[arnes] writes me word that it is the best of the series. I agree entirely with him in this.

It strikes me that one advantage of a strict incognito is this: that people are never jealous of the success of an unknown person: they praise therefore readily, freely, fully. This they will not do when an author is known: other feelings, other considerations raise themselves up in the mind and operate as a minus quantity in the sum of praise. I fear in this case nobody can doubt the author! It should have been discovered later.

Ever,

L.

The letters were republished in the course of the summer with a long dedication to Peel, and bound up with them there was a short tract entitled 'The Spirit of Whiggism,' which could have left little doubt in the mind of any one who had read the *Vindication* as to the identity of 'Runnymede.' From beginning to end we have the argument, the history, and even the language of the *Vindication* repeated, though here and there is a phrase more finished, a point more precisely made, or a position more happily elaborated.

It is a great delusion to believe that revolutions are ever effected by a nation. It is a faction, and generally a small one, that overthrows a dynasty or remodels a constitution. . . . During the last five years the Whigs have been at war with the English constitution. First of all they captured the King; then they vanquished the House of Commons; now they have laid siege to the House of Lords. . . . The House of Lords at this moment represents everything in the realm except the Whig oligarchs, their tools —the Dissenters, and their masters—the Irish priests. In the meantime, the Whigs bawl aloud that there is a 'collision!' It is true there is a collision; but it is not a collision between the *Lords* and the *People*, but between the *Ministers* and the *Constitution*.

It may be as well to remind the English nation that a revolutionary party is not necessarily a liberal one, and that a republic is not indispensably a democracy. . . . The rights and liberties of a nation can only be preserved by institutions. It is not the spread of knowledge or the march of intellect that will be found sufficient sureties for the public welfare in the crisis of a country's freedom. . . . I would address myself to the English Radicals. . . . I mean those thoughtful and enthusiastic men who study their unstamped press, and ponder over a millennium of operative amelioration. Not merely that which is just, but that which is also practicable, should be the aim of a sagacious politician. Let the Radicals well consider whether, in attempting to achieve their avowed object, they are not, in fact, only assisting the secret views of a party whose scheme is infinitely more adverse to their own than the existing system, whose genius I believe they entirely misapprehend. The monarchy of the Tories is more democratic than the republic of the Whigs. It appeals with a keener sympathy to the

passions of the millions; it studies their interests with a more comprehensive solicitude.

There is no probability of ever establishing in England a more democratic form of government than the present English constitution. . . . The disposition of property in England throws the government of the country into the hands of its natural aristocracy. I do not believe that any scheme of the suffrage, or any method of election, could divert that power into other quarters. It is the necessary consequence of our present social state. I believe, the wider the popular suffrage, the more powerful would be the natural aristocracy. This seems to me an inevitable consequence; but I admit this proposition on the clear understanding that such an extension should be established upon a fair, and not a factious, basis.

Our revolutions are brought about by the passions of creative minds taking advantage, for their own aggrandisement, of peculiar circumstances in our national progress. They are never called for by the great body of the nation. Churches are plundered, long rebellions maintained, dynasties changed; Parliaments abolished; but when the storm is passed, the features of the social landscape remain unimpaired; there are no traces of the hurricane, the earthquake, or the volcano; it has been but a tumult of the atmosphere, that has neither toppled down our old spires and palaces, nor swallowed up our cities and seats of learning, nor blasted our ancient woods, nor swept away our ports and harbours. The English nation ever recurs to its ancient institutions—the institutions that have alike secured freedom and order; and after all their ebullitions, we find them, when the sky is clear, again at work, and toiling on at their eternal task of accumulation.

There is ever an union in a perverted sense between those who are beneath power and those who wish to be above it; and oligarchies and despotisms are usually established by the agency of a deluded multitude. . . . This union of oligarchical wealth and mob poverty is the very essence of the 'Spirit of Whiggism.'

Meanwhile Disraeli had found a haven of rest in the Carlton.

To Lady Blessington.

Wednesday. [*Feb.*, 1836.]

MY DEAREST LADY,

Early in March there are to be fifty members elected into the Carlton by the members at large. A strong party of my

friends, Lord L., Lord Chandos, Stuart de Rothesay, etc., are very active in my behalf, and I think among the leaders of our party my claims would be recognised; but doubtless there is a sufficient alloy of dunces even among the Conservatives, and I have no doubt there will be a stout opposition to me. Although I will not canvass myself, I wish my friends to do so *most earnestly*. I know from personal experience that one word from you would have more effect upon me than letters from all the lords in Xdom. I wish therefore to enlist you on my side, and will take the liberty of sending you a list to-morrow.

Votre Dis.[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*March*, 1836.]

I carried the Carlton; the opposition was not inconsiderable in the committee, but my friends were firm—400 candidates, and all in their own opinion with equal claims.

The Carlton,
April 18.

The Opera is very good this year, and Carlotta Grisi the great dancer. There is a report in *Times* of the Lewes banquet. About my pledging myself to come forward is a mendacious flourish, but does not matter. The Carlton is a great lounge, and I have found a kind friend in Francis Baring—Lord Ashburton's eldest son.[2]

Disraeli knew how to employ to advantage his new connexion with *The Times*. He had gone to Lewes with a friend who was candidate for the borough and addressed a meeting in his interest; and *The Times* gave a column of the speech, introducing the speaker as 'Mr. Disraeli, already well known for his literary talents and his opposition to the O'Connell influence in the Government.' The report is worth reading even now for the skill with which the history and constitutional theory of the *Vindication* are woven into a speech that was yet supremely effective as a piece of platform oratory, as is proved by the fact that when the orator sat down

[1] From Mr. Alfred Morrison's collection.
[2] *Letters*, pp. 103, 104.

'the most deafening applause prevailed for the space of several minutes.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

June 13.

The crisis goes on. The general impression is that the Ministers are going to play 1832 over again, and resign with the idea we cannot form a Government. Nothing can give you an idea of the excitement prevailing in the political circles, but I am not inclined to change my opinion, viz., that there will be no dissolution. Lyndhurst, who has been dining with the Duke, confirms what I have heard; the battle cannot be fought better than at present. . . . Lyndhurst's speech was really a masterpiece; since Canning there has been nothing like it. O'Connell came into the House, but, he will have it, *after* L. had done speaking about him. However, he *was* there, and it was a grand hit, for everybody believed him to be there. The Commons were cowed last night; Lyndhurst's dash has daunted them; John Russell was really feeble, and O'Connell furiously tame. In the meantime, I am brought forward with great trumpeting in leading articles of the *Chronicle*. Both Lyndhurst and Sir R. Peel are said to have adopted Mr. Disraeli's view of the Constitution, &c., &c.[1]

The session was in the main an Irish session, and though it opened well for the Government they emerged from it with little credit. Disraeli's account of it, from the same fragment as his account of the session of 1835,[2] and written in the same *staccato* style, is as follows:—

The Tories met Parliament in the most sanguine spirits. It was supposed that the Ministers would not have a majority. The Tories had gained in isolated elections since their resignation enough votes to destroy the majority that drove Sir R. P. from office. The Raphael Carlow business was also considered very injurious to O'Connell. To our surprise the Ministers as strong as ever. Our party became dispirited. Peel timid and always acting on the defensive. The Irish Corporations and Church Bill again approaching. The last propitiously postponed by the Ministers for reasons afterwards discovered.

[1] *Letters*, p. 104.

[2] See above, p. 305.

L. has a conference with the Duke of Cumberland. Forms another and still more comprehensive plan for arresting the movement. Conferences with the Duke of Wellington: announces his determination to withdraw if not supported by Sir R. P. Conferences between the D. of W., Sir. R. P., and Lord L. Sir R. P. agrees to accept Lord L.'s plan and pledges himself to act upon it. The total extinction[1] of the Irish corporations resolved upon. Strength of the Ministers in the Commons—majority of more than 80. Lords assembled at Apsley House. Each peer individually pledges himself to support Lord L.'s plans at all events. Commencement of the real session of the Lords as late as June. Extraordinary speeches and exertions of Lord L. Attempt at creating a collision. Total failure from the firmness of the Lords. Great courage and eminent services of the D. of Cumberland. Great exertions of the Press and of *The Times* in favour of Lyndhurst. The country sides with the Lords. The threatened collision laughed at. The Ministerial tactics long planned by O'Connell now developed. The Lords Bill on Irish Corporations to be accepted and the appropriation clause to be given [up ?]. Consequent jealousy and discontent of the English Radicals. The Ministers obliged to give up the O'Connell tactics. They reject the Irish Corporations Bill as amended by the Lords and pass the appropriation clause. The Lords follow up the Lyndhurst plan. He becomes virtual leader of the Upper House. All the Whig Radical measures thrown out with the entire approbation of the country: all the elections in favour of the Tories. Rage of the Irish party. The country rallies round Lyndhurst. He delivers his speech called 'The Summary of the Session'—reprinted, and circulates through the country in innumerable editions. The English Radicals announce their provisional defection from the Whigs. The Foreign policy of the Whigs. The session closes with the complete triumph of the Tories at home and abroad.

About a month ago (I write this rapid sketch 17 Sept. 1836) at the Carlton Club Lord de L'Isle, son-in-law of the King, informed me that His Majesty wished L. to be Premier, but was afraid he was inextricably bound to Sir R. P. Dined alone with Lord Strangford on the 13th, who was fresh from Walmer, where he had a confidential conversation with the D. of W'n. His Grace said he anticipated a daily break-up of the Government but himself wished it postponed. That he

[1] The Government Bill proposed to substitute for the old corrupt corporations a system of elected councils; but the Lords declined to accept the constructive portion of the scheme and converted the Bill into a measure for the abolition of municipal corporations in Ireland.

himself would take a seat in the Cabinet but no office: wished L. to throw over his profession. Thought P. must be Premier, but thought L. with the leadership of the House of Lords, an earldom, and the Home Department would be almost the same as Premier. Similar ideas are common—but a large party in the country would hail L.'s accession to the Premiership with satisfaction. His firmness and courage have won all hearts, and the result has proved his sagacity.

On the day that Lyndhurst died nearly thirty years later Disraeli took his pen and placed on paper his impressions of the dead man's mind and character: and the document, which is at once an appreciation guided by the knowledge and warmed by the sympathy of a long and intimate friendship, and a judgment that is almost Rhadamanthine in its penetration and detachment, has happily come down to us.

Oct. 13, 1863.

Lord Lyndhurst died this morning.

He had a mind equally distinguished for its vigour and flexibility. He rarely originated, but his apprehension was very quick and he mastered the suggestions of others and made them clearer and more strong. He had a great grasp; thoroughly mastered a subject; deep and acute; and sometimes, when you thought him slow, was only exhaustive. In his statements accurate, complete and singularly lucid: the clearest mind on affairs with equal power of conceiving and communicating his perspicuous views.

His soul wanted ardor, for he was deficient in imagination, though by no means void of sensibility. He adapted himself to circumstances in a moment, though he could not create, or even considerably control them. His ambition active, not soaring. Its natural height to hold the Great Seal thrice: but when the King in 1836 had it conveyed to him that he might be called upon to take the first place, and would he be ready, he exclaimed, 'Why, I am a lawyer, not a statesman,' and seemed disconcerted: but when he had talked over the matter with a friend,[1] he not only arrived at the result that he was a statesman, but let his Master be assured that he was prepared to do his bidding, though it was one unusually difficult and perilous. His cultivation was considerable: far more than he was given credit for. His reading had been

[1] There is here an interlineal gloss—'*i.e.*, D.—1873.'

various and extensive, though he never sought to display it; and his scientific acquirements notable. He retained and digested everything; supported by a powerful and well-ordered memory.

A pleader rather than an orator, and never a debater. Unsuccessful in the House of Commons, he rose at once in the House of Lords to a position of unapproached supremacy; the times were favorable to him there. His stately and luminous expositions in a voice of thrilling music, were adapted to a senate of which he caught the tone with facility. His taste almost amounted to austerity, yet he did not appreciate Demosthenes, and was a strong Ciceronian.

He had a sweet disposition, with a temper that nothing could ruffle; indulgent, placable, free from prejudice and utterly devoid of vanity. His feelings perhaps were not very strong, but they were always lucid. He was wonderfully fond of the society of women, and this not merely from his susceptibility to the sex, which was notorious, but because he was fond of them in every relation of life. He loved to be surrounded by his family, who were all females: a mother of 90, a sister nearly his own age, and who survived him in possession of all her faculties, indulged and devoted daughters. He was happy in two marriages, though his wives in every respect were very different.

His mind was playful, but not witty, and he had little humor though he could sympathise with it. His knowledge of mankind was great, but not consummate, for in their management there was this error, he was willing to give them credit for being influenced by amiable, but not elevated feelings.

His person was highly prepossessing. Far above the middle height, his figure was symmetrical and distinguished, and, though powerfully formed, he never became stout. His countenance was that of a high-bred falcon. Indeed, nothing could be finer than the upper part of his countenance. His deep-set eye gleamed with penetrating fire, and his brow was majestic. Nothing could be more beautiful. It was that of the Olympian Jove. The lower part of his countenance betrayed the deficiencies of his character; a want of high purpose, and some sensual attributes.

To Sarah Disraeli.

June 15, 1836.

Chandos is going to give a grand fish dinner on the 18th to the leaders of both Houses, and has asked me. . . . I have dined with Baring Wall in a house the most beautiful

I ever entered, built by Kent; domed staircases, landing-places supported by Corinthian columns, and a grand salon, which, for its height, carving, gilding, and richly-painted ceiling, exceeded anything I ever saw in a private house. Our dinner was worthy of the 'veritable Amphitryon' of London, and was served off a set of Dresden china of the most marvellous beauty; the candelabra in the middle of immense size, and covered with groups of shepherds and shepherdesses, the whole mounted on green velvet; even the salt-cellars and handles of knives and forks were china, most charming in this weather; our party eight.

[*Undated.*]

Chandos's dinner was a banquet. I was the only person there not an M.P. Peel and Sir James Graham were there; the first came up to me and resumed our acquaintance most flatteringly. Chandos introduced me to Graham. They went down by water, but I accompanied Lyndhurst. We came home in two omnibuses hired for the owner. . . . What do you think of Spain? Trelawny, who is a Republican, is in raptures with the prospects. 'The Spaniards,' he says, 'are in advance of all countries; they have got their constitution of 1812!' Says James Smith, 'I wish I had got mine.'

Aug. 20.

I suppose you have recognised four bolts of veritable Olympian thunder in *The Times*. It is considered worthy of Jove, and nobody can discover behind what cloud the god is shrouded.[1]

The thunderbolts in *The Times* were in the form of leading articles; but, as is the way with leading articles, their lightning has ceased to flash and their thunder to reverberate.

When he comes in the autumn to his now customary review in the diary of the leading events of the year the entries are:—

Establish my character as a great political writer by the *Letters of Runnymede*. Resume my acquaintance with Sir Robert Peel. My influence greatly increases from the perfect confidence of L[yndhurst] and my success as a political

[1] *Letters*, pp. 105, 107.

writer. Stayed a week with Bulwer this spring and introduced him to L., against whom he was bitterly prejudiced. They became warm friends. I must not forget the singular fate of my friend old Lady Salisbury—burnt to death at Hatfield.

And then follow lists of names, new acquaintances of recent date, or merely mnemonic hints to recall some incident of the year—Francis Baring and Lord Ashburton, Croker, Baring Wall, Duke of Beaufort, 'an amusing character—Major Fancourt,' Lord Mahon, Lord Lincoln, 'Trelawny—a strange character,' 'Maclise—a painter,' Lord Ashley [afterwards the philanthropic Earl of Shaftesbury], Mackworth Praed, Barnes, and Sterling—but whether Edward Sterling of *The Times* or John, his son, the subject of Carlyle's biography, we are left to conjecture.

'It is a very remarkable thing,' said Disraeli to Sir Philip Rose, on some occasion when the *Star Chamber* myth had been revived,

> that whatever may have been ascribed to me I suppose there are few men who ever led a literary and political life as I have done who have written so little for the periodical Press; and what is remarkable is that I can positively assert that I never in my life either required or received any remuneration for anything I have ever written except for the books published under my name. Of course, I have written at various times for the Press. I wrote a great deal at one time for Lord Lyndhurst, but I never either received or would have accepted any payment. My object was to connect myself with a man who had already been a Minister, and who was destined to take a conspicuous part in public affairs, and to establish a claim upon him which might some day be useful, but I never held any engagement on the Press or accepted any remuneration; not that I should have been the least ashamed of it if I had done so, but it is not the fact.

His journalistic activity in these years was great. In the course of the winter of 1836 he contributed to *The Times* a long-drawn series of articles under the title

of 'A New Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor, recently discovered,' in which, as the title suggests, he recurred to the method of allegory adopted in *Popanilla*. 'I do not,' said Barnes, 'see much object in allegorising a subject or set of subjects which have been and are daily discussed in the plainest and most intelligible terms'; and certainly Runnymede had suffered from no restraint of reticence that could be removed by disguising Melbourne as 'Shrugshoulders the Grand Vizier,' or Palmerston as 'the Vizier for Foreign Affairs' of 'His Majesty King Mihrage.' Sindbad, accordingly, had none of the success of Runnymede. Disraeli also tried his hand at political satires in verse. There is 'An Heroic Epistle to Lord Viscount Mel . . . . . e' in *The Times* of March 20, 1837; but the day of such things was past, and when somewhat later he proposed to renew his poetical declamation, on this occasion in blank verse instead of the heroic couplet, Barnes was not encouraging:—'Your verses have a stately march and the sentiments are just, but they want variety. The tone is a high one, but the sound is monotonous.'

It is the spoken word, however, and not the written, as Lord Salisbury once remarked, that in the end governs England. Disraeli's activity in *The Times* may have brought him no pecuniary reward, but it brought him something else that he valued a great deal more. In December, 1836, there was a Conservative banquet at Aylesbury, and Disraeli, to whom was entrusted the toast of the House of Lords, delighted his hearers with a speech full of wit and vigour. But he delighted not only his hearers. Through the favour of Barnes, *The Times* sent down a special staff of reporters and regaled its readers with a long account of the demonstration, Disraeli's speech, but no other, being given in the first person. 'Now,' wrote his sister, 'you must be satisfied, that you have succeeded in doing that which you so much desired, viz., to make a speech that would be talked of all over England.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

Dec. 15.

The *Spectator* said of the Bucks meeting that the 'speaking, on the whole, was as stupid as usual, except Mr. Disraeli, who, after a little of his usual rhodomontade about the Peers being the founders of liberty, grew abusive and amusing,' and then quoted the Shakespearean passage.

The Shakespearean passage is worth quoting again.

It may be said that the Prime Minister of the Sovereign rather winks approbation at this assault upon the House of Lords than leads on the assailants. It may be so: discretion may be the better part of valor even in Downing Street. The gay Epicurean leader may summon his forces and yet may refuse to march through Coventry with them. . . . He has placed a Justice Shallow in the Cabinet, assigned the seals of one office to Master Silence, and entrusted the management of our foreign affairs to Master Slender. But the rank and file who, after all, are the men to fight at Shrewsbury—he turns up his nose at these—at Mouldy and Wart, and Shadow and Forcible Feeble, and Bull Calf bellowing out 'Down with the House of Lords,' and who must surely have been a member for one of the metropolitan districts; our Falstaff of the Treasury will not lead these fellows to the field. If we add to these the Milesian Pistol and his ragamuffin tail of cut-purse Nyms and drunken Bardolphs, the political picture is complete; and these—these are our rulers.

More to the taste of his audience, probably, was the following attack on O'Connell.

A denunciation has gone forth against the House of Lords, and from whom? From the paid agent of the Papacy. I am not surprised at this. It is as natural for Mr. O'Connell to cry out 'Down with the House of Lords' as for a robber to cry out 'Down with the gallows.' Both are national institutions very inconvenient in their respective careers. . . . 'Down with the House of Lords,' cries Mr. O'Connell. Ay, down with the only barrier between him and his disastrous machinations. The House of Lords is a great breakwater of sedition that his waves of commotion will beat against in vain. . . . When I listen to him I am reminded of what the great Dean Swift said of a gentleman who was almost as anxious to plunder the people of Ireland

as Mr. O'Connell himself, though not quite so successful—I mean William Wood, who tried to impose on them with brass farthings, 'These are the last howls of a dog dissected alive.'[1]

This sally was greeted with 'loud and continued cheers,' and made a tremendous noise.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Dec. 15.

O'Connell makes no reply; all the Irish papers taunt him. The *Warder* says 'he can find time to attack Fraser, O'Connor, and D. W. Harvey, and to call Mr. Lascelles a blockhead, but why does he not answer Disraeli? "Will not the dog dissected alive give another howl?" ' All the country papers are full of it. Lord Strangford, who came up from Strathfieldsaye last night, began, 'You have no idea of the sensation your speech has produced at Strathfieldsaye.' I said, 'Oh, my lord, you always say agreeable things.' He took me aside and said, 'I give you my honour as a gentleman that the Duke said at the dinner-table, "It was the most manly thing done yet; when will he come into Parliament?" '[2]

After this pronouncement by the greatest Englishman of the day there is nothing more to be said.

From Lord Lyndhurst.

PARIS,
[*Dec.*, 1836.]

MY DEAR DISRAELI,

Sindbad tells me you are in London and active in the great cause—able and active as usual. The Bucks dinner was a grand demonstration, and has placed you in an admirable position as far as character and reputation are concerned. It will be infamous if not followed up by some effort to place you in a position which may give the party the full benefit of your talents and of your activity and untiring zeal. . . . It is hard indeed if we don't get you into the House. The Duke, you may depend upon it, is your friend. . . .

They are beginning here to hate us, and they invent all sorts of lies as a ground for abuse. As to Palmerston and the Ministers in general, they are never named in society without expressions of ridicule and contempt. . . .

[1] *The Times*, Dec. 10, 1836. [2] *Letters*, p. 107.

Suppose (which I think not improbable) there should be a break-up of our Government, how are the parts to be cast in the Tory Administration? This is a difficult affair. I find they talk of me as Home Secretary. I could not afford it. What will they do with Chandos: he is become a very important person. His hold of the country is most powerful and extensive. Will Peel have many of his own click? Give me all the information you can, and as often as you can. . . .

I am now reading the love of Henrietta. I only got the book this morning. Mrs. Gore lent it me. She says it is the best thing you have written since *Vivian Grey*. . . . What I have read of it is light and brilliant and sparkling and impassioned, and all that such a work ought to be.

Ever yours,

L.

CHAPTER XV.

HENRIETTA TEMPLE AND VENETIA.

1834–1837.

Difficile est longum subito deponere amorem:
difficile est, verum hoc qua lubet efficias.

As we see from Lyndhurst's letter at the end of the last chapter *Henrietta Temple* had been published shortly before the close of 1836; and a few months later it was followed by *Venetia*.

Henrietta Temple and *Venetia* are not political works, but they would commemorate feelings more enduring than public passions, and they were written with care, and some delight. They were inscribed to two friends, the best I ever had, and not the least gifted. One was the inimitable D'Orsay, the most accomplished and the most engaging character that has figured in this century, who, with the form and universal genius of an Alcibiades, combined a brilliant wit and a heart of quick affection, and who, placed in a public position, would have displayed a courage, a judgment, and a commanding intelligence which would have ranked him with the leaders of mankind. The other was one who had enjoyed that public opportunity which had been denied to Comte D'Orsay. The world has recognised the political courage, the versatile ability, and the masculine eloquence of Lord Lyndhurst; but his intimates only were acquainted with the tenderness of his disposition, the sweetness of his temper, his ripe scholarship, and the playfulness of his bright and airy spirit.[1]

[1] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

Since the failure of the *Revolutionary Epick* in 1834 Disraeli seemed, save for a few slight contributions to *Heath's Book of Beauty*, of which his friend Lady Blessington was editor, to have abandoned the field of imaginative literature; but he had begun *Henrietta Temple* in the summer of 1834, and written a volume before he threw the novel aside. Politics, social engagements, and the worry and burden of his debts sufficiently occupied both his time and energy for the next couple of years, but eventually the urgent need of money compelled him to pick up the discarded manuscript. 'I have agreed to let Colburn have a novel . . . for a greater sum than I have ever yet received,' he writes to Bradenham in June, 1836. The announcement brought no pleasure to his father. 'How,' he anxiously inquires, 'will the fictionist assort with the politician? Most deeply am I regretting that you find it necessary to return to drink of the old waters.' Isaac D'Israeli, however, knew little of his son's embarrassments, and the need for money was far more pressing than he realised. And there was another and a deeper reason that prompted a resumption of the unfinished story, or, at all events, made a resumption no longer impossible. When the first volume was composed Disraeli himself was in the grip of a strong and vehement passion, and the love story could no more have been carried to any fitting conclusion then than could *Vivian Grey* or *Contarini Fleming* or any of the other novels which are chapters in an autobiography and reflexions of an uncompleted personal experience. But in the years that had since elapsed the experience had passed into another phase. Love, after its first rapture was over, had come into conflict with the harder side of Disraeli's character, with his masterful will and dæmonic ambition; and in the clash between will and passion will had triumphed. The connexion between his own Henrietta and the novel is indicated by a laconic entry in the Mutilated Diary.

Autumn of 1836.—Parted for ever from Henrietta. Returned to Bradenham at the latter end of August; concluded *Henrietta Temple*, of which one volume had been written three years. It was published early in December, and was very successful.

"Henrietta Temple: a Love Story," was the full title of the book. Ferdinand Armine, the heir of an ancient but impoverished Catholic family, heir also as he fancies to a great estate on his mother's side of the house, is with his regiment at Malta, and living the life of a spendthrift, when he learns that he is disinherited, and that the estate has gone to another, his cousin, Katherine Grandison. Overwhelmed with debt, he returns to England, and finds in the heiress a beautiful girl unversed in the ways of the world, whom, as the easiest mode of escape from his embarrassments, he at once determines to marry. Handsome and brilliant, he easily captivates her and they become engaged, though on his side, at all events, there is no spark of love. But soon afterwards he meets Henrietta Temple, and love, instant and overwhelming, takes possession of his soul.

> There is no love but love at first sight. This is the transcendent and surpassing offspring of sheer and unpolluted sympathy. All other is the illegitimate result of observation, of reflection, of compromise, of comparison, of expediency. The passions that endure flash like the lightning: they scorch the soul, but it is warmed for ever.[1]

Henrietta returns his passion and they exchange vows, Ferdinand persuading her into secrecy for a time and concealing from her his engagement to Katherine, which he determines, however, to break at once. But the pressure of his debts and the fear of bringing ruin and disgrace upon his father and mother counsel delay and he becomes involved in a course of double-dealing which soon ends in catastrophe. Henrietta and her father discover the

[1] Bk. II. ch. 4.

prior engagement and draw the worst conclusions; and the rupture that follows is nearly fatal to both the lovers. After some interval they meet again and love is not yet dead though it has fallen on evil days. Chance has made Henrietta one of the greatest heiresses in England, and under pressure from her father she has become the affianced bride of Lord Montfort, the heir to a dukedom. The knot gets more and more entangled till we find Ferdinand in a sponging-house under arrest for debt, his engagement with his cousin, which was the mainstay of his credit, openly terminated, and his heart nearly broken by the loss of Henrietta; but when things are at their worst everything is set right by the skilful diplomacy of Count Alcibiades de Mirabel, who is D'Orsay drawn to the life and with very little pretence of concealment or disguise. Ferdinand is reunited to Henrietta, and Lord Montfort and Miss Grandison find consolation for their disappointment in an interchange of their more tranquil and accommodating affections.

The interest of the novel as a love story lies mainly in that first volume[1] which takes its inspiration from a vivid personal experience. Some of Disraeli's critics after reading *Henrietta Temple* have contrived to pronounce the love in it affected and unreal; but it would be hard in the annals of criticism to find a more notable instance of the perverse human tendency to ignore obvious facts when they refuse to fit a theory. In the second book of the novel we have a picture of first love at the height of its spiritual ardour and intensity, which only a man who himself had really loved could ever have produced. Disraeli indeed had not the simplicity of touch which achieves the supreme lyric effect. That is the privilege of the greatest masters, and of them alone; but of the essential truth and sincerity of his picture no unbiased reader can really feel a doubt.

[1] Including Books I. and II. of the ordinary editions.

Amid the gloom and travail of existence suddenly to behold a beautiful being, and as instantaneously to feel an overwhelming conviction that with that fair form for ever our destiny must be entwined; that there is no more joy but in her joy, no sorrow but when she grieves; that in her sigh of love, in her smile of fondness, hereafter is all bliss; to feel our flaunty ambition fade away like a shrivelled gourd before her vision; to feel fame a juggle and posterity a lie; and to be prepared at once, for this great object, to forfeit and fling away all former hopes, ties, schemes, views; to violate in her favour every duty of society; this is a lover, and this is love! Magnificent, sublime, divine sentiment! An immortal flame burns in the breast of that man who adores and is adored. He is an ethereal being. The accidents of earth touch him not. Revolutions of Empire, changes of creed, mutations of opinion, are to him but the clouds and meteors of a stormy sky. The schemes and struggles of mankind are, in his thinking, but the anxieties of pigmies and the fantastical achievements of apes. Nothing can subdue him. He laughs alike at loss of fortune, loss of friends, loss of character. The deeds and thoughts of men are to him equally indifferent. He does not mingle in their paths of callous bustle, or hold himself responsible to the airy impostures before which they bow down. He is a mariner, who, in the sea of life, keeps his gaze fixedly on a single star; and if that do not shine, he lets go the rudder, and glories when his bark descends into the bottomless gulf.[1]

When that passage was written Disraeli, we may believe, sincerely felt for the moment that the world could be well lost for love; but with a nature such as his the mood could hardly last. We find it succeeded by another, which, if less heroic, is more serene, as we advance into the later volumes of the novel.

Love is inspiration; it encourages to great deeds, and develops the creative faculty of our nature. . . . It is woman whose prescient admiration strings the lyre of the desponding poet, whose genius is afterwards to be recognised by his race, and which often embalms the memory of the gentle mistress whose kindness solaced him in less glorious hours. How many an official portfolio would never have been carried, had it not been for her sanguine spirit and assiduous love!

[1] Bk. II. ch. 4.

How many a depressed and despairing advocate has clutched the Great Seal and taken his precedence before princes, borne onward by the breeze of her inspiring hope, and illumined by the sunshine of her prophetic smile! A female friend, amiable, clever, and devoted, is a possession more valuable than parks and palaces; and, without such a muse, few men can succeed in life, none be content.[1]

The temperature has now fallen and all the uncalculating vehemence of love is gone. In its earlier presentment the passion of Ferdinand and Henrietta is strangely free from all admixture of sense: from the artistic point of view it might indeed be better if there were more, for the sensuous element refined and sublimated in the furnace of the imagination is a necessary ingredient in the poetry of love; but if the sensuous element is absent there is no lack of spiritual warmth and fire. In the later volumes of the novel, however, this is changed: even the spiritual glow of passion has now died away, and love has passed into a sentiment which though pure and tender and reverent is of the intellect rather than of the soul.

The portion of the novel which was written in the autumn of 1836 betrays many signs of crudity in conception and haste in execution. The images of Ferdinand and Henrietta are both in some degree defaced. Ferdinand shows himself such a selfish and deceitful egoist in his love that our sympathy is to a great extent estranged; and in spite of the tact and skill with which the author prepares us for the defection of Henrietta her fickleness cannot be wholly disguised. In the conditions of their genesis there is some resemblance between *Henrietta Temple* and the first part of *Vivian Grey*, in either case a discarded manuscript having been picked up again after the original creative impulse had lost its force. But since the days of *Vivian Grey* Disraeli had gained immensely in experience both as an artist and as a man, and with all its imperfections the supple-

[1] Bk. III. ch. 4.

mentary work in *Henrietta Temple* is far different in literary value from the concluding chapters of his first novel. If the lyric rapture of first love is partly lost we are given a good deal of delightful comedy in recompense, and many of the secondary characters now introduced are admirable. Lady Bellair is an amusing portrait of Disraeli's eccentric friend and ally, of whom we have heard more than once—old Lady Cork. The unimpassioned Montfort, with whom 'life was the romance of reason' as with Ferdinand it was 'the romance of imagination,' may seem at the first view artificial, but he is of the Disraelian line of Beckendorff and Winter, and interesting as the immediate precursor of Sidonia. Then there is Mr. Bond Sharpe, apparently drawn from Crockford; the little waiter in the sponging-house from some unknown model who allowed Disraeli to catch his likeness and was lost in obscurity again; and Mirabel's companions, Mr. Bevil, who 'never permitted himself to smile except in the society of intimate friends,' Lord Catchimwhocan, 'that dear Catch who was always repeating nonsense which he heard from somebody else,' and Charles Doricourt, whom the world called Charley, 'from which it will be inferred that he was a privileged person, and was applauded for a thousand actions which in any one else would have been met with decided reprobation.' But by far the most attractive character of all, perhaps the most attractive that Disraeli ever created or drew, is de Mirabel himself, in whom the wit, the gaiety, the charm, the generosity, and the insouciance of D'Orsay are enshrined for the benefit of future generations.

> There was something in Count Mirabel's very presence which put everybody in good spirits. His lightheartedness was caught by all. Melancholy was a farce in the presence of his smile; and there was no possible combination of scrapes that could withstand his kind and brilliant raillery.[1]

[1] Bk. VI. ch. 14.

His radiant figure lights up all the concluding scenes and makes the last book, with its reconciliation of the lovers, the most readable in the novel.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Dec. 15, 1836.

Strangford [fresh from Strathfieldsaye] said he had not yet seen my novel, and there was only one person at the Duke's who had read it—Lady Wilton. She said she had cried so much that she had excited all their curiosity. Bulwer tells me that at Lady Charlotte Bury's the other night he only heard one report, 'Tears, tears, tears!' so he supposes I am right and he is wrong. Colburn is in high spirits about *H. T.* He says he shall not be content unless he works it up like *Pelham*. There were many reviews yesterday. You have of course seen the *Athenæum*; they were all in that vein, but highly calculated to make people read, if they were wanted, but it is not.[1]

'This vexatious, high-flown, foolish, clever work,' the *Athenæum* called it. Colburn had not lost his skill in working up a novel. 'I hope,' he writes while the book is in the stocks, 'you will have a dozen more originals to draw from besides old Lady C.; an exhibition of two or three leading political characters would not be amiss'; and in another letter he 'wants to know all he can that he may say something about it in the papers to excite curiosity and expectation without in the least gratifying it.' With Colburn's arts to aid its intrinsic merits *Henrietta Temple* was more successful than any of Disraeli's novels that had appeared since *Vivian Grey*. Some of his friends, however, were disappointed. Bulwer 'thinks my speech the finest in the world and my novel the worst,' he writes to his sister; and D'Orsay and Lady Blessington apparently agreed with Bulwer. There has been a curious divergence of view among the critics ever since. Those to whom Disraeli is primarily a politician and his distinctive

[1] *Letters*, p. 108.

work in literature the creation of the political novel despise *Henrietta Temple* because of the absence of political motive. To Froude, for instance, it is a 'clever story, but without the merit or the interest which would have given it a permanent place in English literature.'[1] Tennyson, on the other hand, 'told Disraeli that the "silly sooth" of love was given perfectly there'[2]; and Leslie Stephen[3] speaks of *Henrietta* and *Contarini* as 'Disraeli's most satisfactory performances,' because in these 'he has worked without any secondary political purpose, and has, therefore, produced more harmonious results.'

From Count D'Orsay.

MON CHER DIS,

J'ai reçu votre lettre avec plaisir, et votre dédicace avec fierté. Le mot d'affectionné ami s'applique tout aussi bien à mes sentiments pour vous que les vôtres envers moi. Je regrette seulement que Mirabel ait fait connaissance avec Armine dans un Hell. C'était probablement pour chauffer leurs sentiments au premier abord que vous avez eu recours à ce moyen qui était inutile. J'espère bientôt vous revoir, pour vous répéter combien votre dédicace est vraie.

Votre affectionné ami,

ALFRED D'ORSAY.

From Alfred Tennyson.

CLAPHAM COMMON,
April 28, 1868.

DEAR MR. DISRAELI,

Pray accept my best thanks for the instant attention you have paid to this small matter of mine. . . . Though the result appears to be nil, I do not the less feel an obligation to you; and am quite as much pleased to know that it is owing to the author of that charming love story, *Henrietta Temple*, as to the Prime Minister of England.

Believe me, ever yours truly,

A. TENNYSON.

[1] *Lord Beaconsfield*, p. 215. [2] *Life*, II., p. 371.
[3] *Hours in a Library*, II., p. 130.

One of Disraeli's critics disputed the truth and accuracy of the scenes in the sponging-house in *Henrietta Temple* and of Ferdinand's interview with Levison, of the money-lending firm of Messrs. Morris and Levison; and congratulated the author on having escaped the 'usurious experience' himself. It is to be feared that the author's knowledge of these things was far greater than his critic's. Since his return from the East, Disraeli's pecuniary embarrassments had multiplied and increased. In the debtor's career it is the first step that is decisive.

> If youth but knew the fatal misery that they are entailing on themselves the moment they accept a pecuniary credit to which they are not entitled, how they would start in their career! How pale they would turn! How they would tremble, and clasp their hands in agony at the precipice on which they are disporting! Debt . . . hath a small beginning, but a giant's growth and strength. When we make the monster we make our master, who haunts us at all hours, and shakes his whip of scorpions for ever in our sight. Faustus, when he signed the bond with blood, did not secure a doom more terrific.[1]

Disraeli had committed the first fatal blunder while he was still young, and had never succeeded in retrieving it. Since his return from the East four contested elections, extravagant companions, and an expensive social environment had increased his liabilities and led him deeper into the mire. He was by nature generous and open-handed, caring only for money as he loved to spend it freely, and with no gift of acquisitiveness or power of accumulation. Debt soon makes a man improvident, if it does not find him so; his financial vision ceases to extend beyond the date at which the next bill matures, and if, like Disraeli, he be of a sanguine temperament, he readily convinces himself that a respite is the equivalent of a reprieve, and that if only time can be secured everything will settle itself. During a great part of his life,

[1] *Henrietta Temple*, Bk. II. ch. 1.

and in these years especially, Disraeli was in the grip of the moneylenders, never escaping from an atmosphere of bills, writs, annuities, renewals, discountings, assignments, and all the other processes which are the implements and appurtenances of usury. Amid the worries and vexations of such a life most men would have found serious work or even serious enjoyment utterly impossible, but Disraeli contrived to pursue his pleasures, his labours and his ambitions with a wonderful serenity through all. 'As from fear of the Philistines I cannot come and dine with you, you must come and dine with me,' he writes to Austen one day in 1833. 'I am overwhelmed with difficulties,' he tells him in another letter of the same year, though 'all that is necessary to settle my affairs is six months of quiet.' A couple of years later the situation is much the same. 'My affairs have been so involved,' he says in answer to a complaint that he is neglecting his friends, 'that seclusion, absolute seclusion from society and severe daily labour have been to me as much a matter of necessity as choice.' But he has now 'more than a prospect of almost immediately emancipating himself from sufferings not easy to describe.' 'Circumstances have placed him behind the curtain of financial politics,' and he reckons among his assets £1,000 which he is shortly to receive, 'the result of a piece of business which has engaged my attention during the last five months, and respecting which I have twice visited The Hague.' This was written at the beginning of 1836, and in the Mutilated Diary about the same time there is a laconic entry, 'Haber again,' which points to some connexion between the financial politics in question and the Baron de Haber,[1] with whom Disraeli had collaborated in the *Gallomania* several years before. The business seems to have been some affair of a Swedish loan, and it was carried to a stage where, in the sanguine

[1] Haber was at this time the head of a financial house with a branch at The Hague among other places on the Continent, and Disraeli was no doubt acting for the moment, or aspiring to act, as his London agent.

view of Disraeli, only formal difficulties stood between him and his reward. Apparently, however, the reward never came, and when 'from the strange aspect of the money market any immediate prospect of a favourable nature grew desperate,' he was compelled to 'engage in an intellectual effort, painful at all times, under such circumstances a very terrible exertion,' in order, if possible, to meet the demands of his creditors; the intellectual effort being the completion of *Henrietta Temple*.

In these early years his liabilities probably amounted to no more than a few thousand pounds, a sum which would not have been beyond the competence of his father to provide, but throughout he showed the greatest reluctance to seek assistance from his father. 'In the most important step of a man's life,' he writes on one occasion to Austen, who had advised such an application, 'I have opposed his earnest wishes, and have based my dutiful opposition upon my independence. I do not wish by extraordinary money applications to one who is always very generous to me, to revive a most painful subject.' On another occasion when the stress was even greater Austen repeated his advice, urging that this objection should yield to force of circumstances lest character should be compromised; but Disraeli still clung to his precarious independence and persisted in his policy of faith in the future and temporary expedients for the present. An undated letter of these years, which might well have been signed Alcibiades de Mirabel, will give the atmosphere better than pages of accounts or disquisition.

From Count D'Orsay.

I swear before God that I have not six pence at my banker now, having lost the night before last £325. You may judge how disappointed I am not to be able to assist you, but if you find that I could be of any use to you in the way of security I will do for you what I would not do for any other.

Yours affectionately,

D'Orsay.

Such was the school of finance in which our future Chancellor of the Exchequer graduated. Let it be said at once, however, that though Disraeli ran through the whole gamut of the debtor's customary experience, was guilty of all the improvidence to which embarrassment surely leads, submitted perforce to all the humiliations which it carries in its train, was skilled in all the subterfuges by which debtors commonly evade the importunity of greedy and exacting creditors, and too often caused annoyance to obliging friends by reluctant but unavoidable disappointment of their hopes, nothing that seriously touches his character is to be deduced from the records as they have been preserved; and in the matter of records Disraeli showed himself splendidly indifferent to posterity or splendidly confident as to its verdict. In his career from beginning to end there is no trace of any money transaction that will not bear investigation, and if we waive the inevitably squalid details of a life of embarrassment, nothing that infringes the code of 'the man of honour' or 'the gentleman.' It might even be urged that his debts themselves had a certain disciplinary value. A well-known passage in *Tancred*, if we allow for some whimsical exaggeration, reflects undoubtedly a personal feeling of Disraeli's.

> Fakredeen was fond of his debts; they were the source indeed of his only real excitement, and he was grateful to them for their stirring powers. The usurers of Syria are as adroit and callous as those of all other countries, and possess no doubt all those repulsive qualities which are the consequence of an habitual control over every generous emotion. But, instead of viewing them with feelings of vengeance or abhorrence, Fakredeen studied them unceasingly with a fine and profound investigation, and found in their society a deep psychological interest. . . . 'What should I be without my debts?' he would sometimes exclaim; 'dear companions of my life that never desert me! All my knowledge of human nature is owing to them: it is in managing my affairs that I have sounded the depths of the human heart, recognised all the combinations of human character, developed my own powers, and mastered the resources of others. What expedient in

negotiation is unknown to me? What degree of endurance have I not calculated? What play of the countenance have I not observed? Yes, among my creditors, I have disciplined that diplomatic ability, that shall some day confound and control cabinets. Oh, my debts, I feel your presence like that of guardian angels! If I be lazy, you prick me to action; if elate, you subdue me to reflection; and thus it is that you alone can secure that continuous yet controlled energy which conquers mankind.'[1]

No doubt like Fakredeen Disraeli grew 'sometimes a little wearied even of the choice excitement of pecuniary embarrassment. It was too often the same story, the adventures monotonous, the characters identical.' The characters, however, were not always sordid. From those early days in which he took Evans, his fellow clerk, for partner in a speculation in South American shares he showed a notable capacity for enlisting the good offices of friends, for inspiring them with confidence in his future, and winning and retaining their affection. 'The singular good services of Pyne to me' is an entry in the Mutilated Diary for 1836. Pyne was a prosperous solicitor who had succeeded Austen as the repository of Disraeli's confidence in these unsavoury matters, and Disraeli's letters to him, luckily preserved, tell a tale of which one hardly knows whether it calls more often for tears or laughter. By May, 1836, Disraeli, through Pyne's good offices, has been relieved of some of his most pressing claims, and elate with his temporary freedom is ready for any fresh enterprise that presents itself. A 'new weekly journal under the highest patronage' is about to be started and he has been 'offered and has provisionally accepted half the proprietorship which however will require £500.' 'I have little resources except the £200, which are in fact yours, but I think I could scrape enough together. The object is considerable. This speculation, if there be any virtue in calculation, may turn out, and quickly, a considerable property.' How Pyne regarded

[1] *Tancred*, Bk. V. ch. 3.

the speculation there is nothing to show, but by July his client is in trouble again. 'Peel has asked me to dine with a party to-day of the late Government at the Carlton. Is it safe? I fear not.'

To William Pyne.

BRADENHAM,
Sept. 25, 1836.

Your letter rather alarms me; I scarcely think it safe to remain here as any proceedings of the kind here would be confusion. I have not left this house except for County business[1] occasionally, working unceasingly at my forthcoming book. I have no pecuniary cares for the next three months, and I wish if possible to reap a great harvest in this serene interval, and finish, or nearly so, a second novel for January, getting the forthcoming one out in the very early part of November.

BRADENHAM,
Sunday. [*Nov.*, 1836.]

MY DEAR PYNE,

The letter which I received from you to-day fills me with great disquietude. The idea that I am involving Count D'Orsay and yourself, my two best friends, and especially hampering you, is so insupportable, that there seems to me hardly any explanations and crisis which I would not encounter sooner than the present state of affairs. My situation is simply this. I have taken advantage of the temporary repose for which I am indebted to you and with the exception of County business I have not quitted my room for the last ten weeks. I have now written five octavo volumes, *i.e.*, the novel about to be published, and two more of another, which I calculate finishing by the end of the year. If affairs can be carried on, I then purpose commencing a third, but, as you can easily comprehend, such almost superhuman labors, though practicable with a serene mind and unbroken time, are impossible under opposite circumstances. A serene mind I never expect to have, but hitherto my time has been little disturbed. If the results are what my publisher anticipates, and I am able to complete this engagement, I think between £3,000 and £4,000 might be poured into my coffers by May: but the ships,

[1] He had been sworn in as a Justice of the Peace in the preceding month.

though built and building, are not yet launched, and as I have some difficulties with which you are not mixed up, still to contend with, I doubt whether on our present system I can hope effectively to assist you before the Spring. Do you think the present system can be maintained? That you will 'do your best' I want no assurance, but I am loth to strain a generous steed to whom I am indebted for such great services. I am always afraid that a feeling of false delicacy may prevent you being as frank with me as your interests may require, and that you may imagine that you are in some degree cancelling your unparalleled services to me, by reminding me that they must necessarily have a limit. This never can be the case, and I hope, therefore, you will write to me your wishes, for however disagreeable at this moment may be a family *exposé*, I should prefer it infinitely to your injury.

Ever yours,
D.

BRADENHAM,
Dec. 5. [1836.]

Our county Conservative Dinner, which will be the most important assembly of the kind yet held, takes place on Friday the 9th inst. I have been requested to move the principal toast 'The House of Lords.' I trust there is no danger of my being nabbed, as this would be a fatal *contretemps*, inasmuch as, in all probability, I am addressing my future constituents.

BRADENHAM,
Dec. 26.

This is really Xmas. I arrived just in time, for what with the fall and the snow drifting from the hills, our road is really blocked up, in some parts as high as a man's breast, and I doubt almost whether this may reach our post, which is two miles distant. I assure you when I reached the old hall, and found the beech blocks crackling and blazing, I felt no common sentiments of gratitude to that kind friend whose never tired zeal allowed me to reach my house, and is some consolation for the plague of women, the wear and tear of politics, and the dunning of creditors. We are now, however, comparatively in still waters, thanks to your pilotage, and I am at work again animated by success and by the greatness of future results.

Sunday. [*Jan.* 8, 1837.]

MY DEAR PYNE,

How goes on the damned coin? I am ashamed to bore you, but am beset with as great duns as myself.

I am in good health, considering I have never left my rooms, and have been in worse spirits. But the quantity I have written, and am pouring forth, is something monstrous. I find it a relief, and now that I have nothing else to distract my thoughts, I am resolved to ruin Colburn.

I suppose I shall be in town about the 15th. I am in treaty for Lord Althorp's rooms in the Albany, once Byron's, and now Bulwer's; a curious coincidence of successive scribblers; the spell I suppose growing weaker every degree, and the inspiration less genuine; but I may flare up yet, and surprise you all. I find they won't be dearer than wretched lodgings and infinitely cheaper than the worst hotel; and then I shall be lodged in a way that suits me; gloomy and spacious, with room to stroll and smoke, and able to spout occasionally without being overheard by any damned fellow who steals all your jokes and sublimities.

I am on the whole savagely gay, and sincerely glad that I am freer of encumbrances, in every sense of the word, than I was this time last year.

Ever thine,
D.

A few days later he has heard that the well-known estate of Chequers Court is to be sold and 'we here wish to purchase.' 'I should suppose,' he adds in his usual airy way, 'not under £40,000, perhaps £10,000 more, as there is timber; but at any rate I should like to leave half the purchase money on mortgage, if practicable; if not, we must manage some other way.' 'Be of good cheer,' he concludes, 'the Spring is coming and will bring us all good fortune. I am "bobbish," as Horace says, or someone else, and my fellow is putting on my spurs preliminary to an inspiring canter'; and then follows a cheerful postscript, 'I enclose the blasted bills.'

To Lady Blessington.

BRADENHAM,
Thursday. [*Jan.* 12, 1837.]

MY DEAR LADY,

We have all here been dying of an epidemic; Tita and myself being the only persons who have escaped. I trust that it has not reached K[ensington] G[ore]. All this district are prostrate. I fear for you; D'Orsay I know—immortal youth—is never indisposed. I ascribe my exemption to a sort of low, gentleman-like fever that has had hold of me ever since I came down here, and which is not very inconvenient. I have in consequence never left the house, scarcely my room, and it has not incapacitated me from a little gentle scribbling. I am about something in a higher vein than the last; what you and E. L. B. would call 'worthy of me,' alias unpopular.

I am sorry about B's play[1]; I would not write to him as I detest sympathy save with good fortune; but I am sorry, very, and for several reasons: 1st, because he is my friend; 2ndly, because he is the only literary man whom I do not abominate and despise; 3rdly, because I have no jealousy on principle (not from feeling) since I think always the more the merrier, and his success would probably have assisted mine; 4thly, because it proves the public taste lower even than I imagined it, if indeed there can be a deeper still than my estimate; 5thly, because, from the extracts which have met my eye, the play seems excellent, and far the best poeshie that he has yet relieved himself of; 6thly, because there seems to have been a vast deal of disgusting cant upon the occasion; 7thly, because he is a good fellow; and 8thly,—I forget the 8th argument, but it was a very strong one. However, the actors of the present day are worse even than the authors; that I knew before, but E. L. B. would not believe it and I could pardon his scepticism. As for myself I have locked up my *mélodrame* in the same strong box with my love letters; both lots being productions only interesting to the writer.

I have received several letters from Ld. L., who has sent me H. T. from Paris price 4s. & 2d.; an agreeable present proving the value of our copyrights to London publishers. It is a vile trade, but what is better? Not politics. I look forward to the coming campaign with unmitigated disgust; and should certainly sell out, only one's enemies would say

[1] *The Lady of Lyons.*

one had failed, to say nothing of one's friends. The fact is, I am too much committed to the fray to retire at present—but oh ! that I had the wings of a dove, &c.

Ld. L. will be with us in a week. I feel interested in his career, more than in my own; for he is indeed the most amiable of men, though that is not very high praise, you will say. Ah ! *méchante* ! I see the epigram on your lips !

I really grieve if I said anything which deserved the lecture[1] you gave me, though I am almost glad I merited it if only for its kindness. I was rather harassed when I was last in town as you know and have a disagreeable habit of saying everything I feel; but I love my friends and am not naturally suspicious or on the alert to quarrel about straws. I am here pretty well and have my rooms and my time to myself, but still there *is* a family, though an amiable and engaging one; and the more I feel, the more I am convinced that man is not a social animal. Remember me to D'O. and E. L. B.; to nobody else and believe me

Yours,
DIS.

By the middle of January he is in London, the guest of D'Orsay in Kensington. Lady Blessington had left Seamore Place in the previous year and moved to Gore House, once the home of William Wilberforce; and D'Orsay, as Disraeli puts it, had taken 'an elegant residence adjoining her magnificent mansion.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

Wednesday. [*Feb.*, 1837.]

MY DEAREST,

The Whigs and Tories watch each other like a cat and a dog, and neither will make the first move. The Duke is for the tactics of last Session, and I think under the circumstances he is right; Melbourne is pledged to bring the Irish question immediately forward, and if again defeated, as is certain, he will dissolve or resign. This is exactly the state of affairs. But there is not the slightest doubt that when L. wrote to me from Paris that M. had resigned, &c., it was

[1] 'Be more just to yourself and to your friends, than to listen to those pests of society who desire nothing so much as to make mischief'—that is the pith of the lecture.

true. His informant was Ellice, and I have since learnt from an unquestionable quarter that the information was authentic. Through the whole recess there has scarcely been a single Cabinet Council, in consequence of the dissensions in the Cabinet, but Melbourne saw bodies of the Ministers at his own office. He yielded to the representations of Lord John in maintaining his post, as Lord J. is of opinion that if the Whigs go out of office, they should contrive to go out with a claptrap and not quietly resign from difficulties during the prorogation. This will show you on what a frail tenure the whole hinges, and what may be expected.

I am very well, indeed, but with the exception of seeing L. occasionally, I shall devote myself to the fair Venetia. I write well here, as the life suits me, and am at hand if wanted. As we dine late there is a long morning, and the air bath, which is wonderful, renders exercise unnecessary, and does my head much good. It certainly baffled the influenza, of which poor Lady Combermere has died, surviving her father, old Greville, but a few days.

When D'Orsay does not dine out, which is generally every other day, there is usually one or two persons at dinner here. On Monday Ossulston dined *en famille* here and gave us a very agreeable account of the Gramonts, whom he had been visiting at Versailles. The Duc de Gram is D'Orsay's brother-in-law and Oss's uncle. Since the glorious days they have retired from Court and keep themselves aloof, the Duke devoting himself entirely to the education of his three sons. The first, Agénor, the Duc de Guiche, is quiet, with great talents, and at fourteen has just passed the examination of the *école polytechnique*, one of the severest in the world; the second, Augustus, the Marquis de Gramont, is a complete soldier; the third, Alfred, the Count de Gramont, is only eight years of age, but, though brought up in so domestic and even severe a style, is as great a *roué* as his illustrious ancestor; he does nothing but laugh, shrug his shoulders and run after the maids, who complain bitterly of his rudeness. . . .

Miladi here writes ten hours a day; and makes £2,000 per ann. This is true, for she showed me her agreements. Her novels do not sell very much. She only gets £400 for one; copyright and all. But she has a guinea a line for her poetry, of which she is very proud, and receives from Heath altogether £1,000 per ann. She is not entirely free from the irritability of genius, but what can be expected from such severe labor? But she is a good-hearted woman and a warm friend. I could tell you much of her that would amuse and interest you. She allows her father £200 a year, and has twice paid his debts, and has three or four nephews, young Powers, at

school, and at very expensive ones, who are no favorites with her and not very engaging, but she acts from principle. One is here, just come over from New Brunswick, where his father has an appointment. This lad is to be sent out to India, a cadet, all by Lady B. Lady Canterbury will do nothing, and turns up her nose at old days of which her sister is not ashamed.

D.

If Disraeli escaped the influenza, his general health, as the result of over-work and monetary worries, was by no means robust. Before February was far advanced the death of one of the members for Bucks sent him back post haste to Bradenham, and he performed prodigies of exertion for the Conservative candidate in the bye-election that followed; but on the first day of the polling an incident occurred that greatly alarmed his friends. After canvassing far and wide, he had travelled all through the night to Aylesbury, and, as he stood in front of the George Inn talking to his friends, he fell in a fit, which the doctors, according to his father, explained as a slight attack of epilepsy, but which was, perhaps, sufficiently accounted for by the recording journalist[1] as the result of great fatigue and excitement, acting on a frame already enfeebled. According to the practice of the times, the patient was bled and put to bed, but the following day he was sufficiently recovered to be taken back to Bradenham. This incident seems to have led to an explanation with his father on the state of his affairs and so afforded a great economist an opportunity for lecturing the future Chancellor of the Exchequer on the first principles of finance.

From Count D'Orsay.

Je suis bien aise pour votre intérêt présent et futur que vous vous soyez décidé à avouer à votre père l'étendue de votre scrape. Car les plasterings-over se démolissent toujours et vous en auriez été victime continuellement. Votre imagination, vive et brillante, vous fait bâtir des châteaux

[1] In *The Times* of Feb. 17, 1837.

en Espagne. Tout cela est bel et bon pour les Wonderful Tales of Alroy, mais pour la matérielle vie de l'Angleterre le positif bât l'imaginaire.

In spite of D'Orsay's wise exhortations, Disraeli seems to have given only a half confidence to his father, and the two months that followed were perhaps the most distracting of his life.

To William Pyne.

Sunday. [*Feb.* 19, 1837.]

MY DEAR P.,

I enclose the bill, which I hope will be all right. Your letter is gloomy, but yesterday was Spring and to-day is Winter, and Tuesday may therefore bring sunshine, both moral and physical.

I assure you the trouble, the harass and anxiety, which you must experience in all this, is not the least part of my afflictions: and, indeed, I know not how I can repay you.

I have only 150 pages, or less, of my book to finish, which I ought to canter through in the remainder of the month with ease, but I find it difficult to command the Muse amid all these vexations. The form of Davis, or the unknown visage of Green, mix themselves up, by some damnable process, with the radiant countenance of my heroine, and though visions of sponging-houses might have been in keeping with the last vol. of *Henrietta Temple*, they do not accord quite so well with the more ethereal scenes of the fair *Venetia*. Nevertheless I have contrived to write; and I hope my inspiration has not been much diluted by these distractions, but I am a little nervous.

I long to be in town for many reasons. I have a letter from Ld. L. this morning from Paris, where he has been detained by the dangerous state of his daughter, now happily ceased, and he writes to me, as if he half thought he should be Lord Chancellor before he reached Dover. I think there is something in the wind.

Vale!

D.

He is soon in town again and again with D'Orsay in Kensington; but early in March he is back at Bradenham once more, still in quest of the peace which ever eludes him. 'Of all things in the world preserve me from a

Sheriff's officer in my own county,' he writes to Pyne immediately on his arrival. A fortnight later the Sheriff's officer is at Wycombe, and he fears 'it is no longer possible to prevent a disgraceful catastrophe.' 'Seged King of Ethiopia, who was resolved to have a day of happiness, was not more unfortunate than I have been with my month of quiet. The blows have been rapid and violent.' This early in April; and a few days later to Austen, 'Every possible claim that could be made upon me has poured in during the last two months. . . . I never have been so distressed.'

To William Pyne.

BRADENHAM,
April 23, 1837.

I conclude from your interview, that the game is up, and that our system has failed. I assure you that the only feelings that I have at this moment are regret for your unavailing exertions, which I feel *no professional remuneration can compensate,* and gratitude for the generous zeal with which you have served me for the now not inconsiderable period of our acquaintance, and of which I believe few men were capable, and certainly no other lawyer. I am sure that your kind feelings and your matchless energy have effected all that was possible, and that you have been baffled only by circumstances which could not be foreseen, and over which you had no control.

Eventually, with the assistance of his father, some *modus vivendi* was discovered; but he shrank from revealing to his father, who was 'one of the old school,' the full complexity of a situation which 'he has long taught me to look upon with the greatest apprehension and mortification'; and the arrangement now effected, though it procured the distracted author a certain breathing space, was uneasy and precarious enough.

Such were the unpromising conditions under which *Venetia* was conceived and written. The agreement with Colburn is dated December 20, and a little earlier, as we have seen, Disraeli expected to have the novel

finished by the end of the year: but again and again in those disturbed months his hopes were disappointed and the spring was far advanced before his task was completed.

To Lady Blessington.

BRADENHAM,
March 21. [1837.]

In spite of every obstacle in the shape of harassed feelings and other disagreeable accidents of life, I have not forgotten the fair *Venetia*, who has grown under my paternal care, and as much in grace, I hope, as in stature, or rather dimensions. She is truly like her prototype—

> 'The child of love, though born in bitterness,
> And nurtured in convulsion';[1]

but I hope she will prove a source of consolation to her parent, and also to her godmother, for I consider you to stand in that relation to her. I do not think that you will find any golden hint of our musing strolls has been thrown away upon me; and I should not be surprised if, in six weeks, she may ring the bell at your hall door, and request admittance, where I know she will find at least one sympathising friend. . . .

I have, of course, no news from this extreme solitude. My father advances valiantly with his great enterprise, but works of that calibre are hewn out of the granite with slow and elaborate strokes. Mine are but plaster-of-Paris casts, or rather statues of snow that melt as soon as they are fashioned.[2]

The novel appeared in May, its full title being 'Venetia or the Poet's daughter,' and its parentage being assigned to 'The Author of *Vivian Grey* and *Henrietta Temple*,' a variant on the previous formula that may be interpreted as Colburn's tribute to the success of *Henrietta*. There is a dedication to Lyndhurst in which the author tells him that 'In happier hours when I first mentioned to you the idea of this work, it was my

1 These words from the third canto of *Childe Harold* appeared on the title page.

2 From Mr. Alfred Morrison's collection.

intention, while inscribing it with your name, to have entered into some details as to the principles which had guided me in its composition, and the feelings with which I had attempted to shadow forth, though as "in a glass darkly," two of the most renowned and refined spirits that have adorned these our latter days.' This explanation, which might have been so illuminating, was unluckily never given, and we can only conjecture the motives that prompted Disraeli at this time to turn to the two 'renowned and refined spirits,' Byron and Shelley, in his quest for the material for a new work of fiction. But it would almost appear as if now that he had become a good Conservative something in the depths of his passionate and romantic nature revolted against the dominion of a prosaic political creed and an uninspiring leader; so that he felt impelled to demonstrate that, though he had submitted himself to the yoke of a definite political allegiance, his thoughts were not therefore to be bounded by the Tamworth manifesto. By choosing as his heroes the two greatest revolutionary figures that England had produced he made proclamation in no uncertain tones that as an artist at all events he was determined to retain his freedom and not to bow down before the idols of the Philistines. As one[1] of the best and most appreciative critics of the book has said, 'a waft of liberty flutters through its pages.'

In the complete absence of direct political motive *Venetia* resembles *Henrietta Temple*, and it is peculiar, among Disraeli's novels, in the comparative absence also of reflexions of his own personality or drafts from his own personal experience; unless indeed we are to see in Cadurcis, who stands in the book for Byron, something of Disraeli himself. The idea is by no means fanciful. Disraeli had grown to manhood, as we have seen, in an atmosphere where reverence for Byron was almost a religion, and to him, even more than to most of the aspiring youth of the

[1] Dr. Georg Brandes in his *Study of Lord Beaconsfield*, p. 152.

day, Byron had been an inspiration and a model. Many also as are the obvious differences between the two men they had a certain natural affinity of character and genius, alike in their strength and in their weakness. There is something in both of the same dæmonic force, the same devouring ambition, the same self-idolatry, the same disposition to coxcombry and affectation; and in the wayward childhood and tempestuous career of Cadurcis we are not infrequently reminded of Disraeli himself, though there is nothing to suggest that the resemblance was intended. Yet in spite of the author's sympathy, latent or avowed, it can hardly be maintained that Byron's personality as presented in Cadurcis is really attractive; though in that perhaps the picture was only true to life. Far more pleasing is the presentation of Shelley in the person of Marmion Herbert. Disraeli had less in common with Shelley than with Byron; but in strange combination with Byron's ambitious egoism he had also something of Shelley's power of seeing visions of the future, and he had studied Shelley's poetry as closely as he had studied Byron's. Meredith's diary gives us a glimpse of him, during their enforced stay at Falmouth on the way to the East, deep in the *Cenci*; and he had pursued his studies later, as the *Revolutionary Epick* shows. In the matter of personal details Tita[1] served him as an authority for Shelley as well as for Byron; and in the year in which *Venetia* was begun, Disraeli, it will be remembered, had also made the acquaintance of that 'strange character' Trelawny, the friend of Shelley, who in company with Byron had burnt Shelley's body on the Tuscan shore. Whether Tita or Trelawny was the source, the accuracy of the personal touches is attested by high authority.[2] Herbert, we are assured, 'is drawn in conformity with the most orthodox Shelleyan tradition'; the picture of his appearance in youth is the picture also of Shelley's, and the details of the final

[1] See Appendix A.

[2] The late Dr. Garnett in *Essays of an Ex-Librarian*.

catastrophe are in strict accordance with the fact. Even the colloquy between Herbert and Cadurcis, in which Cadurcis by comparison is so flippant and unsatisfying, is derived almost word for word as regards Herbert's portion from Shelley's *Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients*, a work then known to few. In one respect, indeed, the portrait is hardly faithful. It ignores too much perhaps the element in Shelley's character which made him describe himself as 'tameless and swift and proud'; but Herbert, it may be urged, is an older man than Shelley, and allowance must be made for the mellowing effect of age. At the time *Venetia* was written Shelley was still something of a bugbear to the narrow and self-sufficient English world of the day; his fame as a poet had not yet won him forgiveness for his transgressions as a man, and still less for the crude and aggressive opinions which had brought him into such violent collision with orthodoxy as established in Church and State. To Disraeli's credit be it remembered that he was one of the first who had the courage to attempt to do him justice or, in defiance of popular prejudice, to present his personality in a sympathetic light.

The division of parts between the two poets is very curious and complex. The genius and personality of Byron are assigned to Cadurcis; but the external circumstances of Byron's life are apportioned almost equally between Cadurcis and Herbert. To Cadurcis are given the wilful childhood, the foolish mother, the sudden poetic success, the relations to Lady Caroline Lamb, who appears in the book as Lady Monteagle, and the outburst of popular hostility which closed Byron's career in England; but his unhappy marriage and subsequent relations to his wife and 'Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart,' are transferred to Herbert, who has the genius and personality of Shelley. Both poets are involved in a common end—the end, in fact, of Shelley. The link between the two in life is Venetia, herself a beautiful figure, though, as befits a daughter of Shelley's, almost too

ethereal. Long before the world at large was disposed to be just to Disraeli either as a novelist or as a man, some forgotten critic[1] noted that he was almost the first writer 'who resolutely set himself to picture the child life,' and accounted this to his credit 'as proving a greater depth of character and more freshness of feeling' than were commonly attributed to him. Of this phase of his art we saw something in *Contarini*, and we shall see more in *Coningsby*; but it is in *Venetia* that we find it in its perfect expression. Disraeli has written nothing more pleasing than those early chapters, in which the child Venetia is growing up by her mother's side, in happy ignorance of her father, and with the strangely contrasted but ever affectionate Plantagenet as her constant companion; and the story of the subsequent awakening, in spite of all her mother's precautions, of love and admiration for the unknown and banished father, and of the development of these sentiments into an intense and overmastering passion, is told with power and pathos. Even when Disraeli, greatly daring, tries to write verses for both Byron and Shelley, he is happiest when his subject is a father's love; for nowhere perhaps has he come nearer to real poetry than in the lines written by Herbert, 'On the night our daughter was born.'

Of the secondary characters the most interesting and attractive are George Cadurcis, the cousin of the poet, in whom is well exemplified the truth of a maxim that comes strangely from Disraeli, "Though we are most of us the creatures of affectation, simplicity has a great charm"; and the good Dr. Masham, in whom we have a first-rate picture of the 'regular orthodox divine of the eighteenth century'—

> With a large cauliflower wig, shovel hat, and huge knee-buckles, barely covered by his top-boots; learned, jovial, humorous, and somewhat courtly; truly pious, but not enthusiastic; not forgetful of his tithes, but generous and

[1] His words are preserved in a letter of Sarah Disraeli's, who was ever ready to seize on any morsel of praise bestowed on her beloved brother.

charitable when they were once paid; never neglecting the sick, yet occasionally following a fox; a fine scholar, an active magistrate, and a good shot; dreading the Pope, and hating the Presbyterians.[1]

'I fear,' Disraeli wrote to Pyne on the eve of publication, 'my book bears marks of the turbulence of the last two months.' Many signs of hasty and imperfect workmanship there are. The introduction of Herbert's mistress is a serious æsthetic blunder. Lady Annabel Herbert in the earlier portion of the book is a stately though severe, if not awe-inspiring, figure; but her behaviour towards the end is hardly consistent with her character, and her reconciliation with Herbert strikes us as somewhat forced. Probably also the conditions under which the book was written supply the best explanation of a curious plagiarism from Macaulay which has often been discussed. The well-known passage in the essay on Moore's *Life of Byron* beginning 'We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality' is appropriated bodily with no better acknowledgment in the original text of the novel than the introductory phrase, 'It has been well observed'; though in subsequent editions to fence in the borrowed passage the words 'These observations of a celebrated writer' are introduced into the sentence with which the narrative is resumed.

Venetia had not the popular success of *Henrietta Temple*, though it pleased the critics more. Even the *Athenæum* hailed it as exhibiting 'much less of affectation and disordered ardour' than that 'incoherent love-story'; and its appearance was made the occasion for an article in the *Edinburgh Review*[2] which was written in no captious spirit, but endeavoured, though not sparing Disraeli's faults, to do justice to his merits as a novelist. The reviewer, however, upbraided him severely for 'intruding into the domestic life of a poet and his relations and extracting the materials of fiction

[1] Bk. I. ch. 4.

[2] For Oct., 1837.

out of events so recent and so melancholy'; and the introduction of Lady Caroline Lamb was especially condemned both then and later. Though Lady Caroline Lamb had been in the grave many years, her husband was still alive and—a fact that is not irrelevant—the Whig Prime Minister; but it may probably have been some feeling of the delicacy of the experiment that prompted Disraeli to throw the whole story back by nearly a generation. If the story was to be told at all, it has been told with admirable tact; 'a masterpiece of tact' is the judgment of an eminent critic[1] on the novel as a whole.

[1] Dr. Brandes.

CHAPTER XVI.

PARLIAMENT AT LAST.

1837.

An entry in the Mutilated Diary resumes the narrative.

Returned to London on the first of May; entered much into society: invited by Lord Francis Egerton[1] personally to a magnificent entertainment, which I attended—Sir J. Tyrrell, Q. Dick, Lord Walpole, Exmouth, Fector, Grimston. Distinguished myself very much in the election of Burdett for Westminster; the success mainly attributable to myself: proposed and organized the youth of the Carlton, including all the nobility, fashion, and influence of our party to canvass ——Lord Forester and his brother, Codrington, H. Baring, Pigot, Sir H. Campbell, &c., &c.

To Sarah Disraeli.

May, 1837.

Town is quite full, and the only thing talked of is the Westminster election. I am on Burdett's committee and obliged to canvass. My district, which is Bolton Street, Clarges, &c., is all right, though, curious enough, Leader[2] is one of my list.

P. is the most wonderful person in the world. He lives in one of the most expensive houses in Portland Place, many servants in livery, a handsome wife ornately dressed, children in fancy dresses tumbling on ottomans, one swearing he is a Tory, the other a Radical, &c. An expenditure not under £5,000 per annum, and no one is the least aware of his means. The party was very stupid. A few Carlton men,

[1] Second son of the 1st Duke of Sutherland, and himself subsequently 1st Earl of Ellesmere.

[2] Burdett's opponent.

mixed up with some Marylebone and Bloomsbury slip-slop; but I like to go to a house for the first time.

I suppose the King has really rallied, as I met Tom Young, who affected that he had never even been in danger. I met Sir J. Hanmer, the youthful M.P. for Shrewsbury, and his pretty wife, and was glad to make his acquaintance, for he is full of talent and literature, and so enthusiastic an admirer of mine that he had absolutely read the *Revolutionary Epick*.

The party at Bridgewater House last night turned out to be a grand concert, and the best assembly that has been given this season. There were about one thousand persons, and the suite of apartments, including the picture gallery, all thrown open and illuminated, and I enjoyed myself excessively.[1]

Among Disraeli's papers there is an account[2] of Burdett which is interesting, if for no other reason, because there was a certain analogy between Burdett's political vicissitudes and his own; both of them having been Radicals and Reformers while Toryism was unregenerate; both becoming Tories when Toryism had recovered its vitality.

Sir Francis Burdett was a very high-bred man, very tall and with a distinguished countenance. He was a complete Norman. As an orator, in his best days, he had no equal. It was all grace and music; never was a more commanding manner or a finer voice. The range of his subjects was limited, referring mainly to the character of the constitution; the rights and grievances of the people, &c., &c.; but of these he was master. His declamation was fiery and thrilling, and always natural. He was one of the most natural speakers I recollect; never betrayed into bombast, either in matter or manner. He had considerable power of sarcasm, and his hits always told. His quotations were, I think, generally from Shakespeare.

In politics he was a Jacobite. He was sprung from a Jacobite family, and entered life with the hereditary opinions of his class. He was against the Boromongers, that is to say, the new capitalist classes which William the Third and the House of Hanover had introduced: he was for annual Parliaments and universal suffrage, as Sir William Wyndham and Sir John Hinde Cotton had been before him, in order to curb and

[1] *Letters*, p. 112.

[2] Written about 1863.

control these classes. The latter (Sir J. Cotton) also was for the ballot. It so happened, that the French Revolution was coincident with Burdett's appearance in public life, and so, in the confusion of circumstances, it turned out that he was looked upon as a Jacobin, when in reality he was a Jacobite. The English public, which is particularly ignorant of history, joined in the taunts of his inconsistency when, late in life, the Boromongers having been got rid of, Burdett turned out to be what he started, a high aristocratic English politician.

He was extremely vain, but not offensively so; his high breeding prevented that: and under all circumstances, he was distinguished by simplicity. I think he was the greatest gentleman I ever knew. For many years after he entered Parliament he rode up to Westminster from his seat in Wiltshire on horseback. The country, especially in that part of England, was then very open, and abounded in downs and commons. In one of his best speeches in Parliament (then reformed, and full of quiet middle-class people) on the expenses of elections, he greatly denounced them, and observed that he had a right to give an opinion on the subject, as there was a period in his life when Parliamentary contests had reduced him to a state of absolute beggary. There was a murmur of admiring incredulity. 'I assure you, Sir,' he continued, 'I am indulging in no exaggeration. Honorable gentlemen may not believe it, but I can assure them there was a time when Lady Burdett had only one pair of horses to her carriage.' The effect of this remark in one of the early reformed Parliaments, full of retired tradesmen, many of whom had amassed wealth, but had never plucked up courage to keep a carriage, may be conceived. It was the most patrician definition of poverty ever made.

He was very good-natured, especially to young members, but rather absent and thoughtless in domestic arrangements. He would say to me (1838 and so on), 'Will you take your mutton with me to-day? We are quite alone. Come in boots. You won't be wanted for an hour.' And I often went. He lived in St. James's Place. His dinners were most agreeable. Lady Burdett, a clever woman, but a great invalid, appeared after dinner: and there were several agreeable daughters. One day he asked me to take mutton, and so on, and, when I arrived in frock, I was ushered into illumined saloons, full of grand guests in full *tenue*!

When he was taunted at the beginning of 1837 (I think) with changing his opinions, he gallantly resigned the seat for Westminster, and declared himself at the same time a candidate for the vacancy. It was a crisis in the Conservative cause, and it was generally felt on both sides that his fate

would decide the future course of politics. The Tories worked hard. The Carlton Club mapped the City into districts and divided these among the ardent youth of the party. May Fair fell to me and Sir Robert Pigot, and very great fun we had. There was one street in our district entirely filled with cooks, chiefly foreigners. Ten years afterwards, writing *Tancred*, I availed myself of the experience then obtained, and it formed my first chapter. Burdett won his election: and no one ever enjoyed a triumph more. Perhaps he found the contest still more exciting. He was 'at home' every evening during it, in his dining room, and all might come who cared. There he delivered every evening one of his constitutional harangues, or invectives, against O'Connell, then in the Liberal ascendant. They were very fiery and created great enthusiasm when he denounced the manner of the famous agitator 'half bully, and half blarney.'[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

June 19, 1837.

There was an agreeable party at Madame Montalembert's; but whether la Comtesse had taken an extra glass of champagne, or what might be the cause, she lionised me so dreadfully that I was actually forced to run for my life. She even produced *Venetia* and was going to read a passage out loud, when I seized my hat and rushed downstairs, leaving the graceful society of Lady Egerton, much to my vexation. . . .

I have just seen a very interesting letter from Munster dated 11 last night. The King dies like an old lion. He said yesterday to his physicians, 'Only let me live through this glorious day!' This suggested to Munster to bring the tricolor flag which had just arrived from the Duke of Wellington, and show it to the King. William IV. said, 'Right, right,' and afterwards, 'Unfurl it and let me feel it,' then he pressed the eagle and said, 'Glorious day.' This may be depended on. He still lives.

D.[2]

The King died in the course of the night, and Queen Victoria began that long reign in which Disraeli himself was to be so conspicuous a figure. By eleven o'clock the following morning her first council was assembled.

[1] Burdett reappears, with many of the features of this sketch reproduced, as Sir Fraunceys Scrope in *Endymion*, ch. 76.

[2] *Letters*, p, 113.

I accompanied Lord Lyndhurst to Kensington Palace, when, on the accession of the Queen, the peers and privy councillors and chief personages of the realm pledged their fealty to their new Sovereign. He was greatly affeeted by the unusual scene: a youthful maiden receiving the homage of her subjects, most of them illustrious, in a palace in a garden, and all with a sweet and natural dignity. He gave me, as we drove home, an animated picture of what had occurred in the presence chamber, marked by all that penetrating observation, and happy terseness of description, which distinguished him. Eight years afterwards, with my memory still under the influence of his effective narrative, I reproduced the scene in *Sybil*, and I feel sure it may be referred to for its historical accuracy.[1]

Throughout the session the Whig Government had been tottering to its fall, but a political struggle was now precipitated, as in those days the death of the Sovereign rendered a dissolution necessary.

To Sarah Disraeli.

CARLTON CLUB.
[*June* 20.]

DEAREST,

I write in the midst of three or four hundred persons and in a scene of great excitement.

The battle now approaches; what will be my fate I pretend not to foresee. They tell me Ashburton is safe and it has been offered me, but I have refused it, as I should have had to leave town to-night. I suppose in the course of two or three days I shall be able to speak more definitely.

Lord Lyndhurst attended the Privy Council at Kensington and kissed the young Queen's hand, which all agreed was remarkably sweet and soft. She read her address well and was perfectly composed, though alone in the council chamber and attended by no women.

As yet there are not even rumors; all is tumult and like a camp.

Ever,

D.

In a speech in the course of the election campaign which followed, Disraeli declared that no one probably during

[1] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

the few preceding months had received more requisitions to become a candidate for Parliament than himself. Not only was Ashburton offered, but proposals came from Derby, Chichester, and Dartmouth, and also from his former friends in Marylebone and Taunton. It was all but arranged that he should stand for Barnstaple; but eventually an opening presented itself that proved more attractive than any of the others. The borough of Maidstone, then with two members, had been represented in the expiring Parliament by a Conservative and a Liberal, the Conservative being Wyndham Lewis, husband of the 'pretty little flirt and rattle' whom Disraeli had met at Bulwer's five years before. It was at first the intention of the local Conservatives to nominate Lewis only, but when they had completed the first day's canvass they found their position so much stronger than they had supposed that they despatched a deputation to the Carlton Club in quest of a second candidate, and the choice fell upon Disraeli.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Friday. [*June* 30.]

The clouds have at length dispelled, and my prospects seem as bright as the day. At six o'clock this evening I start for Maidstone with Wyndham Lewis, and I suppose by Wednesday I shall have completed my canvass. I doubt whether there will be a contest.[1]

His address to the electors of Maidstone is worth preserving as a model of vigour in thought and terseness in expression.

I solicit your suffrages as an uncompromising adherent of that ancient constitution which once was the boast of our fathers, and is still the blessing of their children. I wish to see the Crown enjoy its prerogative, both Houses of Parliament their equal privileges, and the great body of the nation that unrivalled and hereditary freedom which has been the noble consequence of our finely-balanced scheme of legislative

[1] *Letters*, p. 114.

power. Convinced that the reformed religion as by law established in this country is, at the same time, the best guarantee for religious toleration and orthodox purity, I feel it my duty to uphold the rights of our national Church, that illustrious institution to which we are not less indebted for our civil than for our spiritual liberties. Resident in an agricultural county, and deeply interested in the land, I will on all occasions watch with vigilant solicitude over the fortunes of the British farmer, because I sincerely believe that his welfare is the surest and most permanent basis of general prosperity.

To Sarah Disraeli.

MAIDSTONE,
Tuesday. [*July* 4.]

Last night there was a full meeting, and I think I made the best speech I ever made yet—as well maintained as the Aylesbury one, and more than an hour in length; so to-day I canvassed on *my own* influence. I do not see how we can be defeated, but I have said little about the affair generally, as when one feels assured it is best to be quiet.[1]

Of the speech on this occasion Wyndham Lewis wrote to his wife, 'Disraeli was on his legs more than an hour: he is a splendid orator and astonished the people.' In the matter of political doctrine the speech followed the lines that have become so familiar to us, and with the exception of an impassioned attack on that 'flagitious statute,' the new Poor Law, there is nothing in it now that calls for attention. The new Poor Law had been passed by the Whigs in 1834 with the full approval of Peel and Wellington, but though it corrected flagrant abuses, its harshness made it unpopular, and the cruelties that attended its enforcement had for some time been denounced daily in the columns of *The Times* and by John Walter, the chief proprietor of *The Times*, from his place in the House of Commons.

It is not to elicit an electioneering cheer [said Disraeli] it is not to gain a single vote that I tell you I have long since registered myself among the sternest opponents of that

[1] *Letters*, p. 115.

measure. I can appeal to a career which, though private, is not altogether obscure, in proof of my sincerity and consistency. I have the proud consolation to know that, with the exception of the honorable member for Berkshire [John Walter], I was the first county magistrate who raised his voice against that odious Bill. I had the honor of calling the first meeting in my own county against it, and it was this right hand inscribed one of the first petitions to both Houses of Parliament. I hope, therefore, my sincerity cannot for a moment be doubted. That Bill bears fearful tidings for the poor. Its primary object is founded not only on a political blunder, but a moral error—it went on the principle that relief to the poor is a *charity*. I maintain that it is a *right*! . . . I would not have the poor man deprived of the small consolation of witnessing the games of his grandchildren—I would not deny him the mournful satisfaction of viewing the tombs of his forefathers. One of our poets has beautifully said—'Sweet is the music of the Sabbath bells,' but of this music the Whigs have deprived the poor and the aged. For him the Sabbath bells sound no more. Immured in a prison, no spiritual consolation can he derive in the hallowed temple of his ancestors; but, at length, broken-hearted, he quits a world with which he is disgusted. To sum up my feelings in a sentence—I consider that this Act has disgraced the country more than any other upon record. Both a moral crime and a political blunder, it announces to the world that in England poverty is a crime.

'I was glad,' he remarks to Pyne in praying him to guard against the descent of writs during the election, 'to find the Sheriff's officer here among my staunch supporters: I suppose gratitude.' He was sanguine from the first, and when the Liberal candidate, Wyndham Lewis's colleague in the late Parliament, retired from the contest it looked for a moment as if he would be returned unopposed.

To Sarah Disraeli.

July 22.

The accounts from Maidstone continue as favorable as ever. Several of Robarts' supporters have come over to me since his secession. I believe I am the only *new* candidate of our side who has not an opposition. . . . So much for

the 'maddest of all mad acts,' my uncle G.'s[1] prescience, and B.E.L.'s unrivalled powers of encouragement! The nomination day is fixed for the 25th.[2]

On the 25th, however, Colonel Perronet Thompson, editor of the *Westminster Review*, and a well-known figure among the Radicals of the day, more adventurous than Robarts, allowed himself to be nominated. 'I hope,' said his proposer when he found occasion to mention Disraeli, 'that I pronounce his name aright.' 'Colonel Perronet Thompson,' retorted Disraeli in the opening sentences of his speech, 'I hope, as Mr. Ellis said, that I pronounce his name aright.' Disraeli's ready wit and eloquence had made him a favourite with his side, though, as his popularity grew, the animosity of his opponents increased in like proportion. On this occasion a hostile paper tells us, 'the Blues opened the floodgates of their recriminating eloquence on the degraded Disraeli, who winced beneath the cries of "Old clothes!" "Shylock!" and various other complimentary epithets for nearly an hour.' Such are the amenities of electioneering.

To Sarah Disraeli.

MAIDSTONE,
July 27, 1837. 11 o'clock.

DEAREST,

Lewis	707
Disraeli	616
Colonel Thompson	412

The constituency nearly exhausted.

In haste,
DIZZY.[2]

When the final figures were declared they were not far different: he had reached the goal at last.

[1] George Basevi, a brother of Disraeli's mother. Another Miss Basevi, their sister, had married a Mr. Lindo, and 'B.E.L.' was her son, and therefore Disraeli's cousin.

[2] *Letters*, p. 115. It is about this time that the familiar appellation which is here used as signature, and which was subsequently to become so famous, begins to make its appearance.

Mrs. Wyndham Lewis to Major Viney Evans.[1]

July 29, 1837.

Mark what I say—mark what I prophesy: Mr. Disraeli will in a very few years be one of the greatest men of his day. His great talents, backed by his friends Lord Lyndhurst and Lord Chandos, with Wyndham's power to keep him in Parliament, will insure his success. They call him my Parliamentary *protégé*.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

BRADENHAM, SUNDAY.
[*July* 30, 1837.]

MY DEAR MRS. WYNDHAM,

You may conceive my astonishment yesterday on entering the County of Bucks to find the walls of every town plastered over with pink (my colour at Wycombe) placards 'Maidstone Election; State of the Poll; Lewis and Disraeli!' &c., &c. It was curious to meet our united names thus unexpectedly, and as I had been dozing in the postchaise, I really thought, on waking, that I had been dreaming all the while of home and Buckinghamshire, and that I was still by the waters of the Medway and among the men of Kent. All doubt, however, was dispelled on my arrival at Wycombe, where I found that on the previous day there had been a great festival spontaneously and suddenly celebrated by my neighbours in honour of our victory. Friday was market day at Wycombe, which is the greatest corn market in England, and the news arrived there about noon. Immediately all the bells were set a-ringing, a subscription made at the market tables to illuminate the town in the evening, and the band called out, parading long after midnight. At Aylesbury, twelve miles further on, the news was known earlier, and was announced from the hustings by Lord Chandos, whereupon the multitude gave three times three for Lewis and Disraeli, and cards were printed by Praed's committee, circulating the intelligence. I thought all this would amuse you, and indeed I was rather gratified by finding that those among whom I lived, and who, after all, in this world, must know me best, felt such genuine satisfaction in my success.

We all here wish very much that Mr. Wyndham and yourself would come and pay us a visit among our beechen groves. We have nothing to offer you but simple pleasures, a sylvan scene and an affectionate hearth. I hope to get to

[1] Her brother.

town on Tuesday evening after polling. I am rather nervous about our county election; our third man lost the show of hands on Saturday, which they are pleased to say would not have occurred had I spoken. I suppose my colleague is in Glamorganshire. My kind regards are his and yours.

DIS.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*Aug.* 5.]

DEAREST,

The Government talks of breaking up! Lord Melbourne really said that he could not carry on the thing with 'Irish boroughs against English counties.' The Whigs now confess that they are beaten to pieces. . . .

I dined with Munster, Strangford, Shaftesbury, Exmouth, and Loftus at the Carlton the day that Hume was thrown out. It is a fact that the little Queen clapped her hands when she was told that Hume was out. Yesterday I dined at the W. L.'s. The Clarendons, Prince and Princess Poniatowski, Mrs. C. Gore, Lady Floyd; Mrs. Dawson, Parnther, Beauclerk, and myself; a fine dinner well cooked and gorgeous service; very friendly, more friendly every day; certainly W. L. is one of the oddest men that ever lived, but I like him very much.

What do you think of Lyndhurst's marriage? I had long heard, but never credited it. . . . I am very well and begin to enjoy my new career. I find that it makes a sensible difference in the opinion of one's friends I can scarcely keep my countenance.

I received my father's letter, for which I send my love, and to all.

DIS.[1]

[*Aug.* 12.]

DEAREST,

I did not see the *Herald*[2]; but I find my advent canvassed in many papers; among them the *Spectator*, who puts Holmes, Sugden, and myself as men whom the Whigs would anxiously have kept out; but says they have no doubt I fancy I shall be the terror of the Treasury bench, but they shall be 'agreeably disappointed if I turn out anything better than a buffoon.' This must come from Col. Thompson & Co., who

[1] Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS.

[2] His sister had written:—'A few days back the *Morning Herald* said something of two men being returned to this Parliament of whom great things were expected. Who is the second?'

did not particularly relish my nomination jokes. Clear your head of all nonsense about scrutinies, petitions, &c., &c. There is not a safer seat in England than mine. They have not a shadow to work upon. . . .

I franked your letter. . . .

From the prospects of the undecided elections there is no doubt there must be 318 Tories in the House . . . and I shall be rather surprised if we don't pick up a few more. In short, the Government is done, and I doubt whether they will meet Parliament. . . . The Whigs are more than low-spirited; they are *in extremis*; they give the affair up. Peel says he can carry on the Government with the present Parliament, not the slightest doubt, so I hope we are sitting for seven years. What fun! And how lucky after all I should esteem myself!

My love to all,

D.

To Mrs. Bulwer Lytton.

[*Undated.*]

It was odd that my electioneering struggle should terminate in being M.P. for Maidstone. As I am already a believer in destiny, it required not this strange occurrence, and doubly strange from the manner in which it took place, to confirm me in my Oriental creed. . . . We are the children of the gods, and are never more the slaves of circumstances than when we deem ourselves their masters. What may next happen in the dazzling farce of life the Fates only know.[1]

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

BRADENHAM,
Sept. 1, 1837.

After you went, everything and everybody were most dull and *triste*. The truth is the visit was too short. Yesterday I 'executed justice and maintained truth' at West Wycombe, where they kept me so late that I missed the post. Here everything remains the same, save that it is now the memorable first of September and the boys are out shooting. They went out at six this morning and have not yet made their reappearance.

We must ask you for news: you cannot expect it from this sylvan solitude. Not an incident ever occurs here; one day is as like another as fruit on a tree. The weather

[1] From a letter in Mr. Alfred Morrison's collection.

has been more favorable, which made us all still more deplore the absence of our recent guests.

All unite here in love and affection and compliments to you and Wyndham: I send my quota.

DIS.

Mrs. Wyndham Lewis to Major Evans.

Sept. 8, 1837.

I have been paying a visit to Mr. Disraeli's family. They reside near High Wycombe—a large family house, most of the rooms 30 and 40 feet long, and plenty of servants, horses, dogs, and a library full of the rarest books. But how shall I describe his father; the most lovable, perfect old gentleman I ever met with? A sort of modern Dominie Sampson—and his manners are so high-bred and natural. Miss Disraeli is handsome and talented, and two brothers. Our political pet, the eldest, commonly called Dizzy, you will see a great deal of; you know Wyndham brought him in for Maidstone with himself.

To Sarah Disraeli.

WOOLBEDING.
[*Oct.* 24 (?), 1837.]

MY DEAREST,

I arrived here yesterday at 3 o'clock, having travelled through a fine country, Esher, Guildford, Godalming, until leaving at that point the high road, I entered a region of picturesque and sylvan beauty I have never seen equalled, in the midst of which, after a hilly drive of 20 miles, I found Woolbeding on the banks of the Rother. This is a house rather old-fashioned than antiquated, but very convenient and compact, covered with ivy, with the Church joining it in the same green garb, and a very fine conservatory. The grounds and gardens are as remarkable for their beautiful forms and rich shrubs as you can conceive, with the river winding all about. The place belongs to Lord Robert Spencer's heirs, who are doubtful, and is only used by Maxse[1] as a shooting box. His principal residence is in the West of England and he only lives here in the sporting season. . . .

It rains to-day without ceasing. Here are at present nothing but shooting dandies; Lord Rokeby, Henry Berkeley, and Whyte Melville. . . . We dine at half past six, and there is a constant breakfast—the only rule, as Maxse says,

[1] Mr. James Maxse, his host. Lady Caroline Maxse, his hostess, was a daughter of the 5th Earl of Berkeley.

being that it is expected that his guests will endeavour to breakfast before he dines: there is no end of horses, guns, and dogs and a very large company of London servants. All you have to do is to give your orders without delicacy. Lady Caroline is amiable, and has four beautiful and interesting children, to whom she is devoted. . . .

I see by the *Globe* of last night that the forthcoming *Edinburgh* has an article on 'Disraeli's Novels'—I suppose to assist my parliamentary *début*. Very kind of the Whigs. I am, however, perfectly callous.

I will write when there is matter for a letter; but if it rains I doubt whether there will be. At any rate I shall not stay here longer than I can help. In the course of my travelling down I passed many famous places, Ockham (Lord King's), Loseley House, and Sutton Place, but the latter was so embosomed in trees I could not distinguish it: all this on the high road.

Your affectionate,

D.[1]

WOOLBEDING,
[*Oct.* 26 (?).]

MY DEAREST,

. . . . . .

Yesterday Lady Caroline drove me to Cowdray, Mr. Poyntz's, in one of the most brilliant equipages I ever witnessed. Her poneys, for such they are styled though they are 15 hands high, are thoroughbred, and worthy of George the Fourth, as well as her carriage, which is of cane on a frame of a peculiarly brilliant and rich green; she has two outriders, and the moment there is the slightest elevation the poneys break into a gallop of their own accord to the fear and astonishment of all passengers. She is, however, a good whip and knows her cattle and country. . . .

Cowdray is one of the most magnificent demesnes in England. Poyntz has about 25,000 acres. The old Tudor Hall, which you approach from Midhurst by an avenue, was burnt down many years ago and is now only a picturesque ruin; but in the most favored spot of the park, surrounded by the most poetic timber in the world, with a fine view of the South Downs through their tall stems, is the modern residence, an irregular cluster of great extent and presenting no lack of tall chimneys built at different times and added as occasion prompted. . . .

I doubt whether I shall stay here beyond Saturday; but

[1] Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS.

I find it difficult to get away, being very popular with the women, who are charmed I do not shoot. I like my friends; they are very good, warm-hearted people indeed. I am going to Petersfield to see the Jolliffes to-day. . . .

Your affectionate,

D.[1]

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

WOOLBEDING, MIDHURST,
Oct. 29.

Your letter of the 18th did not reach me until yesterday, as I have been rambling about. I date this from the Maxses, where I have been staying three or four days and which I leave to-morrow. The house is full of shooting dandies, not much in my way. Until the last fortnight, I have been in Bucks, but on the wing. I stayed a week at Lord Chandos' at Wotton, a few days with Sir Gore Ouseley, and a few days at Newport Pagnell in the extreme north of the county, where we had a great Conservative dinner. We have indeed had a brisk campaign in this respect in our county, and I am quite wearied with after-dinner spouting. I have heard nothing directly from Maidstone, but indirectly I am sorry to say I learnt yesterday that they are still very eager about their dinner, which they intend shall take place in November, though I should think this were impossible. Tell my colleague he must be in his place by the 15th. There is a pressing circular out. What is to happen no one knows, but there is a very active whip. Lord John had the impudence to write to Peel, enquiring whether there would be a division on the Speakership; Sir Robert gave him a caustic reply and now the Whigs protest there will certainly be a struggle, though I doubt it myself. My health is excellent. . . .

An extraordinary season is expected; at present the only topic of interest is the Queen's visit to the City, and all the triumphal arches through which she is to pass before she tastes the orthodox turtle cooked in the sound of Bow Bells; as there are to be no toasts given the affair must be very dull. The Duke of Wellington dines there, and I hope Sir Robert Peel. The Queen and Lord Melbourne are having their portraits taken by Hayter at the same time and under the same roof. Melbourne lives only at Brighton, the other Ministers work, except Palmerston, who is Leporello to our Don Juan.

My kind regards to Wyndham.

D.

[1] Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS.

The last entry in the Mutilated Diary carries us on to the eve of the meeting of Parliament.

BRADENHAM,
Nov. 12, 1837.

To-morrow I leave Bradenham to take my seat in Parliament, *i.e.*, on the 15th. I have passed these three months since my election chiefly in Bucks, and in a run of desultory political reading, though chiefly on Ireland. Attended several political dinners in my County, to which I limit myself: spoke often and well—at Newport Pagnell, where there was great enthusiasm, and Great Marlow. After the Quarter Sessions, the 17th of October, went to Woolbeding, Lady Caroline Maxse's, where I passed a week. Returned to Bradenham that I might pass ten quiet days.

My health wonderfully renovated: were it not for the anxiety the state of my affairs occasionally causes me, I should laugh at illness. My life for the past year has been very temperate; my nervous system consequently much stronger. I am now as one leaving a secure haven for an unknown sea. What will the next twelve months produce?

APPENDIX A.

TITA.

This interesting personage, one of the many links between Byron and Disraeli, was a Venetian whose full name was Giovanni Battista Falcieri, and who, entering Byron's service as gondolier, had become his devoted personal servant and was with him at Missolonghi when he died. He is introduced in *Don Juan* (II. 56),

> 'Battista, though' (a name call'd shortly Tita),
> 'Was lost by getting at some aqua-vita,'

and is mentioned by Shelley in a letter written from Ravenna, Aug. 15, 1821:—'Tita, the Venetian, is here, and operates as my valet—a fine fellow with a prodigious black beard who has stabbed two or three people, and is the most good-natured looking fellow I ever saw.'[1] After Byron's death Tita fought for the Greek cause at the head of a regiment of Albanians; but at the close of the war he fell into distress, and in this condition was picked up by Clay at Malta in the summer of 1830, and accompanied Clay and Disraeli in their subsequent wanderings in the Levant. On their return to England, when Clay had no further occasion for Tita's services, Disraeli sent him down to Bradenham, where at first he startled the inhabitants of the quiet Buckinghamshire village by his dress, appearance, and habits, and where he remained a privileged favourite till Isaac D'Israeli's death in 1848. The rest of the story can

[1] Moore's *Life of Byron*, III., p. 237.

be given in the words in which Disraeli himself told it to Sir Philip Rose.

One of the chief anxieties of my sister and myself was, what was to be done with Tita. Our embarrassment was increased by the announcement of his marriage to 'Hughes,' my mother's former maid, who remained on as housekeeper—an event which we suspected had taken place some years previously. It was dreadful to think that a man who had been in Byron's service, and soothed his last moments, who had been the faithful attendant and almost the companion and friend of my father, for so many years, who had actually died in his arms, should end his days in the usual refuge for domestic servants, by keeping a public-house, or a greengrocer's shop; but, happily, just at that moment I accidentally met Sir John Cam Hobhouse, in a country house, and asked him if he remembered Tita in Byron's service. He replied, 'Perfectly.' Then I said, 'He now wants a friend, and he has an hereditary claim on you as Byron's executor.' I told him his subsequent history and my anxiety to provide for him, and asked him for an appointment as messenger in some department of the Government. Hobhouse gave me little hope at the time, but, within a week of our meeting, I received a letter that a messengership at the Board of Control had fallen vacant, to which he should be happy to appoint Tita, and so we landed him. Another crisis occurred when the Board of Control was abolished, and Tita was liable to be dismissed, on a small pension; but fortunately we were then in power, and Stanley was head of the India Office, to whom I related Tita's history, and appealed to him to look after his interests. The result was that Tita was appointed chief messenger at the new India Office, then temporarily located in Victoria St., but without the liability of having to carry messages.

Tita died in 1874 at the age of 76; and the following letter well illustrates Disraeli's habit of pertinacious kindness for those whom he had once admitted to his friendship or taken under his protection:—

To Queen Victoria.

10, Downing Street, Whitehall,
Jan. 13, 1875.

Mr. Disraeli with his humble duty to your Majesty. He earnestly recommends to your Majesty, for a pension of £50, Sarah Falcieri, the widow, after thirty years of much devotion,

of Giovanni Battista Falcieri, the faithful servant of Lord Byron.

In Mr. Disraeli's youth, 45 years ago, Falcieri travelled with him for two years, in Egypt, Syria, and other parts of the East: a most faithful and gifted man. Then he served your Majesty, as a Messenger in the India Office; and retired pensioned and universally beloved. His widow is an Englishwoman.

APPENDIX B.

LORD LYNDHURST'S RECOLLECTIONS.

1826–1832.

The accounts of the sessions of 1835 and 1836 on pp. 305, 331, are taken from a memorandum headed 'Summary of Events—mainly Lord Lyndhurst's career from 1826 to 1836; written at Bradenham, Sept. 17, 1836,' and inscribed with the motto, 'Those who anticipate their century are persecuted when they live and pilfered when they are dead!'[1] The earlier portion of the memorandum, though it has no connexion with Disraeli's own political career, is interesting as a contribution to Lyndhurst's biography and perhaps to the history of the time:—

Copley [1826] at Duke of Montrose's, which he joined from the circuit: very dull: intended to go abroad, but detained a week by waiting for remittance from London. On his way up found at Manchester a communication from the Minister offering him the Mastership of the Rolls. Had he been abroad perhaps it would not have been offered. Lord Gifford had died suddenly. . . .

Canning, aware of the impending fate of Liverpool, had long been maturing a party of his own; had sounded Copley. Canning aware that the Duke of Wn. meditated the premiership. There had long been two parties in the Cabinet,

[1] *Vivian Grey*, Bk. VI. ch. 4: 'He who anticipates his century is generally persecuted when living and is always pilfered when dead.'

Canning's and Wellington's; but Lord Liverpool supported Canning. A breeze in the H. of C. between Canning and Copley, a little before the death of Liverpool, on the Catholic question. Canning irritated by Copley's re-chauffing in a speech Phillpotts' (afterwards Bishop of Exeter) pamphlet. When Canning wrote to him to offer the great seal added at the end 'Phillpotts *non obstante*.' Canning wished to get Brougham out of the H. of C., and offered him the Chief Barony of the Exchequer. B. took time to consider, and was to report to the Lord Chancellor: declined to Lyndhurst, saying that he had consulted his brother (the one who died), who recommended him not to leave the H. of C.

Lyndhurst, not very sanguine as to the success of the Canning Cabinet; but the great seal and a peerage! 'Who would refuse it? I thought I would not baulk fortune, and that a seat in the H. of L. would always keep me a career.' Canning had resolved not only not to press the Catholic Question, but had promised the King that he would prevent it being carried in the Commons. Difficulty in forming a Cabinet unrivalled. Now the difficulty is to satisfy so many, then to find Ministers. The seals of the Home Office actually begging, as Canning wanted a Protestant Secretary. At last Sturges Bourne took them out of mere friendship. Canning elated at obtaining the adhesion of Lansdowne: Holland very eager to take office.

Nothing annoyed Canning more than the denunciation of Lord Grey. Said to Lyndhurst, 'I feel I must remain in the Commons, but I am half tempted to ask for a peerage merely to let fly at him.' Nothing could exceed the virulence of the party of defection. There was a dinner, I think, at Bathurst's. It had been an invitation of a month. The Copleys had been asked before the break-up. L. hesitated about going, but thought it was shabby and spiritless to decline. Went and sat next to Mrs. Arbuthnot: nothing could be more bitter. The only person who was civil and good-humoured was old Eldon. Lady L. sat next to him.

Canning had been long ailing. Eat voraciously. There was a Cabinet dinner at Lord L.'s at Wimledon. A beautiful day with a clear blue sky, but a cutting easterly wind. Canning rode down. They were tempted by the fine weather to hold the Cabinet in the garden. Soon Canning complained of the cold and shivered. Went in to dinner, but even the dinner, though he eat voraciously, did not remove it. Went home, was taken ill, and died very shortly.

Nothing can give an idea of the scene under Goderich. No order at the Cabinet. A most ludicrous scene. Nothing ever

done. Anglesea sitting with a napkin round his head from the tic, but the only one who seemed to exert himself. As they went home L. said to a colleague, 'This can never last.' In a few days Goderich sent for L. to Downing Street—walking up and down the room in great agitation, wringing his hands, and even shedding tears. Told L. that he must resign. L. tried to reason with him, but no avail. Resigned the next day. Geo. IV. sent for L. and asked what he was to do. L. said there was only one thing. 'Send for the Duke of Wellington.'

Knighton had arranged the Canning Cabinet, and was C.'s friend. That appointment had been long maturing—much intrigue. Knighton very able—the real king of this country—did everything—wrote all the King's letters. When a weak or indolent person in a high situation once admits the assistance of an inferior, soon becomes a slave. What is occasional becomes a habit. The Wellington Cabinet broke up on the Catholic question, and were out for four and twenty hours. The King was firm. The Duke, Peel, L., &c., went down to Windsor and resigned the seals. The King kissed each of them. George IV. was much distressed—acted in spite of Knighton. They went back to London and dined at Bathurst's, and were in high spirits at being free of office. In the middle of the night letters came to the Duke and Lynd. giving up. Knighton had worked upon his distress after their departure.

The Catholic Bill.—Lord Grey wanted office, and it was known that he would have taken the viceroyalty of Ireland (*e.g.*). Once the intention of the Duke to admit the Grey party. Took a sudden prejudice to Grey. Something happened on a coal committee. Told L. afterwards he had seen enough of Grey that morning to have nothing to do with him.

1832.—L.'s motion that enfranchisement should precede disfranchisement threw out the Whigs. It was the intention of the Tories to make the Speaker Premier. A weak man, but a stalking-horse. Peel would have been the virtual Premier. L. was deputed to make the offer. I must do Manners Sutton the justice to say that he at first burst out laughing and said, 'Why, it will be the Doctor over again.' But after some conversation he entertained the idea, seemed very complacent, and asked until to-morrow to decide. Thence L. went to offer Baring the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. He sent for Holmes out of the H. of C. and told him to find Baring and send him to him. Baring hesitated and asked for twelve hours. The next morning M. S. and B. both refused in consequence of the vote of the H. of C. It was the original intention not to have given the House

time to come to this vote, but to have prorogued it that morning. The hesitation of M. S. and B., and the unwillingness of Peel to act without their adhesion, lost everything. Had the Tories formed their Government it would have had the power of modifying the Reform Bill.

Among some of my papers will be found an account[1] of the secret political movements of 1834, and the formation of the Peel Government, in which preceding movements I was engaged. Four places in the Cabinet offered to Lord Stanley: one reason of his declining, unwillingness to act with the Duke of Wellington.

A few undated political notes, written in Disraeli's hand apparently about the same time, and relating to the same period, may conveniently be added.

Committee on the Reform Bill, Sir James Graham, Lord J. Russell, Lord Durham, Lord Duncannon, divided on the ballot, three to one in favour. The one was Duncannon: not known—Graham always insinuating it was himself. Had Lord Durham lived would have made a communication in the House of Lords, he was so indignant.

On leave to bring in the Reform Bill, Peel was anxious to meet it at once with a direct negative—it would have been thrown out by a very considerable majority, and the question would have been finished. Lord Granville Somerset was the person who dissuaded Peel. The consequence of the delay was the agitation of the country, &c.

Lord Duncannon twice offered O'Connell office—once under the Government of Lord Grey with the Premier's sanction. It was the Mastership of the Rolls.

[1] See pp. 266-269.

APPENDIX C.

D'ORSAY'S PORTRAIT OF LYNDHURST.

The portrait of Lyndhurst by D'Orsay, which is now at Hughenden Manor, has an interesting history. It somehow came into the possession of Mr. Gladstone, and was by him despatched to Christie's with other pictures and his collection of china when he left Carlton House Terrace in 1875. Disraeli, hearing that the picture was to be sold, sent Mr. Montagu Corry, his private secretary, to buy it; but in the meantime it had occurred to Mr. Cecil Raikes to invite a number of Conservative members of Parliament to join him in securing it with a view to a presentation. The rival bidders reached the auction room about the same time, but only to find that the picture had been already sold at an extremely low price. By the offer of a very handsome profit, Mr. Corry tried to obtain it, but his offer was rejected; and eventually, after some amusing manœuvres by the purchaser, which are related in the *Life of Raikes*,[1] it was secured by Mr. Raikes for a sum nearly ten times as great as the original auction price. The picture was sent to the Prime Minister accompanied by the following letter:—

HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY,
July 2, 1875.

DEAR MR. DISRAELI,

Knowing the friendship that united you both to the late Lord Lyndhurst and to Count D'Orsay, we beg to express the hope that you will accept from us the portrait of the one

[1] Pp. 100-102. The story as given there differs in some small particulars from the version here adopted, this latter being based on a contemporary memorandum written by Lord Barrington.

painted by the other as a mark of our sincere admiration and respect.

Barrington, Robert Bourke, Henry Chaplin, W. Romaine Callender, George Cubitt, W. Hart Dyke, Henry W. Eaton, Alex. Staveley Hill, Henry G. Lennox, John Manners, Charles H. Mills, Mahon, Henry W. Peek, Henry Cecil Raikes, Sandon, W. H. Smith, Newport, Fred. Stanley, Gerard Sturt, C. Sykes, Richard Wallace, Row. Winn, H. Drummond Wolff.

Disraeli addressed his acknowledgment to Lord Barrington.

2, WHITEHALL GARDENS,
July 12, 1875.

MY DEAR BARRINGTON,

Do me the favour of expressing to those members of the House of Commons who, with yourself, have made me an offering, which I infinitely value, the gratitude and the gratification which I feel at this graceful act of friendship, and my sense of the refined manner in which it has been conveyed.

Yours ever,
B. DISRAELI.

II

1837–1846

BY WILLIAM FLAVELLE MONYPENNY

PREFACE

The period covered by this volume, the preparation of which has been delayed by reasons of health, is a period of critical importance in Disraeli's career, and one with regard to which there has been much misunderstanding. It is also, as it seems to me, the period when his genius was at its greatest height and vigour. These are the justifications, if any are needed, for what may seem at first sight the disproportionate length at which it has been treated.

I have again to thank Lord Rothschild and the other trustees of the Beaconsfield estate for their constant kindness and encouragement. Outside the Beaconsfield papers my main reliance, as in the previous volume, has been on published material; but I have once more to record my obligations to Captain Lindsay for the originals of many of Disraeli's letters to his sister, and I am also under obligations to the Duke of Rutland, Lord Lansdowne, and Mr. Leopold de Rothschild, in the case of a few other documents. For most of the illustrations I am again indebted to Mr. Coningsby Disraeli, but the portraits[1] of Lord George Bentinck, Mr. Henry Hope, and Lord John Manners, are owing, respectively, to the Duke of Portland, Mr. Adrian Hope, and Lady Victoria Manners. Lastly, my best thanks are due to Mr. G. E. Buckle and my publisher, Mr. Murray, for their kindness in reading the poof-sheets and for many helpful suggestions.

W. F. M.

October, 1912.

[1 These three portraits are not reproduced in this new edition.—G. E. B.]

CHAPTER I.

THE MAIDEN SPEECH.

1837–1838.

On November 5, 1837, Queen Victoria's first Parliament assembled for its first session, and Disraeli began the career in the House of Commons which was to last without a break for nearly forty years.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*Nov.* 15, 1837.

MY DEAREST,

I took my seat this morning: I went down to the House with Wyndham [Lewis] at two, and found it very full, the members standing in groups and chatting. About three, there was a cry of 'Order, order,' all took their seats (myself on the second bench, behind Sir Robert Peel), and a messenger summoned the Commons. The Government party was very strong in consequence of an article in *The Times* about two days back, which spread a panic through their ranks, but which I think was a hoax. Shaw Lefevre proposed, and Strutt of Derby seconded, Abercromby.[1] Both were brief, the first commonplace, the other commonplace and coarse; all was tame. Peel said a very little, very well. Then Abercromby, who looked like an old laundress, mumbled and moaned some dullness, and was then carried to the chair, and said a little more amid a faint, dull cheer. To me of course the scene was exciting enough, but none could share my feelings except new members.

[1] The Speaker in the late Parliament, who at its opening in 1835 had been put forward by the Whigs against his Tory predecessor Manners-Sutton, and elected by a majority of six after a fierce party struggle. The article in *The Times* had hinted that the Opposition might follow the example set them by the Whigs in 1835, and oppose Abercromby's re-election.

Peel came to the Carlton yesterday, and was there a great deal. He welcomed me very warmly, but all indeed noticed his cordial demeanor; he looks very well, and shook hands with me in the House. He asked me to join a small dinner at the Carlton on Thursday. 'A House of Commons dinner purely,' he said; 'by that time we shall know something of the temper of the House.'

O'Connell came in very late; many members on both sides arrived only this morning. I did not recognise Bulwer, but as he is in town I think he must have been there.

My love to all,

D.

The old Palace of Westminster had been partly destroyed by fire in 1834, and Lords and Commons were still in the temporary chambers[1] which they occupied while Barry's stately pile was rising from the ruins. The House of Commons of which Disraeli now found himself a member has a remarkable roll of fame. Lord Melbourne, the Whig Prime Minister, had his place in the House of Lords, but, with the exception of Lord Aberdeen, every one of his successors in the highest office under the Crown down to the time when Lord Salisbury formed his first Government, nearly half a century later, was in the new House of Commons. Sir Robert Peel, who had been Prime Minister for a short period already, and now led the Opposition, was in a very few years to be Prime Minister again. Lord John Russell, who was now Home Secretary and leader of the House, was twice to be at the head of Whig administrations; but in the interval between them he was to revert to second place, yielding the primacy to his present colleague, Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, who, over fifty as he was, and with a very long career in office behind him, had as yet given little promise of the fame and popularity he was afterwards to win. Lord Stanley, Peel's neighbour on the front Opposition bench, who had begun life as a Whig, was to be three times Prime Minister as the leader of the Tories; and on the same bench sat Mr. Gladstone, who, though not yet

[1] The Lords in the Painted Chamber, and the Commons in the old House of Lords.

twenty-eight, had now been five years in Parliament and had held subordinate office in Peel's short administration, and who on no less than four occasions was to find himself at the head of a Government of the opposite party. The new member for Maidstone, conspicuous by his Jewish appearance and highly dandified dress, completes the number of our future Prime Ministers; though, as he moved into his place behind Peel and Stanley and Gladstone, none probably but himself had a thought of the high destiny that awaited him.

After Russell and Palmerston, the most notable occupants of the front Ministerial bench were Spring Rice, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; Poulett Thomson, the President of the Board of Trade, who a few years later, under the title of Lord Sydenham, was, as Governor-General of Canada, to leave his mark on the history of our colonial administration; Cam Hobhouse, the friend of Byron, President of the Board of Control; the Attorney-General, Sir John Campbell, afterwards Lord Chancellor; and Lord Morpeth, the popular Chief Secretary for Ireland, of which Thomas Drummond, the Under-Secretary, was now the real ruler. Macaulay was still in India, but within two years was to take his place in the Whig Cabinet. Sir Henry Hardinge, who had been Irish Secretary in Peel's short administration, but who is better remembered as a soldier and Governor-General of India, was among those who had seats on the front Opposition bench, as were also Sir Edward Sugden, who had been Irish Lord Chancellor, and was later, as Lord St. Leonards, to sit on the English Woolsack; Goulburn, who had been Peel's Home Secretary in 1835; and Herries—'old, grey-headed, financial Herries'[1]—who had begun his career under Pitt, and had been Chancellor of the Exchequer without a Budget in the brief Ministry of Goderich. Sir James Graham had lost his election in Cumberland, and, when Parliament met, was not in his place by Lord Stanley, with whom he had seceded from the Whigs in

[1] See p. 209.

1834; but he was soon to return to the House as member for another constituency.

Outside the two front benches there were many noteworthy figures. Most conspicuous of all was the burly form of O'Connell, the real, though not exacting, master of the Government. Close to him, but sharply contrasted in the matter of bulk and stature, was his lieutenant, Richard Lalor Sheil. On the Tory side of the House there were Disraeli's friends, Lord Chandos and Sir Francis Burdett; Mackworth Praed, member for Aylesbury, already nearing the close of his too brief life; Lord Ashley, afterwards famous as the philanthropic Earl of Shaftesbury; and two notable personalities in the representatives of King's Lynn, Lord George Bentinck, then an invincibly silent member, and Sir Stratford Canning, who had won celebrity in the diplomatic world long before he entered Parliament. Among the Whig members were the witty and vivacious Charles Buller, and a boyish figure, Lord Leveson, who during Disraeli's time was to play a conspicuous part on the political stage as Lord Granville. The little band of Radicals, though attenuated by the elections, was, in proportion to its numbers, richer in talent and personality than the general body of the Whigs. Roebuck was not to be seen, having met with defeat at Bath; but, in spite of a similar defeat in Middlesex, Joseph Hume, the vigilant and persistent critic of the estimates, was in his usual place, having already contrived to find a friendly refuge in Kilkenny. Grote, who sat for the City of London, and who is remembered as the historian of Greece, if as a politician he is forgotten, was one of the group of philosophic Radicals; and another was Sir William Molesworth, a young Cornish baronet, whose austerity in the matter of political principle did not prevent him from being something of a dandy in his dress. Not far away were a couple of friends of Disraeli's, Radicals of a different type from Molesworth, but equally elaborate in their dress—Edward Bulwer, the novelist, and 'honest Tom Dun-

combe,' a man of birth and fashion who was one of D'Orsay's chosen associates. Another friend of Disraeli's was a young patrician Radical of a more serious cast than Duncombe—Charles Villiers, already the persistent enemy of the Corn Laws, a pioneer in the cause of which he lived to be the Nestor.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Nov. 16.

DEAREST,

There is no news. I have just come from the House, where I went to be sworn. It was something like Quarter Sessions on a great scale.

The dinner to-day is merely a House dinner of 14—all our great men with the exception of Lord Ramsay[1] and myself, the only two new members. It has created some jealousy and surprise; but W[yndham] L[ewis] is delighted, and says 'Peel has taken him by the hand in the most marked way.' . . .

D.[2]

November 21.

I tried to write you a line yesterday, as I was endeavouring to eat a sandwich, which I was not permitted to finish. Affairs are in a state of great excitement, and most interesting. All Sunday our members poured in, and at 4.30 the Carlton was full. Lyndhurst arrived rather unexpectedly on the Saturday night, and sent for me the following morning. I never saw him look so well, he really might have passed for five-and-forty, plump and rosy, and most gaily attired, and in the highest force and spirits. He was more than kind, and after paying a visit to Peel and the Duke, showed at the Carlton, where his appearance created great enthusiasm. Yesterday, after being obliged to go down to the House at eleven, to ensure a house for members to swear, I went to a great meeting at Peel's. There must have been 300 members. Peel addressed, full of spirit, and apparently eager for action. Thence again to the House, where we were summoned to the Lords at two o'clock. The rush was terrific; Abercromby himself nearly thrown down and trampled upon, and his mace-bearer banging the members' heads with his gorgeous weapon, and cracking skulls with

[1] Afterwards Earl and Marquis of Dalhousie, the great Governor-General of India.

[2] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.

impunity. I was fortunate enough to escape, however, and also to ensure an entry. It was a magnificent spectacle. The Queen looked admirably, no feathers but a diamond tiara; the peers in robes, the peeresses, and the sumptuous groups of courtiers rendered the affair most glittering and imposing. The Speech was intentionally vague, that no division might possibly occur. All was mystery until five o'clock. From the Lords I escaped, almost at the hazard of our lives, with Mahon,[1] who is now most cordial, and we at length succeeded in gaining the Carlton, having several times been obliged to call upon the police and military to protect us as we attempted to break the line, but the moment the magical words 'Member of Parliament' were uttered all the authorities came to our assistance, all gave way, and we passed everywhere. You never saw two such figures, our hats crushed and covered with mud, and the mobocracy envying us our privileges, calling out 'Jim Crow' as we stalked through the envious files.

I went down, after refitting at the Carlton, for about half an hour, during which I tried to scribble to you. The seat I succeeded in securing behind Peel I intend if possible to appropriate to myself. The House was so crowded later, that the galleries were all full of members; many unable to obtain seats were sitting on the stairs and on chairs and benches behind the Speaker's chair. Lyndhurst and many peers were in their seats at the bar: the strangers' gallery of course crammed.

The address was moved by Lord Leveson,[2] a child apparently, in a rich diplomatic uniform, and seconded by Gibson Craig, a new member in a court dress. Leveson made a crammed speech like a schoolboy; Gibson Craig, of whom the Whigs had hopes, rose, stared like a stuck pig, and said nothing; his friends cheered, he stammered, all cheered, then there was a dead and awful pause, and then he sat down, and that was his performance. The address was then read, and Wakley[3] made a most Radical speech and amendment,[4] determined to bring affairs to a crisis. He was fluent, flippant, and vulgar; a second-rate hustings orator. He was seconded by Molesworth, a most odious speaker, who wearied the House. . . . John Russell threw the Radicals over in a most matured and decided manner. It was a declaration evidently

[1] Afterwards 5th Earl Stanhope, the well-known historian and biographer of Pitt. As a grandson of Lord Carrington's he was a frequent visitor at Wycombe.

[2] Afterwards 2nd Earl Granville.

[3] Thomas Wakley, 1795-1862, medical reformer and founder of the *Lancet*.

[4] In favour of extension of the franchise.

the result of a Cabinet decision. The sensation was immense. Peel then rose and made one of the finest speeches I ever heard, most powerful and even brilliant. He broke the centre of the Government party for ever. The Radicals were mad. . . .

So, after all, there was a division on the Address in Queen Victoria's first Parliament—509 to 20. The division took an hour. I then left the House at ten o'clock, none of us having dined. The tumult and excitement great. I dined, or rather supped, at the Carlton with a large party off oysters, Guinness, and broiled bones, and got to bed at half-past twelve o'clock. Thus ended the most remarkable day hitherto of my life.[1]

[*Dec.* 5.]

DEAREST,

. . . Yesterday was rather amusing in the House. The Sheriffs of London, Sir Bob or Tom, and Sir Moses, and no mistake, appeared at the bar in full state to present, according to the privilege of the city of London, some petitions, after which they took their place under the gallery and listened to the debate,[2] which turned out to be the Jew question by a sidewind. Nobody looked at me, and I was not at all uncomfortable, but voted in the majority with the utmost *sangfroid*. . . .

D.[3]

Disraeli kept silent for something more than a fortnight, and then, on the evening of December 7, rose to deliver his maiden speech. The subject in debate touched the privilege of members, and was personal enough in its bearing to arouse a good deal of passion. The general election of the preceding summer had not seriously affected the numerical strength of parties, but the Melbourne Government, with its ordeal now behind it, and with a friendly Sovereign upon the throne, was in a

[1] *Letters*, pp. 117-120.

[2] On a Bill intended to relieve Quakers and Moravians from the obligation to take an oath before entering on municipal offices. Grote having moved that it should be an instruction to the Committee to extend the relief to persons of all religious denominations, the debate which followed was mainly directed to the question of Jewish disabilities; but the leader of the House and the author of the Bill, though declaring themselves favourable to the principle of Jewish relief, argued against the attempt to introduce it into the present measure as impolitic, and Grote's instruction was defeated by a majority of sixteen.

[3] *Letters*, p. 120.

stronger position than before, though its position even now was very far from strong.

The death of the King was a great blow to what had now come to be generally styled the 'Conservative Cause.' It was quite unexpected; within a fortnight of his death, eminent persons still believed that 'it was only the hay fever.' Had His Majesty lived until after the then impending registration, the Whigs would have been again dismissed. Nor is there any doubt that, under these circumstances, the Conservative Cause would have secured for the new ministers a Parliamentary majority.[1]

The spirits of the Tories had risen high during the English elections; but the Irish returns had robbed them of their majority, and, exasperated at seeing their hopes defeated in a second Parliament by O'Connell and his 'tail,' they opened a subscription for the promotion of petitions in Irish constituencies represented by Repealers. Burdett, among other English members of the House, ostentatiously supported this subscription with his purse and with his influence; and Smith O'Brien, the same who at a later day was to gain a luckless notoriety in another field, and whose own seat was now in danger, brought the matter before the House, complaining of Burdett's conduct, and moving for a committee of inquiry. A long debate ensued, in the course of which O'Connell spoke, and was to have been answered by Lord Stanley; but while O'Connell was on his legs, Disraeli, it is said,[2] went up to Stanley and obtained from him permission to follow his old antagonist. With his un-English appearance, dandified dress, affected manner, and elaborated style, Disraeli was hardly likely at the first attempt to win the favour of the House of Commons, nor in that jealous assembly would his outside reputation either as a novelist or as a hustings orator do anything to help him. In the ordinary course, however, he would have been certain of a hearing; but he had gone out of his way to provoke the hostility of the Irish, on whom the traditions

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. V. ch. 2. [2] Kebbel's *Life of Lord Derby*, p. 73.

of the House were least likely to impose restraint. 'We shall meet again at Philippi' had been his challenge to O'Connell, and by rising after O'Connell he had been careful to insure that the challenge should be remembered. He began with the usual appeal for the indulgence which the House was in the habit of allowing to those who for the first time solicited its attention. He then took up a point in the speech of 'the hon. and learned member for Dublin' (O'Connell); and when he described that speech as a 'rhetorical medley,' the House laughed, and it laughed again and louder when he alluded to some subscription, with which O'Connell himself had been connected, as 'a project of majestic mendicancy.' A hostile note soon began to be mingled with the laughter, but for a time the orator was able to proceed, and on the whole not without effect. Presently, however, the hostility became more marked, and he was constrained to renew his plea for indulgence:

> I shall not trouble the House at any length. I do not affect to be insensible to the difficulty of my position, and I shall be very glad to receive indulgence even from the hon. members opposite. If, however, hon. gentlemen do not wish to hear me, I will sit down without a murmur.

For a minute or two there was comparative calm, but a declaration that since the Reform Bill 'the stain of boroughmongering had only assumed a deeper and darker hue,' and that intimidation was more highly organised than even under the old system, awoke the storm anew. 'Hisses, groans, hoots, catcalls, drumming with the feet, loud conversation, and imitation of animals,'[1] are among the noises recorded as coming from the Irish quarter of the House. Disraeli cannot have been much surprised, for he told his constituents later that he had been warned of the reception he would meet with, and that the warnings had only impelled him to face the ordeal the sooner. At all events he kept his temper. 'I wish,' he pleaded, 'I could induce the House to give

[1] Hitchman's *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, I., p. 134.

me five minutes more ;' but the only response was uproar, and when, to enforce his claims to a hearing, he tried to put himself forward as virtually representative of the new members of the House, he was rewarded with 'bursts of laughter.' 'Now why smile ? Why envy me ?' was his good-humoured retort. 'Why should not I, too, have a tail, if it be only for a single night ?' And at this sally we are told the laughter was long and general. Henceforth the speech becomes almost unintelligible. 'I determined,' he explained to his constituents later, 'to be on my legs exactly the period I intended my speech should occupy. I succeeded, sometimes in comparative calm, sometimes the cheers of friends joining with the yelling of foes, sometimes in a scene of tumult indescribable ; but I stood erect, and when I sat down I sent them my defiance.' As he drew towards the close he embarked on an elaborate period, which had no doubt been prepared for use as a peroration, and which, beginning with a classical allusion to the 'amatory eclogue' between 'the noble Tityrus of the Treasury Bench [Lord John Russell] and the learned Daphne [? Daphnis] of Liskeard [Charles Buller],' whose '*amantium irœ*' had resulted, as he expected, in an '*amoris integratio*,' ended with a picture of 'the noble lord from his pedestal of power wielding in one hand the keys of St. Peter and waving with the other——': but the picture remained unfinished, the conclusion of the sentence being lost in shouts of laughter. 'Now, Mr. Speaker,' he proceeded, when his voice could be heard again, 'see the philosophical prejudices of man. That image I should have thought, when I was about to complete it, might have been much admired. I would have cheered it heartily if it had come from the lips of a political opponent ; and I would gladly hear a cheer, even though it should proceed from such a party.' The time he had allotted himself had now expired. 'I hope I may thank hon. gentlemen opposite for the sincerity of their expressions of approbation as well as disapprobation. I am not

at all surprised at the reception I have experienced. I have begun several things many times, and I have often succeeded at the last—though many had predicted that I must fail, as they had done before me.' (Cries of 'Question, question!' and 'Hear, hear, hear!') And then, in a voice which, by the testimony of every witness, rose high above the clamour, and which one even describes as 'almost terrific': 'I sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me.'[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

Dec. 8, 1837.

I made my maiden speech last night, rising very late after O'Connell, but at the request of my party and the full sanction of Sir Robert Peel. As I wish to give you an *exact* idea of what occurred, I state at once that my *début* was a *failure*, so far that I could not succeed in gaining an opportunity of saying what I intended; but the failure was not occasioned by my breaking down or any incompetency on my part, but from the physical powers of my adversaries. I can give you no idea how bitter, how factious, how unfair they were. It was like my first *début* at Aylesbury, and perhaps in that sense may be auspicious of ultimate triumph in the same scene. I fought through all with undaunted pluck and unruffled temper, made occasionally good isolated hits when there was silence, and finished with spirit when I found a formal display was ineffectual. My party backed me well, and no one with more zeal and kindness than Peel, cheering me repeatedly, which is not his custom. The uproar was all organised by the Rads and the Repealers. They formed a compact body near the bar of the House and seemed determined to set me down, but that they did not do. I have given you a most impartial account, stated indeed against myself.

In the lobby at the division, Chandos, who was not near me while speaking, came up and congratulated me. I replied that I thought there was no cause for congratulations, and muttered 'Failure!' 'No such thing!' said Chandos; 'you are quite wrong. I have just seen Peel, and I said to him, "Now tell me exactly what you think of D." Peel replied, "Some of my party were disappointed and talk of failure. I say *just the reverse*. He did all that he could do under the

[1] For the concluding portion of the speech I have used the report in the *Mirror of Parliament*, which is at once the fullest and the most intelligible.

circumstances. I say anything but failure; he must make his way.'"

The Government and their retainers behaved well. The Attorney-General, to whom I never spoke in my life, came up to me in the lobby and spoke to me with great cordiality. He said, 'Now, Mr. Disraeli, could you just tell me how you finished one sentence in your speech, we are anxious to know —"In one hand the keys of St. Peter, and in the other——"?' 'In the other the cap of liberty, Sir John.' He smiled, and said, 'A good picture.' I replied, 'But your friends will not allow me to finish my pictures.' 'I assure you,' he said, 'there was the liveliest desire to hear you from us. It was a party at the bar, over whom we had no control; but you have nothing to be afraid of.' Now I have told you all.

Yours, D.—in very good spirits.[1]

Disraeli's many enemies in the press made the most, of course, of his 'failure,' though *The Times* went out of its way to soothe his wounded feelings by describing the speech as eloquent. We have independent testimony to the warmth of Peel's encouragement. 'Sir Robert Peel, who very rarely cheers any honourable gentleman, not even the most able and accomplished speaker of his own party, greeted Mr. Disraeli's speech with a prodigality of applause which must have been very trying to the worthy baronet's lungs. . . . He repeatedly turned round his head, and, looking the youthful orator in the face, cheered him in the most stentorian tones.'[2] Stanley, on the other hand, who rose immediately after Disraeli, and who, as there is reason to believe, was at this time deeply prejudiced against him, made no allusion whatever to the remarkable scene of which the House had just been witness.

From Lord Lyndhurst.

MY DEAR DISRAELI,

Why have you not called upon me? The scamps of Radicals were determined that you should not speak. I am sure you have the courage to have at them again. You are sure to succeed in spite of their bullying.

Ever yours,

LYNDHURST.

[1] *Letters*, pp. 120-122. [2] Grant's *British Senate in 1838*, II., p. 334.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Monday [*Dec.* 11].

DEAREST,

I dined with Bulwer on Saturday, and, strange enough, met Sheil. I should have been very much surprised, had I not arrived first and been apprised. It thus arose: on Saturday, Bulwer walked into the Athenæum; Sheil, who has just recovered from the gout, was lounging in an easy chair reading the newspaper; around him was a knot of low Rads (we might guess them) abusing me and exulting in the discrimination of the House. Probably they thought they pleased Sheil. Bulwer drew near, but stood apart. Suddenly Sheil threw down the paper and said in his shrill voice, 'Now, gentlemen, I have heard all you have to say, and, what is more, I heard this same speech of Mr. Disraeli, and I tell you this: if ever the spirit of oratory was in a man, it is in that man. Nothing can prevent him from being one of the first speakers in the House of Commons (great confusion). Ay! I know something about that place, I think, and I tell you what besides, that if there had not been this interruption, Mr. Disraeli might have made a failure; I don't call this a failure, it is a crush. My *début* was a failure, because I was heard, but my reception was supercilious, his malignant. A *début* should be dull. The House will not allow a man to be a wit and an orator, unless they have the credit of finding it out. There it is.' You may conceive the sensation that this speech made: I heard of it yesterday, from Eaton, Winslow, and several other quarters. The crowd dispersed, but Bulwer drew near, and said to Sheil: 'D. dines with me to-day; would you like to meet him?' 'In spite of my gout,' said Sheil, 'I long to know him; I long to tell him what I think.'

So we met: there were besides only D'Eyncourt,[1] always friendly to me, Mackinnon, a Tory, and one Quin[2] of the Danube. Sheil was most charming, and took an opportunity in conversation with me of disburthening his mind of the subject with which it was full. He insisted continually on his position that the clamorous reception was fortunate, 'for,' said he, 'if you had been listened to, what would have been the result? You would have done what I did; you would have made the best speech that you ever would have made: it would have been received frigidly, and you would have

[1] C. Tennyson D'Eyncourt, 1784-1861, Whig member for Lambeth, and Alfred Tennyson's uncle.

[2] No doubt Michael Joseph Quin, traveller and journalist, who a couple of years before had published a book entitled *A Steam Voyage down the Danube.*

despaired of yourself. I did. As it is, you have shown to the House that you have a fine organ, that you have an unlimited command of language, that you have courage, temper and readiness. Now get rid of your genius for a session. Speak often, for you must not show yourself cowed, but speak shortly. Be very quiet, try to be dull, only argue and reason imperfectly, for if you reason with precision, they will think you are trying to be witty. Astonish them by speaking on subjects of detail. Quote figures, dates, calculations. And in a short time the House will sigh for the wit and eloquence, which they all know are in you; they will encourage you to pour them forth, and then you will have the ear of the House and be a favourite.'

I think that altogether this is as interesting a *rencontre* as I have ever experienced.

Yesterday I dined with Hope,[1] a sumptuous, but rather dull, party. Strangford and Cecil Forester,[2] Eaton, Beresford, Stanley of Cumberland, Baring, late of Yarmouth. On Saturday I dine with Peel, his first party.

Love,
D.

Sheil was unquestionably right. Disraeli had made the blunder of trying to take the House by storm without giving it time to become accustomed to the peculiarities of his manner, and only the hostility of the Radicals and O'Connellites had saved him from genuine failure. 'I am too far out of the world to know anything that's in it,' wrote his father, 'but I am always fearful that "theatrical graces" will not do for the English Commons. Whether any display of that nature you may have indulged in, I know not. Your own observation of what is about you must be your instructor.' The unfair turbulence of his enemies had not only averted ridicule, but had created a feeling in his favour; and when, urged on, in his own phrase, by 'ambition, his constituents, and the hell of previous failure,'[3] he next addressed the House, the result was very different.

[1] Henry Hope of Deepdene, 1808-1862, eldest son of the author of *Anastasius*.

[2] Afterwards 3rd Lord Forester, 1807-1886.

[3] *Coningsby*, Bk. I. ch. 3.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Dec. 18, 1837.

Nothing daunted, and acting on the advice of Sheil (a strange Parliamentary mentor for me after all), I spoke again last night and with complete success. It was on the Copyright Bill. The House was not very full, but all the Cabinet Ministers and officials were there, and all our principal men. Talfourd,[1] who had already made a long speech (his style flowery, with a weak and mouthing utterance), proposed the Copyright Bill very briefly, having spoken on it last session. Bulwer followed him, and confined himself to the point of international copyright, which called up Poulett Thomson. Then Peel on the copyright of art; and then I rose.

I was received with the utmost curiosity and attention. As there had been no great discussion I determined not to be tempted into a speech, which everyone expected of course I rose to make. All I aimed at was to say something pointed and to the purpose. My voice, in spite of our doings at Maidstone, was in perfect condition. I suggested a clause to Talfourd, with the idea of which I had been furnished by Colburn. I noticed that the subject had already been done so much justice to on other occasions that I should not trouble the House, but I had been requested to support this Bill by many eminent persons interested in its success. Thus far I was accompanied by continual 'hear, hears,' and I concluded thus: 'I am glad to hear from her Majesty's Government that the interests of literature have at length engaged their attention. It has been the boast of the Whig party, and a boast not without foundation, that in many brilliant periods of our literary annals they have been the patrons of letters ('Hear, hear' from John Russell & Co.). As for myself, I trust that the age of literary patronage has passed ('Hear hear' from leader of the Rads), and it will be honorable to the present Government if, under its auspices, it be succeeded by that of legislative protection.' I sat down with a general cheer.

Talfourd, in reply, noticed all the remarks of the preceding members, and when he came to me said he should avail himself of 'the excellent suggestion of the honorable member for Maidstone, himself one of the greatest ornaments of our modern literature.' Here Peel cheered loudly, and indeed throughout my remarks he backed me. So on the whole

[1] Serjeant Talfourd, afterwards a Judge, but better known as the author of *Ion*. His efforts 'in behalf of English literature and of those who devote themselves to the most precarious of all pursuits' had just won for him the dedication of *Pickwick*.

there was glorification. Everybody congratulated me. Colonel Lygon said, 'Well, you have got in your saddle again, and now you may ride away.' Even Granville Somerset[1] said, 'I never heard a few sentences so admirably delivered. You will allow me to say so, after having been twenty-five years in Parliament.' But all agree that I managed in a few minutes by my voice and manner to please everyone in the House. I don't care about the meagre report, for I spoke to the House and not to the public.

I have no time to tell you about Maidstone, except that the banker gave me a banquet more splendid than many I have had in this town, that we had the largest meeting on record, and that I made a successful speech; that Wyndham Lewis is infinitely more warm than ever, and my constituents far more enthusiastic, and it is my firm opinion that the next time I rise in the House, which will be very soon in February, I shall sit down amid loud cheers, for I really think, on the whole, though I have not time now to give you the reasons, that the effect of my *début*, and the circumstances that attended it, will ultimately be favorable to my career. Next to undoubted success the best thing is to make a great noise, and the many articles that are daily written to announce my failure only prove that I have not failed. One thing is curious, that the opinion of the mass is immensely affected by that of their leaders. I know a hundred little instances daily, which show me that what Peel, and Sheil, and other leading men have said, have already greatly influenced those who are unable to form opinions for themselves.—Love to all.

D.[2]

One eloquent sentence in the speech at the Maidstone banquet deserves to be rescued from oblivion: 'By the Conservative Cause I mean the splendor of the Crown, the lustre of the peerage, the privileges of the Commons, the rights of the poor. I mean that harmonious union, that magnificent concord of all interests, of all classes, on which our national greatness and prosperity depends.' 'When I meet you again as my constituents,' he had told the electors of Maidstone during the contest in July, 'not a person will look upon me without some degree of

[1] Lord Granville Somerset, 1792-1848, second son of the 6th Duke of Beaufort. He had held office in Peel's administration of 1834-35.

[2] *Letters*, pp. 125, 126.

satisfaction, perhaps some degree of pride.' His first visit to them was paid under the shadow of his recent failure, but his eloquence and spirit made it none the less a triumph.

Parliament adjourned for Christmas under the shadow cast by the news of the outbreak of rebellion in Canada, and the holiday was shortened accordingly. Disraeli spent it at Bradenham, busily plying his pen, one fruit of his labours being a series of papers in *The Times* under the title of 'Old England,' and with the signature 'Cœur de Lion.' They are discourses on the familiar text, 'How is the King's Government to be carried on?'—'great question of a great man, true hero-question'; or, 'How is the Queen's Empire to be maintained?'—Disraeli's own variant on the Duke of Wellington's formula; but, save for an occasional indication that the writer had been reading Carlyle, they are in no way remarkable.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

BRADENHAM,
Friday [*Jan.* 5, 1838].

MY DEAR MRS. WYNDHAM,

I was very sorry not to see you this morning, but very imprudently I sat up late at night writing, which never does for me. Slept little, and only towards morn, and woke wretchedly shattered. I hope you have had not a very disagreeable journey to town, and found Wyndham well.

We miss you here all very much; everything seems flat and everybody dull and dispirited, almost as dull and dispirited as you think me.

Believe me,
Ever yours, with great regard,
DIS.

In the middle of January the House met again. Disraeli was no amateur politician seeking in public affairs distraction for the intervals between more strenuous amusements. He had devoted himself in all seriousness to a political career, and politics henceforth were to be the main business of his life. 'The greatest opportunity that can be offered to an Englishman was now his—a

seat in the House of Commons;'[1] and having won this opportunity by much toil and effort, he was determined to make the most of it. 'Let me tell you how to get on in the House of Commons,' he said to a young member twenty years later. 'When the House is sitting be always in your place; when it is not sitting read Hansard.'[2] We need not suppose that the author of this maxim had submitted himself too literally to the terrible discipline which it recommends, but he fulfilled the first condition of Parliamentary success by throwing himself with zeal into the life and work of the House. Luckily, in these years of freedom from responsibility he found in the House of Commons abundant time for writing letters.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Thursday, Jan. 18, 1838.

We have adjourned until Monday, after two nights of the most feeble debates that can well be fancied. The frigid genius of Canada pervaded our deliberations, and even Sir Robert appeared to sink under it, for I never recollect him so inefficient. I have no news to tell you, except that I shall go and see Kean to-morrow with Mrs. W. L., provided she get a good warm box.

Jan. 20.

Town is very dull; everybody is frozen to death. Brougham's speech[3] on Thursday was most clever, as good as his old House of Commons harangues. Our peers mustered thick, and seemed 'miching mallecho,' but the Duke of Wellington rose and spoilt all with his generosity and all that. Great disgust in Tory ranks, even among the highest. Duke supposed to be *passé*, and to like being buttered with Whig laudation. . . .

I went to see young Kean last night, and the theatre was full in spite of the frost, which thins all the other houses; but I will not criticise him, for one word describes all—mediocrity. We went with the Horace Twisses;[4] Lord Chesterfield's box a capital fire, our own tea, and really very amusing.

D.

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 52.
[2] *Lord Beaconsfield's Irish Policy*, by Sir J. Pope Hennessy.
[3] Debate on Canadian Rebellion.
[4] Horace Twiss, 1787-1849, lawyer, wit, politician, and journalist, nephew of Mrs. Siddons and father-in-law of J. T. Delane.

LIBRARY OF HOUSE OF COMMONS,
Jan. 23.

To be impartial, which one should be when a man with brains is concerned, Roebuck[1] yesterday was not equal to the occasion. Sharp and waspish, he would have made a good petulant Opposition speech, but as the representative of a nation arraigning a Ministry of high crimes and misdemeanours, he was rather ridiculous : the subsequent debate was, on the whole, interesting. Sir G. Grey,[2] who had gained a reputation by the Canada revolt, contrived pretty well to lose it. Lord Francis Egerton spoke with all the effect which a man of considerable talent and highly cultivated mind, backed by the highest rank and 60,000*l.* per annum, would naturally command. He has a bad delivery, a good voice, but no management or modulation of it, and the most ungainly action conceivable ; nevertheless, on the whole impressive, and his style rich and somewhat ornate. Leader[3] ludicrously imitated Roebuck for more than an hour, and then the only feature was Pakington's[4] *début*, who sat next to me. His friends expected a great deal from him, and they announce that he quite fulfilled their expectations. He was confident, fluent, and commonplace, and made a good chairman of quarter sessions speech. 'It was the best speech that he ever will make,' said Sugden, 'and he has been practising it before the grand jury for the last twenty years.' However, I supported him very zealously, and he went to bed thinking he was an orator, and wrote to Mrs. Pakington, I've no doubt, to that effect.

[*Undated.*]

I went to a most *recherché* concert at Parnther's, where I found all the *élite* of town, and where the season commenced, as all agreed, very brilliantly. The Duke was there, looking very well in his garter, riband, and the golden fleece. There were indeed as many stars as in an Arabian story—

Ye stars, which are the poetry of dress ![5]

I can scarcely tell you who was not there, for I saw Lans-

[1] He was heard at the bar as agent for the House of Assembly of Lower Canada against the second reading of the Canada Bill.

[2] Under-Secretary for the Colonies.

[3] A well-known Radical member.

[4] Afterwards as Sir John Pakington a Cabinet colleague of Disraeli's.

[5] 'It is pleasant,' says St. Barbe in *Endymion* (ch. 33), 'to talk to a man with a star.

"Ye stars, which are the poetry of heaven,"

Byron wrote [*Childe Harold*, III. 88] ; a silly line ; he should have written,

"Ye stars, which are the poetry of dress." '

downes, Salisburys, Stuart de Rothesay, Duke of Beaufort, Douro, Cantalupe, Fitzroy, Loftus, &c., and Mrs. W. L., who was very proud, evidently, of being there. But the most picturesque group was the Rothschilds, the widow still in mourning, two sons, some sisters, and, above all, the young bride,[1] or rather wife, from Frankfort, universally admired, tall, graceful, dark, and clear, picturesquely dressed, a robe of yellow silk, a hat and feathers, with a sort of *Sévigné* beneath of magnificent pearls; quite a Murillo.

[*Undated.*]

I send you two good franks, the handwriting of two of the greatest ruffians in the House, and given to me by both of them when very drunk. They are 'Tailers,'[2] but have taken a sort of blackguard fancy to me, and very civil.[3]

Monday.

DEAREST,

We had a queer but amusing party at the Twisses. It was really given to Mr. and Mrs. Barnes; the W. L.'s were got to meet them, and the rest were men—Lord Darlington, Lowther, G. Somerset, Lord Reay, H. Hardinge, Henry Baring, &c., and myself. The dinner was good for Twiss, and everything went off well; Mrs. Barnes, who looked, as H. B. said, like a lady in a pantomime, very funny, surrounded by sons of dukes and privy councillors.

The weather was so bad, the streets being nearly half a foot deep in slough and snow, that I doubt whether I could have got to Salisbury House, short as was the distance, had not G. Somerset taken me. It was a most brilliant party, and the first time the world has been received there since the alterations which commenced since the old lady's death. Such a revolution! There is not a vestige of the ancient interior; even the staircase is entirely new and newly placed. There had been a grand dinner given previously to Lord and Lady[4] Lyndhurst—to meet the Duke, the Wharncliffes, Ellenborough, Pozzo di Borgos,[5] Francis Egertons, and other grandees. The assembly was most select. Lady Lyndhurst made a favourable impression, and afforded me an agreeable surprise. I was of course presented to her. . . . L. is in high spirits, but if he have not a son, I think he will sink under the disappointment. He talks of nothing else.

[1] Baroness Lionel de Rothschild.

[2] *I.e.*, O'Connellites.

[3] *Letters*, pp. 127-131.

[4] Lyndhurst's recently-married second wife, Georgiana, daughter of Lewis Goldsmith of Paris. She lived on into the twentieth century, surviving her husband nearly forty years.

[5] Count Pozzo di Borgo, the Corsican, famous as friend and enemy of Napoleon, was the Russian Ambassador in London.

Lady Salisbury, to whom I had never been introduced, received me with great cordiality, and talked to me a great deal. I find I owe the invitation to Lady Londonderry—at least, to her mention of me. I knew almost every man there. . . .

D.[1]

[*Undated.*]

On Saturday I dined with George Wombwell,[2] and met De L'Isle, Adolphus Fitzclarence, Auriol, and Hope. I drank a great deal too much wine, but a great deal less than my host, and his *fidus* Adolphus. I got away to the Salisburys, where there was a most brilliant and agreeable assembly.[3]

[*Undated.*]

I dined with the Powerscourts; Lady P.[4] is without exception the most beautiful woman in London. The party was good, in some instances rather funny—the Murchisons and Mrs. Somerville,[5] Mahon, Redesdale,[6] and Bankes.[7] Murchison[8] a stiff geological prig, and his wife silent. Mrs. Somerville grown very old and not very easy, but Bankes was so very agreeable that I hardly ever was at a more pleasant meeting.

[*Undated.*]

The evening at the Salisburys last Saturday was very brilliant; so many beautiful women, and among them the Princess of Capua. Her beauty is remarkable, added to in some degree by her gorgeous and fantastic dress. It was entirely of green velvet and gold; her headdress of the same material, although in shape that of a contadina. Miss Burdett Coutts was also there, a very quiet and unpretending person; not unlike her father, nevertheless. Lady Aldboro' made her first appearance for the season, and was very witty and amusing, and looked as fresh as ever. Lady Stanhope[9] is the very picture of Bob Smith, but I forgot you know her. . . . She has a very pretty daughter, Lady Wilhelmina.

[1] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.

[2] Said to be the original of Mr. Cassilis in *Coningsby*.

[3] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.

[4] She was a daughter of the 3rd Earl of Roden's, and in 1846 married as her second husband Disraeli's friend Castlereagh, afterwards 4th Marquis of Londonderry.

[5] The well-known scientific writer.

[6] The 2nd Lord Redesdale, raised to an earldom on Disraeli's recommendation in 1877.

[7] No doubt George Bankes, 1788-1856, the last of the Cursitor Barons of the Exchequer.

[8] The well-known geologist, afterwards Sir Roderick Murchison.

[9] A daughter of the 1st Lord Carrington's.

One of the prettiest and most interesting women I ever met, is Lady Powerscourt. I forgot to notice the Prince of Capua, a savage, dull-looking fellow covered with moustache, and stars. He is entirely ruled by his wife.

Mdrch 15.

I write to say I heard yesterday of the sudden death of my colleague. I have seen Mrs. Wyndham ; she is, of course, at present, extremely overwhelmed. She was sitting in the room with him when he died.[1]

On the day on which this last letter was written Disraeli spoke in a debate on a motion by Charles Villiers directed against the Corn Laws, and greatly distinguished himself.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Friday [*March* 16].

MY DEAREST,

You will hear with delight that last night, very unexpectedly, for I had given up all thought of speaking, and suffering naturally not a little both mentally and physically, I rose and made a most successful speech. Indeed, it was not merely a very good speech, but it was by far, and by all sides agreed, the very best speech of the evening, which it is always a great thing to achieve, as then nobody else is talked of.

I was so disturbed by deputations from Maidstone, rival candidates for the vacant post, the arrival of Jem, &c., &c., having been twice called out of the House to the Carlton, and having nearly lost my voice which I had been cooking with so much care for days, that at six o'clock, when I at last sat down in my place, I had quite given up all idea of speaking, but finding the House very thin, and getting more composed, I began to think I would take an opportunity of making a speech merely for the press. Even with this humble view, I was unfortunate ; thin as the House was, it seemed to consist only of speakers ; 12 or 14 fellows were on their legs at the same time, and Darby and Gally Knight, between whom I sat, were always up at the same time. In this state I went to our front and table bench, which was clear of all the great guns, who had gone to dinner, except Chandos, and told him my despair, and that I had given up the affair as a bad job. He recommended me to rise where I was, and boldly speak from the floor. Even here I could not catch the Speaker's eye, and time flew on, and the great guns one by one returned —Peel, Graham, Goulburn, Hardinge, Herries, &c., &c., and

[1] *Letters*, pp. 135, 137.

I was obliged to shift my plan and my place, till I at last had none at all. About 10 o'clock, I think, when standing behind the Speaker's chair, Hardinge beckoned to me, and I seated myself between him and Graham. He wanted to speak about moving the new writ for Maidstone. Having got a place, I did not leave it, although I ought to have done so, having answered his question, and I asked Graham whether he would speak. He said No, and recommended me, but very kindly, not to try, as he said the House was noisy, tired, and uninterested, and wanted to divide. So I gave it up for ever, but just as I rose to quit my seat, Clay, who was speaking, sat down, and the Speaker, imagining that I was going to rise to speak, called my name.

I was in for it, put my hat down, advanced to the table, and dashed along. I got the House still in a minute, I was heard with the greatest attention and good humor immediately, succeeded in all my points, though of course I made a much shorter speech than I would have done at an early hour and a thin house,—and at length sat down amid loud cheers, and really principally from the Government side. No one cheered me more vehemently than Hobhouse, who was a little drunk: Poulett Thomson paid great attention, and Cutlar Fergusson,[1] who cheered very much also, came up to me in the lobby, and spoke as warmly as you possibly can imagine. I had no acquaintance with him, which I had with Parker of the Treasury, a slight one, but he came up and shook hands with me, and said, 'All our people agree it was one of the best speeches ever made on the subject.'

Lord John said nothing, but sat with his arms folded, and watched me very attentively. I thought he looked malignant, and there was a smile on his face; but I did him injustice, for I walked home with Ossulston, who had only come down for the division, and he said to me, 'I understand you have made a most brilliant speech to-night; I wish I had been down.' I replied I supposed he had heard it from some friend. 'Oh,' he answered, 'Johnny, I have only seen Johnny, and he says it was the best thing he had heard for a long time; a great thing for one so scant of laudation.' . . .

As for our own people, Graham, Goulburn and Hardinge and good old Herries shook hands with me immediately. When I had regained my place, I was removed too far for notice from Chandos and Sir Robert Peel, but I heard their cheers. As for all the other congratulations I received, it is impossible to enumerate them. In the lobby, all the squires came up to shake hands with me, and thank me for the good

[1] The Judge Advocate-General.

service. They were so grateful, and well they might be, for certainly they had nothing to say for themselves. I think Sugden was more pleased than anyone. I saw Chandos afterwards at the Carlton, where I received great congratulations from everybody. I need not say he triumphed. Even Harcourt tried to say something pleasant, and everybody appeared to sympathise, except Sir W. Y.,[1] who grinned much the same ghastly smile as he would at Aylesbury. All our party noticed the great courtesy of the Whigs and the other side generally to me. In fact, I think I have become very popular in the House ; I ascribe it to the smoking-room. . . .

Strange to say, I got Jem in the House, and missed him after my speech ; I hope he heard it. Chandos detected him early in the evening.

'Disraeli, is your brother here ?'

'Yes.'

'I thought so (smiling) ; no mistaking him.'

He asked me at the Carlton where he was. I said I had missed him. 'I suppose he has gone to *market*,' says Chandos.

I have scribbled all this nonsense in marvellous haste.

D.

From Sarah Disraeli.

[*March* 17, 1838.]

My Dearest,

We were grateful for your long despatch. Jem told us enough to make us desire to hear what you felt. Now that 400 have heard you, I seem to care for nothing. It was James's *début* in the House, so that we did not know how much to trust to him. He describes the rush into the House as prodigious when you began to speak, and then the profound silence, and then all the cheers. He heard many people speak of you, rejoicing in your speech and your reception ; and once before you spoke Castlereagh rushed in, saying, 'Has Disraeli been up ?' It seemed by his account of all the sensation produced that you were quite as great a man at Westminster as at Aylesbury. . . .

God bless you, dearest !

Yours affectionately,

S. D.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

Sunday [*March* 25].

I am at this moment off for Maidstone,—that Maidstone where we have been so happy ! They have sent for me sud-

[1] Sir William Young, one of the members for Bucks. Chandos and Harcourt were the others.

denly, and I must go ; with a dull spirit and a heavy heart, I need not assure you. I send you this line because you will not hear from me for a day or two, but I hope on my return my messenger will assure me that you are as well, not as we could wish, but as we can hope. God bless you, dear friend.

D.

BRADENHAM,
April 16.

Exmouth[1] and myself arrived here for dinner on Saturday, and found them all well, but my father this morning is menaced by a fit of gout ; at least, I hope so, and that it is nothing worse, but he leads such an extraordinary life that he never complains of the slightest ache, that I am not miserably nervous. There was one gleam of sunshine as we approached Bradenham which welcomed us ; but otherwise the weather is cold and gusty, and there is not the slightest evidence of springlike vegetation. I agree with Gally Knight, who told me the other day that he was no admirer of Eastering. At Whitsun one has a better chance of sunbeams and blossom. . . .

While I have been writing this, the whole county has become as white as a twelfth cake. Jem, who is in the room, with six or seven dogs, desires his love to Mrs. Wyndham, and makes such a barking that I can scarcely write.

There is no news from this place, which of course is little altered, though somewhat improved, particularly a new walk thro' the woods devised and cut by Jem, and which you will like very much.

All send their love to you from this roof.

Yours,
D.

April 19, 1838.

My father's health gives me the greatest possible uneasiness. Although an eldest son, it seems to me that I could scarcely survive his loss. The first wish of my life has ever been that after all his kindness to me, and all the anxiety which I have cost him, he should live to see me settled and steady, and successful to his heart's content. I cannot describe to you my misery at the thought of losing him ; but he complains of his head, and many other strange symptoms, and yesterday when we were alone he nearly fell.

BRADENHAM HOUSE,
Sunday [*April* 22].

I shall be in town on Tuesday night, as it is expected that Serjeant Talfourd's motion on Copyright will come on on Wednesday, and I intend to speak on it. . . .

[1] Third Viscount, 1811-1876, grandson of the victor of Algiers, and a good and loyal friend of Disraeli's to the end of his life.

I leave this place with great regret, even tho' the sun do not shine. After a week or so, one gets used to quiet habits, and feels, as I always do, the charm of domestic bliss. I experience a reluctance in once more entering the scene of strife and struggle, but after all, like the shower bath, it needs only a plunge. I never leave home without feeling as I did when I went to school, which is an odd though true thing for one to say who has been such a wanderer. A return, however, makes me just as nervous. I dread to detect the progress of time, and always anticipate misfortune. . . .

I send you an emblem of the spring-flowers without perfume. Farewell!

Yours,
D.

When Talfourd's Copyright Bill came up for second reading, Disraeli fulfilled his intention of joining in the debate.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*April* 26.]

MY DEAREST,

I made a most brilliant and triumphant speech last night —unquestionably and agreed upon by all hands the crack speech of the night, and everyone who spoke after me, either for or against, addressed himself to me; but of this you cannot judge by the reports. C. Wynn, in speaking of Southey, confirmed 'the statement in the eloquent speech of the hon. member for Maidstone.' Poor little Milnes plastered me with compliments, but his own speech was entirely smashed by the reporters. The Ministers tried not to make a House. We had a sharp run, and I think I may fairly claim carrying the measure; at least Talfourd gave me credit for it, as I sent to the Carlton at 9.30, and got down a couple of members and absolutely converted Blakemore, if no others. . . .

The whole day has been passed in receiving compliments on my speech. Sir James Graham, who was in the House, was really most warm; but of all this when we meet.

Love,
D.[1]

As the law then stood, copyright subsisted for twenty-eight years or the duration of the author's life, whichever period was the longer; and Talfourd's Bill proposed to extend it to sixty years from the date of the author's

[1] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.

death. 'Literary men,' said Disraeli in the speech of which he wrote with so much complacency, 'exercise great power, often an irresistible power; and I would ask whether it is wise for this House to debar from the right of property in their works the creators of opinion.' In spite of his persuasive eloquence, the second reading was only carried by 39 to 34, and the Bill perished in Committee.[1]

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

CARLTON,
Friday, April 27.

It is natural, after such severe trials as you have recently experienced, and such petty vexations as you are now forced to encounter, that you should give way to feelings of loneliness and sorrow. It is natural and inevitable; but you must not *indulge* such sentiments, and you must endeavour not to brood over the past. The future for you may yet be full of happiness and hope. You are too young to feel that life has not yet a fresh spring of felicity in store. Although you have few near relations, they are such as are dear to you; a mother whom you love, and a brother to whose return you look forward not only with affection, but with the charm and excitement of novelty. And I can assure you that you have in my family friends in the best and sincerest sense of the word, who have from their first acquaintance with you loved and appreciated you.

As for myself, I can truly say, that the severe afflictions which you have undergone, and the excellent, and to me unexpected, qualities with which you have met them, the talent, firmness and sweet temper, will always make me your faithful friend, and as far as my advice and assistance and society can contribute to your welfare or solace you under these severe trials, you may count upon them. For, as you well know, I am one of those persons who feel much more deeply than I ever express, and if ever I express feelings of regard to anyone, my memory assures me that it is never any fault of mine if they are not fervently cherished and if they do not endure.

I fear that you are at present in a miserable circle of narrow-minded people, incapable of any generous emotion and any

[1] Talfourd renewed his efforts in subsequent sessions, but had the misfortune to encounter the opposition of Macaulay; and it was not till 1842 that the Act was passed which remained in force till 1911. The Act of 1911 grants copyright for a period of fifty years from the author's death.

genial sympathy; but this is an infliction that will not last, and I recommend you by all means to command your temper and watch over your interests. . . .

Every paper in London, Radical, Whig, or Tory, has spoken of my speech in the highest terms of panegyric, except the wretched *Standard*, which, under the influence of that scoundrel Maginn,[1] always attacked me before I was in Parliament, and now always passes over my name in silence. . . . Mrs. Dawson[2] stopped the carriage in the street yesterday to congratulate me, and her manner was most hearty and, I think, sincere. . . .

I look forward now with great interest to your return. *Expedite* but do not *hasten* it. Be active, but do not be in a hurry, or you will have to return once more to that odious place and those odious persons whom I hope will speedily be banished from our memories.

And now God bless you, and believe me,

Ever your affectionate friend,

D.

May 5.

Town is very agreeable, the weather soft and warm; and I suppose the fields and trees have put on their spring liveries these last few days, as well as the households of our fine people here.

Yesterday I dined with the Londonderrys *en famille*, and only met Lord[3] and Lady Hardwicke; but it was most agreeable, for Lady Hardwicke is without exception the most dramatic singer I ever listened to; her voice, too, is most sweet and powerful, and she is so unaffected that she actually sang without stopping for so long a time that it was near one when our *petite comité* broke up. I never met persons who seemed to enjoy life more, or who seemed fonder of each other, than the Hardwickes. I have known Lord H. for some time, and met him first at Smyrna when he was only Captain Yorke, and always liked him, he is so frank and gay. They asked me to dine with them to-morrow, but I am engaged to the Salisburys, which I regret.

All the world is talking of the grand festival which is to be given in Merchant Taylors' Hall by the Conservative members of Parliament to Sir Robert Peel. I am, of course, one of the hosts. It is to be one of the most magnificent and important gatherings ever witnessed. There is a gallery which

[1] See p. 73.

[2] A sister of Sir Robert Peel's and a great friend of Mrs. Wyndham Lewis's.

[3] The 4th Earl. His wife was a daughter of the 1st Lord Ravensworth.

will hold 70 ladies. Tickets to admit them were offered to Lady Peel, but she declined the dangerous honor, confident that the selection would create ill feeling: so the 70 ladies' tickets are to be balloted for by all the hosts. Every *grande dame* is mad to get a ticket. I know to whom I should venture to offer mine were she in London or could go, but I suppose, or rather feel, that is impossible.

The Chesterfields had the audacity to ask 5,000 guineas for the loan of their house to the Russian Ambassador Extraordinary,[1] and absolutely expected to get it. Lady Jersey asked 2,000. Lady Londonderry thought all this house-letting *infra dig.*, and had the spirit to write to the Empress, who had been most hospitable to herself and Lord L. when in Russia, and offered Holdernesse House and the whole establishment to the Grand Duke, who is coming over; intending themselves to go into a hired house. The offer was declined by the Empress in a letter in English beautifully and correctly written, both in style and calligraphy, and in which she signs herself 'With reiterated love, your affectionate Alexandra.'

On the 19th Lord Chandos gives a grand banquet to the Duke of Wellington, Lord Lyndhurst, Lord and Lady Londonderry, Lord and Lady Jersey, Sir Robert and Lady Peel, Sir James and Lady Graham, and Lord Stanley. You will be rather surprised, I think—at least I was—that I should be invited to it: but Chandos is a good friend, and greatly triumphs in my success in the House.

I must cease at present all this gossip, which I thought would amuse you after your journey. Pray come to town cheerful and happy, and believe in a happy and brilliant future like

Your affectionate
D.

Sunday [*May* 20].

Your exquisite offering arrived just in time, and added by its opportune arrival to all the grace of the present. I assure you that with unaffected delight I felt that for the first time in public I wore *your chains*. I hope you are not ashamed of your slave.

I am sorry to say the Duke [of Wellington] continues so unwell that he could not join the party, which otherwise was very brilliant, and even gay. . . . The plate at Buckingham House is marvellous; not merely costly, but rare, and the rooms are crammed with all possible curiosities and nicknacks, the spoils of our friend Emanuel, &c., for all which things Chandos has a passion. It is just the house to suit you.

[1] To the Coronation.

For guests we had the Londonderrys, Jerseys, Peels, Sir James and Lady Graham, Lyndhurst, Goulburn, Mahon, Sir H. Hardinge. All admired Lady Anna Grenville,[1] our host's only daughter, just presented.

I fear much the heavens do not smile on your Richmond expedition. I could only be consoled for not meeting to-day by the conviction that you were at least receiving pleasure, but Richmond on a rainy day is certainly not Paradise, though sometimes I have fancied it such when the sun was shining. . . .

Farewell! I am happy if you are.

Yours,
DIS.

For Disraeli, with his native love of pageantry and splendour, a rare opportunity was now drawing near. The Coronation of Queen Victoria was fixed for the end of June, and few in the thronging multitudes who were in London at the time can have felt a keener joy than he in the spectacles and festivities for which the ceremony gave occasion.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Monday [*June* 25].

MY DEAREST,

London is now very gay. The whole of the line of procession is nearly covered with galleries and raised seats; when these are clothed with carpets and colored hangings the effect will be superb. London teems with foreigners. There are full 200 (*on dit*) of distinction, attached to the different embassies, and lodged in every possible hotel from Mivart to Sablonière. Lord F. Egerton told me this morning that he had been paying a visit to a brace of Italian princes in the last-named crib on a third floor, and never in the dirtiest locanda of the Levant, Smyrna, or Alexandria, had he visited a more filthy and offensive scene; but they seemed to enjoy it, and are visible every night, with their brilliant uniforms and sparkling stars, as if their carriage at break of dawn were not changed into a pumpkin.

Your geranium gave me a flower to-day, and will give me a couple more. I have bought also a promising plant myself.

My love to all.

D.

[1] Afterwards Lady Anna Gore-Langton, mother of the 4th Earl Temple of Stowe.

[*Undated.*]

We had a very agreeable party at D'Orsay's yesterday. Zichy, who has cut out even Esterhazy, having two jackets, one of diamonds more brilliant than E.'s, and another which he wore at the Drawing-room yesterday of turquoises. This makes the greatest sensation of the two. He speaks English perfectly; is a great traveller, been to Nubia, all over Asia, and to Canada and the United States. Then there was the Duke of Ossuna, a young man, but a grandee of the highest grade. He is neither Carlist nor Christino, and does not mean to return to Spain until they have settled everything. Therefore they have confiscated his estates, but he has a large property in Italy, and also Belgium. He is a great dandy and looks like Philip II., but though the only living descendant of the Borgias, he has the reputation of being very amiable. When he was last at Paris he attended a representation of Victor Hugo's *Lucrezia Borgia*. She says in one of the scenes, 'Great crimes are in our blood.' All his friends looked at him with an expression of fear; 'but the blood has degenerated,' he said, 'for I have committed only weaknesses.' Then there was the real Prince Poniatowsky, also young and with a most brilliant star. Then came Kissiloffs and Strogonoffs, 'and other offs and ons,' and De Belancour, a very agreeable person. Lyndhurst, Gardner, Bulwer, and myself completed the party.

I must give up going to the coronation, as we go in state, and all the M.P.s *must* be in court dresses or uniforms. As I have withstood making a costume of this kind for other purposes, I will not make one now, and console myself by the conviction that to get up very early (eight o'clock), to sit dressed like a flunky in the Abbey for seven or eight hours, and to listen to a sermon by the Bishop of London, can be no great enjoyment.

Lyndhurst made a very successful speech the other night on Spain, and foreign politics are coming into fashion.

D.

June 29.

I went to the coronation after all. I did not get a dress till 2.30 on the morning of the ceremony, but it fitted me very well. It turned out that I had a very fine leg, which I never knew before! The pageant within the Abbey was without exception the most splendid, various, and interesting affair at which I ever was present. To describe is of course useless. I had one of the best seats in the Abbey, indeed our House had the best of everything. I am very glad indeed that Ralph persuaded me to go, for it far exceeded my expecta-

tions. The Queen looked very well, and performed her part with great grace and completeness, which cannot in general be said of the other performers; they were always in doubt as to what came next, and you saw the want of rehearsal. The Duke was loudly cheered when he made his homage. Melbourne looked very awkward and uncouth, with his coronet cocked over his nose, his robes under his feet, and holding the great sword of state like a butcher. . . . The Duchess of Sutherland[1] walked, or rather stalked, up the Abbey like Juno; she was full of her situation. Lady Jersey[2] and Lady Londonderry blazed among the peeresses.[3]

[*July* 2.]

The beautiful lady [mentioned in a newspaper] was my friend the Countess Sablonouska, the beauty of the season. She did not sit with the foreign Ambassadors, but was led into the Abbey by a Russian nobleman to her seat among the fairest of the visitors opposite.

The Queen behaved with great grace and feeling about Lord Rolle: nothing could be more effective. She seemed for an instant to pause whether etiquette would allow her to rise from her throne, and then did so and held out her hand with infinite dignity and yet delicate sentiment.

Lyndhurst, as I think I told you, paid his homage with singular dignity, but committed the *faux pas* of not backing from the presence. Fanny [Lady Londonderry] looked an Empress. Her fête is put off on account of the Queen's ball to-night.

Exmouth paid his homage very well, but complained terribly of the weight of his robes and coronet, which were made for his grandfather at George IV.'s Coronation, and the old lord was a very tall, stout, burly man. I have got a gold medal given me as M.P., but I have presented it to Mrs. Wyndham.

O'Connell was in a Court dress and looked very well, and was deeply interested in everything, but was hooted greatly, *on dit*, by the mob. Hume, who would not put on Court attire, was prevented from sitting in our gallery, but was in the Abbey. I think I told you of Fector's[4] gorgeous suit; it has been noticed in the papers. When we two got into his chariot, that cantankerous Norreys halloed out, '*Make room for the Maidstone Sheriffs!*' Very good, I think, though rather annoying.

[1] The Mistress of the Robes.

[2] Sarah, eldest daughter of the 10th Earl of Westmorland by his wife the heiress of Robert Child the banker.

[3] *Letters*, pp. 138-140.

[4] The new member for Maidstone.

Bulwer I did not see ; he certainly was not in the House. . . .

The procession was, I think, rather a failure : heavy, want of variety, and not enough music or troops. There are so few troops in the country, that they cannot get up a review in Hyde Park for Soult, and keep on the fair, they are so ashamed.

I saw Lord Ward after the ceremony, in a retiring room, drinking champagne out of a pewter pot, his coronet cocked aside, his robes disordered, and his arms akimbo, the very picture of Rochester.

Wednesday [*July* 4].

DEAREST SA,

. . . There was a very brilliant ball at the Salisburys' last night, all the remarkables and illustrious in whom London now abounds being there. I stayed till 2, but there were then no signs of separation, and the supper-room was just open. By-the-bye, the Countess Zavodouska, for I believe that is her name, appears quite the reigning beauty of the season, and moves surrounded by a crowd of glittering admirers. She did me the honour of remembering me, though not in Turkish costume, and told me she had read *Vivian Grey*.

Exmouth came up to Theodore Hook, full of indignation at the 31 Baronets in the night's Gazette. 'Thirty-one Baronets ! Here's a pretty game of the Whigs !' says he. 'They'll make a bloody hand of it, at any rate,' said Theodore.

The same wit and worthy was abusing the foreigners, and particularly Prince Poniatowsky, who, *on dit*, is anxious to turn the rich and pretty Mrs. Craven into a Princess. 'I suppose he can't show his face in his own land, the Radical scamp,' said T. H. Whereupon he was informed the Prince was no Rad, and had refused the crown of Poland. '*Peut-être*,' replied Theodore. 'He may have refused a crown, but he looks very much now as if he would accept half a crown.'

The foreigners thought that Lord Rolle's tumble was a tenure by which he held his barony.

I hope you are all well, and I send you my love.

D.

Tuesday [*July* 11].

MY DEAREST,

Yesterday, the day being perfect, there was a splendid review in Hyde Park. I saw it admirably from Mrs. Wyndham's.[1] The Delawarrs, Rolles, Lawrence Peels, and Dawsons were there, but no one was allowed to be on the drawing-room floor, lest there should be an appearance of a party, except old Lord Rolle and myself to be his companion. Lord R. sat

[1] Her house was No. 1, Grosvenor Gate, now 29, Park Lane.

in the balcony with a footman each side of him, as is his custom. The Londonderrys after the review gave the most magnificent banquet at Holdernesse House conceivable. Nothing could be more *recherché*. There were only 150 asked, and all sat down. Fanny was faithful, and asked me, and I figure in the *Morning Post* accordingly. It was the finest thing of the season. Londonderry's regiment being reviewed, we had the band of the 10th playing on the staircase: the whole of the said staircase (a double one) being crowded with the most splendid orange-trees and Cape jessamines; the Duke of Nemours, Soult, all the 'illustrious strangers,' the Duke and the very flower of fashion being assembled. The banquet was in the gallery of sculpture; it was so magnificent that everybody lost their presence of mind. Sir James Graham said to me that he had never in his life seen anything so gorgeous. 'This is the *grand seigneur* indeed,' he added. I think it was the kindest thing possible of Fanny asking me, as it was not to be expected in any way. The splendor of the uniforms was remarkable.

Love,
D.[1]

A fortnight later we find him on the way to his constituents at Maidstone.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

ROCHESTER,
July 26.

Pressed as I am for time, wet, which is at least a novelty, hungry with no chance of my appetite being gratified, and about to make a speech of which I have not an idea ready, I send you this scrawl from a wretched pot-house, to tell you that you have not been the whole day a moment absent from my thoughts.

MAIDSTONE,
July 27.

I arrived here just a quarter of an hour before the meeting. Under the inspiration of a glass of brandy and water at Rochester, and the racket of the post-chaise, I contrived to collect some nonsense which turned into a capital speech; but what I shall say at the dinner to-day I can't devise, having exhausted every possible topic of congratulation to our friends and of triumph over our foes. Let me avail myself of this moment, which I seize in a room full of bustle and chatter, to tell you how much I love you.

[1] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*July* 29.]

On Friday the Randalls gave a grand breakfast to the principal members of the party, which was well done, and 'equal to anything of the kind,' as they say. But only conceive a grand *déjeuner* scarcely over at 3.30, and a grand dinner at 5.30! I took a walk into the country, as it was in vain to pay visits. We dined 107, more than the room could hold. I had to make another speech; never began a sentence with the slightest idea of its termination; really in a funk, but never made a more successful one. But to speak plainly, the two speeches cost me great efforts at the moment. I never racked my brain so much, but it answered to the helm.

[*August.*]

The ball at Holdernesse House was a very brilliant affair. I was introduced to Lord Brougham by Lady William Powlett, and Sir Lytton[1] also made his appearance. I spoke the other night after O'Connell, and with spirit and success. I thought it as well that my voice should be heard at the end of the session, and especially on an Irish subject. There were only eight Tories in the House, the subject having been brought on unexpectedly and without notice, and Brougham speaking in the Lords, which takes men away. The Whig benches were tolerably full, as they had made a whip.[2]

This speech was a vigorous indictment of the Irish policy of the Government on the occasion of their abandoning an Irish Corporations Bill which the Lords had drastically amended. It was characteristic of Disraeli that, having begun the session with a failure in speaking on an Irish subject immediately after O'Connell, he should have determined to bring it to a close by making a successful effort in a precisely similar situation.

[1] Bulwer, who had just been made a baronet.
[2] *Letters*, pp. 142, 143.

CHAPTER II.

MARRIAGE.

1838–1839.

Disraeli's thoughts were now again turned towards matrimony, and, as the reader has no doubt guessed, he was by this time fully satisfied that he had found the lady for his choice. The accident of his election for Maidstone had given to the 'pretty little woman,' the 'flirt,' and the 'rattle,' whose volubility had astonished him when he met her first at Bulwer's in 1832, a part among the principal actors in the drama of his life. Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, before marriage Mary Anne Evans, was born in 1792, the daughter of John Evans, a Lieutenant in the navy. Her father died on active service while she was still an infant, leaving his widow with two children in something less than affluence—a circumstance which has given rise to purely fanciful stories of a very humble origin for the future Lady Beaconsfield. In those days the navy, which was just about to enter on the period of its greatest achievements, offered a more open road to merit than perhaps any other English institution; and Evans, joining as a lad, had had to make his way from the bottom of the service before winning his commission. But he came of a respectable farming stock in Devon,[1] and his wife, a Viney, belonged to a family of

[1] His parents lived at Brampford Speke, a village a few miles from Exeter; but Lady Beaconsfield's birthplace was Exeter itself, where in the register of baptisms for the parish of St. Sidwell there is the entry, under date Nov. 14, 1792: 'Marianne, daughter of John and Eleanor Evans.'

good position and connexion in the West of England. Beautiful though poorly dowered, their daughter at twenty-three had won the hand of Wyndham Lewis, a Glamorganshire man of birth and fortune, who was soon to be member for Cardiff, and who at a later date became one of the two members for Maidstone.[1] The election of 1837 gave the other seat to Disraeli, and Mrs. Lewis, as we have seen,[2] at the very beginning of the closer acquaintance which followed this event, divined the genius of her husband's colleague, made him her 'Parliamentary *protégé*,' and prophesied his coming greatness; while Disraeli in his turn rewarded her with a friendship that was cordial from the first, and gradually became tinged with a sort of mock devotion. The death of Wyndham Lewis had of course changed their relations, and made it necessary that they should be either more or less to each other in future. Mrs. Lewis was now a widow, and though she was already forty-five, twelve years older than Disraeli, she was still by all accounts wonderfully youthful for her years; and, with this advantage in her favour, there is no reason to believe that she varied in her practice from the kindly race of women, or allowed her suitor to suspect the real disparity in their ages. She had been left with a house[3] in London and a good income[4] for life, and the world has always assumed that in these accessories is to be sought the explanation of that which followed. But though Disraeli himself confessed, as we shall see at a later stage, that when he first made his advances he was prompted thereto by no romantic feelings, we shall find, nevertheless, good reasons for thinking that the judgment of the world may stand in need of revision.

[1] See NOTE on p. 472.
[2] Page 380.
[3] No. 1, Grosvenor Gate, now 29, Park Lane.
[4] At first, apparently, about £4,000 a year, and rather more later.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

Aug. 20, 1838.

The sun shines, and Bradenham looks beautiful; most green and fresh, and to-day even bright. But you are not here. Come, and prithee quickly; for though these people are kind and good, and as amusing as any other honest folk in the shires, their talk is insipid after all that bright play of fancy and affection which welcomes me daily with such vivacious sweetness.

Oct. 7.

I have not recovered from the stupefaction of yesterday. [when Mrs. Lewis had left after a long visit to Bradenham]. I have scarcely left my room, scarcely spoken to anyone. All is dull, silent, spiritless; the charm is broken, the magic is fled!

All this may be inevitable, and I will believe it all may end well. But what future joy and prosperity, what fortune, even what fame, can compensate for this anguish?

Oct. 9.

I have made up my mind to leave this place to-morrow, in order that I may have the delight of a day or two with your own sweet self. . . . I have not been out of the house since you left it, until this afternoon, having been in a state of apathy, a dull trance. This morning I rose pretty cheerful, was inspired by your letter, worked very well at the tragedy, recasting the great scene, greatly improving it, and writing a magnificent soliloquy. When the first act is complete you shall have it.

Love had driven him to poetry, as had happened once before. On the earlier occasion, to use a phrase[1] of his own, he had made an attempt 'to strike the long-mute strings of the epick lyre,' and with characteristic courage he now embarked on a still more risky venture—the composition of a great tragedy. Under the leadership of Macready there had been in recent years a marked revival of interest in serious drama. Talfourd's *Ion* had been produced in 1836, and had been followed at no long interval by Bulwer's *Lady of Lyons*. Disraeli was determined not to be behindhand, and set to work on *Alarcos*.

[1] In a letter to Lord Mahon.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[LONDON, *Oct.* 11.]

DEAREST,

. . . I understand that the trousseau of Julia Macdonald surpassed in fancy and splendor all late exhibitions, which, considering that her family collectively have not a sou, was surprising. She was married in a dress of white velvet with three flounces of point lace, and departed in a white silk costume with a trimming of birds of paradise feathers. But the most wonderful thing was D'Orsay's present to the bridegroom —a white silk waistcoat, *brodé* in gold, from Paris; the design by the Count, who was at the wedding. This surpassed anything ever seen. I shall call on him to-morrow. . . .

Sir Robert Peel very well and very courteous indeed. I chatted this morning an hour with Lyndhurst, who looks younger and brisker than ever—much. I never saw him so well. . . . Love.

D.[1]

[LONDON, *Oct.* 13.]

DEAREST,

I called on D'Orsay yesterday, and found him very flourishing. He asked me to dine with him to-day to celebrate his birthday, but I was obliged, though with great regret, to decline. It is all lies about Macready, who goes on with the Theatre. . . .[2]

The Gibsons, George Wombwell, and Stapleton dined at Grosvenor Gate yesterday. There has been a row at Crockford's, and Ude dismissed. He told the committee he was worth £4,000 a year. Their new man is quite a failure, so I think the great artist may yet return from Elba. He told Wombwell that, in spite of his £4,000 a year, he was miserable in retirement; that he sat all day with his hands before him *doing nothing*. Wombwell suggested the exercise of his art for the gratification of his own appetite. 'Bah!' he said, 'I have not been into my kitchen once: I hate the sight of my kitchen. I dine on roast mutton dressed by a cookmaid.' He shed tears, and said that he had only been twice in St. James's Street since his retirement, which was in September, and that he made it a rule never to walk on the same side as the Clubhouse. 'Ah, I love that Club, though they are *ingrats*. Do not be offended, Mr. W., if I do not take my hat off to you when we meet: but I have made a vow that I will

[1] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.

[2] Covent Garden, where he was then playing *The Lady of Lyons*.

never take my hat off to a member of the Committee.' 'I shall always take my hat off to you, Mr. Ude.'

Love,
D.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

BRADENHAM,
Oct. 14.

This morning all the dahlias have disappeared, and the rigor of the night has been fatal to even sweeter things than they; among them I grieve to say our favorite heliotrope. Tita is very blank about the vanishing of his favorites. I cannot say that I am happy, because that would not be true, but I exert myself to bear up against my sorrowful lot. My present feelings convince me of what I have ever believed, that there is no hell on earth like separated love.

Oct. 18.

I wrote your name in large characters and placed it before me. I remembered your parting injunctions. I poured all my spirit into my tragedy. The effort was great and painful, but as my brain warmed and my spirit rose, it was successful. I wrote all yesterday without ceasing. I did not go down to dinner, and never left my room till the evening. My imagination solaced me, for I poured into the fictitious scene my actual sensations, and the pages teem with passages which you will not read without emotion, for they came from my heart and they commemorate my love, my doubt, my misery. Your name was before me, the name of her who is my inspiration, my hope, perhaps my despair. . . .

I believe in [your promised visit] as men believe in the millennium. My faith is firm, but I cannot help sometimes reminding myself that my creed is in the impossible.

Oct. 19.

In health I am well; which I ascribe to my ascetic diet, and the magic of cayenne, which has as completely removed all my nervous sensations of discomfort as Guinness did last year, so you have saved me twice. I rise early, and have worked yesterday and to-day from 9 to 2, breakfasting at 11. Beyond 2 I cannot write, and pass the day as well as I can; reading a play, sauntering when it is genial as to-day, which was even balmy, and ever thinking of my sweet love. My progress has been great and brilliant; you know I am not easily satisfied with my efforts, and not in the habit of speaking of my writings with much complacency. You may therefore credit there is some foundation when I tell you, that I think my present work will far exceed your expectations,

and realise even my hopes. . . . I envy the gentlemen about you, but I am not jealous. When the eagle leaves you the vultures return. There! that is sublime.

There is hardly a flower to be found, but I have sent you a few sweet-peas.

Oct. 23.

I write in good health and in good spirits. I prosper in my work. I am satisfied with what I have done. I look upon my creation and see that it is good. Health, my clear brain, and your fond love;—and I feel that I can conquer the world.

Oct. 25.

Your letter recalls to me most fully, vividly, and painfully, the wretchedness of my situation, separated from my love, and what must be the inevitable result of our present life—fading emotion and final estrangement. I can write at no length to-day. The immortal gods, wherever and whatever they be, grant that the future may be different to what my prophetic soul paints it!

Oct. 29.

. . . I cannot reconcile Love and separation. My ideas of Love are the perpetual enjoyment of the society of the sweet being to whom I am devoted, the sharing of every thought and even every fancy, of every charm and every care. Perhaps I sigh for a state which never can be mine, which never existed. But there is nothing in my own heart that convinces me it is impossible, and if it be an illusion it is an illusion worthy of the gods. I wish to be with you, to live with you, never to be away from you—I care not where, in heaven or on earth, or in the waters under the earth. . . .

I would have written on Friday, but was really too unhappy. So I sauntered about thinking of you, and gleaned, for we can no longer gather, flowers which I sent to you, and which I amused myself by dexterously packing in franks; for, to tell the truth, I spoiled more covers than one before I could stow them, which with the united aid of scissors and patience I at last contrived to succeed in. . . .

I thank you much for your political news, which is of great use to me, as I can make up a letter for Chandos, who complains of my no longer writing to him, and all that, but, alas! I have nothing to say, nor, to tell the truth, do I care as of yore about politics. For love swalloweth up all things. . . .

I have lost all heart for my tragedy. I always aim in all I do at the highest. I see no use in writing tragedies unless they be as fine as Shakespeare's; and as that is impossible to

attain, what am I to do ? In Fame as well as Love, my motto is 'All or Nothing,' because I prefer happy obscurity to mediocre reputation.

Oct. 30.

The storm here was a hurricane. It broke our drawing-room windows, peeled the lead off our roof, and tore up about thirty trees, some valuable—ten young oaks in the coppice, the only large elm we had, and the large laburnum at the end of the terrace. As for our orchards, there are cherry and apple trees in all directions, as if the devil had been riding about on a broomstick. . . .

I have heard nothing from Maidstone, and probably shall not. They seem to wish to saddle the money that is minus on me, which of course is too ridiculous, so we shall quarrel. We may as well do it at once, as they will doubtless throw me over eventually.

Meanwhile he had contrived to provoke a quarrel with the lawyers, antagonists more redoubtable than even O'Connell, and won by his bearing not a little credit, though in a sense he had to accept defeat and humiliation. The by-election at Maidstone caused by the death of Wyndham Lewis had been followed by a petition against the successful Conservative candidate; and in opening the case for the petitioners, Charles Austin,[1] their counsel, had made certain statements which seemed to amount to a charge that Disraeli at the general election had promised bribes to electors, and afterwards failed to pay them. The proceedings in the petition came to a premature end through the respondent's resignation,[2] and, finding himself thus deprived of the opportunity of clearing himself before the committee of inquiry, Disraeli with characteristic impulsiveness sent a letter[3] to the newspapers in which he repelled the charge with all his customary emphasis, and, not content with this, proceeded, equally in his customary manner, to make a vigorous counter-attack :

In opening the case of the petitioners against the return of Mr. Fector for Maidstone on Friday last, Mr. Austin stated

[1] Macaulay's brilliant contemporary at Cambridge, and a younger brother of John Austin, the jurist.

[2] He was at once re-elected.

[3] Dated June 5, 1838.

that 'Mr. Disraeli, at the general election, had entered into engagements with the electors of Maidstone, and made pecuniary promises to them, which he had left unfulfilled.'

I should have instantly noticed this assertion of the learned gentleman had not a friend, to whose opinion I was bound to defer, assured me that Mr. Austin, by the custom of his profession, was authorised to make any statement from his brief which he was prepared to substantiate, or to attempt to sub stantiate.

The inquiry into the last Maidstone election has now terminated, and I take the earliest opportunity of declaring, and in a manner the most unqualified and unequivocal, that the statement of the learned gentleman is utterly false. There is not the slightest shadow of a foundation for it. I myself never, either directly or indirectly, entered into any pecuniary engagements with, or made any pecuniary promises to, the electors of Maidstone, and therefore I cannot have broken any or left any unfulfilled. The whole expenses of the contest in question were defrayed by my lamented colleague, and I discharged to him my moiety of those expenses, as is well known to those who are entitled to any knowledge on the subject.

I am informed that it is quite useless, and even unreasonable, in me to expect from Mr. Austin any satisfaction for those impertinent calumnies, because Mr. Austin is a member of an honourable profession, the first principle of whose practice appears to be that they may say anything provided they be paid for it. The privilege of circulating falsehoods with impunity is delicately described as doing your duty towards your client, which appears to be a very different process to doing your duty towards your neighbour. This may be the usage of Mr. Austin's profession, and it may be the custom to society to submit to its practice ; but, for my part, it appears to me to be nothing better than a disgusting and intolerable tyranny, and I, for one, shall not bow to it in silence.

I therefore repeat that the statement of Mr. Austin was false, and, inasmuch as he never attempted to substantiate it, I conclude that it was, on his side, but the blustering artifice of a rhetorical hireling, availing himself of the vile licence of a loose-tongued lawyer, not only to make a statement which was false, but to make it with a consciousness of its falsehood.

His aim, it would appear, was to provoke a challenge. 'Anything,' he wrote to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, 'is better than submitting to an insult. I am perfectly cool and perfectly prepared for him. But I fear there is no

chivalry nowadays, and I dare say the fellow will not do what he ought.' His anticipations were realised, as the next letter shows :

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

Mr. Austin does not fight, but applies to the Court of Queen's Bench. There is a great flutter among the lawyers, and there was a meeting, and the Attorney-General in the chair. I would have preferred a more expeditious and cheaper process of settling the business ; but at any rate it may save you some suffering, and this shall be my consolation. . . .

All my friends, and more than my friends, say that the letter was the best ever written, and that Austin is a poltroon to take the step he has adopted.

On the application of the Attorney-General, Lord Denman granted a rule nisi for a criminal information. Austin declared in his affidavit that his charges had been directed, not against Disraeli personally, but against the political party which had supported him, and when the matter came before the court Disraeli's counsel expressed his client's regret that he should have taken a step which would have been unnecessary if he had known the truth of the matter. The court, however, held that this apology was insufficient, and the rule was made absolute. Judgment on the criminal information was allowed to go by default, but when Disraeli appeared to receive sentence he addressed the court in a long speech in mitigation of punishment which is not the least famous or interesting of his efforts :

I will for a short time avail myself of the merciful permission of the Bench to offer some observations which, I think, may induce it to visit this misdemeanour in a spirit of leniency. I stand before the court confessedly guilty, not from any dislike to enter into an investigation of the circumstances which have induced me to commit this trespass, but because I have been advised that, whatever the moral effect might be, the legal effect could be but one—namely, a conviction. . . . It would be affectation in me to pretend that the (I will say, unfortunate) letter which has originated these proceedings was written for the atmosphere of Westminster Hall. . . I

confess my feelings at that moment were considerably excited. I had lived to learn by experience that calumny once circulated is more or less for ever current. . . . I found it necessary to take a step which should cope with the calumny, and which should be decisive. Two courses alone were open to me. I might have gone down to my seat in the House of Commons, and might have treated it as a breach of privilege. I might have made the observations I afterwards wrote, and, as your lordships know, I might have done so there with impunity; but I had a wish not to shield myself under my privilege. Late at night I wrote this unfortunate letter, and sent it instantly to all the newspapers. . . . I did not consider that the system of bribery spoken of by Mr. Austin prevailed in any borough—certainly it did not in Maidstone. . . . But . . . admitting there was such a system . . . I must say the introduction of my name was most grievous and most unwarranted. . . .

I regret what I have done. I not only feel regret, but great mortification, for what I have done. I am sorry I should have injured the feelings of any man who had not attempted to injure me. I am sorry that through misconception I should have said anything that could for a moment have annoyed the mind of a gentleman of the highest honor and integrity. I should myself be satisfied with that expression of deep regret and mortification. But, my lords, from the manner in which this declaration is couched, from several expressions that have fallen at various times during these proceedings, from the animus which has characterised them within and without these walls, I cannot help fearing that I am brought here by one of those fictions of law of which I have read, and it is not so much for an offence against the law as an offence against lawyers that I am now awaiting judgment. . . . My lords, I am not desirous of vindicating the expressions used in that letter in reference to the profession, any more than the expressions used in reference to the individual. . . . I cannot forget that from the Bar of England have sprung many of our most illustrious statesmen, past and present; . . . but I have ever believed, I believe at this moment—I see no libel in the expression of that belief, no want of taste, under the circumstances of the case, in expressing it even here—that there is in the principles on which the practice of that Bar is based a taint of arrogance; I will not say audacity, but of that reckless spirit which is the necessary consequence of the possession and the exercise of irresponsible power. . . .

I confess that I myself have imbibed an opinion that it is the duty of a counsel to his client to assist him by all possible means, just or unjust, and even to commit, if necessary, a

crime for his assistance or extrication. My lords, this may be an outrageous opinion; but, my lords, it is not my own. Allow me to read a description of the duty of a counsel to a client, and by a great authority: 'An advocate, by the sacred duty which he owes his client, knows in the discharge of that office but one person in the world—that client and none other. To save that client by all expedient means, to protect that client at all hazards and costs to all others, and among others to himself, is the highest and most unquestioned of his duties; and he must not regard the alarm, the suffering, the torment, the destruction, which he may bring upon any other. Nay, separating even the duties of a patriot from those of an advocate, and casting them, if need be, to the wind, he must go on, reckless of the consequences, if his fate it should unhappily be, to involve his country in confusion for his client's protection.' Here, my lords, is a sketch, and by a great master; here, my lords, is the *rationale* of the duties of an advocate, and drawn up by a Lord Chancellor[1]! . . .

My lords, I have done. I leave my case with confidence to your merciful consideration, briefly recapitulating the points on which I have attempted to place myself fairly before the Bench and the public. As to my offence against the law, I throw myself on your lordships' mercy; as to my offence against the individual, I have made him that reparation which a gentleman should, under the circumstances, cheerfully offer, and with which a gentleman should, in my opinion, be cheerfully content. I make this, my lords, not to avoid the consequences of my conduct, for, right or wrong, good or bad, these consequences I am ever ready to encounter; but because I am anxious to soothe the feelings which I have unjustly injured, and evince my respect to the suggestions of the Bench. But as to my offence against the Bar, I do with the utmost confidence appeal to your lordships, however you may disapprove of my opinions, however objectionable, however offensive, even however odious, they may be to you, that you will not permit me to be arraigned for one offence and punished for another. In a word, my lords, it is to the Bench I look with confidence to shield me from the vengeance of an irritated and powerful profession.[2]

Disraeli had submitted, but his submission was far from abject. In presence of the majesty of the law he had contrived, in fact, to repeat, though in more decorous language, the substance of the offending letter. The

[1] Brougham, in his speech in defence of Queen Caroline.
[2] From *The Times* of Nov. 23, 1838.

Attorney-General, however, accepted the rather dubious apology as 'ample,' and the court decided that it could with propriety pass over the offence unpunished. Denman was already involved in the dispute with the House of Commons which arose out of the case of Stockdale, the printer, and he and the other lawyers may have thought that it was more prudent not to provoke a second. They can hardly have believed that the honours really rested with them, and they were probably well aware that the sympathies of the lay world were wholly with their antagonist.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

LONDON,
Nov. 23.

I saw Lord Chandos to-day, passing through town to Avington, the Duke's seat in Hants. I have arranged to be with him at Xmas, which will exactly suit your plans. He was most kind, as he ever is, and warm about the speech and the 'pluck' (his own word) of the whole affair. He thinks to face lawyers is the boldest of achievements. But the most agreeable thing that happened to me was Lord Abinger[1] coming up, with whom I had a long conversation. His praise was great but discriminating. The quotation from Brougham he thought most apposite and admirable; and he talked to me a great deal of the principles, so different from those then expressed, on which he always conducted his professional pursuits.

BRADENHAM,
Nov. 26.

I came down by a new engine called the North Star (on the Western Railroad), of enormous and unprecedented power. We were only 42 minutes reaching Maidenhead, which is at the rate of 36 miles an hour. It is the only satisfactory piece of railroad travelling I ever performed. By this means I got home by dinner-time, the bell sounding as I just touched the green.

I found them all very well, and my father very much delighted about the speech, which he thinks the best thing that has happened to me for a long time. I am glad to say the *Examiner* and *Spectator*, though Whig and Radical papers, gave the greatest encomiums for 'spirit and feeling,' especially the *Spectator*, which praised the whole affair very much. . . .

[1] The Lord Chief Baron.

I have not been out since my return, since I have not been sorry to have a little lazy quiet to calm my mind and collect my ideas. I pulled my papers out this morning, and warmed up a little, and hope that to-morrow will find me at my accustomed task!

Nov. 29.

I can tell you nothing, but that I love you, and, indeed, am so ill and stupid that I should not be surprised if you doubted it from this very weak expression. I have received a good many letters and papers from town about the speech, but that is now a stale affair. You will be glad to hear that all lawyers of all parties agree in its eulogium, and especially Follett,[1] who said at the Carlton more than I care to repeat. But I know you like to hear of these things.

Dec. 2.

I have been in bed almost ever since I last wrote to you, but I trust I have now thrown off this attack [of influenza]. You know what a vile lowering disorder it is. . . . I try to think of my tragedy; but I am convinced that to write a great tragedy is the *chef-d'œuvre* of literary skill; and that with the finest poetic genius, and even dramatic nature, one may fail. Of all compositions, it requires the utmost skill and practice, and profound conception. If mine ever appear, it shall be a masterpiece; but that appearance is very doubtful. I have burnt more than I have written—that's a good sign at least.

Wednesday, Dec. 5.

I have been obliged to betake myself to my bed again. Although yesterday nearly bent double with the acuteness of this strange complaint which has now attacked me every year, more or less, since my return to England, I still hope to meet you on Friday.

Dec. 20.

Not five minutes after I left your dear presence, I met rather an adventure. A cortège of dandies and grooms riding up the lane to Bradenham, and, lo! Count D'Orsay, Lord Albert Conyngham and Forester, about to call on me with an invitation from Lord Carrington to dine at Wycombe Abbey, where they were staying. They were resolved to pay their visit, so I drove on, begged the family to receive them as I could not, for the Aylesbury people were just entering the gates as I got on the green. So I could not join my guests for an hour, when I found them still here and well amused.

[1] Peel's Solicitor-General in 1834-35, and afterwards Attorney-General. He had appeared with the Attorney-General Campbell, in the proceedings against Disraeli.

I had refused the invitation on the road, as I have not entered Wycombe Abbey for six years, and the present Lord Carrington, then Robert Smith, was my opponent on the hustings; but I found Forester,[1] who is Lord Carrington's brother-in-law, had instructions to get me at all hazards; so I was at length forced to consent to dine there to-day. Thus in a few hours has evaporated the feud of long years!

Dec. 22.

We had a most agreeable meeting at Lord Carrington's. I found there Lady Chesterfield, George and Mrs. Anson, the Albert Conynghams, Forester, the Crewes and D'Orsay; all staying at the Abbey except myself. Our party was rather noisy, but very gay. I did not get home until past midnight, or rather near the chimes of one, and then with great difficulty, as I could scarcely resist their entreaties that I should remain and send for my toilette in the morning. At last I escaped, having made the greatest friends with all of them, and with half a promise, that when D'Orsay returns, who left on the next day, I would come and remain at the Abbey for two or three days.

I did not make them acquainted here with your passage through Wycombe as dexterously as you would have done yourself in my situation, not producing that dramatic suspense for which you are eminent; but I did contrive at least that they should not obtain the information from any other person.

Dec. 23.

I shall not allow any feeling of false pride to prevent me from expressing my deep mortification at your strange and prolonged silence. I am not exacting in any of these lesser offices of the heart, because I prefer that at all times they should flow from the affections, and not be impelled by anything approaching to a sense of duty. . . . I also know that one of the arts of life is never to turn a pleasure into a bore, which correspondence immediately becomes as soon as it is considered a formal affair. . . . You told me once you required a year to study a character; our year has nearly elapsed, and your meditations may have dissatisfied you with mine. What my feelings may be if I find that I am doomed ever to waste my affections, and that a blight is ever to fall on a heart which nature intended to be the shrine of sensibility, it matters not. At present I will believe that my fate is indissolubly bound up with yours, until your voice or your conduct assures me that all this time I have laboured under a miserable delusion.

[1] John George, 2nd Lord Forester, 1801-1874.

Dec. 26.

It is my joy and even my pride that we do not have many lovers' quarrels ; truly they are not lovable things, and should only be adopted by those whose flagging affections require stimulus. Mine never do. Alas ! it is too much love that makes me querulous, the suspense of affection and the pangs of separation. . . . I do not intend to go again to the Abbey —at least not to stay. I am gratified that the old feud has ceased, but I don't think that such estrangements should be succeeded by rapid intimacies. It is better to be sought than to weary. D'Orsay comes here to-morrow night, shoots on Friday, and is off on Saturday morning.

Saturday, Dec. 29.

I am entirely overwhelmed. Indeed, it has been one of the most miserable weeks that I have ever passed ; and my constitution, tried by the excitement and agitation of the last six months, has quite given way. I have written to put off all my engagements, and am lying on my sofa, so utterly wretched that I cannot convey to you even a faint idea of my prostration. And it is doubly painful, for I cannot bear to complain, as I should have the house full of doctors, and, alas ! they cannot minister to a mind diseased.

I have written to Lord Chandos to excuse my attendance at the Bucks dinner and my visit to Stowe. Lord Carrington came here on Thursday to ask D'Orsay, then expected, and myself to come to him on Monday ; but I have declined, nor shall I attend the Quarter Sessions. . . . D'Orsay arrived on Thursday morning to breakfast. The day was fortunately very fine, and he was amused out of doors with his gun ; he left us this afternoon. It was useless for me to attempt to conceal my feelings, and therefore I pleaded illness, which I detest doing. I never saw him arrive with so much reluctance or depart with so much satisfaction, and yet he is really, as you well and truly say, a *friend*, and the best and kindest of men. But what are friends, and what is all the goodness and kindness in the world, if there is a cloud between you and the being you adore ? . . . I am sure you never wish to show your power over me, because I never wish to conceal it, and, besides, you are above all that : but, indeed, this last week is something too terrible to think of.

Dec. 30.

I am mad with love. My passion is frenzy. The prospect of our immediate meeting overwhelms and entrances me. I pass my nights and days in scenes of strange and fascinating rapture. . . . Lose not a moment unnecessarily in coming. I cannot wait. . . . I can scarcely believe in the joy of our

immediate meeting. Will the time ever pass away until that rapturous moment ?

Dec. 31.

The happiest of New Years ; and, indeed, I hope and believe it will be the happiest of our lives.

Jan. 22, 1839.

'Tis twilight after a lovely day, but I have no dark thoughts. All my motions are soft and glowing as the sky. Sweetest and dearest of women, our united loves shall flow like two rivers ; as gentle and as clear. . . . Bless you and bless and bless you.

Jan. 23.

I love you, if possible, each day more truly and more tenderly. All my hopes of happiness in life are centred in your sweet affections, and I wish only to be the solace and glory of your life.

Disraeli's conquest was, perhaps, not so easy as his letters, taken by themselves, might lead us to believe. In love, as in most things, beneath the placid surface he was eager and impulsive. She was by nature colder, and she had also reached the age when passion waits upon the judgment. She was resolute, it would appear, that there should be no open engagement till the conventional year had elapsed from her first husband's death, and she was, perhaps, not unmindful of those elusive feminine arts by which the impetuous lover is at once baffled and fascinated. Matters came to a crisis about the time we have now reached, and there is a strange letter from Disraeli, found after Lady Beaconsfield's death carefully disposed among her papers, which tells sufficiently the story of their first and last serious quarrel.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

PARK STREET,
Thursday night, Feb. 7, 1839.

I would have endeavoured to have spoken to you of that which it was necessary you should know, and I wished to have spoken with the calmness which was natural to one humiliated and distressed. I succeeded so far as . . . to be desired to quit your house for ever. I have recourse therefore to this miserable method of communicating with you ; none can be more

imperfect, but I write as if it were the night before my execution. . . .

I avow, when I first made my advances to you, I was influenced by no romantic feelings. My father had long wished me to marry; my settling in life was the implied, though not stipulated, condition of a disposition of his property, which would have been convenient to me. I myself, about to commence a practical career, wished for the solace of a home, and shrunk from all the torturing passions of intrigue. I was not blind to worldly advantages in such an alliance, but I had already proved that my heart was not to be purchased. I found you in sorrow, and that heart was touched. I found you, as I thought, amiable, tender, and yet acute and gifted with no ordinary mind,—one whom I could look upon with pride as the partner of my life, who could sympathise with all my projects and feelings, console me in the moments of depression, share my hour of triumph, and work with me for our honor and our happiness.

Now for your fortune: I write the sheer truth. That fortune proved to be much less than I, or the world, imagined. It was in fact, as far as I was concerned, a fortune which could not benefit me in the slightest degree; it was merely a jointure not greater than your station required; enough to maintain your establishment and gratify your private tastes. To eat and to sleep in that house, and nominally to call it mine—these could be only objects for a penniless adventurer. Was this an inducement for me to sacrifice my sweet liberty, and that indefinite future which is one of the charms of existence? No; when months ago I told you one day, that there was only one link between us, I felt that my heart was inextricably engaged to you, and but for that I would have terminated our acquaintance. From that moment I devoted to you all the passion of my being. Alas! it has been poured upon the sand! . . .

By heavens, as far as worldly interests are concerned, your alliance could not benefit me. All that society can offer is at my command; it is not the apparent possession of a jointure that ever elevates position. I can live, as I live, without disgrace, until the inevitable progress of events gives me that independence which is all I require. I have entered into these ungracious details because you reproached me with my interested views. No; I would not condescend to be the minion of a princess; and not all the gold of Ophir should ever lead me to the altar. Far different are the qualities which I require in the sweet participator of my existence. My nature demands that my life should be perpetual love.

Upon your general conduct to me, I make no comment. It



Mrs. Wyndham Lewis
1829
from the miniature by Rochard at Hughenden

is now useless. I will not upbraid you. I will only blame myself. . . . But you have struck deep. You have done that which my enemies have yet failed to do: you have broken my spirit. From the highest to the humblest scene of my life, from the brilliant world of fame to my own domestic hearth, you have poisoned all. I have no place of refuge: home is odious, the world oppressive.

Triumph—I seek not to conceal my state. It is not sorrow, it is not wretchedness; it is anguish, it is the *endurance* of that pang which is the passing characteristic of agony. All that can prostrate a man has fallen on my victim head. My heart outraged, my pride wounded, my honor nearly tainted. I know well that ere a few days can pass I shall be the scoff and jest of that world, to gain whose admiration has been the effort of my life. I have only one source of solace—the consciousness of self-respect. Will that uphold me? A terrible problem that must quickly be solved.

Farewell. I will not affect to wish you happiness, for it is not in your nature to obtain it. For a few years you may flutter in some frivolous circle. But the time will come when you will sigh for any heart that could be fond, and despair of one that can be faithful. Then will be the penal hour of retribution: then you will think of me with remorse, admiration and despair; then you will recall to your memory the passionate heart that you have forfeited, and the genius you have betrayed.

D.

Lovers at all times are apt to be histrionic, and it is their privilege that they can be histrionic without being insincere. This, if true of others, is true still more of a man like Disraeli, and of his sincerity in the present matter we have the devotion of a lifetime as convincing demonstration. The quarrel, of course, was speedily composed.

From Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

For God's sake come to me. I am ill and almost distracted. I will answer all you wish. I never desired you to leave the house, or implied or thought a word about money. I received a most distressing letter, and you left me at the moment not knowing . . . I have not been a widow a year. I often feel the apparent impropriety of my present position. . . . I am devoted to you.

In later days she used laughingly to declare: 'Dizzy married me for my money, but if he had the chance again

he would marry me for love.' The world had made up its mind that he had married her for her money, and it was her knowledge of the truth that made it possible for her to adopt the world's point of view. If her husband sometimes did the same, it was characteristic of the man to accept with easy acquiescence a theory which reduced his conduct to a lower plane of motive than that of which he was conscious.

Parliament met in February, and Disraeli has himself depicted the situation in which Ministers found themselves at the beginning of the session :

> The balance of parties in the House of Commons, which had been virtually restored by Sir Robert Peel's dissolution of 1834, might be said to be formally and positively established by the dissolution of Parliament in the autumn of 1837, occasioned by the demise of the Crown. The Ministerial majority became almost nominal, while troubles from all quarters seemed to press simultaneously upon them : Canadian revolts, Chartist insurrections, Chinese squabbles, and mysterious complications in Central Asia which threatened immediate hostilities with Persia, and even with one of the most powerful of European Empires. In addition to all this, the revenue continually declined, and every day the general prejudice became more intense against the Irish policy of the Ministry. The extreme popularity of the Sovereign, reflecting some lustre on her Ministers, had enabled them, though not without difficulty, to tide through the session of 1838 ; but when Parliament met in 1839 their prospects were dark, and it was known that there was a section of the extreme Liberals who would not be deeply mortified if the Government were overthrown.[1]

The great reforming impulse which had carried the Whigs into power at the beginning of the decade was now completely spent, and Whiggery, which was in fact a survival from the conditions of a previous age, had lost its vitality. As yet, however, there was nothing very definite to take its place, and so the Whigs remained in office, and Melbourne, the typical statesman of a time of transition, easy alike in manner and in political principle, remained Prime Minister. Of the duty which he dis-

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 55.

charged so well, and for which his name will live in history, the training of the young Queen for her memorable career as a constitutional Sovereign, he was perhaps himself not wholly conscious; and as his Ministry staggered on from humiliation to defeat, and he rode through every difficulty with easy nonchalance, there were few who gave a thought to the service which all the while he was thus rendering to the nation.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*February*, 1839.]

I went up with the Duke of Buckingham,[1] Praed, Fremantle, Christopher, Blackstone, and a host of Horwoods, Brickhills, &c., as a deputation to Lord Melbourne on the Corn Laws, which was very amusing. Melbourne, frank and rollicking, evidently in his heart a thorough Tory and agriculturist, rubbed his hands and laughed; when the evil consequences insisted on, agreed to everything. 'And, my lord,' said some Horwood from Ely, 'will not the fundholder be endangered?' 'Oh, of course,' said the Prime Minister.[2]

[*Feb.* 25.]

MY DEAREST,

Tommy[3] told me last night that he should bring the actresses on the stage again on Thursday night. I wish you would look into the books and let me know something about the matter. Is it 'ecclesiastical polity' or is it a puritanic innovation? If the latter, I would justify my vote.

How was it in James the First's time and Eliza's? Is the arrangement alluded to in the Book of Sports? Payne Collier[4]—what says he? Or the other Collier?[5] Find out what you can—that is to say, if you be well and have no headache—and let me have it on Thursday morning. This will give you a couple of days' research.

I dined at Sir Robert's on Saturday, and came late, having mistaken the hour. I found some 25 gentlemen grubbing in solemn silence. I threw a shot over the table and set them going, and in time they became even noisy. Peel, I think,

[1] Disraeli's friend Lord Chandos, who had succeeded on the death of his father, the 1st Duke, at the beginning of the year.

[2] *Letters*, p. 146.

[3] Duncombe, who had a motion for the abolition of certain restriction on theatrical entertainments in Lent, which were then enforced by the Lord Chamberlain in the City of Westminster.

[4] Shakespearian critic.

[5] No doubt Jeremy Collier, the famous Non-juror, who led the movement for the purification of the stage at the end of the seventeenth century.

was quite pleased that I broke the awful stillness, as he talked to me a good deal, though we were far removed; he sitting in the middle of the table. I had Sir Robert Inglis[1] on my right hand, whose mind I somewhat opened. He requested permission to ask after my father, and inquired whether he was at Bradenham.

The dinner was curiously sumptuous. There was really 'every delicacy of the season'; and the second course of dried salmon, olives, caviare, woodcock pie, foie gras, and every combination of cured herring, &c., was really remarkable. The drawing-room and picture-gallery were lit up, and the effect was truly fine. . . .

Love,
D.

Friday [*Mar.* 1.]

MY DEAREST,

We dined yesterday at Scrope's,[2] and met the Poulett Scropes, who are staying with him, the Murchisons, Sir Charles and Lady Morgan, and Lord Sudeley: the house magnificent and the contrast remarkable to the bare walls and Ionic meagreness of my last visit. Rooms crimson, with green silk curtains: spectral colors; fine pictures, marqueterie chairs and some splendid cabinets: good dinner and silver-gilt plate. Paired off to half-past 10 anticipating debate on Mexico. Found Mexico put off and Tommy about to jump up: never heard a more entertaining debate. Duncombe's drollery inimitable. Though I had not intended to speak—I had not even your note in my pocket—it animated me, and though full-figged (in costume), I rose with several men at the same time; but the House called for me, and I spoke with great effect and amid loud cheering and laughter. Supposed to have settled the question, which, to the disgust of Government, was carried by a majority of 20. Never saw Johnny in a greater rage; he sent for Alfred Paget, who was going to vote for us, and insisted that he should not. . . .

Love,
D.

[1] A well-known Tory of the old school, member for Oxford University, where he had ousted Peel on the Catholic question in 1829.

[2] William Scrope of Castle Combe. There was some family connexion between the Scropes and the Vineys, in which Disraeli after his marriage took considerable pride. In his last year of office as Prime Minister he endorsed a letter from a member of the Scrope family putting forward a claim to a dormant peerage: 'Mr. Scrope was a relation of Lady Beaconsfield, and I am much interested in his case. His blood is the best in England. I don't wish to alter the laws of the country even for the Scropes, but I wish justice to be done.' Poulett Scrope was a younger brother of Poulett Thomson's, and had married William Scrope's daughter and sole heiress.

On this and on many other occasions in these early sessions, Disraeli acted with the Radicals against the bulk of his own party. A week later, on the second reading of the Ministry's now annual Bill[1] for the reform of Irish corporations, he found himself again in a different lobby from his leaders. Peel and Stanley had accepted the Government policy in principle, but Disraeli was one of a small minority, composed mainly of Irish Tories and extreme English supporters of the Protestant supremacy, who persisted in opposing the Bill. He was careful, however, to dissociate himself in motive from the bulk of his allies. Disclaiming religious bigotry, he argued against the measure on the ground of its tendency to weaken the central government in Ireland. 'In England, where society was strong,' he said, 'they tolerated a weak government; but in Ireland, where society was weak, the policy should be to have the government strong."[2] The significance of the Irish question cannot be exhausted in a formula, but in that single sentence there is more of wisdom and enlightenment than in many thousands of the dreary pages of Irish debate that are buried in the volumes of Hansard.

To Sarah Disraeli.

March 9.

My last speech was very successful, the best *coup* I have yet made. And it was no easy task, for I spoke against the Government, the great mass of the Conservative party, and even took a different view from the small minority itself. I was listened to in silence and the utmost attention. Peel especially complimented me, sore as he was at the Conservative schism, and said, 'Disraeli, you took the only proper line of opposition to the bill'; and Hardinge, a sharp critic, said I had entirely got the ear of the House, and overcome everything.

[*April.*]

The game is in Peel's hands; but he evidently has resolved that the Ministers shall resign and not be turned out. The Radicals clamour against him for not permitting them to assist him. However, all is bustle, and 500 members at

[1] See p. 332.

[2] Hansard, March 8, 1839.

prayers, in order to secure places. This is just one of those occasions in old days when I used to feel so mortified at not being an M.P. *Assisting*, as the French say, at such a 'crisis,' has considerable fascination, and all must feel it though they can't and won't confess. One cannot walk down Parliament Street under such circumstances without some degree of exultation.[1]

Ministers did not wait for actual defeat. Early in May, in a full House, their majority sank to five in an important division, and Melbourne at once resigned.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

Wednesday [*May* 8].

The Queen sent for the Duke of Wellington this morning at 12, and about 2 she sent by his advice for Peel, who passed in his carriage down Pall Mall, to the Palace, opposite the Carlton. He was in *full* dress, which is etiquette on these occasions. About 4 he left the Queen and went to the Duke of Wellington. Nothing at 6 o'clock had transpired except that Peel had expressed his readiness to take office.

GEORGE STREET,
2 *o'clock* [*May* 10].

A messenger post-haste reached me as I was just turning the corner of Park Street to you, desiring me to come on here [Lord Lyndhurst's] instantly.

Peel is out and given up the Government already in consequence of Whig intrigues about the Household. I have not the slightest doubt that her Majesty will be obliged to surrender. I am writing something which Lord L. thinks may be of service to them and myself.

CARLTON,
[*May* 12].

I have finished a letter to the Queen, and am now copying it, very exhausted. . . . There are all sorts of rumors, and the most credited are very unfavorable, viz[t], a Radical Government and a dissolution : but I hope they are Sunday lies.

'This,' writes Disraeli in *Endymion*,[2] 'was the famous Bedchamber Plot, in which the Conservative leaders, as is now generally admitted, were decidedly in error, and which terminated in the return of the Whigs to office.' Even in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, written not many years

[1] *Letters*, pp. 149, 150. [2] Ch. 58.

after the event, he had come to the opinion that Peel had made a blunder: 'It was unfortunate that one who, if any, should have occupied the proud and national position of the leader of the Tory party, the chief of the people, and the champion of the throne, should have commenced his career as Minister under Victoria by an unseemly contrariety to the personal wishes of the Queen.'[1] At the moment, however, like a good party man, Disraeli defended his leader, and in his letter, which appeared in *The Times*[2] over the signature of 'Lælius,' he lectured the young Queen on the dangers of her resolution to retain as her companions the wives and sisters of her outgoing Ministers:

> Your Majesty has confidence in the strength of your own character. You are convinced that the line of demarcation between public duty and private affection is broad and deep. On all that concerns the State, you are assured that your lips and your heart will be for ever closed to the circle in which you pass your life. Be it so. I humbly presume to give your Majesty credit for all the exalted virtues which become a throne. But where, then, are the joys of companionship? The Royal brow is clouded, but the Royal lip must never explain its care. The Queen is anxious, but the Lady in Waiting must not share her restlessness or soothe her disquietude.
>
> Madam, it cannot be. You are a queen; but you are a human being and a woman. The irrepressible sigh will burst forth some day, and you will meet a glance more interesting because there is a captivating struggle to suppress its sympathy. Wearied with public cares, crossed, as necessarily you must sometimes be, the peevish exclamation will have its way, and you yourself will be startled at its ready echo. The line once passed, progress is quick: fascinating sympathy, long-suppressed indignation, promised succour; the tear, the tattle, the innuendo, the direct falsehood; in a moment they will convince you you are a victim, and that they have heroes in wait to rescue their Sovereign. Then come the Palace conspiracy and the backstairs intrigue. You will find yourself with the rapidity of enchantment the centre and the puppet of a camarilla, and Victoria, in the eyes of that Europe which once bowed to her, and in the hearts of those Englishmen who once yielded to her their devotion, will be reduced to the level of Madrid and Lisbon.

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. IV. ch. 14.

[2] Of May 13, 1839.

In another letter which 'Lælius' addressed to Melbourne a fortnight later there is a character of Peel which deserves to be rescued from the oblivion of a newspaper file :

Let me consider the character and position of a political leader whom, to use only the admissions of his adversaries, I may describe as a man unrivalled for Parliamentary talents, of unimpeached integrity, of unsullied personal conduct, of considerable knowledge, both scholastic and civil, and of an estate ample and unencumbered—one of long official practice, of greater political experience ; of that happy age when the vigor of manhood is not impaired, and when men have attained as much experience as, without over-refining action, is compatible with practical wisdom ; when an elevated and thoughtful ambition is, not eager, yet prepared, for power, free from both the restlessness of youth and the discontent of declining age—epochs that alike deem life too short for delay. Add to this a temperament essentially national, and a habit of life pleasing to the manners and prejudices of his countrymen, with many of the virtues of the English character and some of its peculiarities ; confident, rather than sanguine ; guided by principles, yet not despising expedients ; fearful to commit himself, yet never shrinking from responsibility ; proud, yet free from vanity, and reserved rather from disposition than from an ungenerous prudence ; most courageous when in peril ; most cautious in prosperity. It is difficult to estimate the characters of our contemporaries, but this I believe, though a slight, to be not an incorrect, sketch of that of Sir Robert Peel.[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*Undated.*]

Dined *en famille* with the Duke of Buckingham, to eat venison ; a regular Bucks party. Sir East and a widow daughter, enthusiastically blue, and boring Chandos about my genius, who seemed quite puzzled and proud at having an author for his friend. I believe Lady Anna has not been allowed to read the tragedy [*Alarcos*], therefore she hopes it will be acted. She is great fun.

[*June.*]

Douro's[2] marriage has taken place : a great concourse and much cheering in the streets, and would have been in the church had not the Dean of Carlisle with apostolic *naïveté* preliminarily warned the audience. The church crowded ; three

[1] *The Times*, May 28, 1839. [2] Afterwards 2nd Duke of Wellington.

or four ladies in pulpit; pews engaged weeks before. I have not seen the lady, but, according to Douro, she weighs 11 stone 5 lbs. I hear a beautiful face, and came out last year. They were married before twelve, and at four o'clock he was riding in the park.

I was at Madame Montefiore, *née* De Rothschild, as she says at court: a most magnificent concert. Two royal princes (Sussex and Cambridge) and the Duke of Wellington gartered and fleeced. Grisi and Persiani sang a duet, and the supper very splendid. The weather is at length charming, and I think you must really look after my summer costume. . . .

Social London is rather dull, in contradistinction to political London; indeed no one thinks of anything but politics. I send you a very good thing in the shape of Theodore Hook's epitaph on Lord de Ros—'Here lies Henry, 17th Baron de Ros, in joyful expectation of the last Trump.' I am reading the Indian papers,[1] which are the most amusing thing I have met with since the *Arabian Nights*.

June 23.

I didn't get home till half-past five on Friday morning, and had only time yesterday before post to receive the congratulations of my friends, which came thick as the leaves of Vallombrosa. How strange that nearly in despair at the end of the session I should have made by universal consent the best speech on our side on the most important party question. After listening to Ewart as long as he replied or attempted to reply, which was about ten minutes or so, I thought the moment he began to repeat by rote I might retire, and I went to the Carlton. The rumor of my success had preceded me. Canterbury was very warm; he has always taken an interest in my Parliamentary career. It was Charles Buller who told him it was one of the best speeches. I had touched up Charley a little, though with courtesy. He is erroneously represented in the papers as not being in the House, whereas the 'laugh' which you may observe in the report was occasioned by his taking off his hat and making me a bow. Two of my old foes, Lord Lincoln and Lord Ashley, tendered me their congratulations with extended hands. As for *Alarcos*, Colburn, on the strength of the speech I suppose, advertises it this morning as 'Mr. Disraeli's Tragedy.'

D.[2]

Nothing, as a rule, can surpass in dulness the dead political speeches even of famous men, but these early

[1] The papers setting forth the antecedents of the first Afghan War, which was then in progress.

[2] *Letters*, pp. 151-153.

efforts of Disraeli's have often a quality which preserves their freshness after the lapse of two generations. His speech on this last occasion, which occupies nearly two columns of *The Times*,[1] is an excellent case in point. The subject in debate was Lord John Russell's scheme for the foundation of a central Education Board, with an endowment of £30,000 a year—the grain of seed which has grown into our present vast system of national education. Churchmen were jealous of the scheme as conceived in the interest of the Dissenters, and Gladstone had taken the high line of 'objecting to any infringement whatever of the principle on which the Established Church was founded—that of confining the primary support of the state to one particular denomination.' Disraeli also opposed the measure, but was content with lower ground. '*He was an advocate for national education, but it did* not follow that he should also be an advocate for State education.' China and Persia in the East, Austria, 'the China of Europe,'[2] and Prussia, with its paternal government, were the countries with highly developed systems of state education. Paternal government and state education, in fact, went hand in hand together. 'It had been discovered that the best way to insure implicit obedience was to commence tyranny in the nursery.'

> The same system which tyrannised in the nursery under the pretence of education would . . . immure old age within hated walls, under the specious plea of affording relief. It was always the state, and never society—it was always machinery, never sympathy. By their system of state education all would be thrown into the same mint, and all would come out with the same impress and superscription. They might make money, they might make railroads; but when the age of passion came, when those interests were in motion, and those feelings stirring, which would shake society to its centre, then . . . they would see whether the people had received the same sort of education which had been advocated and supported by William of Wykeham. . . . . No; other

[1] Of June 21, 1839.

[2] The phrase reappears in *Coningsby*, Bk. VI. ch. 3.

principles had actuated the men of former days, and let them look abroad on England and witness the result. Where would they find a country more elevated in the social scale? where a people more distinguished for all that was excellent in the human character? The time would come, if they persisted in their present course, when they would find that they had revolutionised the English character; and when that was effected, then they could no longer expect English achievements.

Incidentally he protested against an attempt which had been made to raise the cry of 'No Popery!' Nor did he share the apprehensions of members on his own side, that the proposed system of education might lead to national infidelity. By a united effort of the sectarians the national Church might be overthrown, but the penalty, as in the time of the Commonwealth, would be the wildness of fanaticism, the fury and violence of contending sects, not the general spread of 'miserable, cold, and restless infidelity.' And when the moment of anarchy was past, and the people of England sought a return to peace, they would not plunge into infidelity, 'which was abhorrent to their nature, and at variance with all the better feelings of the human heart'; but they would revert to the Church of their fathers, or perhaps seek refuge in that other Church which 'had the advantage of being able to appeal to unrivalled antiquity, and also strongly to the feelings and imaginations of men'—the Church of Rome.

To Mrs. Wyndham Lewis.

July 8.

Lord Fitzgerald[1] asked me to dinner on Tuesday, which I have refused, as I hope to be in the House of Commons; it is said that he is the most difficult man to dine with in London, and I therefore tell it you as a specimen of the Parliamentary barometer; for he is one who considers success in debate as the great object of existence.

[1] The Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald whose appointment as President of the Board of Trade in the Wellington Ministry in 1829 led to the Clare election and the triumph of O'Connell.

To Sarah Disraeli.

July 8.

I dined at Greenwich with the Duke of Buckingham on Saturday. A large party embarked at Whitehall in a steamer, but I went by land with Lyndhurst. A sumptuous banquet, and Brougham made nearly fifty speeches full of comic humor and fierce slashing of Whigs; declared it was impossible to turn them out of power, to Chandos's blank despair, because they were not *in* power, to Chandos's chuckling relief. Lyndhurst was also capital. I dined with him yesterday to meet Webster,[1] who is, I believe, considered a very refined and *spirituel* Yankee, but seemed to me a complete Brother Jonathan—a remarkable twang, as 'tyrannical' and all that; he also goes to the *levēē*. A fine brow, lofty, broad, and beetled deep-set eyes, and swarthy complexion. He is said when warmed to be their greatest orator. Strangford was there, very airy and sparkling; all the rest Americans and principally relatives.[2]

Saturday [*July* 13].

MY DEAREST SA,

I made a most capital speech on Chartism last night, of which *The Times* gives a fair and accurate report. The *Morning Herald* has taken up the speech and written a leader on it, and calls it 'a speech of very considerable talent.' It was made under every disadvantage, for the Tories, supposing Chartism would only be a squabble between the Whigs and Radicals, were all away, while the Ministerial benches were crowded—all the Ministers, all the Whigs, and all the Radicals. Peel, however, was in the House, having come down on the Penny Postage. It was a very damaging and disagreeable speech to the Government, and they didn't like it. . . .

Powerscourt has invited *us* to pass our autumn in Ireland: he raves about *Alarcos*, and literally knows it by heart. He declares 'tis the finest tragedy that ever was written. Milnes,[3] the poet, is astonished that I didn't give it Macready, as 'it would have made his fortune.'

Strange that I never yet wrote anything that was more talked of in society, and yet it has never been noticed by the scribbling critics.

My love to all.

D.[4]

[1] The American statesman. [2] *Letters*, p. 153.
[3] Richard Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, 1809-1885.
[4] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.

There is some reason to believe that Disraeli had, in fact, submitted his play to Macready, who was then at the height of his fame, and that he only resorted to publication when he had failed to get it accepted for production on the stage. The play as published was dedicated to Lord Francis Egerton, himself a poet, as 'an attempt to contribute to the revival of English tragedy,' and in this dedication Disraeli traced its origin, as he had previously traced the origin of the *Revolutionary Epick*, to his Mediterranean journey, though, having learnt something in the meantime, he entered the lists against Shakespeare with more diffidence than he had shown in his earlier challenge to Milton.[1]

> Do you remember the ballad of 'the Count Alarcos and the Infanta Solisa'? . . . Years have flown away since, rambling in the Sierras of Andalusia beneath the clear light of a Spanish moon, and freshened by the sea-breeze that had wandered up a river from the coast, I first listened to the chaunt of that strange and terrible tale.
>
> It seemed to me rife with all the materials of the tragic drama; and I planned, as I rode along, the scenes and characters of which it appeared to me susceptible.
>
> That was the season of life when the heart is quick with emotion, and the brain with creative fire; when the eye is haunted with beautiful sights, and the ear with sweet sounds; when we live in reveries of magnificent performance, and the future seems only a perennial flow of poetic invention.
>
> Dreams of fantastic youth! Amid the stern realities of existence I have unexpectedly achieved a long-lost purpose.

Strange and terrible the tale is indeed, as anyone who has read Lockhart's rendering of the ballad will be able to recall—too strange and terrible for success on the stage,

[1] As in the *Epick* we find a certain far-off mimicry of Milton, so in *Alarcos* there is a certain far-off mimicry of Shakespeare:

> 'Thou art too young to die,
> And yet may be too happy. Moody youth
> Toys in its talk with the dark thought of death,
> As if to die were but to change a robe.
> It is their present refuge from all cares
> And each disaster. When the sere has touched
> Their flowing locks, they prattle less of death,
> Perchance think more of it.'
>
> Act III., Scene ii.

or even to give pleasure in a literary play. Disraeli's tragedy, as might be expected, shows sufficient literary workmanship to redeem it from contempt. There is a certain weird impressiveness in the development of the plot, and a certain measure of skill in the conduct of the dialogue. But horror is piled on horror till the reader has supped too full; and though *Alarcos* may have been talked about at the time of its publication, it has never since found many admirers. While Disraeli was Prime Minister in 1868, an adaptation was produced at Astley's Theatre Royal. It ran for five weeks, 'with the loudest demonstrations of applause from delighted audiences,' as the courtly manager wrote to the author at the close, but, unfortunately, as he had to add, with heavy losses to himself as the penalty of his enterprise.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*July* 26.]

I went down to Rosebank to a *petit bal* given by the Londonderrys, after a dinner to the Duchess of Cambridge on her birthday. The place itself is but a beautiful cottage, but there is a grand conservatory more than sixty feet long, lofty and broad in proportion, and, adorned with festoons of flowers, formed a charming ball-room, and I met a great many of my friends. In reality, the brilliant moon, the lamplit gardens, the terraces, the river, the music, the sylvan ball-room, and the bright revellers, made a scene like a festa in one of George Sand's novels.

[*Aug.* 16.]

I dined at Burdett's yesterday. Dinner at seven o'clock precisely; everything stately and old-fashioned, but agreeable. The house charming; the dining-room looking into delightful gardens, with much old timber, beyond St. James's Park. I got away by 9.30, and went down to the House, which I found dozing in committee, but I made a speech. Unfortunately, as generally happens on long committee nights, there was scarcely a reporter in the gallery. I analysed all the evidence of the constabulary report. It made great effect, quoting all the pages and names without any document. The complete command of the House I now have is remarkable, and nothing can describe to you the mute silence which immediately ensued as I rose, broken only by members hurrying to their places to listen.

On Monday I was more than four hours at Lord Palmerston's private residence on business of no slight importance. Prince Esterhazy, who came into the dining-room whilst I was waiting, said, 'I have come to introduce myself to Mr. Disraeli. I have long wished to know you; I read your speeches with admiration.'[1]

The business with Palmerston seems to have had reference to some member of the consular or diplomatic service who had been recalled by the Foreign Office, and had asked Disraeli to take up his case.

From Lord Palmerston.

STANHOPE STREET,
Aug. 15, 1839.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am very much obliged to you for your note of the 12th, and for the patient attention which you gave to the long statement I was obliged to make to you; and I can assure you I am very sensible to the great candour and fairness with which you have dealt with the matter which formed the subject of our conversation.

My dear sir,
Yours faithfully,
PALMERSTON.

Parliament was prorogued on August 27, and next day Disraeli was married to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis at St. George's, Hanover Square. 'I feel,' he had written to her not long before, 'that there never was an instance where a basis of more entire and permanent felicity offered itself to two human beings. I look forward to the day of our union as that epoch in my life which will seal my career: for whatever occurs afterwards will, I am sure, never shake my soul, as I shall always have the refuge of your sweet heart in sorrow or disappointment, and your quick and accurate sense to guide me in prosperity and triumph.' Many have gone to the altar with high hopes like these, but few have seen them come to such complete fruition. It was in some respects a strange alliance. In a curious document which survives,

[1] *Letters*, pp. 155, 156.

Mrs. Disraeli analyses her husband's character and her own, and tabulates their opposing qualities so as to emphasise the contrast :

Very calm.	Very effervescent.
Manners grave and almost sad.	Gay and happy-looking when speaking.
Never irritable.	Very irritable.
Bad-humoured.	Good-humoured.
Warm in love, but cold in friendship.	Cold in love, but warm in friendship.
Very patient.	No patience.
Very studious.	Very idle.
Very generous.	Only generous to those she loves.
Often says what he does not think.	Never says anything she does not think.
It is impossible to find out who he likes or dislikes from his manner. He does not show his feelings.	Her manner is quite different, and to those she likes she shows her feelings.
No vanity.	Much vanity.
Conceited.	No conceit.
No self-love.	Much self-love.
He is seldom amused.	Everything amuses her.
He is a genius.	She is a dunce.
He is to be depended on to a certain degree.	She is not to be depended on.
His whole soul is devoted to politics and ambition.	She has no ambition and hates politics.

'He is a genius, she is a dunce': there, naïvely stated, we have a fundamental difference which might have been expected to exclude lasting sympathy. If we add to her own testimony the testimony of those who knew her, we see in Mrs. Disraeli a woman vain, pleasure-loving, and effervescent, to the casual observer a little shallow and irresponsible, outspoken to the point of tactlessness, but of an exuberant kindness of heart which covered a multitude of defects ; of little mental cultivation, and in the things on which society largely bases its judgments—dress, furniture, and manners—of a certain oddity of taste which naturally grew more marked as the years went on, and made her a bizarre and unconventional

figure. But, fortunately, Disraeli was bizarre enough himself to be blind or indifferent to many of her peculiarities ; and if his wife had little care for the things of the mind, she was very far from being a ' dunce ' in the proper meaning of the word, as the tabulated characters set forth above, with the penetration shown on one side and the self-knowledge on the other, would alone suffice to prove. The ' quick and accurate sense ' of which her husband wrote was something more than a phrase. She had not only in liberal measure the gift of feminine intuition, but the rarer gift of judgment ; and in the lesser business of life, in which Disraeli himself was helpless, she had practical ability of no mean order. Marriage did not end his financial embarrassments, but it relieved him of their severest pressure, and it gave him at last a fixed home in London, and a companion who could shelter him from most of the sordid detail that he always found so distasteful. If there were nothing more to be said, these things alone would suffice to explain the ' gratitude ' on which he once laid stress, according to a well-known story, as the keynote of his affection.

But there is something more to be said. Commonplace in intellect his wife may have been, but there was a strain of heroism in her character which, if her lot had been different, might have remained unrevealed, or at least unrecorded, but which, aided by the good fortune or the happy inspiration of her marriage to a man of genius, has won for her a place in the company of women whose names are held in honour. ' There was no care which she could not mitigate, and no difficulty which she could not face. She was the most cheerful and the most courageous woman I ever knew.' Such was her husband's tribute when, after more than thirty years, death came to part them. She may have had no ambition and have hated politics, as she tells us, but she knew how to devote herself with perfect singleness of purpose to her husband's career ; while her faith in his coming greatness, her confidence in his power of surmounting every obstacle, her

buoyant courage in the hour of trial, and her invincible constancy in misfortune, approached the sublime. And she had her reward. Disraeli always found it hard to persuade the world of his sincerity, even when he was most sincere, but his bitterest enemies never ventured to cast a doubt on the sincerity of his devotion to his wife. Shortly before her death she told a woman friend that 'her life had been a long scene of happiness, owing to his love and kindness.' Her own testimony is supported both by the testimony of all who knew them and by the testimony of the records, which is in this case, as it chances, hardly less convincing: for every scrap of paper that had once, for good or evil, been touched by 'dear Dizzy's' pen, and fell into the hands of his wife, became from that moment sacred, and was hoarded among her treasures; with the result that we are able to catch illuminating glimpses of their intimate life such as would otherwise have been impossible. Throughout the thirty years and more for which their union lasted, not even the shadow of a passing cloud seems ever to have rested on their mutual affection. When Disraeli wrote the glowing sentence, 'My nature demands that my life should be perpetual love,' he pitched his ideal high, but not higher than the actual truth which was realised in his marriage.

The honeymoon was spent partly at Tunbridge Wells, and later in a Continental tour which carried them as far as Munich.

To Sarah Disraeli.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS,
Sept. 4.

We have had unceasing rain, and have therefore not left our rooms, which we find very agreeable, except to drive to Bayham[1] amid squalls, and an excursion to Penshurst yesterday amidst showers. De L'Isle was out shooting, but we saw the children, whom we found quite charming. . . . I have only been on the Pantiles once, and have met Lord Monteagle,[2]

[1] Lord Camden's.

[2] Mr. Spring Rice had just been succeeded as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Mr. Francis Baring, and had gone to the Upper House as Lord Monteagle.

with whom I am very good friends, notwithstanding our skirmishing. There is scarcely anybody here that we know, or care to know.

BADEN-BADEN,
Sept. 19..

This is the most picturesque, agreeable, lounging sort of place you can imagine. A bright little river winding about green hills, with a white sparkling town of some dozen palaces called hotels, and some lodging-houses, like the side scenes of a melodrama, and an old ruined castle or two on woody heights. I don't think we shall stay more than a week. Mary Anne says it is not much better than Cheltenham—public dinners, balls, promenades, pumps, music and gambling.

MUNICH,
Oct. 2.

We travelled from Baden to Stuttgart, through the Black Forest for two days—a region of uninterrupted interest, most savage and picturesque, though rich from its vegetation and occasional valleys of pasture. . . . Stuttgart a very handsome town of the Turin school, modern but improving; but the Grecian villa of the king in the park is charming, and most tastefully furnished. We fell upon great *fêtes*, which pleased us much. The king, surrounded by a brilliant court, sat in a pavilion in the midst of a beautiful mead, which was enclosed by tiers of covered seats, and distributed prizes to the Wurtemberg peasants for oxen, horses, &c. 'Twas much finer than the tournament. More than 20,000 persons I should think present; the peasantry in rich and bright dresses, dark velvets with many large silver buttons, vivid vests, and three-cornered cocked hats. It was fine to see a family leading a bull crowned with roses, rams worthy of the antique garlanded for altars. After this races, which were not very good, though the passion of the king is for horses, and his stables are, I believe, the finest in Europe. The whole scene was very patriarchal, though her Majesty came in half-a-dozen blue carriages with scarlet liveries. The king rode a fine barb, followed by grooms, &c., in scarlet.

We visited the studio of Dannecker, and I insisted on seeing the artist, whom I found a hale old man, more than eighty, but with a disorder in his throat which prevents him from speaking. He was much affected by our wishing to see him, and when we drove off opened the window of his room, waved his hand, and managed to say, 'Viva, viva!'

I have read enough of Hallam to make me thirst for literary history in detail. . . . I don't think his English literature his strongest point. He is very meagre and unjust—on Sir

Thomas Browne for instance. Compare Hallam with Coleridge hereon. He never notices the extraordinary imagination of B. In general, I see in Hallam a dash of German affectation in his style, which he has imbibed of late years. My paper is full.

Thousand loves to all.

D.

MUNICH,
Oct. 14.

After a fortnight's residence in this city, I find it difficult to convey to you an idea of it. Since Pericles no one has done so much for the arts as the King of Bavaria. Galleries of painting and sculpture, Grecian temples, Gothic and Byzantine churches, obelisks of bronze, equestrian statues of brass, theatres and arcades painted in fresco, are but some of the features of splendor and tasteful invention which on every side solicit the eye, and which I can only allude to. . . . We have seen the king several times, tall, meagre, and German—a poet, which accounts for Munich, for a poet on a throne can realise his dreams.[1]

HÔTEL DE L'EUROPE, RUE RIVOLI, PARIS,
Nov. 4.

We arrived here on Saturday very well; and your very welcome letters reached me instantly. October until the last two days presented to us a cloudless sky, which rendered our travelling from Munich to Frankfort very agreeable. We visited Ratisbon, a very ancient Gothic city. Walhalla, a height on the Danube, crowned with a Grecian temple larger than the Parthenon, but of beauty not less eminent, raised to the genius of Germany by the King of Bavaria; Nuremberg, a city which retains all its olden character, the Pompeii of the middle ages, and Wurtzburg-on-the-Maine, once the capital of a princely prelate who sojourned in a much nobler palace than our sovereigns. So to Frankfort, where after a few days we crossed the Rhine, having travelled in our tour by the waters not only of that river, but of the Neckar, the Danube, and the Maine: the four principal rivers of Germany. The Neckar and the Maine are charming, though not as famous as the Rhine, nor offering at one point such an aggregate of beauties as are clustered together between Bingen and Coblentz. The famous Danube is but an uncouth stream; its bed is far too considerable for its volume, so that it presents a shallow, shoaly look, with vast patches of sand and shingle in the midst of its course.

[1] Disraeli contributed a short paper on Munich to the *Book of Beauty* for 1840.

Henry Bulwer, who is now a great man, called on us on Sunday.

PARIS,
Nov. 22.

I hope to reach England in a week, and shall be very glad to find myself there again. The political horizon is cloudy and disturbed, but the serious illness of the Duke of Wellington, which has just reached our Embassy, may yet assist the Whigs on their last legs. I always hold that no one is ever missed, but he is so great a man that the world will perhaps fancy his loss irreparable. . . . We have been very gay in Paris and our friends very kind to us, having been invited to the Embassy, Canterburys, Sheridans, &c. . . . Mary Anne is particularly well, and in her new costumes looks like Madame de Pompadour, who is at present the model of Paris—at least in dress. . . . Paris is very much changed since my first visit; there are *trottoirs* in every street, and in the most ordinary corners you find shops which Regent Street cannot equal. But their efforts in the higher arts, of which they talk so much, will not pass muster after Munich. We hope to meet my father quite himself again.

D.

His father, in their absence, had been attacked by an affection of the eyes from which he never recovered, and which ended in total blindness.

To Sarah Disraeli.

GROSVENOR GATE
[*Undated*].

Your letter would have made me very happy had it brought more satisfactory tidings of my father. I had persuaded myself from your account that the enfeebled vision merely arose from bodily health, sedentary habits, &c. We are very uneasy and unhappy about him, and we would take great care of him if he would come up for advice. Everything is very flat, and we live in the midst of perpetual fog, and shall be glad when business will let us find ourselves at Bradenham.

Dec. 18.

Alexander has just left us; he seems to think with skill and care my father ought to recover his sight. There is no news otherwise, except my father thinks me looking very well, which makes me fear he is really blind, as this is the first time in his life he ever thought so. Last week we dined *en famille* with Mrs. Montefiore to meet Antony Rothschild, who is to marry one of the Montefiores, Charlotte. There were Roth-

schilds, Montefiores, Alberts, and Disraelis—not a Christian name, but Mary Anne bears it like a philosopher.

D'Orsay sent on his horse to Wycombe Abbey, as Bob Smith has none 'worth riding,' but he could not get out of the house the whole time he was there, even to pay you a visit. It was so foggy he was obliged to give it up. They had a roaring, robustious, romping party, of which he gave very amusing details. Playing hide-and-seek, they got into the roof, and Albert Conyngham fell through the ceiling of one of the rooms—an immense long leg dangling out. Carrington came to look at it with his eye-glass, but took it very good-humoredly. Great regrets on his part that I was not at Bradenham.[1]

[1] *Letters*, pp. 156-164.

[NOTE.—From Mr. Sykes's *Mary Anne Disraeli*, among other interesting facts about Lady Beaconsfield's origin and early life, we learn that her mother had a settlement of £5,300; that, while Mary Anne was in her teens, her uncle (afterwards Major-General Sir James Viney) became head of the Vineys, and came to live at the family residence, Cathedral House, Gloucester; that her brother obtained a commission in the army, and rose to be Lieut.-Col. Viney Evans; that it was at a ball at a private house in Clifton that she met Wyndham Lewis; and that her marriage to him took place in the parish church there on Dec. 22, 1815, her uncle Viney being present.—G. E. B.]

CHAPTER III.

The Condition of England.

1839–1841.

That 'most capital speech on Chartism' in the last weeks of the session of 1839, of which we have already heard something, calls for more attention. It is remarkable in itself as a contribution to the study of the 'condition of England question,' which had long been in Disraeli's thoughts, and which a few years later was to provide him with a subject for the deepest of his novels; and it stands out among the speeches of his first years in Parliament as the boldest proclamation to his leaders and to the world at large that he had by no means abandoned the position he had taken up in the early stages of his political career, and that he still desired to see a regenerated Toryism resting on the broad basis of faith in the people.

Chartism was the direct descendant of the older Radical movement with which Disraeli had been in sympathy at the time of his first incursions into the domain of practical politics. Since the passage of the Reform Act, Radicalism had changed its character, and an entirely new school—the so-called 'philosophic' Radicals—had gained the ascendancy. With these, the orthodox upholders of the Benthamite tradition—men like Grote or Molesworth in Parliament, or the Mills outside—Disraeli had never anything in common. But when he entered the House of Commons there were still a few Radical members of the older or philanthropic type—men, for instance, like Fielden and Wakley—who inherited the

traditions, half Radical and half Tory, of Cobbett and Burdett, and were inspired, not by abstract theories, but by natural sympathy with the people and an active interest in their welfare. With these and their like Disraeli soon established friendly relations, possibly at first through Bulwer and Duncombe, who were Radicals themselves, and as wits and dandies were already his friends; and friendly relations led in due course, on certain subjects of common interest, to a working alliance.

The philosophic school was essentially middle-class in its genius and ideals, but English Radicalism in its origin had been essentially popular and democratic. It had begun in the closing decades of the eighteenth century as a movement for electoral reform, its earliest demands anticipating the five points of the Chartists—annual Parliaments, manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, payment of members, and abolition of the property qualification for a seat in the House of Commons. The movement languished during the Napoleonic wars, but renewed its vigour after the peace, with Burdett as its leader and spokesman in the House of Commons, and the counties as the main source of its Parliamentary strength, but drawing also much support from the manufacturing towns, which had been brought into existence by the industrial revolution of the preceding half-century. This revolution—the greatest of its kind in the history of the world—had introduced two new and disturbing factors into the old social order. On the one hand it had created a large and wealthy class of manufacturing capitalists, who regarded with jealous eyes the monopoly of political power that was now in the hands of the territorial aristocracy; and on the other it had congregated in the great towns of England a multitude of workers—men, women, and children—the misery of whose lives was a disgrace to the nation. It was from this suffering multitude that the movement which ended in the first Reform Act drew most of its strength. Ostensibly, political enfranchisement had been the object of the agitation, but the deep sense of grievance which

was the real motive power had been far more social than political in its origin.*

The revolution, when accomplished, proved, however, to be political far more than social in its significance and results. The workers by whose aid the middle classes had won their way into the citadel of power found themselves shut out. In abolishing the rotten boroughs, the Whigs had taken occasion to make the borough franchise less popular than before; and if there was still a popular element in the electorate for the counties, it owed its preservation to the efforts of the Tories. The Reform Bill, in fact, as Disraeli had been quick to see, was an essentially class measure. Indirectly, no doubt, as he remarks in *Sybil*, it tended in the long-run to further the cause of social amelioration. 'It set men a-thinking; it enlarged the horizon of political experience; . . . and insensibly it created and prepared a popular intelligence,' to which the statesman could appeal for the redress of social evils. The people gained ultimately from the clash between the ideals and ambitions of the aristocracy and those of the middle class; but at first it seemed to them that they had only changed masters, and in many ways for the worse, their new rulers being less sympathetic than the old, and having certainly far less of the instinct of public duty. From the beginning the new House of Commons gave very little thought to the condition of the multitude. During the period of Whig rule many great and memorable measures were passed into law, but in the domain of social and economic reform the achievement of the thirties is not to be compared with what had been accomplished in the unreformed Parliament during the preceding decade under the guidance of Tory statesmen like Huskisson and Canning and Robinson and Peel. The ten-pound householders, who to their everlasting honour put an end at once to West Indian slavery, had no eyes for the slavery, hardly less real, that was close to their own doors. Class interest blinded the rich manufacturers to the foundations of

human misery on which their wealth was raised, and the dominant philosophy of the hour was ready with convenient formulæ to provide a sanction for their indifference. Disraeli, writing in *Sybil* in 1845, thus summed the matter up :

> If a spirit of rapacious covetousness, desecrating all the humanities of life, has been the besetting sin of England for the last century and a half, since the passing of the Reform Act the altar of Mammon has blazed with triple worship. To acquire, to accumulate, to plunder each other by virtue of philosophic phrases, to propose a Utopia to consist only of Wealth and Toil, this has been the breathless business of enfranchised England for the last twelve years, until we are startled from our voracious strife by the wail of intolerable serfage.[1]

The two achievements of the new Parliament in the sphere of social legislation were a Factory Act to limit the labour of children, passed in 1833, and the famous new Poor Law of 1834. The Factory Act was the outcome of a movement which had been begun in the unreformed Parliament by the Tory Michael Sadler, a man whose fame ought to be greater than it is, and continued after the Reform Act by another Tory, Lord Ashley, when Sadler had been rejected by the new middle-class electorate in the great industrial town of Leeds in favour of the very genius of triumphant Whiggery, Macaulay. Unhappily, Ashley's efforts, like those of Sadler before him, were to a great extent frustrated by the thinly-veiled hostility of the Whig Ministry on the one hand, and the fierce and open opposition of the manufacturing capitalists and their allies, the philosophic Radicals, on the other; and in the result the provisions of the Act of 1833 were but a meagre and grudging concession to the crying needs of the case. The Poor Law of 1834 was an even more characteristic expression of the spirit of the new political order, both in its good points and in its bad. In the last decades of the eighteenth century and during the Napoleonic wars a change had

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 5.

been in progress in English agriculture analogous to that which had substituted the capitalist manufacturers for the small masters in industry. Hitherto, the farmers had been on much the same social level as the labourers among whom they lived; now, while the less fortunate sank to the condition of their labourers, the more fortunate formed themselves into a wholly separate class, and a class that, as long as the war lasted, remained highly prosperous. At the same time the position of the labourers changed rapidly for the worse, their relation to their employers, somewhat as in the case of the workers in the towns, though of course less completely, becoming, in Carlyle's phrase, an affair of cash nexus. As the conditions of their life grew harder, the rural justices, who were charged with the administration of the Poor Law, began in a spirit of compassion the demoralising practice of supplementing wages out of the rates, and in the bad times of the war, when bread was at famine prices, this practice was extended, till in the Southern counties especially the great mass of the labouring poor had been converted into paupers.

For this state of things the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was intended to provide a remedy. It put an end to great abuses, and the Spartan rigour with which it was administered may in the long-run have been salutary, but the future gain was purchased at the price of much immediate suffering. The transition to the new system was conducted with the ruthless logic of men possessed by a theory, and the first effect, undoubtedly, was greatly to increase the misery of the poor. 'If paupers are made miserable,' said Carlyle grimly, 'paupers will needs decline in multitude. It is a secret known to all rat-catchers.' 'That this Poor Law Amendment Act,' he added, 'should be, as we sometimes hear it named, the chief glory of a Reformed Cabinet, betokens, one would imagine, rather a scarcity of glory there.'[1] In its passage through the House of Commons the Bill had been

[1] *Chartism*, ch. 3.

supported, not only by the philosophic Radicals and the main body of the Whigs, but also by Peel, who in such matters, indeed, was a more faithful exponent of middle-class ideals than the Whig leaders themselves. It had been bitterly opposed, however, by the small band of Tories and philanthropic Radicals, through whose exertions the Factory Act had been carried in the previous year; and when in 1837, the year after the new Poor Law had come into force, a period of bad harvests and bad trade began, the distress that resulted led to a formidable agitation for the repeal of the measure.

With this agitation Disraeli was in active sympathy from the very beginning. He had been well aware, indeed, that the administration of the old law called for reform; and, as he indicated in one[1] of the speeches of his first year in politics, he would have endeavoured to reform it by bringing the Poor Laws 'back to the system of 1795'—that is, to the old Elizabethan system before it had been perverted under the stress of the war. But he heartily disliked the Act of 1834, not only because it treated the pauper as a criminal, but also because it abolished the old parochial constitution, and violated, as he thought, in its centralising tendency the traditional principles of English self-government. As has been seen,[2] he fulminated against the new system during his contest at Maidstone, like many other candidates in the elections of that year; but, as both the front benches were opposed to the agitation, few of those who reached the House retained their interest in the matter, and it was 'quietly and good-naturedly hinted' to Disraeli, as he afterwards related,[3] that if he wished to advance in public life he had better keep his opinions on the new Poor Law to himself. This hint, however, failed to deflect him from his course, and early in his first session, when 'an inconvenient and most unaccommodating Radical'[4] brought forward a motion for the immediate repeal of the Act,

[1] Page 224.
[2] Page 377.
[3] Speech at Shrewsbury, Aug. 27, 1844.
[4] Fielden.

he was one of a minority of thirteen Tories and philanthropic Radicals who voted in its favour against the forces of the Government and the Opposition combined. This crushing defeat checked for the moment the progress of the agitation, but it was not sufficient, as we shall see, to bring it to an end.

If the bad harvests which began in 1837 brought deeper misery to the agricultural poor, the bad trade by which they were accompanied made the condition of the industrial workers, if possible, even worse. The descriptions in *Sybil* of the rural town of Marney help us to realise the sufferings of the one, the pictures of life in Mowbray and the mining district near it the sufferings of the other. It was under such conditions that Chartism had its rise. Misery turned the thoughts of the working classes once more to their invidious exclusion from political rights, and, recalling the old Radical programme from oblivion, they embodied its five points in a document which became famous as the People's Charter. Great mass meetings were held in the North during the autumn and winter of 1838, and when Parliament met for the session of 1839 a National Convention of Chartist delegates, which was called by its own constituency the People's Parliament, met in London at the same time. The Convention devoted its energy to preparing a monster petition in favour of the Charter ; and when, after some delay caused by the intervention of the Bedchamber crisis, the time for its presentation came, this petition, Disraeli tells us, 'was carried down to Westminster on a triumphal car, accompanied by all the delegates in solemn procession. It was necessary to construct a machine in order to introduce the large bulk of parchment, signed by a million and a half of persons, into the House of Commons, and thus supported its vast form remained on the floor of the House during the discussion. The House, after a debate which was not deemed by the people commensurate with the importance of the occasion, decided on rejecting the prayer of the petition, and

from that moment the party in the Convention who advocated a recourse to physical force in order to obtain their purpose was in the ascendant.'[1]

In the debate,[2] which as a matter of fact took place a month after the solemn procession, on a motion that the House should resolve itself into committee to consider the petition, Disraeli, who, as his letters show, had anticipated the occasion, and carefully prepared himself, spoke immediately after the leader of the House. He had learnt a good deal since the days when he himself believed in political mechanism as a remedy for social evils, so he began by admitting the fallacy by which, as Russell had insisted, the petition was pervaded—that political rights would necessarily insure social happiness. But though they might reject the remedy suggested by the Chartists, they ought none the less, he argued, to try and cure the disease. The nature of the disease was not clearly understood. The Chartist movement could not be explained as the work of professional agitators or as the outcome of mere sedition. Neither could it be wholly explained as the result of the new Poor Law, though he believed there was an intimate connexion between the two. Both Charter and new Poor Law, with many other evils, he would trace to the same origin—the Reform Act and the constitution which the Reform Act had established. The old constitution had an intelligible principle; the present had none. 'Great duties could alone confer great station,' and while the old constitution imposed great public duties on the small class to which it entrusted political power, our new ruling class was not bound up with the great mass of the people by the performance of social duties, and had attained political station without the conditions which should be annexed to its possession. Having thus gained power without responsibility, our new rulers naturally were anxious to save themselves trouble and expense; hence on the one hand the cry for cheap government, and their eagerness on the other

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. V. ch. 1. [2] July 12, 1839.

to transfer to a centralised Government the social duties which they ought to have accepted as the necessary accompaniment of their new political privileges. Hence, for instance, the new Poor Law, which taught the destitute not to look for relief to their neighbours, but to a distant Government stipendiary. It would be said, indeed, that the Opposition were responsible in some degree for the enactment of the new Poor Law, and he admitted the fact; but he also regretted it, and—here, we may fancy, with a fugitive glance at Peel—he thought their consenting to such a Bill was a very great blunder. The Tory party would yet rue the day they did so, for they had acted contrary to principle—the principle of opposing everything like centralised government, and favouring in every way the distribution of power.

The noble lord (John Russell), who was tolerant of the advanced demands of his Radical supporters, treated the Charter with derision because it was not compatible with the retention of political power by the class which he had created; but if he thought that in this country a monarchy of the middle classes could be permanently established he would be indulging a great delusion—a delusion which, if persisted in, must shake our institutions and endanger the throne. Such a system was foreign to the character of the English people. In the speeches of the Chartist leaders there was to be found the greatest hostility to government by the middle classes. They made no attack on the aristocracy, none on the Corn Laws; but they attacked the new constituency, that peculiar constituency which was the basis of the noble lord's government. The whole subject, he was aware, was distasteful to both the great parties in the House. He regretted the fact. He was not ashamed to say, however much he disapproved of the Charter, he sympathised with the Chartists. They formed a great body of his countrymen, and no one could doubt they laboured under great grievances. This must always be considered a very remarkable social movement. It was

a social insurrection, and if they treated it as a mere temporary ebullition they would be grievously mistaken.

Having thus made his protest against the indifference with which the petition was treated on both sides of the House, Disraeli voted in the majority by which the motion was rejected. Charles Egremont, in *Sybil*, spoke on the same occasion, and a conversation in the novel well reflects the bewilderment which Disraeli's speech must have caused to Peel as he listened, or to any others who took the trouble to think of it at all:

'It was a very remarkable speech of Egremont,' said the grey-headed gentleman. 'I wonder what he wants.'

'I think he must be going to turn Radical,' said the Warwickshire peer.

'Why, the whole speech was against Radicalism,' said Mr. Egerton.

'Ah, then he is going to turn Whig, I suppose.'

'He is ultra anti-Whig,' said Egerton.

'Then what the deuce is he?' said Mr. Berners.

'Not a Conservative certainly, for Lady St. Julians does nothing but abuse him.'

'I suppose he is crotchety,' suggested the Warwickshire noble.

'That speech of Egremont was the most really democratic speech that I ever read,' said the grey-headed gentleman. . . .

'What does he mean by obtaining the results of the Charter without the intervention of its machinery?' inquired Lord Loraine, a mild, middle-aged, lounging, languid man, who passed his life in crossing from Brooks' to Boodle's, and from Boodle's to Brooks', and testing the comparative intelligence of these two celebrated bodies. . . .

'I took him to mean—indeed, it was the gist of the speech—that, if you wished for a time to retain your political power, you could only effect your purpose by securing for the people greater social felicity.'

'Well, that is sheer Radicalism,' said the Warwickshire peer; 'pretending that the people can be better off than they are is Radicalism, and nothing else.'[1]

Before the debate took place the Convention had been transferred to Birmingham, and there, three days later, there was a riot so fierce that the Duke of Wellington

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. V. ch. 1.

sought a parallel for the scene of devastation in his recollections of the Peninsula. But when Russell, as Home Secretary, asked the House of Commons to authorise an advance to the Birmingham Corporation for the establishment of a police force, Disraeli opposed, insisting that inquiry into the insurrectionary spirit should precede the grant of extraordinary powers, and in a House of 150 he had the courage to enter the lobby as one of a minority of three[1] against the resolution. Next day, on the first reading of a Bill for the institution of a local constabulary, he accused Lord John of declaring war against Birmingham, and levying 5,000 troops against his former allies. His speech on this occasion drew a severe reproof from the Chancellor of the Exchequer,[2] and an Under-Secretary[3] had the temerity to denounce him as 'an advocate of riot and confusion.' Disraeli in his rejoinder gave them both a taste of his quality:

> I have heard some comments made upon me by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and an Under-Secretary of State which I do not choose to pass unnoticed. Indeed, from a Chancellor of the Exchequer to an Under-Secretary of State is a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous, though the sublime is on this occasion rather ridiculous, and the ridiculous rather trashy. How he became Chancellor of the Exchequer, and how the Government to which he belongs became a Government, it would be difficult to tell. Like flies in amber, 'One wonders how the devil they got there.'[4]

At a later stage of the same Bill, Disraeli scored a palpable hit at the expense of Lord John Russell, who had ascribed the disturbances in the country to Oastler,[5] a well-known Tory Chartist, and to the agitation against the Poor Law, in which Oastler had been a leader. 'Far be it from me,' said Disraeli, 'to cope with the noble lord in endeavouring to trace the pedigreé of

[1] Fielden and Wakley were the others, the tellers being Leader and Duncombe.
[2] Spring Rice.
[3] Fox Maule, afterwards Lord Panmure and 11th Earl of Dalhousie.
[4] It is to this incident that Disraeli alludes in his letter on p. 468.
[5] Richard Oastler, 1789-1861, known as the 'Factory King,' Sadler's friend and chief ally in his crusade against the abuses of the factory system.

sedition, but I confess I feel disposed to trace it to a higher source than Mr. Oastler. . . . There was a time, as you are all aware, after the Reform Bill had passed this House, when we were told 200,000 men were to march from Birmingham to assist the decision of the other House of Parliament. That was before Mr. Oastler. . . . The noble lord regards the Chartists as if they were the first body of men who had appealed to physical force. He talks as if the hon. and learned member for Dublin had never appealed to a petition signed by 50,000 fighting men.'[1] Peel in the next session took the same line of argument, and followed it with great effect.

Rioting in the towns and rick-burning in the country continued during the recess, and at Newport in Wales there was positive insurrection. When Parliament met in January, a vote of want of confidence was moved from the Opposition benches, and the Ministry formally charged with responsibility for these disorders.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
Friday [*Jan.* 31, 1840].

MY DEAREST,

This is a hurried sketch of our debate. Sir Yarde[2] was very bad, but not much less effective than Acland last year in a similar position; but more stupid, the difference being Sir Tom only stuttered, Sir John stuck. Sir George Grey made a dashing House of Commons speech which I should have liked to have answered, but as he concluded about 8, and I had not dined, it was impossible. I had no intention of speaking the first night, and am very sorry I did, for, although I said some good things and was very well received, I was debarred by circumstances from making the speech I had intended. The fact is the Government put up Gisborne, who is sometimes a most rakehelly rhetorician, and produces great effects in a crowded house, but uncertain. There was and had been for some time a general rumor that he was to make a great display, and when he got up Fremantle came to me and asked me to reply to him. He began very well, but after some little time regularly broke down, was

[1] *The Times*, Aug. 10, 1839.
[2] Sir John Yarde-Buller, afterwards Lord Churston.

silent for some moments, sent for oranges, coughed, stuck again and again and again, and finally, pleading 'some physical inability' which had suddenly deprived him of his voice, sunk overwhelmed with his own exposure. We thought he was drunk, but the Whigs say the fault was he was not, and that when he is tipsy and is not prepared he is very good. I found, however, I had a lame bird to kill, or rather a dying one: and though I made a somewhat brilliant guerilla operation, there was not that solid tactical movement that I had originally contemplated.

The next night we had it all our own way, Howick making the most extraordinary announcement[1] which you have read and alone justifies the debate. Graham very rigorous and malignant, and Macaulay[2] plunging into the most irretrievable slough of failure you can possibly conceive; nothing could be worse—manner, matter, and spirit, ludicrously elaborate and perfectly inappropriate. The Speaker with difficulty preserved order, and it was clear to everyone that in future Macaulay will no longer command the House, on such an occasion; and to such a personage, of course, always lenient.

Yesterday we again had it all our own way, Stanley being very effective. The debate is with us, but the division[3]—though Arthur Lennox has rallied to the Tories—will, I apprehend, be very seedy.

Vale.

D.

Disraeli in his speech resumed towards the Chartists his attitude of the previous session. 'I am not ashamed or afraid to say that I wish more sympathy had been shown on both sides towards the Chartists. . . . I am not ashamed to say that I sympathise with millions of my fellow-subjects.' Guerilla operation as the speech may have been, it contains one passage that became famous—a characteristic fling at Lord John Russell:

> The time will come when Chartists will discover that in a country so aristocratic as England even treason, to be successful, must be patrician. They will discover that great truth, and when they find some desperate noble to lead them they

[1] In explanation of his withdrawal from the Ministry at the beginning of the recess.

[2] 'That unfortunate speech on Buller's motion in 1840; one of the few unlucky things in a lucky life,' was Macaulay's own verdict many years later (Trevelyan's *Life*, ch. 8).

[3] The Government had a majority of 21 in a House of nearly 600 members.

may, perhaps, achieve greater results. Where Wat Tyler failed, Henry Bolingbroke changed a dynasty, and although Jack Straw was hanged, a Lord John Straw may become a Secretary of State.

In the course of the session Disraeli had the courage to help his Radical friends in attempts to secure remission of what he regarded, and not without reason, as the excessive punishment inflicted on some of the Chartist leaders,[1] voting on one occasion in a minority of five; denouncing the Whig Government as harsher in its practice than even the Star Chamber; asking 'how it happened that the same thing obtained impunity in Ireland under the name of agitation, which in England was punished under the name of sedition;' and making a characteristic appeal to the Tory members around him not to forget that they were the natural leaders of the people. 'Yes, I repeat,' he added, in response to cries of protest from the Whig side of the House, 'the aristocracy are the natural leaders of the people, for the aristocracy and the labouring population form the nation.'[2]

His conduct in these matters drew an approving letter from a notable popular leader, Charles Attwood,[3] of Newcastle, to which Disraeli sent an interesting reply:

To Charles Attwood.

GROSVENOR GATE,
June 7, 1840.

. . . I am honored by your approbation of my public conduct. I entirely agree with you, that an union between the Conservative party and the Radical masses offers the only means by which we can preserve the Empire. Their interests are identical; united they form the nation; and their division has only permitted a miserable minority, under the specious name of the People, to assail all rights of property and person.

Since I first entered public life, now eight years ago, I have worked for no other object and no other end than to aid the

[1] Six years later (March 11, 1846), when he had won a great position in the House of Commons, he spoke and voted again in favour of a motion with the same object in view, and was again in a minority.

[2] Hansard, July 10, 1840.

[3] Founder of the Northern Political Unions, which played a great part in the Reform Bill agitation, and brother of Thomas Attwood, the member for Birmingham, Cobbett's 'King Tom.'

formation of a national party. And when I recollect the difficulties with which this proposition struggles, and the contests and misrepresentations which I have personally experienced in advocating its adoption, you may understand the extreme satisfaction with which I have witnessed the recent progress of events, and now learn, on your unquestionable authority, that in Northumberland, long the sacred refuge of Saxon liberty, a considerable party, founded on the union in question, is at present in process of formation and of rapid growth.

None but those devoid of the sense and spirit of Englishmen can be blind to the perils that are impending over our country. Our Empire is assailed in every quarter; while a domestic oligarchy, under the guise of Liberalism, is denationalising England. Hitherto we have been preserved from the effects of the folly of modern legislation by the wisdom of our ancient manners. The national character may yet save the Empire. The national character is more important than the Great Charter or trial by jury. Notwithstanding the efforts of the Whigs to sap its power, I still have confidence in its energy.

Meanwhile, in spite of his sometimes aggressive independence, Disraeli had succeeded in winning the approbation of a leader whose approbation was never lightly given. In the first days of the session of 1840 Peel invited him to attend what would now be called a 'shadow Cabinet'—a conference of the principal members of the Conservative Opposition, sixteen in all, of whom, as Mrs. Disraeli proudly records, 'Dizzy was the only one who had not been in office.' On the very day that he received this signal proof of confidence he reasserted his independence by a brilliant incursion into debate in opposition to his leader, and by voting against him in the division that followed. The House of Commons had become involved in the famous affair of Stockdale, and was now, at the instance of both the front benches, about to commit the Sheriffs of London to the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms for executing orders of the Court of Queen's Bench which were represented as a breach of privilege. An overzealous legal member, in the course of the debate, was foolish enough to enlarge on the tyranny of the courts in the time of Charles I., and Dis-

raeli, who was well read in the history of that period, replied at once in a speech 'of great eloquence and vigour,' as the newspapers described it, in which he gave a vivid account of the tyranny of Parliament in the same troubled age, and showed that the tyranny of the courts was nothing in comparison. He ended with a declaration which has not lost its significance, that there was a difference between the law of Parliament and the law of the House of Commons, and that 'he for one would never consent to see the country subjected to the law of the latter.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*Jan.* 19, 1840.]

Peel congratulated me very warmly on my marriage. . . . Yesterday I gave my first male dinner-party. Everything went off capitally; Lyndhurst, Strangford, Powerscourt, Ossulston, D'Orsay, Sir R Grant, and Sir L. Bulwer, &c. . . . I have been introduced at last formally to the Duke of Wellington at Lyndhurst's; he accorded me a most gracious and friendly reception, and looked right hearty. The Queen is to be married February 10.

5.30 [*Jan.* 23].

Since Tuesday I have done nothing but receive congratulations about my speech. . . . Lord Fitzgerald just told me that since the good old days of Canning he had never heard so brilliant a reply. . . . Hogg says it was not only a good speech: it was something better, an effective.

The curious thing is that *The Times*, which gives an admirable report of what I said, gives a most inefficient impression of the effect produced. I never heard more continued cheering: the house very full, about half-past 10 when I sat down, a prime hour and every man of distinction there. I never spoke better even in Bucks. It is in vain to give you any account of all the compliments, all the congratulations, the shaking of hands, &c., which occurred in the lobby during the division, but time and this damned post prevent all communication. . . . From Sir Robert Peel downwards there is but one opinion of my great success. Eliot very warm indeed.

I have been to see the sheriffs in prison. They really think themselves martyrs. I told them they would 'live in history,' and they answered, 'No doubt of it.'

Burn this egotistical trash. Love,

D.

[*Undated.*]

Eastell, who dined with me yesterday, had just come up from old Lord Sidmouth at Richmond. The fine old gentleman, now 85, takes the most lively interest in the question, and, strange for an old Speaker, is on the side of law. He was in raptures with my speech.

Feb. 12.

The Duke of Bucks has dined with me ; he was really quite gay and seemed delighted with everything, which with him is very rare, as society bores him. I have asked sixty M.P.'s to dine with me, and forty have come. I shall now rest upon my oars. We are in great confusion with Stockdale. He bore his examination with great coolness, without being audacious, and unbroken presence of mind. The sheriffs and under-sheriffs have been under examination, but the House only gets deeper in the mire, and I think the result is that they must commit the sheriffs, which will occasion a riot, and eventually the judges, which will cause a rebellion. If Follett had not misled Peel originally, the Whigs would have been crushed.

[*Feb.* 18.]

My Dearest,

I went up yesterday with our House,[1] very strong in numbers and very brilliant in costume ; but it was generally agreed that I am never to wear any other but a Court costume, being, according to Ossulston, a very Charles II.

The peers preceding our procession by only half an hour, the golden carriages of the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker were almost blended in the same crowd, and the quantity of carriages and personages of note, to say nothing of courtiers, gentlemen-at-arms, and beefeaters, was very fine. All our men were costumed, but Scholefield and Muntz, and a few Rads, including, to my surprise, O'Connell, *en bourgeois*. The Speaker, with John Russell on his right and Peel on his left, both in the Windsor dress, marched up to the throne in good style ; we followed somewhat tumultuously. The Queen looked well : the Prince on her left in high military fig very handsome, and the presence was altogether effective. Always having heard the Palace abused, I was rather agreeably surprised : the hall is low, but the staircase is not ineffective ; the antechamber, a green drawing-room, in which we were assembled for half an hour, leads at once to the Throne room. After the Bavarian palaces, all this is nothing, but I was amused, for the scene was busy and brilliant.

My love to all.

D.

[1] To congratulate the Queen on her marriage.

BRIGHTON,
April 20.

We have found this place pleasant enough, the weather being very fine. I have eaten a great many shrimps, which are the only things that have reminded me I am on the margin of the ocean; for it has been a dead calm the whole week, and I have not seen a wave or heard the break of the tide. There are a good many birds of passage here, like ourselves. I had a long stroll with the Speaker,[1] who is the most amiable of men and not one of the least agreeable, fresh as a child and enjoying his holidays.

June 1.

After all, poor Lady Cork did not die of old age; she was arranging her plants in a new fashion and caught cold. On Saturday at Hope's I sat next to Rogers, and he made one or two efforts at conversation which I did not encourage; but after the second course (Rogers having eaten an immense dinner), both of us in despair of our neighbours, we could no longer refrain from falling into talk, and it ended by a close alliance, the details and consequences of which are so amusing that I must reserve them for our visit.

All the world has been this morning to Exeter Hall to see Prince Albert in the chair. Peel moved one of the resolutions, and produced a great effect on his Highness.

Friday, June 12.

The political world is convulsive: the Government, by extraordinary efforts and pledging themselves that if in a minority they would resign, having induced Howick and all the malcontents, rats, and shufflers to return to their allegiance, came to pitched battle again last night, and were, to our surprise as much as their own consternation, ignobly defeated. After this occurred a scene which only can be compared to Donnybrook fair. O'Connell insanely savage, the floor covered with members in tumultuous groups, Stratford Canning pale as a spectre, with outstretched and arraigning arm, hooting, cheering, groaning, and exclamations from unknown voices in the senatorial crowd. Maidstone in full dress, fresh from the Clarendon, re-enacting the part of the English Marcellus, and Norreys with a catcall.

To-day the Houses went up to the Queen with congratulations on her escape.[2] I didn't go.

On Wednesday the Lyndhursts, Ingestres, Ernest Bruces, Hoggs, Lords Munster, Claud Hamilton, Walpole, Gardner, Follett, and the Duchess Dowager of Richmond, dined with

[1] Shaw-Lefevre, afterwards Viscount Eversley.
[2] From the attempt on her life by the madman Oxford.

us: very brilliant and successful, and Mary Anne much pleased, particularly as she is going to-night to the musical ball, and afterwards to Lady Lyndhurst's supper, which is revived and is to be very grand.

July 14.

Last night I massacred Dr. Bowring.[1] . . . I answered the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and was replied to by the President of the Board of Trade, who, however, had nothing to say for himself, and was obliged to take refuge in mere assertions. My facts flabbergasted him, as well as Bowring's champion, Hume, who was ludicrously floored. His speech is not in the least reported, but convulsed the House when he said the 'hon. and *learned* member for Maidstone' had taken him by surprise, quoting authors he had never read, &c. &c. Peel most gallantly came to the rescue of his 'hon. friend the member for Maidstone,' and gave me immense *kudos*.

Aug. 7.

Yesterday Louis Napoleon, who last year at Bulwer's nearly drowned us by his bad rowing, upset himself at Boulogne. Never was anything so rash and crude to all appearances as this 'invasion,' for he was joined by no one. A fine house in Carlton Gardens, his Arabian horses, and excellent cook was hardly worse than his present situation.

In a note of later years Disraeli recounts at length the incident at Bulwer's:

Bulwer, who then lived at Craven Cottage, gave a breakfast party there. We arrived late, and all the guests had gone up the Thames in a steamer. Walking on the Terrace, quite alone, two gentlemen who had arrived still later came up to us. These were Prince Louis Napoleon and Persigny. My wife explained to the Prince why the assembly was so scant. Upon which the Prince said: 'We will get a boat, and I will row you down to meet them.'

There was a boat and boatman lingering about, whom we hailed from the Terrace. The Prince took the oars, and for a little time we went on very well. At last, to escape the swell of a steamer that was approaching, the Prince contrived to row into a mudbank in the middle of the river, and there we stuck. Nothing could get us off. I was amused by the

[1] A well-known Benthamite who had been employed by Government to make commercial investigations abroad, as the Opposition alleged, from motives of political jobbery, and at a greatly excessive remuneration. He was afterwards, as Sir John Bowring, Plenipotentiary in China, and became famous in connexion with the Arrow affair in 1856-57.

manner in which my wife, who was alarmed especially, and not without cause, from the fear of other steamboats which caused a great swell on the water, rated the Prince: 'You should not undertake things which you cannot accomplish. You are always, sir, too adventurous,' &c. &c. &c. I remained silent. At length the boatman, who had come to the rescue, got us off, and we arrived again at Craven Cottage just as Bulwer's company appeared in the distance. Nothing could be more good-natured than the Prince, and I could not have borne the scolding better myself. We often used to smile over this adventure; and many years after (I think 1856) my wife sat next to the Emperor at dinner at the Tuileries, and as he was chatty, and often adverted to the past, she ventured to remind His Majesty of the story, which he said he quite remembered. The Empress, who overheard them, said: 'Just like him.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

WOOLBEDING,
Sept. 7.

We are staying a few days with the Maxses. There is no one here except Tom Duncombe; but, as you know, the place is very beautiful, a paradise of flowers and conservatories, fountains and vases, in the greenest valley with the prettiest river in the world. This was a former temple of Whiggery. Charles Fox's statue and portrait may be seen in every nook and every chamber, a sort of rural Brooks's.

[*Undated.*]

Walpole[1] went to dine yesterday with the Miss Berrys, who now live at Richmond; the party consisting of Miss Montague, Guizot, and Pollington — very *recherché* and 'Strawberry Hillish.' The old ladies a little in love with the Horace Walpole of the nineteenth century, who, by the bye, is more elegant, fantastical, and interesting than ever, and talks of changing his name, retiring to Parma or Cremona, or some city equally decayed and unvisited. Venice too vulgar, with Monckton Milnes writing sonnets in every gondola, and making every bridge 'a bridge of sighs.' I breakfasted with him to-day, and he really was divine. I never met anything like him—such a stream of humor, fancy, philosophy, and quotation, in every language. When last in Egypt he met Botta, who talked of me much.

Peace, peace is the order of the day, and French funds have risen 5 per cent. in one day. The Princess Augusta still lives, but everybody else in London seems dead.

[1] Afterwards 4th Earl of Orford.

Throughout the autumn England and France were hovering on the verge of war, for this was the memorable year of the expulsion of Mehemet Ali's Egyptians from Syria, Palmerston's greatest triumph in his career as a Foreign Minister. With due reserve of judgment as to the intrinsic wisdom of the Minister's policy, Disraeli has celebrated the achievement in a glowing passage of *Tancred*:

When we consider the position of the Minister at home, not only deserted by Parliament, but abandoned by his party and even forsaken by his colleagues; the military occupation of Syria by the Egyptians; the rabid demonstrations of France; that an accident of time or space, the delay of a month or the gathering of a storm, might alone have baffled all his combinations; it is difficult to fix upon a page in the history of this country which records a superior instance of moral intrepidity. The bold conception and the brilliant performance were worthy of Chatham; but the domestic difficulties with which Lord Palmerston had to struggle place the exploit far beyond the happiest achievement of the elder Pitt.[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

Oct. 15.

The King of Holland has abdicated, and Beyrout, after a bombardment of nine hours, has been taken by the English. The Cabinet have decided on 'carrying out' the treaty of July to the letter, with only four dissentients. *On dit* that even Lord Holland, that old Gallomaniac, ratted to Palmerston, who is quite triumphant. Great panic exists here, and even the knowing ones, who from their confidence in Louis Philippe have all along been sanguine of peace, look very pale and blue. Alas! that a Bourbon dynasty, even of Orleans, should absolutely depend for its existence on a Guizot or a Thiers, a *professeur* and a *rédacteur*. My domestic ministry, which is as troublesome as the French, is provisionally formed.

Oct. 22.

Lord Holland was found dead in his bed this morning. This, though not considered as yet a very significant event, is in my eyes not unimportant. It breaks up an old clique of pure Whiggery, and the death of a single Minister, by causing Cabinet reconstruction, is always of some weight. . . .

We have had a delightful visit to Deepdene. In the midst of romantic grounds and picturesque park Hope has built,

[1] *Tancred*, Bk. III. ch. 6.

or rather is still building, a perfect Italian palace, full of balconies adorned with busts. On the front a terraced garden, and within a hall of tesselated pavement of mosaics, which is to hold his choicest marbles. We found there Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Hope, and Harness,[1] now grown an oldish gentleman, but still juvenile in spirits, and even ready to act charades and spout poetry. Mrs. Adrian is French, a child of nature—never heard of Sir R. Peel. She is the daughter of the famous General Rapp.

Nov. 21.

There is no doubt that Acre has fallen, and therefore the matter is settled. What was the poor Pacha to do against all Europe? He has been infamously misled by that rascal Thiers, a thorough representative of the *gaminerie* of Paris. In the meantime, the Liberals are infinitely disgusted with Palmerston's triumph, and quarrel among themselves in much the same fashion as Monsieur Thiers. . . .

We intend spending Christmas at Deepdene, and from thence to Bradenham. We had the Lyndhursts and Tankervilles, with Cis Forester and Hope, to dinner the other day, when we had a perfect *Spanish pudding*. Lyndhurst recognised his old Bradenham friend. Tankerville's French cook, he tells me to-day, has been trying his 'prentice hand' at it, but a fiasco. He says he finds a French cook can never execute out of his school, and Cis wants the receipt for the mess, but Mary Anne won't give it.

DEEPDENE,
Dec. 26.

We arrived here a week ago, with our host and Adrian Hopes. Then came Mr. Mitchell, very amusing; Baron and Baroness de Cetto, Walpole, Lord de L'Isle, Sir A. Grant, and Lord and Lady Ernest Bruce; two days after came Baron Gersdorf, Sir Hume Campbell; and these formed our Christmas party, with the addition of the delectable Mr. Hayward. . . . Our party very merry and agreeable, and we have had many Christmas gambols, charades, and ghosts; and our princely host made all the ladies a Christmas box; to Mary Anne two beautiful specimens of Dresden china, a little gentleman in cocked hat and full dress, and a most charming little lady covered with lace. A thousand loves, and good wishes for a real happy Christmas and New Year. God grant it may turn out so for all of us.

D.[2]

[1] Doubtless William Harness, 1790-1869, divine and author, schoolfellow and friend of Byron, and at this time incumbent of Regent Square Chapel.
[2] *Letters*, pp. 176-180.

Peel's clumsy management of the crisis of 1839 had renewed the Whig lease of office for a longer term than he or anyone else expected. The popularity of the young Queen had waned after the Bedchamber affair, and had not been increased by her German marriage; but it had been revived in full force by the attempt on her life in the summer of 1840, and the Ministry of which her popularity was the mainstay profited accordingly. The triumph of Palmerston's foreign policy in the autumn of that year had brought them great prestige; and if discontent was still rife, disorder at least had been checked, and the Chartists dragooned into a sombre inactivity. It was small wonder if for a moment in that winter of 1840 many Whigs believed that the long downward movement had at last been arrested, and that their party was in the fair way of recovering its authority.

But, as Mr. Tadpole observed with much originality at the Carlton, they were dancing on a volcano. It was December, and the harvest was not yet all got in, the spring corn had never grown, and the wheat was rusty; there was, he well knew, another deficiency in the revenue to be counted by millions; wise men shook their heads and said the trade was leaving the country, and it was rumored that the whole population of Paisley lived on the rates.[1]

It was the fourth time in succession that the harvest had failed, and there was no sign of trade recovering its activity. Population had increased immensely since the end of the great war, and wages had been steadily falling; but up to a certain point there had been compensation for the fall in their higher purchasing power, and even the price of food had, in spite of the Corn Laws, on the whole been trending downward. During the twenty years before the accession of the Queen the wretchedness of the people had been due to low wages rather than to dear food; but the long period of high prices, combined with exceptionally bad employment since the opening of her reign, had made the position intolerable, and some great measure of social

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 65.

renovation was clearly required. The Whigs appeared to be helpless ; Disraeli's friends, the Chartists, had come forward with their remedy, but it had been contemptuously rejected, and discontent, debarred from one mode of expression, was seeking another channel.

It was now that the agitation, hitherto fitful, for the repeal of the Corn Laws began to gather power, and that the great question which was to transform the whole of English politics came to the forefront. The Corn Laws were so long the gage of party battle, and they raise issues with regard to which party feeling is still so vehement, that it is by no means easy to thread a way through the controversial tangle in which they are involved. Anyone who tries will find himself at once in a bewildering atmosphere of legend and exaggeration, of half-truths masquerading as indefeasible principles, and rival theories appropriating such facts as fit them, while ignoring the rest. When he realises, as he soon will, the infinite complexity of the social and economic organism which is the field of investigation, and the enormous difficulty of segregating the effects of any given cause in the multitudinous play of social and economic forces ; when he tries, for instance, to distinguish between the influence on prices of tariff legislation in the first half of the last century and what in all probability was the far more potent influence of currency conditions during the same period ; when he sees how easily even the best-established principles may be thwarted or obscured in their operation by counteracting agencies, and the readiness with which figures can without falsification be selected to prove any given thesis, he will be apt, if he set forth without partisan purpose, to take refuge in a sort of economic agnosticism. He will learn at all events not to trust the confident dogmatism of either school of partisans, and perhaps to suspect that the question of high tariff or low in its strictly economic bearing is a good deal less important than either believes ; and when he has also come to see how the economic question

proper involved in the controversy was overshadowed from the first by great political issues, he will not think more lightly of the difficulties in the way of retrospective judgment.

The Corn Laws were a natural development of the great mercantile system the foundations of which had been laid by Burleigh in the reign of Elizabeth, and which, built up gradually during the storms of the seventeenth century, was sedulously maintained by the Whig aristocracy that governed England in the eighteenth. Whatever its practical defects or the theoretical fallacies by which it was sometimes defended, this system had the merit of setting before itself a single definite aim, which it pursued with steadfast purpose, and which gave it unity and coherence. Its aim was political power, and, if it sometimes erred in its choice of measures, it chose them with more enlightenment, as is now generally recognised, than critics in the first reaction which led to its overthrow were disposed to admit; and certainly during its sway of two centuries or more England rose to an astonishing height of prosperity and greatness. The system extended its reach over the whole field of economic activity, not only commerce and industry, but agriculture also. Up to near the end of the eighteenth century England exported corn, and for nearly a hundred years from the time of the Revolution production had been encouraged by a bounty on export, which it is claimed, and it would seem with justice, helped to steady prices as between years of scarcity and abundance. Then came a period of transition, when imports were sometimes necessary, and for nearly twenty years, under an Act of 1773, there was comparative free trade. By the time of the French Revolution the home supply had become permanently deficient, and in 1791 there was a reversion to the old policy of encouraging home production, now, however, by the method of a duty on imports intended to exclude foreign supplies when the home price fell below a certain standard; but under the abnormal

conditions of the revolutionary wars this and subsequent legislation remained practically a dead letter. Prices soon rose to the point at which corn could have been imported at a merely nominal duty; but foreign supplies were not available, and in spite of all efforts to increase the home production, wheat continued to rise till in 1812 it actually reached the level of 155s. the quarter. With this result, of which the depreciated currency seems to have been the principal cause, the Corn Laws had nothing to do. Whatever the intention of their framers, up to 1815 they had in practice hardly affected the price of corn or bread; yet it was probably the recollection of those terrible famine years more than any subsequent experience that made the name of Corn Law stink in the nostrils of the people.

The famine prices of the war had, of course, brought advantage to landlords and farmers, in spite of the burden of the rates under the old Poor Law, which grew with their profits; but on the restoration of peace the whole structure of English agriculture seemed to be threatened with collapse, and the assistance of the legislature was accordingly invoked. It was natural enough, and in harmony with the whole spirit of the mercantile system, that something should be done to help the greatest national interest through a difficult transition; but the Corn Law of 1815 exceeded all bounds, altogether prohibiting the import of foreign wheat when the home price fell below 80s. a quarter.[1] Fortunately, its injustice was frustrated by its ineptitude, and the attempt to maintain prices at the 80s. level was an absolute failure. Encouraged by the security, real or apparent, which the law gave to the corn-grower, the home production rapidly increased; and when the resumption of cash payments had led to a general decline in prices, wheat fell in a few years to a level below the average of the generation that followed the complete repeal of the Corn Laws.

[1] By an interesting provision wheat was admitted from Canada at 67s. a quarter.

The result was an inquiry into agricultural distress, and an attempt in 1822 to bring the law more nearly into unison with the facts by a reduction of the price at which importation began to 70s. a quarter. The failure to control prices was again, however, complete. When the Corn Laws became an object of party attack, there was much exaggeration of the evils they had caused. As late as 1840 Peel was able to show that the average amount of duty levied on all the wheat imported under these laws did not exceed 5s. 3d. a quarter. But in one respect their mischief could hardly be exaggerated. By depriving the country of the steadying effect of moderate importation, the Acts of 1815 and 1822 seriously increased the fluctuation of prices, and the Act of 1828, which eventually took their place, only made matters worse. This Act, which was passed by the Wellington Ministry, and which was the Act that remained in force till Peel took the matter in hand in his second administration, employed the complicated mechanism of a sliding scale of duties, the duty being nominal at 73s., and rising to a maximum of 23s. 8d. inversely as the price fell to 64s. It was obviously now the interest of the importers to hold back corn till prices had reached their zenith, and the fluctuations in consequence were more violent than ever.

Moreover, by 1828 the moral justification for a Corn Law so stringent had largely disappeared. The earlier legislation had been an addition to a general code which gave a fairly balanced protection to all economic interests. But the country had been outgrowing the old mercantile system, and Huskisson had reconstructed it, during his memorable term of office as President of the Board of Trade from 1823 to 1827, to suit the new conditions. He by no means, indeed, discarded the traditional principle of regulating trade in the interest of maritime power and economic equilibrium, but he swept away a multitude of antiquated restrictions originally devised in the interest of commerce, and abolished or reduced an immense number of duties for the protection of industries now

strong enough to stand alone. Though Huskisson is said to have been the inventor of the sliding scale, it is certain that he would not have applied it as it was applied in the Act of 1828; and it is unfortunate that he was not allowed or encouraged to deal with the Corn Laws in the same liberal spirit which he had brought to his reforms affecting industry and commerce. The question was left for settlement to Wellington's ill-starred Ministry, and they entirely forgot that Huskisson's reforms had made the position accorded to agriculture appear special and invidious, so that the Corn Laws henceforth wore the aspect of a class measure.

In a sense the new Poor Law of 1834, by diminishing the burden of the rates, which under the old system had weighed so heavily on the land, tended also to deprive the Corn Laws of their moral justification. Otherwise during the period of Whig rule in the thirties the position remained unaltered. The Whigs were protectionists by the tradition of their party, and they suffered at this time from complete incapacity in all matters of public economy and finance. The Act of 1828, as completely as its predecessors, failed to maintain prices at the level that was aimed at; and under it production so rapidly developed that, according to an estimate of Peel's on the eve of its supersession, nearly 90 per cent. of the wheat consumed by the nation was, in spite of the great increase of the population to be fed, still grown at home even in a bad year. In 1835, after a series of good harvests, the average price of wheat was actually less than 40s. the quarter, and as long as bread was cheap there was no practical grievance and little agitation. But when the bad harvests which began in 1837 forced up the price of corn, the question rapidly ripened. An Anti-Corn-Law Association was founded in Manchester in 1838, and by the energy of Richard Cobden was speedily developed into the organisation which became famous as the Anti-Corn-Law League. As one bad harvest succeeded another, and trade continuously sank into deeper stagnation, the

League became more active in its campaign of agitation, and the results were soon visible. The Corn Laws had been an open question in the Melbourne Cabinet, though the Prime Minister himself was a violent protectionist; but whereas in 1837 only three Ministers had voted in the free trade minority, in 1839 no fewer than ten voted with Villiers on his now annual motion. After that year, as Chartism for a time fades into the background, the League is at the centre of the political situation.

The movement identified with the name of Cobden was not bounded in its scope by the question of the Corn Laws, and Cobden's triumph, when it came, meant far more than the triumph of a particular set of economic principles. The Corn Laws had become the symbol of the political predominance of the landed aristocracy—a predominance which had been rudely shaken, but by no means overthrown, by the passage of the Reform Act. It is a commonplace of history that some time is required for the disclosure of the full consequences of a political revolution, the traditions of the old order retaining their power long after the change in the political arrangements which gave them vitality. In our own days, for instance, we often hear it remarked that it is only now becoming possible to discern the real significance of the great extensions of the franchise in the last generation. It was the same in the case of the Reform Act of 1832. Nominally that Act established the middle classes in power; in practice, in the Whig Governments that ruled England during the thirties, the aristocratic tradition remained all-powerful. The great bulk of their supporters were Whigs rather than Radicals, and the Radicals themselves were divided and impotent. Benthamism, indeed, which may be regarded in a sense as the middle-class philosophy, was already a great influence as a spirit in the air pervading political thought and informing legislation; but it was only when it had been transformed into what the Germans call 'Manchesterismus' that it attained its full potency

in Parliament and party. Its professional exponents in the Parliaments of the thirties, the philosophic Radicals, were pedants without power of appealing to men in the mass; and it was not till the genius of Cobden had taken control of the Radical movement, and given it a definite aim and fresh acceleration, that it became really effective. In Cobden, in fact, the middle classes found themselves. By his victory in the struggle that raged around the Corn Laws he dealt a staggering blow to the power of the aristocracy, and thus completed the work begun by the Reformers in 1832.

His agitation from the first was so essentially middle-class that it was regarded with deep distrust by the populace and their leaders, who remembered the great betrayal of ten years before; and from the Chartists especially, who beneath the clamour for cheap bread suspected a middle-class design for the reduction of wages, the League encountered violent opposition. If the agricultural interest and their friends the Tories had known how to place themselves at the head of the masses from whom the Chartists drew their strength, if Peel had possessed a tithe of Disraeli's political insight or popular sympathies, Cobden's agitation might have perished ingloriously, and the whole subsequent history of England have been different. But Cobden was helped from the beginning by the fact that the leader of the forces opposed to him was at heart on the side of the middle classes himself, and had no political ideal, aristocratic or democratic, fundamentally different from Cobden's own. 'There,' said Wellington of Peel, 'is a gentleman who never sees the end of a campaign.' Peel was trying to substitute for the Toryism of the past something which was almost a contradiction in terms—a middle-class Toryism. His Toryism was better than Eldon's in that it was in motion; but he moved, not according to principles or towards a goal of his own choice, but by a series of retreats before the pressure of the enemy, and this could only end, as it did, in his facing about and adopting the

enemy's line of march. Peel made no attempt to probe the grievances of the Chartists or devise a medicine for their ills. He was content to encourage the Whigs in their policy of repression, and to leave the suffering multitude without guidance or hope. And as a result Cobden was enabled to enlist their sympathy to a great extent on the side of his agitation, and, as had happened once before, to use popular forces for advancing the power of the middle classes at the expense of the aristocracy.

Cobden was the real author of the middle-class Liberalism which dominated England for more than a generation, and the tradition of which is still so powerful; or if there is anyone to dispute with Cobden the credit of its authorship, it is Peel himself. As the note of the old Whig order, Disraeli would have said, was oligarchic selfishness, so the note of the new Liberal order was a vague cosmopolitanism—both inconsistent, though in opposite ways, with truly national principles. With hostility to the Corn Laws and hostility to the landed gentry there was associated in Cobden's mind a certain hostility to the national idea of which the landed gentry were the especial custodians. During the long peace the national idea had gradually been growing dim, the very strength of our position among the nations of Europe tending to obscure it, and the cosmopolitan principles of which Cobden's mind was full met with a good deal of acceptance. He was to find, indeed, later, when he had overthrown the landed gentry and broken the Tory party, that the national idea was still stronger than he had imagined. The middle classes, when they had fairly entered on their long lease of power, chose Palmerston as their leader, and marched contentedly under his guidance into the Crimean War, forgetful of the reign of peace of which Cobden had been dreaming. In another direction, however, Cobden's influence was more effective. If to the national idea he was cold, he hated the imperial idea with a sincere and deadly hatred, and he succeeded in giving to the Liberal party, which he did

so much to shape, an anti-imperial bias that almost destroyed the Empire.

Party in this country is rigorous in its divisions, and party would have us believe that the English world was then divided into protectionists who upheld the worst abuses of the Corn Laws, and free traders who adopted the cosmopolitan views of Cobden. Disraeli was in neither camp. He could appreciate the genius of the 'inspired bagman with his calico millennium,' to quote Carlyle's description of Cobden, but he never, like Peel, fell under his sway, and neither was he ever ruled by the fanatics of protection. He was one of the few people of that generation to grasp firmly the truth which has hardly even now found any wide acceptance—that protection and free trade were made for man, and not man for either of them. Free trade, as he maintained, was an expedient, not a principle, and that was the keynote of nearly all his speeches. From the first he was resolute in looking at the question as a whole and in its concrete relations, and in refusing to be drawn aside into abstract lines of argument; in studying it in the light of history; and in fixing his eyes above all on its political significance. 'Reduce the burdens that so heavily press upon the farmer,' he said as early as 1832,[1] 'and then reduce his protection in the same ratio. That is the way to have cheap bread' . . . . without destroying the interest which is the basis of all sound social happiness.' Apart from the effective cry of cheaper bread for the people, there were two main arguments, not wholly congruous, employed by the opponents of the Corn Laws—one, that the high cost of living for which they were responsible made it impossible for our manufacturers to compete with the foreigner; the other, that the free admission of corn from abroad would enable foreign countries to buy our manufactures. The argument from the cost of living was that which chiefly weighed with the bulk of the manufacturers, and was strongly urged by Villiers in the session of 1838.

[1] Page 225.

The answer, as Gladstone on the opposite benches and the Chartists outside Parliament were equally quick to see, was 'Thank you. We quite understand. Your object is to get down the wages of your workpeople.'[1] In his speech[2] on this occasion Disraeli denied the premiss that the Corn Laws had any appreciable effect in raising the cost of manufacture, and he then proceeded to lay bare the political motive that underlay the whole agitation:

> Whose interest was it to have the Corn Laws repealed? It was the interest solely of the manufacturing capitalist, who had contrived to raise a large party in favor of that repeal by the specious pretext that it would lead to a reduction of rents, and by obtaining the co-operation of a section in this country who were hostile to a political system based on the preponderance of the landed interest.

Two years later, probably through the now rising influence of Cobden, who was always guarded in his language as to the effect the abolition of the Corn Laws would have on the cost of living, Villiers laid the stress on the argument drawn from an abstract theory of exchange: 'Repeal the Corn Laws, and you will create new markets for our manufactures, and England will become the workshop of the world.' Disraeli spoke again, protesting against the matter being considered and decided as a mere abstract question of political economy. The whole Cobden theory was founded on a curious belief in the total absence of competition between nations as a whole combined with the most strenuous competition between the individuals that compose them; and Disraeli showed the danger of a one-sided development of the industry of the country, and the economic dependence that it must inevitably imply, and pointed to the fate of Holland as a warning against the belief that 'the industry of foreign nations was to be regulated by a mere devotion to our interests and necessities.' Tillage, the Dutch had said in the seventeenth century, was to them of no

[1] Morley's *Gladstone*, I., p. 249. [2] *V. supra*, ch. I.

account, for 'Europe was their farm,' and that expression would be an appropriate pendant to the formula that Britain should be the workshop of the world. Such 'arrogant aspirations' were based, he was certain, 'on profound ignorance of human nature; and however we might modify our own tariff, the industry of other nations would ramify into various courses, and would establish opposing interests in the same community.'[1] In the same interesting speech he showed how Prussia, which at the Congress of Vienna had only five million subjects, had by 'the machinery of commercial union conquered Germany in peace,' quoting from the paper in which the whole plan of union was 'laid down by Stein, the celebrated Prussian Minister.' 'If Prussia had conquered by the arms of her generals, the acquisition could not have been more complete.' Somewhat later[2] in the same session, in a debate on foreign policy, he showed again that he was studying the actual circumstances of foreign trade; tracing in detail the effect of Palmerston's rule at the Foreign Office, and arriving at the conclusion that 'during the last nine years the commerce of England had received greater injury than in any other like period under any other Minister.'

Though the Whigs were already doomed when the session of 1841 began, the end was slow in coming. Humiliation the Ministry cheerfully accepted, and reverses they ignored; and after what he called their sixth defeat of the session Disraeli wrote to Lady Blessington: 'Their feebleness is of so vigorous a character that I doubt not they will still totter on.' As is usual on such occasions, impatient Tories thought that their leaders were remiss in not dealing the final blow, and Wellington especially was suspected of unwillingness to see a change of Government. Disraeli set forth 'the state of the case' in a letter to the Duke which appeared in *The Times*[3] over the signature of 'Atticus.' 'Atticus is a great hit,

[1] *The Times*, April 2, 1840. [2] July 22, 1840.
[3] March 11, 1841.

he wrote to his sister, and the letter certainly marks a notable advance in style on his earlier journalistic efforts. Beginning with the assumption that it was the Duke who was keeping the Whigs in office, the writer dismisses at once the explanation given by some, that, 'satisfied by the celebrity of an unrivalled career, his Grace is indisposed to enter the arena of political responsibility.'

> This idea of retiring on a certain quantity of fame, as some men retire on a certain quantity of money, has the twang of mediocrity. It is generally the refuge of those whose distinction has been more owing to chance than their own conceptions. . . . But original and creative spirits are true to the law of their organisation. An octogenarian Doge of Venice scaled the walls of Constantinople ; Marius had completed his seventieth year when he defeated the elder Pompey and quelled the most powerful of aristocracies ; white hairs shaded the bold brain of Julius II. when he planned the expulsion of the barbarians from Italy ; and the great King of Prussia had approached his grand climacteric when he partitioned Poland. In surveying your Grace's career of half a century, I cannot perceive any very obtrusive indications of moderation in your purposes, though abundant evidence of forbearance in your conduct. Celebrated for caution, I should rather select as your characteristic a happy audacity. No one has performed bolder deeds in a more scrupulous manner ; and plans, which, in their initial notion, have assumed even the features of rashness, have always succeeded from the wariness of your details. . . . Your physical aspect is in complete harmony with your spiritual constitution. In the classic contour of your countenance, at the first glance, we recognise only deep thoughtfulness and serene repose ; but the moment it lights up into active expression, command breathes in every feature ; each glance, each tone, indicates the intuitive mind impervious to argument, and we trace without difficulty the aquiline supremacy of the Cæsars.

No ; if the Duke is reconciled to the continuance in office of the existing administration, it is not because he shrinks from action ; it is rather from an opinion that, checked by his power, they can do no harm, and that in the enjoyment of place they will not care to project it. An erroneous opinion, as 'Atticus' thinks, for there is

no little danger, as he proceeds to show, in 'a state of affairs which accustoms the great body of the people to associate the idea of regular government with that of revolutionary doctrines':

> As long as public credit is to be maintained, or the national honor vindicated, a tax to be raised, or an armament equipped—in a word, as long as anything is to be done—a successful appeal is made to the loyal support of the Conservative party; but the moment that party evinces any ambition to possess itself of the forms as well as the spirit of power . . . some abstract declaration as to the nature of ecclesiastical property, or the exercise of the political franchise, is pompously announced; the capacity of an administrative body is made to depend upon the Parliamentary assertion of some unfeasible principle; and by the assistance of the revolutionary majority it is demonstrated that the Conservative party are disqualified for the conduct of public business. . . . These ingenious manœuvres are described in Ministerial rhetoric as the assertion of a great principle.

A Parliamentary policy 'that permits the Whigs simultaneously to carry on the Government by a Conservative majority and to carry on the revolution by a Radical one' cannot be wise. Refined political tactics may mystify the popular mind. A nation perplexed, like a puzzled man, will blunder, and the blunder of a people may prove the catastrophe of an Empire.

The great difficulty of the Whigs was the financial situation, and on the Budget of the year the crisis finally came. Bad harvests and bad trade, aided by the business incapacity of the Government and by an adventurous foreign policy, had brought the finances of the country into serious disorder, deficit following deficit till the total reached millions. The Whigs in desperation sought an exit from their difficulties in a tentative advance towards the principles of free trade. '"Lord Roehampton thinks that something must be done about the Corn Laws," murmured Berengaria one day to Endymion, rather crestfallen; "but they will try sugar and timber first. I think it all nonsense, but nonsense is sometimes necessary." This was the first warning of that famous

Budget of 1841 which led to such vast consequences, and which, directly or indirectly, gave such a new form and colour to English politics.'[1] The Budget scheme included a reduction of the duties on foreign sugar and timber, and the substitution of a fixed duty of a shilling the bushel on corn for the existing sliding scale. But the country had come to the conclusion that Peel was the one man who could deal with the situation, and this simultaneous attack on three great protected interests by a weak and tottering Ministry precipitated the end. The reduction of the sugar duty favoured slave-grown sugar, and on this the Opposition concentrated their attack. The ground was well chosen for combining with the protectionists the uncompromising anti-slavery men on the Ministerial benches, and after a debate of eight nights the Government were defeated by a majority of thirty-six.

To Sarah Disraeli.

May 15.

'I spoke with great effect last night in the House, the best speech on our side; it even drew 'iron tears down Pluto's cheek,' *alias*, applause and words of praise from Peel. A full House about half-past nine o'clock, and all the Ministers there. . . . The times are terribly agitating, and I can give you no clue to what may happen.

May 20.

The debate on Tuesday was powerful and exciting. I dined with the Guests, but regained my post behind Sir Robert by ten o'clock, a few minutes before he rose. He spoke for three and a quarter hours, equally divided between commerce, finance, and the conduct of the Government; the latter division very happy and powerful. I think it will end in dissolution.[2]

The Ministry, however, had no false pride, and after their defeat they neither dissolved nor resigned, but only proposed to revert to the old schedule of sugar duties, and to proceed to the development of the rest of their scheme. Peel, however, moved a formal vote of want of confidence, and carried it by a majority of one; but

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 65. [2] *Letters*, p. 181.

even then, instead of resigning, Ministers decided to ask for a dissolution of Parliament, and this the Queen granted, though five years later she had come to the opinion that she had 'made a mistake.'[1] In his letter to the Duke of Wellington, Disraeli had declared that 'our domestic history for the last ten years had been a visible and violent attempt to govern this country in spite of its Parliament.' In the final debate he enlarged on the same familiar theme.

> 'The House of Commons affected some astonishment that the Government, being in a minority, did not resign. . . . The House of Commons, proud of its new-fangled position as a reformed house, had allowed the Ministers to stigmatise a vote of the House of Lords as the whisper of a faction; but the poisoned chalice was now returned to their own lips, and they who had treated the House of Lords with insult now treated the House of Commons with contempt. Had they supported the House of Lords when it was insulted, they would not now be in the situation they occupied. . . . This was not the first time they were in that situation; the consequence of Whig policy had been seen before this, when, being strong in the Lords, they assailed and insulted the House of Commons, and changed its existence from a triennial to a septennial duration. Throughout their whole history one thing was always apparent—a systematic course of assault upon the Parliamentary institutions of the country. The Ministers remained in power in spite of the House of Commons, and in spite of the House of Lords.[2]

[1] See her letter to Lord John Russell of July 16, 1846, in the *Letters of Queen Victoria.*

[2] *The Times*, May 28, 1841.

raeli declared that the statement of the placard was 'utterly false,' and that there was not a single shilling in the list of judgments which had not been completely satisfied ;[1] explained that the judgments of recent date had been entered up by him as collateral security for a 'noble friend,' who had subsequently relieved him of all liability ; and ended with the protest : 'I should not have solicited your suffrages had I not been in possession of that ample independence which renders the attainment of any office in the state, except as the recognition of public service, to me a matter of complete indifference.'

As a matter of fact, marriage had by no means put an end to Disraeli's financial embarrassments. To his wife, from whom he appears to have had few or no secrets in any other matter, he seems at first to have adopted, with regard to his debts, the same policy of half-confidence that he had pursued towards his father. 'Very unwell from these damned affairs,' he writes, a year after his marriage, to Pyne, his solicitor ; and a little later : 'A writ delivered in my absence to my lady and other circumstances have produced a terrible domestic crisis.' Pyne about this time seems to have fallen into decay, with the dire result that Disraeli was obliged, as he complained, 'to attend personally to his affairs,' and personal attention seems only to have made him an easier prey than ever to the rapacity of usurers. We find him, for example, borrowing money at 40 per cent. to meet a bill of D'Orsay's[2] for which he had become responsible. His liabilities were now more than £20,000, and by his peculiar financial methods they tended constantly to grow. 'I cannot understand,' wrote his wife on the occasion of one of his customary 'operations,' 'why only £5,000 is wanted.' Probably, if the truth were known, neither could her hus-

[1] To his solicitors he had written: 'On looking over the list I see nothing but settled affairs, but there are some names which were not personally settled by me. I take it for granted they are all right.'

[2] D'Orsay was most probably the 'noble friend' who is alluded to in the Shrewsbury letter. [Disraeli assured Sir Philip Rose that, with the exception of £500, which he became liable for on D'Orsay's behalf with his eyes open, he never suffered in a pecuniary way by his connexion with him.—G. E. B.]

band. For every statement in his address in reply to the placard there appears to have been at least a formal justification, but it must be confessed that in its general effect it was hardly such as to give the good people of Shrewsbury an accurate view of the financial position of their candidate.

The elections everywhere went against the Whigs, but the Ministry met Parliament, and only resigned after an amendment to the Address had been carried against them by a majority of over ninety. In the debate on this amendment Disraeli spoke again, the burden of his speech being a criticism of the Government for remaining in office after the vote of want of confidence passed in the previous Parliament, and after it had become clear that the country was confirming the judgment of Parliament in the elections. Graham and Stanley, we are told,[1] showed their disapproval of this novel constitutional doctrine by a negative shake of the head, and it was left to Disraeli himself, more than a quarter of a century later, to create the precedent of resigning in anticipation of the verdict of a new and hostile House of Commons. Seeing clearly that, though the country had refused to entrust the task to the Whigs, the entire fiscal system stood in need of revision, he also attacked at once, as he was to attack often again, the assumption that the Whigs had a monopoly in commercial, as indeed in all other reform—an assumption which was then comparatively novel. 'Why, the progress of commercial reform,' he exclaimed, with much truth, 'was only arrested by the Reform Act.' The tariff, in his opinion, ought long before this to have engaged the attention of the Government, and must sooner or later be the subject of legislation. The nation had, indeed, declined to allow a Ministry which was 'rickety and staggering' to attempt the reconstruction of the commercial system of the country, but it had shown no lack of sympathy with the enterprise itself.

[1] *Lord Broughton's Recollections*, VI., p. 40.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Aug. 25.

The speech was successful. Bernal[1] made a *brioche*, which I was delighted at, as he malignantly attacked me, and his manner was most flippant and audacious. After the first minute he commenced, 'Gentlemen,' as if on the hustings—cries of order. 'Well, I suppose you are gentlemen'—cries of disgust. After this he five times made the same blunder, in fact lost his head.

Saturday [*Aug.* 28].

I suppose that the Editor of the *Herald*, when the Queen sends for him to form a Government, intends to leave Lyndhurst out, which is distressing. It is some consolation that he has made me Paymaster of the Forces, which is agreeable. As for all these editorial figments and newspaper *on dits*, they are manufactured for country cousins. Peel *never opens his mouth*, and very properly; until he is entrusted with the task of forming a Government, it would be the height of arrogant impertinence in him to appoint any of his colleagues. . . .

We are frightened out of our wits about the harvest, but as the glass has been gradually rising for some days I do not despair. If the sun ever shine again we shall get down to Bradenham, I hope, but about Monday I shall be able to write more definitely.[2]

The fatal division had been taken the night before this letter was written, and on Monday, August 30, Peel went to Windsor and kissed hands as Prime Minister. His Cabinet was soon completed, with Lyndhurst as Lord Chancellor; Graham, Aberdeen, and Stanley, Home, Foreign, and Colonial Secretaries; and the Duke of Wellington leader in the Lords, without the burden of office. By the end of the week most of the subordinate offices in the Ministry had been filled, but day followed day and no messenger or message came to Grosvenor Gate, and on the Sunday, in despair, Disraeli wrote to the Prime Minister:

[1] Ralph Bernal, afterwards Bernal Osborne, Whig member for Wycombe.

[2] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.

To Sir Robert Peel.

GROSVENOR GATE,
Sept. 5, 1841.

DEAR SIR ROBERT,

I have shrunk from obtruding myself upon you at this moment, and should have continued to do so if there were anyone on whom I could rely to express my feelings.

I am not going to trouble you with claims similar to those with which you must be wearied. I will not say that I have fought since 1834 four contests for your party, that I have expended great sums, have exerted my intelligence to the utmost for the propagation of your policy, and have that position in life which can command a costly seat.

But there is one peculiarity in my case on which I cannot be silent. I have had to struggle against a storm of political hate and malice which few men ever experienced, from the moment, at the instigation of a member of your Cabinet, I enrolled myself under your banner, and I have only been sustained under these trials by the conviction that the day would come when the foremost man of this country would publicly testify that he had some respect for my ability and my character.

I confess to be unrecognised at this moment by you appears to me to be overwhelming, and I appeal to your own heart—to that justice and that magnanimity which I feel are your characteristics—to save me from an intolerable humiliation.

Believe me, dear Sir Robert,
Your faithful servant,
B. DISRAELI.

Mrs. Disraeli, who, as has been seen, was an intimate friend of Peel's sister, had written the night before without her husband's knowledge :

Mrs. Disraeli to Sir Robert Peel.

GROSVENOR GATE,
Saturday night.

DEAR SIR ROBERT PEEL,

I beg you not to be angry with me for my intrusion, but I am overwhelmed with anxiety. My husband's political career is for ever crushed, if you do not appreciate him.

Mr. Disraeli's exertions are not unknown to you, but there is much he has done that you cannot be aware of, though they have had no other aim but to do you honour, no wish for recompense but your approbation.

He has gone farther than most to make your opponents his

personal enemies. He has stood four most expensive elections since 1834, and gained seats from Whigs in two, and I pledge myself as far as one seat, that it shall always be at your command.

Literature he has abandoned for politics. Do not destroy all his hopes, and make him feel his life has been a mistake.

May I venture to name my own humble but enthusiastic exertions in times gone by for the party, or rather for your own splendid self? They will tell you at Maidstone that more than £40,000 was spent through my influence only.

Be pleased not to answer this, as I do not wish any human being to know I have written to you this humble petition.

I am now, as ever, dear Sir Robert,
Your most faithful servant,
MARY ANNE DISRAELI.[1]

Peel replied to Disraeli:

From Sir Robert Peel.

WHITEHALL,
Sept. 7, 1841.

MY DEAR SIR,

I must in the first place observe that no member of the Cabinet which I have formed ever received from me the slightest authority to make to you the communication to which you refer.

Had I been consulted by that person, I should have at once declined to authorise a communication which would have been altogether at variance with the principle on which I have uniformly acted in respect to political engagements, and by adhering to which I have left myself at entire liberty to reconcile—as far as my limited means allow—justice to individual claims with the efficient conduct of the public service.

I know not who is the member of the Cabinet to whom you allude, and cannot but think he acted very imprudently. But quite independently of this consideration, I should have been very happy had it been in my power to avail myself of your offer of service; and your letter is one of the many I receive which too forcibly impress upon me how painful and invidious is the duty which I have been compelled to undertake. I am only supported in it by the consciousness that my desire has been to do justice.

[1] Thirty-six years later the wheel had come full circle, and, oddly enough, Peel's daughter-in-law wrote to Lord Beaconsfield to inform him that her husband was 'most anxious to serve' him in the event of any change in his Government leading to a vacancy.

I trust also that, when candidates for Parliamentary office calmly reflect on my position, and the appointments I have made—when they review the names of those previously connected with me in public life whom I have been absolutely compelled to exclude, the claims founded on acceptance of office in 1834 with the almost hopeless prospects of that day, the claims, too, founded on new party combinations—I trust they will then understand how perfectly insufficient are the means at my disposal to meet the wishes that are conveyed to me by men whose co-operation I should be proud to have, and whose qualifications and pretensions for office I do not contest.

Believe me, my dear sir,
Very faithfully yours,
ROBERT PEEL.

This reply drew a second letter from Disraeli :

To Sir Robert Peel.

GROSVENOR GATE,
Sept. 8, 1841.

DEAR SIR ROBERT,

Justice requires that I should state that you have entirely misconceived my meaning, in supposing that I intended even to intimate that a promise of official promotion had ever been made to me, at any time, by any member of your Cabinet.

I have ever been aware that it was not in the power of any member of your Cabinet to fulfil such engagements, had he made them : permit me to add that it is utterly alien from my nature to bargain and stipulate on such subjects. Parliamentary office should be the recognition of party service and Parliamentary ability, and as such only was it to me an object of ambition.

It appears to me that you have mistaken an allusion to my confidence in your sympathy for a reference to a pledge received from a third person. If such a pledge had been given me by yourself, and not redeemed, I should have taken refuge in silence. Not to be appreciated may be a mortification : to be baulked of a promised reward is only a vulgar accident of life, to be borne without a murmur.

Your faithful servant,
B. DISRAELI.

There for the present the matter remained at rest. Offers of service and requests for ' recognition ' when a Ministry is in the making are far more common than the

outside world realises, and there was nothing that was discreditable either in the fact or in the mode of Disraeli's application. His rejoinder to Peel's reply is not without dignity, while that reply itself smacks of the debater, reading into Disraeli's letter an interpretation which it will not bear, and expatiating on this in order to cover embarrassment. Peel's tone, in fact, betrays a certain consciousness that his omission of Disraeli stood in need of explanation. For one habitually so cold and ungracious in his manner, he had shown in Disraeli an interest that was exceptional; had honoured him more than once with marks of appreciation, and had gone out of his way to take him into his counsels. In his first Parliament, Disraeli, though ready enough, as we have seen, to assert his independence when opportunity offered, had yielded for the most part a submission to his leader that was sometimes even ostentatious; and the leader in his turn had betrayed no resentment at his follower's occasional guerilla operations. Only a few weeks before the correspondence just set forth, Peel had sent a friendly acknowledgment of a letter in which Disraeli announced his victory at Shrewsbury. Moreover, notwithstanding Peel's proverbial lack of foresight, he could hardly, with his intimate knowledge and long experience of the House of Commons, have been blind to the possibility that a Disraeli estranged might mean trouble in the future. Why, then, did he ignore him in the formation of his Ministry?

The fact is, it is almost certain that Peel really wanted to give Disraeli office. Apart from traditions that have been handed down to this effect, there is one definite statement. In 1854 an article appeared in a newspaper[1] which had been founded by Disraeli himself, defending him against the attacks of a more than usually malevolent 'biography' that had just made its appearance. This article was written, as Disraeli's papers show, by his friend George Smythe, who was also a friend of Peel's, had held office under Peel in 1846, when Disraeli's re-

[1] *The Press*, Jan. 7, 1854.

bellion was at its height, and sat with him in the House of Commons till his death in 1850; and it contains this statement: 'The common opinion that Peel did not appreciate Disraeli is a mistake. The present writer is aware that Sir Robert wished to offer office to Mr. Disraeli in 1841. This was prevented by the political parasites by whom it was the weakness of the great Minister to be surrounded, and we owe to this circumstance those immortal sketches of the Rigbys, the Tadpoles, and the Tapers, which Beaumarchais never surpassed.' The suggestion here appears to be that Peel was turned from his purpose by the Crokers and Bonhams, and men of that type and standing; but there is a story[1] which seems to provide a more probable explanation, that Stanley was the real cause of Peel's change of mind. It has been mentioned before that Stanley was at this time deeply prejudiced against Disraeli—through misapprehension of the facts of an incident ten years earlier, in which a member of his family and Disraeli had been involved, but in which Disraeli's part appears to have been wholly creditable; and, according to the story, when Peel suggested Disraeli as eligible for office, Stanley declared, in his usual vehement way, that 'if that scoundrel were taken in he would not remain himself.'[2] If this be the true account, we may imagine Peel's reflections not many years later when he saw Stanley and Disraeli in league against his influence.

From Sarah Disraeli to Mrs. Disraeli.

[*September.*]

I suffer much for your and dear Dis' disappointment, but we must not despair. After all, it is not half so bad as losing an election. We have, I hope, a long future before us, and changes may occur every day. Our *Examiner* has missed

[1] Deriving from the late Lord Houghton.

[2] Smythe's article speaks, though in another connexion, of Stanley's prejudice against Disraeli in earlier years as having been 'notorious in the House of Commons'; but if Stanley really intervened in 1841, it was obviously impossible in 1854 to make allusion to the fact in an article for a paper controlled by Disraeli.

this morning, so that we do not know the latest appointments; but up to the latest, except Gladstone, there is not one single untitled or unaristocratic individual.

For Disraeli and his wife a visit to Normandy, where we find them established in the old town of Caen, helped to fill the interval between the brief autumn session and the entrance of the new Parliament on its real labours in February. The new Ministers meanwhile were preparing to grapple with the difficult problems of tariff and finance bequeathed to them by their predecessors. If the Parliament, as Lady Montfort says in *Endymion*, was 'a political economy Parliament,' Peel's, as Cobden said, was 'peculiarly a politico-economical intellect.'[1] Peel had supported Huskisson in his commercial reforms nearly twenty years before, and Robinson, who had then been Chancellor of the Exchequer, was now, as Ripon, in Huskisson's former office of President of the Board of Trade. As leader of the Opposition, Peel had shown all the wariness of an old Parliamentarian, and his hands were in consequence comparatively free for the task now before him. To his freedom there was, indeed, only one limitation. He could modify the Corn Laws; but by the last debates of the old Parliament, by the circumstances of the general election, and by explicit declarations of his own,[2] and of his followers,[3] he and his Ministry were deeply committed to the maintenance of the principle of protection to agriculture.

Peel's general plan for restoring order to public finance was based on the same idea as that of the Whigs—the reduction of duties with a view to promoting consumption, and so increasing revenue. But his plan was de-

[1] Morley's *Cobden*, I., p. 237.

[2] Take, for instance, his speech of August 27, 1841, immediately before the division that dislodged the Melbourne Ministry: 'We both acknowledge the principle of protection to agriculture. The first Finance Minister of the Crown, being asked if this measure of a fixed duty was a tax or a protection, answered: "It is a protection." We start, then, from the same point.'

[3] Gladstone, for example, said, in seeking re-election at Newark: 'There were two points on which the British farmer might rely, the first of which was that adequate protection would be given to him, while the second was that protection would be given to him by means of the sliding scale.'

veloped with less precipitancy and a more secure sense of power, and as he now had behind him the elections, which the Whigs when they produced their Budget still had before them, he was able to adopt the bold expedient which Huskisson had suggested, of an income-tax to meet immediate needs of revenue till remissions should have time to tell on consumption. He began with the Corn Laws. In his scheme for their reconstruction he clung tenaciously to the unlucky device of the sliding scale ; but he reduced the rates of duty, and he substituted for the old plan of continuous variation inversely with the price a system of variation by a series of leaps from one resting-place to another, in the hope that the merchants might thus have less motive for withholding corn from import in the expectation of higher prices, and to the injury of the consumer and the revenue alike. The scheme gave satisfaction neither to the extreme free traders nor to the agricultural interest, and the Duke of Buckingham, who was in the Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal, carried his dissent to the point of resignation.

To Sarah Disraeli.

[*February*, 1842.]

A thunderbolt in a summer sky could not have produced a greater sensation than the resignation of the Duke of Bucks. All is confusion. I had a long conversation with him the other day. 'He has only one course—to be honest.' I am sorry to say I hear he has taken the Garter. . . . Peel seems to have pleased no party, but I suppose the necessity of things will force his measure through.

Disraeli does not appear to have been wholly in love himself with the plan adopted by Peel, and it is possible that he thought then, as he had evidently come to think when at the end of his life he surveyed the situation retrospectively in *Endymion*, that a moderate fixed duty such as the Whigs had proposed would have been the best working arrangement. But whatever his doubts, he kept them to himself. The legend that the neglect of his pretensions to office in 1841 drove him at once into

opposition to Peel is so firmly established that to many the facts will come as a surprise. For two whole sessions he gave his support to Peel's Government and its principal measures — a support, moreover, that was not grudging nor even mechanical, but active and intelligent; and another year was to elapse before he embarked on anything that could be regarded as deliberate and systematic opposition. Attempts were made from the first to lure him into rebellion, but he steadfastly resisted them, though on the new Corn Law, at all events, something of the kind appears to have been expected. 'I am obliged,' he tells his wife, who was detained at Bradenham for some weeks by an illness of her mother's, 'to be very careful about pairing, as Mrs. Dawson, Bonham and Co. are full of good-natured rumors.' 'I saw Mrs. Dawson,' he writes another day. 'She was most friendly and particularly disagreeable.'

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Feb. 25.

You cannot conceive how solitary I feel: utterly isolated. Before the change of Government, political party was a tie among men, but now it is only a tie among men who are in office. The supporter of administration, who is not in place and power himself, is a solitary animal. He has neither hope nor fear.

Feb. 26.

Last night Sir Robert Peel carried his [corn] resolutions by an immense majority—far beyond anticipation. Sir Richard Vyvyan, Mr. Blackstone, and Lord Ossulston (who is a great malcontent) rose, and left the house together, determined no more to support Peel. The general rumor was that I had done the same, and several men expressed their surprise, when they saw me in the lobby; I believe these rumors have been intentionally circulated, but the fact is I have had a thorough understanding with Fremantle[1] throughout—or at least for the last week—and I am sure the Government themselves had, or rather have not now, the slightest doubt of my supporting them. However, my presence at the late divisions has been most politic and necessary.

[1] Sir Thomas Fremantle, 1798-1890, afterwards 1st Lord Cottesloe, at this time chief Government Whip.

Disraeli in the meantime had found a subject of his own. In the course of his commercial studies he had been impressed with the inefficiency of our consular establishment, which was then, in the words of Peel, too often a retreat for such as were 'disqualified for public situations.' Disraeli doubtless felt impelled, after his recent rebuff, to make a demonstration; and here, he may have thought, was a subject which would serve, bristling as it was with detail, to win him credit as a practical man who could be solid as well as brilliant. So he put down a motion for the blending of the consular with the diplomatic body, and prepared an elaborate speech.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Feb. 21.

I went through my whole speech this morning without a reference to a single paper, so completely am I master of all its details. It took me three hours, an awful period; but I fear I cannot retrench it, at least materially. The details are so numerous, so varied, and so rich. I am full of confidence as to its effect in the House, but I am very doubtful as to the opportunity being speedily offered.

Feb. 22.

You were prepared for my disappointment in not bringing forward my motion to-night, but the infernal debate[1] drags its slow length along. . . . George Smythe[2] made a most elaborate speech; very Radical indeed, and unprincipled as his little agreeable self, but too elaborate—his manner affected and his tone artificial, and pronunciation too; but still ability though puerile.

Monday [*March* 7].

Yesterday Lord Claud Hamilton called on me, to ask to second my motion. It was just the thing I wanted, as being stepson to Lord Aberdeen, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, it gives, as George Smythe says, an official character to the affair. . . . I feel a calm confidence, and I think I cannot fail of making some impression. . . .

Wynne [a prominent constituent from Shrewsbury] called on me this morning, and, though I was at home to no one, James had the sense to admit him. He had called previously on Tomline [the other member for Shrewsbury]

[1] On the corn resolutions.

[2] George Sydney Smythe, 1818-1857, afterwards 7th Viscount Strangford.

and asked if he were at home. The servant hesitated, final took in Wynne's card, and brought out word that Mr. Tomlin was not at home. Conceive the rage of Wynne! It is som thing awful, solemnly severe and unappeasable; the la visit on Mr. Tomline, he says. I heaped coals on the fi without appearing to do so; told Wynne that I was at hon to no one to-day and the reason, but there was a standin order always in his exception; asked him to dinner, which l refused, as he was engaged, but very charmed; and final gave him an order for the House on Tuesday if in town. H left me as devoted to us as was he deadly to Tomline. could not help laughing, remembering Tomline's last vis to me: the tables fairly turned.

Yesterday, after a hard morning's work, I went out for little air, found Maxse at our door, and walked with him f about an hour in the Park. He was very kind, and I hope to have got some small talk for you, as he is a gossip and lounger, but there is nothing stirring. Croker is one of th five executors of Lord Hertford, but the will is not y open. . . .

I will now give you my blessing, as well as send you m love deep and dear. The more we are separated the more cling to you. . . . 'Tis your approbation and delight f which I am now laboring, and unless I had that stimulus don't think I could go on.

Wednesday [*March* 9].

The affair last night realised all my hopes; the success wa complete and brilliant. I rose at five o'clock to one of th most disagreeable audiences that ever welcomed a speake Everybody seemed to affect not to be aware of my existenc and there was a general buzz and chatter. Nevertheless, n losing my head, I proceeded without hesitation for te minutes, though when I recollected what I had to trav through, and the vast variety of detail which I had pe spicuously to place before the House, I more than onc despaired of accomplishing my purpose.

In about ten minutes affairs began to mend; when a quart of an hour had elapsed there was generally an attentiv audience; and from that time until near half-past seve when I sat down, having been up about two hours and twent minutes, I can say without the slightest exaggeration, that n only you might have heard a pin fall in the House, but the was not an individual, without a single exception, who did n listen to every sentence with the most marked interest, an even excitement. The moment I finished, Peel, givin me a cheer, got up and went to dinner upstairs. . . . Hen

Baillie, Dicky Hodgson, and Lord John Manners,[1] and several others came in turn and sat by me, after I had sat down, to give me the general impression of the House, that it was not only, by a thousand degrees, the best speech I had ever made, but one of the best that was ever made. The enthusiasm of young Smythe extraordinary; he and several others particularly mentioned my manner, perfectly changed and different to what it used to be—'Exactly as you talk at the Carlton or at your own table,' he said, 'particularly my voice, not the least stilted, but the elocution distinct, the manner easy, a little nonchalant, and always tinged with sarcasm.'

Now for the other side. [Milner] Gibson came to me to say that they all agreed on their side that it was the most amusing speech they ever listened to, and carried them on completely; Tom Duncombe, that it was one of the best statements he ever heard, and if I had followed it up by a loose, indefinite resolution I might have made a very strong division. But what think you of the mighty *Mister Cobden* coming up to me to offer me his thanks for the great public service I had done, &c.?

I put Palmerston on his mettle. He made one of his usual dashing, reckless speeches, which men who have been Secretaries of State can venture to do in a scrape and backed by a party; but there was a general feeling on all sides of the House that he had not succeeded in shaking the minutest detail of one of my facts. He spoke with great pains, and with as much effort as if he were answering Peel. I made a most happy reply to his insinuation as to my being disappointed about office, or rather his sarcastic hopes that I might obtain it. What I said was literally this: 'I must in the first place return my thanks to the noble Lord for his warm aspirations for my political preferment. Coming from such a quarter, I consider them auspicious. The noble Viscount is a consummate master of the subject, and if to assist my advancement he will only impart to me the secret of his own unprecedented rise, and by what means he has contrived to enjoy power under seven successive administrations, I shall at least have gained a valuable result by this discussion.' Graham cheered this most vehemently.

After the debate congratulations came thick. Dudley Stuart embraced me at Crockford's, and declared, before Chesterfield and a crowd of dandies, that my speech was one of the most effective he had ever listened to. Even Jemmy Macdonald told me he heard 'I had had a hell of a flare-up.'

[1] Baillie (1803-1885, afterwards Right Hon. H. J. Baillie) was member for Inverness, Hodgson for Berwick, and Manners (1818-1906, afterwards 7th Duke of Rutland) Gladstone's colleague at Newark.

I walked from the House with Henry Baillie, who told me in his cold, quiet way: 'Upon my soul, I am not sure it was not the best speech I ever heard.' All young England, the new members, &c., were deeply interested. . . .

But I think what I am going to tell you is the most gratifying and remarkable. Sidney Herbert just now came down to sit by me, and said: 'I don't know whether it is a fair question, but might I ask where you got that mass of extraordinary information which you gave last night?' I replied: 'From study and observation and inquiry, from no particular source.' He observed: 'I think it a most remarkable display; it is thought so.'

I am going to dine with the Baillies to-day—House of Commons dinner—only George Smythe, and come down afterwards. There are odd rumors that a section of the Tories will declare against Peel to-night, on the second reading of his [Corn] Bill. On Friday comes on the Budget—a very important week; but the news from India[1] fills everyone with alarm.

March 10.

. . . Last night Lord Eliot said to me: 'Well, you are one of the few who have broken lances with Palmerston and rode away in triumph.' He said it would have made an admirable party motion a year ago, and would have thrown the Government into a minority. . . .

At supper at Crockford's, H. Twiss, sitting next to me, between his mighty mouthfuls, at length saturninely turned round, and said suddenly and without any preliminary observations: 'I am not sure whether your retort on Palmerston in reply last night was not the completest case of having a man on the hip that I ever remember in Parliament.' . . .

Now for one or two good things—genuine, for I heard them myself. George Beresford, coming into the House, said to Augustus O'Brien,[2] who was standing at the Bar: 'How did Beresford Hope speak? He's my cousin.' 'My dear fellow,' said O'Brien, 'if he were your own brother, he could not have spoken worse.'

Monckton Milnes said to George Smythe, with his queer face of solemn deprecation and conceit, speaking of the same oratorical effort: 'Why don't you interfere to prevent him speaking, Smythe?' 'Why, I don't interfere to prevent you speaking, Milnes!' was the retort, and even Milnes' impudence was floored.

[1] Of the murder of Sir William Macnaghten, the British Envoy in Cabul, and the destruction of Elphinstone's force in the retreat to Jellalabad.

[2] Afterwards Augustus Stafford, 1809-1857.

March 11.

I already find myself without effort the leader of a party, chiefly of the youth and new members. Lord John Manners came to me about a motion which he wanted me to bring forward, and he would 'second it like Claud Hamilton.' Henry Baillie the same about Afghanistan. I find my position changed.

March 12.

Letters on the consular business every day. Peel alluded to the subject in the House of Commons last night, and many suggestions as to future motions. But at present the Budget engrosses all minds, and I was very fortunate in having gained my opportunity. The Income Tax, or rather the Property and Income Tax, is a thunderbolt; but Peel can do anything at this moment.

Sunday [*March* 13].

I am not particularly anxious to be in town at this moment, political affairs are very confused; and Vyvyan, since the consular speech, always 'whispering in my ear.' Yesterday he came with a formal proposition—viz., to oppose the further progress of the Corn Bill to-morrow in consequence of Peel's financial statement. He intends to do it himself, and begged me to speak—'in the same tone, exactly the same tone as the other night, that's the thing. You have got the ear of the House.' I declined interfering, said I hated speaking, &c. &c., must watch events, &c. But as old Talleyrand, when he did not clearly see his way, always took to his bed, so I think it would be as well for me if, in consequence of a cause which, thank God, no longer exists, domestic anxiety were to take me into the country—rather suddenly. . . .

I have agreed to dine at Gore House to-day, Lady B[lessington] having asked me every day. But I dislike going there, D'Orsay being in high spirits, quite unchanged, but Lady B. very altered—silent, subdued, and broken. She told me another year would kill her, and complained bitterly that, after having fought against so much prejudice, and made a sort of position, with her two nieces about her, and not owing a shilling in the world, she is perhaps to see it all shattered and scattered to the winds. I think it is horrid. But perhaps it may end better than she anticipates.

Monday [*March* 14].

Hertford's will is still the subject of endless tales. It appears now that by a codicil, revoking former legacies to them, he left £25,000 apiece to his valet and Croker. This

is a fact. He had left his star[1] of the Order of the Garter, in costly brilliants, with a long panegyric to Peel, as the saviour of his country and all that, and the legacy was afterwards revoked. I suppose his ghost smelt the Income Tax.... The Zichy has £150,000 because she saved Lord Hertford from being poisoned by her mother. . . . The new Lord cut off his mustachios on his accession, saying: 'There never was a Marquis of Hertford with mustachios.'

March 15.

On Thursday for certain I shall be with my beloved. . . . I trust this is our last separation; indeed, I believe it, and it has only taught us to love each other, if possible, more and more. . . .

Will you believe it?—Dr. Bowring[2] has just been to ask me what I think of the quarantine question, and whether I will speak on his motion to-night and support him if I approve of it. I know nothing of the question, and don't mean to stay at the House; but I told him, touched by his imperturbable good temper, that I was entirely of his opinion on the subject, and paid him a general compliment.

I kept from the House [yesterday], because Vyvyan, as I was informed, was going to attack Peel, and oppose the progress of the Corn Bill. He was in the House armed with many papers; but the spirit did not move him. I believe there is to be a grand row on Friday, but I shall steal off the morning before, and all the better, as affairs political are very queer. . . .

This morning and yesterday at breakfast I placed the bouquet of violets on my table (you know how fond I am of flowers on my breakfast-table), and fancied it was a very apt representative of yourself.

Every morning I have kept a sort of diary of affairs and thoughts in French, which I write now with great ease and some elegance.

The speech on the consular motion was largely an attack on Palmerston's administration during his long reign at the Foreign Office, and in the course of this and the following session Disraeli returned persistently to the same congenial theme. The line of inquiry on which he was now embarked—a study of foreign policy in its

[1] This star was presented by Sir Richard Wallace to Lord Beaconsfield when he received the Garter on his return from the Congress of Berlin in 1878.

[2] See p. 491. Disraeli had returned to the attack in his speech on the consular motion.

bearing on our foreign trade—had for him two attractions. It provided him with opportunities for attacking the Whigs, and it enabled him to escape from the dull and unenlightening detail of economic discussion into a more spacious atmosphere, where his vision had wider range. Whatever the starting-point of debate, Disraeli soon contrived to rise into the region of foreign affairs. He deeply disliked the income-tax, but when the Bill came up for second reading, instead of blaming the Minister, he ingeniously connected the tax with the disasters in Afghanistan, of which all minds were full, and which, as all knew, were a heritage from the policy of the Whigs. The war on the Indian frontier had compelled the Prime Minister to take the 'bold but sagacious step' of introducing an account of the finances of our Indian Empire into the annual Budget statement. Vigorous action had been needed to avert bankruptcy in India and cope with great deficiencies both there and in England, and he believed that the income-tax, though it was 'a tax of a most odious and inquisitorial character,' was absolutely necessary. He complained on this occasion that Parliament had never been consulted with regard to the war, and a couple of months later he seconded his friend Baillie in a motion for papers, which led to an animated debate.[1] To avoid the appearance of hostility to the Government in office, Disraeli aimed his attack directly at Palmerston. The foreign policy of the noble lord 'seemed to lie in an alternation of fatal inertness and more terrible energy'; it was a 'constant transition from a state of collapse to one of convulsion'; it was 'a system which commenced with the neglect of our duties, and terminated by a violation of the rights of other nations.' The late Ministers of the Crown had 'proclaimed war without reason, and prosecuted it without responsibility.' He was not alarmed by a single disaster; he was not afraid of our losing India through internal intrigue or foreign invasion; but if ever India were lost,

[1] June 23, 1842.

it would be lost by financial causes, by draining its resources to maintain wars such as that in which we were then engaged. Members had not been vigilant in the business of India, but perhaps, now that this war had led to a tax which, in the words of Bacon, came home to men's business and bosoms, they would cease to be indifferent. This speech, which is remarkable for the knowledge and grasp it shows of the Indian situation, made an impression in the House, and provoked Palmerston to a reply which was, however, deft rather than conclusive.

When Peel unfolded[1] his plan for the simplification of the tariff, Disraeli reminded the House that the real pedigree of free trade was other than the Whigs believed, and that the Minister's conduct was entirely in harmony with the traditions of his party. If they would read and digest the speeches of Lord Shelburne, 'the most remarkable man of his age,' they would find that in the science of political economy they were far behind many of the great statesmen who flourished at the end of the previous century. The principles of free trade had been developed —and not by Whigs—fifty years before. It was Mr. Pitt[2] who first promulgated them in 1787 as a system of reciprocity, while Fox and the other famous Whigs of that day came forward as the champions of the old system of restriction. Nor had the party which originally brought free trade principles into notice been false to those principles, as he showed in greater detail in a speech[3] later in the session. The settlement of 1815 was indeed an anti-commercial settlement, but Lord Liverpool had soon seen that it was impossible to continue on the basis then adopted. From 1820 to 1830

[1] May 10, 1842.

[2] Disraeli was on other occasions in the habit of carrying back the pedigree to Bolingbroke and the Treaty of Utrecht. If he was to begin with the later statesman, he might have taken as his starting-point Pitt's Commercial Propositions of 1785 for establishing free trade between Great Britain and Ireland, which were opposed by the Whig leaders, Burke, alas! included, with a display of faction and unenlightenment that surpassed even their performance on the French commercial treaty of 1787.

[3] July 21, 1842.

the history of this country was a history of commercial progress. The true principles of commerce were applied in Parliament, and while the home Government was carrying its great measures of renovation, their Foreign Minister was calling new markets into existence. Then the Whigs came into office, and from 1831 to 1841 not a single step was taken to advance the commercial principles of Pitt and Shelburne and Lord Liverpool and Huskisson. Nay, more, during this period our Foreign Minister was pursuing a system of anti-commercial diplomacy. No fewer than five commercial treaties with European States had been lost by his misconduct, and our Eastern markets, which on many accounts were the most valuable we possessed, had been harassed and disturbed. But now that the Prime Minister had in one class of his measures recurred to the policy which had been so beneficial in the past, he hoped that he would apply that policy as a whole. His Corn and Customs Bills were the legitimate continuation of a movement that had been arrested, and he was certain that he also felt the importance of treaties of commerce with the great communities of Europe, and that he was deeply sensible of the bearing of our foreign policy on our foreign trade.[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
April 7.

I write to give you the earliest intelligence that the Shrewsbury petition is withdrawn. This great *coup*, almost, in the present state of affairs, as great as my return, was effected in the most accidental and happy manner by my agent, Bailey of Gloucester, without any interference and barely knowledge of either of the great parties. On his own responsibility he paired off Shrewsbury against Gloucester. Under circumstances of extreme difficulty which must be reserved for narrative, I never knew a happier instance of daring energy and address combined. He left town on Tuesday by mail,

[1] This last speech, according to *The Times*, to which it gave the text for a series of articles on 'Foreign Policy and Foreign Trade,' 'obtained considerable notice'; and that not only 'for its intrinsic merits,' but because 'it struck upon a chord to which the public mind was attuned.'

and I was called out of the House eight o'clock yesterday (Wednesday), and found him. I expressed my surprise, perhaps my regret, that he had not departed, when, to my astonishment, I found that in the four-and-twenty hours he had been to Gloucester, Shrewsbury, and returned. It was like the story of the rise of Wolsey.

The committees work so ill under the new system that I really despaired sometimes of keeping my seat, and was convinced that the Shrewsbury people would proceed. But the Gloucester Whigs prevailed upon them to sacrifice themselves for the extrication of their neighbors.

GROSVENOR GATE,
Saturday morning [*April* 23].

The horses are at the door, and we are going with the living Horace Walpole to visit for the last time Strawberry Hill. Last night, after going to the City, I fired a most effective shot in the debate[1]—cheered by Peel and all the Ministers, loudly by Hardinge, who said to me in the lobby: 'You made an admirable speech, Di.' I observed I was sensible of his support, &c. Replied, taking my arm: 'You know what I said to you years ago—you would become "one of the clearest and most forcible speakers in the House."'

Sir J. Graham came up to me, and said: 'Never was a party pinned more effectively; the pin was pushed in to the middle, and to the very head.' Just at this moment, when he was unbuttoning his heart, a thick-headed Alderman forced himself upon us and spoilt all.[2]

CARLTON,
Aug. 11.

MY DEAR SA,

This delicious weather makes one sigh for country air; but we are still prisoners.

Last night Peel made the most effective speech by very far I ever heard from him. He crushed Palmerston,[3] who on the last night, like an excited player, lost on one dashing stake all his hard-won winnings of the last month. I was in the leash to speak, but the effect of Peel's speech was so overwhelming that all the Whigs (Vernon Smith, Charley Buller, Hawes, &c.) took refuge in silence, and Cobden, seizing the opportunity, attempted to an impatient and excited House to foist off his intended speech of the night before, and turned the whole course of the debate, or rather burked it, being followed by Hume, Ewart, and Co. in an American corn vein.

[1] On the income-tax. [2] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS.
[3] Palmerston, on a motion for papers, had made a general attack on the policy of the Government.

Palmerston looked overwhelmed, but was infinitely mortified by the turn of the debate, which rendered his position still more ludicrous — most ludicrous, however, when Philip Howard, the butt of the House, and who pours forth endless *niaiseries*, rose to vindicate 'his noble friend,' which he did with agonising detail, till Peel went away, the House nearly emptied, and Palmerston, bound to remain, refrained even from replying, for which he had prepared.

By-the-by he quoted me very courteously at his commencement, and, indeed, 'went off' with me, which produced an effect in the House.

Fremantle asked me, after Peel's speech, to reply to any man of note who rose on the opposite benches.

I sigh for news from Bradenham. Your vegetable cargoes are most welcome.

A thousand loves,

D.

The session of 1843, like that of the previous year, was marked by recurrent motions on commercial depression and distress in the country; and in his speeches on these motions, which were of course only a pretext for attacks on the Corn Laws, Disraeli's line of argument was always the same. Commercial depression was a complex phenomenon. Its origin could be found in no single cause, and it was ridiculous to pretend to cure it by any single or sudden remedy. Certainly no measures, however liberal, of ours would induce foreign Powers to ameliorate at once their present commercial policy. 'A species of Berlin decrees, more stringent even than those of Napoleon, were silently but surely spreading over the Continent against us; and it required far more than the mere repeal of the Corn Laws to effect a reciprocal liberalisation of European commercial relations.'[1] Of one[2] of these speeches a not over-friendly witness, Lord Morley, has testified that 'it is remarkable to this day for its large and comprehensive survey of the whole field of our foreign commerce, and for its discernment of the channels in which it would expand.'[3] This particular speech, hardly more remarkable than others in their kind, was made in the debate on a motion of

[1] July 1, 1842, from *The Times* report.
[2] Feb. 14, 1843.
[3] *Life of Cobden*, II., p. 336.

Lord Howick's which is memorable for the dramatic scene between Peel and Cobden. Disraeli had spent the winter in Paris, and it was his first deliverance after his return. Following his usual line of argument, he protested against a policy that would apply a single remedy to our commerce in all its branches without regard to varying circumstances. He thought our markets could fairly be divided under three general heads—our European markets, the markets of the East, and the markets of the New World. Our European markets must be regulated by commercial treaties. He believed, for instance, there was a majority in the present French Chamber friendly to a treaty of commerce, and it was in the power of the House of Commons whenever it chose to come to a right understanding with the people of France. If this were done, the session need not end without the conclusion of such a treaty. Having dealt with other treaties of commerce which had been the subject of negotiations, though they had not been carried out, he came to the East. There we addressed ourselves to a very ancient state of society, and our trading intercourse must be conducted on the ancient principles of commerce. If we acted in Europe by negotiation, we could only penetrate the East by enterprise ; and though no immediate or vast impulse to our trade could be expected, we had a right to look for an increase in the three great Eastern markets—in the Levant, in India, and in China. In the New World, again, we encountered a third set of conditions, and commerce with that region, by the nature of the case, must be an affair of speculation—'rapid profits, shattering losses, unnatural expansion, paralysing collapse.' It was not our tariff, not our Corn Laws, that induced the present stagnation in our New World trade ; but its causes were transitory, and there and elsewhere he believed the breeze of prosperity in its own good time would come. He thought it wisest to wait for it—indeed, he saw no other remedy.

I would give an ample trial of the measures of the Government introduced last year. I supported those measures, not from any blind submission to the Minister who introduced them, but because I approve of the principle on which the commercial system of the right hon. gentleman is founded. The principle of his tariff is a fair protection to native industry—a principle, in my opinion, perfectly consistent with a large and liberal commercial intercourse. As regards the present Corn Law we know as yet but little. I am not prepared to stand or fall by the details of that measure, nor am I, for one, surprised that the right hon. gentleman declines to do so. With respect to that law, I will reserve to myself the most unbounded licence. I will not rest my character for political consistency on a fixed duty or a sliding scale. But I will support that system which, to use the expression of the noble lord [John Russell], maintains the preponderance of the landed interest. I believe that preponderance to be essential to the welfare of the country; I attribute to that preponderance the stability of our institutions; I uphold that preponderance, not for the advantage of a class, but for the benefit of the nation. . . . I will venture to remind the House of the words of a great prince, appropriate to the occasion, for they were not only the words of a great prince, but also of a great merchant—I mean that Doge of Venice who, looking out from the windows of his Adriatic palace on the commerce of the world anchored in the lagoons beneath, exclaimed: 'This Venice without *terra firma* is an eagle with one wing.' I wish to see our national prosperity upheld alike by a skilful agriculture and by an extended commerce.[1]

The reform of the tariff in the previous year had been intended to prepare the way for the policy of reciprocal arrangements with the other states of Europe which Disraeli advocated so zealously; but this policy made little progress, and on April 25 the impatient free traders called for a further remission of duties without waiting for the commercial treaties which were to provide the opportunity. Disraeli in the debate tried to defend a Ministry whose principles were now in a state of rapid flux, and which, consequently, no longer found it easy to defend itself. He quoted 'the work of Dr. List,'[2] then little known in England, but now canonised as the Bible

[1] Hansard, Feb. 14, 1843.
[2] *The National System of Political Economy.*

of modern protection. He reminded the free traders that the Governments of Europe had often other objects than the wealth of nations in view in their commercial arrangements ; that political considerations were always present to their minds ; and that they sometimes maintained manufactures at a loss 'as the elements of future strength.' Until those Governments had accepted 'our high notions of political economy,' we were certain to have difficulties. The motion meant 'that they should fight against hostile tariffs with free imports,' and he believed that would be a policy of the most disastrous kind. Free trade, which had originally meant a large and liberal intercourse, in contradistinction to the old colonial system, now appeared to mean, in the mouths of gentlemen opposite, an absence of all restrictions ; but surely there was some analogy between civil and commercial freedom, and a man was not the less free from being subject to certain regulations. Was it not the natural course to adopt the happy medium always followed by practical men — the principle of reciprocity ? The free traders, of whose school the total neglect of circumstances was a peculiar characteristic, ignored the fact that powerful interests had grown up in other countries as a consequence of our commercial system, to enforce and advocate our views ; and in a commercial negotiation the Minister of England had elements of strength denied to any other country. If we acted with decision we must attain our end, and he thought we could not do better than adhere to a method which, even if it failed to-day, might always succeed to-morrow.

In this and other speeches Disraeli chivalrously came to the rescue of his 'right hon. friend, the Vice-President of the Board of Trade'—that is to say, Gladstone, whose reputation among the Conservatives on the question of protection had, to use his own expression, already 'oozed away.'[1] Both in Parliament and in the country confidence

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, I., p. 262.

in the Ministry was beginning to be shaken,[1] and Disraeli thought it necessary to go down to Shrewsbury and justify to his constituents the support he had given them. This task he accomplished in a speech that is full of interest, and is as clear an exposition, both of his own point of view in the controversies of the hour, and of enlightened Tory sentiment throughout the party struggle which has lasted ever since, as any he ever delivered. He had voted, he said, for the Corn Bill and the revision of the tariff because he believed them to be measures that were wise and expedient. The principle of these measures was 'protection to native industry, avowed, acknowledged, and only limited because the Minister desired that that protection should be practical . . . such as should compensate for enormous taxation, and should not allow the energies of the country to merge and moulder into a spirit of monopoly.' He was not himself an enemy to free trade according to his idea of free trade. He had never supported either prohibitions or monopoly, or made native industry the stalking-horse by which to shield abuses. 'But my idea of free trade is this: that you cannot have free trade unless the person you deal with is as liberal as yourself. If I saw a prize-fighter encountering a galley-slave in irons, I should consider the combat equally as fair as to make England fight hostile tariffs with free imports.' He believed that Sir Robert Peel had adopted opinions which were just and right, and that he was anxious to support the native industry of the country; but every Government was entitled, as long as it adhered to principle, to an ample allowance for circumstances, and Sir Robert Peel, though he would be their Minister, was not the man to be their tool. What he had done so far had been for the public advantage.

You should not part with him for what he has done; neither should you part with him because you think he will

[1] In Shrewsbury itself the leading Conservative paper was openly denouncing them.

do a certain act which I believe that he will not. If I find the Government seceding really from their pledges and opinions—if I find them, for instance, throwing over that landed interest that brought them into power—my vote will be recorded against them. I do not come down to Shrewsbury to make a holiday speech and say this. I have said this at Westminster, sitting at the back of Sir Robert Peel, alone, and without flinching, and I say it again here.[1]

I never will commit myself on this great question to petty economical details; I will not pledge myself to miserable questions of 6d. in 7s. 6d. or 8s. of duties about corn; I do not care whether your corn sells for this sum or that, or whether it is under a sliding scale or a fixed duty; but what I want, and what I wish to secure, and what, as far as my energies go, I will secure, is the preponderance of the landed interest. Gentlemen, when I talk of the preponderance of the landed interest, do not for a moment suppose that I mean merely the preponderance of 'squires of high degree.' My thought wanders farther than a lordly tower or a baronial hall. I am looking in that phrase . . . to the population of our innumerable villages, to the crowds in our rural towns: I mean that estate of the poor which, in my opinion, has been already dangerously tampered with; I mean the great estate of the Church, which has before this time secured our liberty, and may, for aught I know, still secure our civilisation; I mean also by the landed interest that great judicial fabric, that great building up of our laws and manners, which is, in fact, the ancient polity of the realm.

They had all heard how Mr. Cobden, who was a very eminent person, had spoken in a very memorable speech of the barbarous relics of the feudal system. If there were any relics of the feudal system remaining, he regretted that there were not more. What was the fundamental principle of that system? That the tenure of all property should be the performance of its duties—'the noblest principle that was ever conceived by sage or ever practised by patriot.'

When I hear a political economist, or an Anti-Corn-Law Leaguer, or some conceited Liberal reviewer, come forward and tell us, as a grand discovery of modern science . . . that 'Property has its duties as well as its rights,'[2] my answer is

[1] This passage, which, from its bearing on Disraeli's subsequent action, is of great biographical interest, is omitted in Mr. Kebbel's reprint.

[2] This famous aphorism had been promulgated in Ireland by the great administrator, Thomas Drummond, five years before.

that that is but a feeble plagiarism of the very principle of that feudal system which you are always reviling. Let me next tell those gentlemen who are so fond of telling us that property has its duties as well as its rights, that labour also has its rights as well as its duties ; and when I see masses of property raised in this country which do not recognise that principle ; . . . when I hear of all this misery and all this suffering ; when I know that evidence exists in our Parliament of a state of demoralisation in the once happy population of this land which is not equalled in the most barbarous countries —I cannot help suspecting that this has arisen because property has been permitted to be created and held without the performance of its duties.

If the Anti-Corn-Law League succeeded, how long would the present law of inheritance in land survive the whole change of their agricultural policy ? And if they recurred to the Continental principle of parcelling out estates, how long could they maintain the political system of the country ? Some would say, 'Let it go'; but his answer to that would be, 'If it goes it is a revolution, a great, a destructive revolution ; and it is not my taste to live in an age of destructive revolution.' England had been made by the preponderance of the landed interest. We should never have been able to conquer the greatest military genius the world had ever seen, and to hurl him from his throne, if we had not had a territorial aristocracy to give stability to our constitution. Without that preponderance of the landowner he did not see why Great Britain, probably very contented and very prosperous, should have been a greater Power than Denmark or Sweden ; and he, for one, would not be the citizen of a third-class State if he could be the citizen of a first-class Empire. Nor did they, who had all the memories of an historical past, want, he was sure, 'to be turned into a sort of spinning-jenny, machine kind of nation.'

He knew, indeed, there was a deterioration of society in the present day which was not to be seen only in the lower classes of the country ; that the nobility and gentry of the land, who had vindicated our rights, defended our liberties, and founded our greatest colonies, were deficient

in those high qualities which they had always hitherto exhibited. But he had still some confidence in the national character of Englishmen. This country had experienced great vicissitudes in the past, and we had even had revolutions on a very great scale. The King, the Church, and the constitution, had all been swept away; yet the nation eventually had returned to itself.

> Shall I tell you how it was that the nation returned to itself, and Old England after the deluge was seen rising above the waters? This was the reason—because during all that fearful revolution you never changed the tenure of your landed property. That I think, gentlemen, proves my case; and if we have baffled a wit like Oliver Cromwell, let us not be staggered even before Mr. Cobden! The acres remained; the estates remained. The generations changed: the Puritan father died, and the Cavalier son came into his place, and, backed by that power and influence, the nation reverted to the ancient principles of the realm. And this, gentlemen, is the reason why you have seen an outcry raised against your Corn Laws. Your Corn Laws are merely the outwork of a great system fixed and established upon your territorial property, and the only object the Leaguers have in making themselves masters of the outwork is that they may easily overcome the citadel.[1]

Over and over again in the course of this speech we find Disraeli declaring his personal belief that, notwithstanding the new Corn Law and the revision of the tariff, measures only intended for the correction of abuses, Peel remained faithful to the principle of protection. In this belief, as we now know, Disraeli was mistaken. Four days after the speech was delivered, Peel told Gladstone, whom he was taking into his Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade, 'that in future he questioned whether he could undertake the defence of the Corn Laws on principle'; and, in his record of the conversation made on the day it took place, the new President intimates that Peel's 'words were addressed to a sympathising hearer.'[2] It is not a mere coincidence that the Shrewsbury speech

[1] This speech is reported at length in the *Shropshire Conservative* for May 13, 1843.

[2] Morley's *Gladstone*, I., p. 260.

was Disraeli's last attempt at a whole-hearted defence of Peel's administration. He had promised his constituents that if he found the Government throwing the landed interest over his vote would be given against them, and before the month was out he had occasion to fulfil his pledge. The Government had committed themselves to a scheme for reducing to a nominal amount the duty on corn from Canada, and under the conditions then prevailing a capital result would be the indirect admission of corn from the United States at the low fixed duty of 4s. the quarter. At this aspect of the measure the agricultural interest, already suspicious and uneasy, took serious alarm; though Stanley, who, as Colonial Secretary, was immediately responsible, and who, as the future was to show, was a sincere believer in protection, tried hard to convince them that the effects in practice would be small. When he next saw his constituents, Disraeli, after reminding them of the pledge he had given at the time of his previous visit, explained the circumstances in which it had come up for fulfilment.

> Upon my arrival in London, the first information I received on entering the lobby of the House of Commons was that the Government had determined to force through the Canadian Corn Bill. . . . I had not the moral courage nor the immoral audacity to say one thing to my constituents, and within 24 hours[1] vote diametrically opposite. . . . At that time there was a most powerful party arrayed against the Government, and how easy it would have been for me to have made a violent and damaging speech against them, and have influenced the passions of those friends who were then in opposition! Such a course of action on my part would have told with double effect, because I had defended the Ministry on their two previous measures; but I had no wish to do so, and I only recorded my silent suffrage against them.[2]

The Government carried their Bill, but in the teeth of opposition from many of their supporters and at no small cost to their popularity and prestige.

[1] The interval was short, but the '24 hours' is a piece of Disraelian rhetoric, and is not to be taken literally.

[2] Speech at Shrewsbury, August 28, 1844.

To Sarah Disraeli.

GROSVENOR GATE,
May 12.

We left Shrewsbury after breakfast, and arrived at home for dinner. For the provinces I think my speech was a great effect. Nothing could equal the enthusiasm of my auditors or be stronger than my position there. . . . We did not arrive at Shrewsbury till ten at night, by which we lost a triumphant entrance, the streets having been filled with the expectation of our immediate arrival from six to eight o'clock; guns on the English bridge ready to be fired and frighten our horses, and deputations at the column. After the dinner we went to the Bachelors' Ball, which was very gay and well attended. Mary Anne, who never looked so well (in white with a dark wreath of velvet flowers twined with diamonds), was the grand lady of the evening, and led out to supper by the Lord Mayor. The next day we went to the races; saw Retriever win the Tankerville—an excellent race—and shook hands with a great many of our friends. Lord Newport[1] was our travelling companion up to town, and very agreeable; a shrewd, tall, fair, unaffected, very young man. I was at the House last night and received many compliments about my speech and Shrewsbury campaign. I spoke at Shrewsbury, they tell me, an hour and twenty minutes, but it did not seem long. M. A. was in the gallery, and got even more cheering than I did. . . . Tell my mother we feasted on her chickens. Her slippers were much admired at Shrewsbury.

[1] Afterwards 3rd Earl of Bradford, 1819-1898.

CHAPTER V.

A Winter in Paris.

1842–1843.

'This,' said Lady Montfort one day to Endymion, 'is a political economy Parliament, both sides alike thinking of the price of corn and all that. Finance and commerce are everybody's subjects, and are most convenient to make speeches about for men who cannot speak French and who have had no education. Real politics are the possession and distribution of power. I want to see you give your mind to foreign affairs. . . . . But foreign affairs are not to be mastered by mere reading. Bookworms do not make Chancellors of State. You must become acquainted with the great actors in the great scene. There is nothing like personal knowledge of the individuals who control the high affairs. . . . What I think you ought to do is to take advantage of this interval before the meeting of Parliament, and go to Paris. Paris is now the capital of diplomacy.'[1] Disraeli himself profited by this sage advice, and shortly after the prorogation of 1842 we find him and his wife established in the Rue de Rivoli.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Hôtel de l'Europe, Rue Rivoli,
Oct. 14.

. . . We have for the last ten days or so had the most beautiful weather here, which will, they say, last during the month: our rooms, looking to the gardens of the Tuileries, so warm

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 71.

that we sit with the windows open, the glass 70 in the shade. Mary Anne has entirely recovered, and I think I never saw her looking so well. We have found agreeable acquaintance in the de Gramont family. The Duchess Count D'Orsay's sister, and like him in petticoats. She receives three times a week, and the few people in Paris may be found in her little house in the Faubourg St. Honoré, crammed with pretty furniture, old cabinets, and pictures of the de Gramonts. The Duc as well as his spouse extremely good-looking, and brother of Lady Tankerville, who we also find here and who is very kind to us. She is staying with Marshal Sebastiani, who married her sister, recently dead. The Duc, when Duc de Guiche, was an officer in our 10th Hussars, in the days of Lord Worcester, Pembroke, and George Wombwell. One of his three sons, the Vicomte de Gramont, is with them, and their two daughters, on the point of coming out, and the first considered very pretty, and celebrated in the novels of Eugène Sue, the only *littérateur* admitted into fashionable society here; the rest are savages. We see these Mlles. de Gramont in the evening, where they are trying their wings, previous to a formal *début*, and kiss their mother at ten o'clock and go to bed.

Of English here are the Adrian Hopes, who arrived from Normandy yesterday; Henry Hope, who has been here as long as ourselves; George Smythe, Cochrane,[1] Lord Pembroke, Antony de Rothschilds, Mrs. Montefiore. Antony succeeds the Duke of Orleans[2] in his patronage of the turf, and gives costly cups to the course, which his horses always win. Through Goldsmith[3] I have made the acquaintance of Mauguin,[4] whom I see much of and like, and Odilon-Barrot, the leader of the Opposition, called on me yesterday. Thiers is in the country, as well as almost every other leading man, but they will soon cluster in. He frequents the *salon* of the Duchess, and seems in favor with the Carlists; here also I shall find Berryer.[5] Goldsmith gave us a grand banquet and good company—the Swedish and Spanish Ministers, the U. S. for Foreign Affairs, Mauguin, and other diplomats. They all talked at the same time, shouted, and gesticulated, the noise Neapolitan, and the *salle à manger* being very small, and there being fourteen *bougies* alight on the table, independent of several side-lamps, the effect was overwhelming. Mary

[1] Alexander Baillie Cochrane, 1816-1890, afterwards 1st Lord Lamington.
[2] Louis Philippe's eldest son, who had been killed in a carriage accident in the previous July.
[3] The father of Lady Lyndhurst.
[4] A well-known lawyer and politician.
[5] A leading Legitimist politician.

Anne and myself have taken advantage of the fine weather to visit several places which I had never seen—Père la Chaise and all that—and yesterday we made with Smythe a charming pilgrimage to the Luxembourg. . . . Smythe and Cochrane dined with us yesterday. We have a *cuisinière bourgeoise*, very pretty. Mary Anne begs you not to have any stays made till she comes home, as she can give you valuable information thereon. . . . We meet at the de Gramonts, Princes de Beaufremont, Counts de Chambellan, Duchesses de Marmier. What names! But where are the territories? There are only 100 men in France who have ten thousand per ann. Henry Hope and De Rothschild could buy them all.

Nov. 9.

Our English friends have nearly all departed, and the serious illness of the Duc de Gramont has put a stop to the pleasant *réunions* at their house. We have dined with Lord and Lady Cowley: a very pleasant dinner. . . . The ambassador is very like the Duke, but much taller. Lady Cowley has the most polished yet natural manners, very well-informed and rather clever. Paris is very empty of notables, though some few are stealing in. The season will be late and sombre, owing to the death of the Prince Royal, and the non-consequent autumn meeting of the Chambers, which will not now reassemble till the middle of January. We have passed an evening at Madame Baudrand's, the wife of the general and aide-de-camp of the King, and friend. She is an Englishwoman, and young enough to be his daughter. We also met her friend, Miss Tennyson d'Eyncourt, who remembered dining with me seven or eight years ago at Bulwer's. Many Frenchmen have English wives—Madame Lamartine, Odilon-Barrot, and De Tocqueville.

Nov. 22.

MY DEAR SA,

. . . I have seen a good many persons since I wrote last. I think I was then on the eve of paying a visit to Thiers, whom I found in a very handsome house, and in his cabinet, or sanctum, a long gallery room, full of works of art; at the end his desks and tables covered with materials, maps and books and papers for the life of Napoleon, or rather the history of the Consulate and Empire. I stayed with him two hours: a very little man, but well proportioned, not dwarfish, with a face full of intelligence and an eye full of fire. Madame Thiers receiving every evening, Mary Anne and myself paid our respects to her a few nights after. We met there Mignet,[1] Count Walewski, the son of Napoleon, whom we knew before,

[1] A well-known historian.

and others. Thiers paid M. A. the greatest courtesy and attended her to her carriage. Madame Thiers pretty: her mother, Madame Dosne, there. I believe the house, which is very handsome, belongs to Monsieur Dosne, the father-in-law.

Next day to the Sorbonne, where I paid a visit to the celebrated Cousin, late Minister of Instruction and now Dean of the University: great power of elocution; he delivered me a lecture which lasted an hour and a half, very perspicuous and precise, dogmatic but not a pedant. I have seen also the great Dupin,[1] who is rich and lives in a very handsome hotel; his brother Charles—a pair of zanies; and I also made a visit to the prince of journalists, M. Bertin de Vaux, an ox who lives in a fat pasture manured by others. He dwells in a fine hotel, and lives like a noble; indeed, few have such a rich estate as the *Journal des Débats*.

Yesterday, however, was my most distinguished visit; like a skilful general, I kept my great gun for the last. On Sunday night I received a letter from the royal aide-de-camp in service to inform me that the King would receive me in a private audience at St. Cloud on the morrow at half-past eleven. I was with his Majesty nearly two hours alone; the conversation solely political, but of the most unreserved and interesting kind. He was frank, courteous, and kind. In taking my leave, which of course I could not do until he arose, he said he hoped my visit to St. Cloud had made as favorable an impression on me as mine had on him; that he hoped to see me in the evenings at the palace, when he should have the pleasure of presenting me to the Queen. There is no court of any kind at this moment, and therefore M. A. cannot be presented, and we hear that the poor Queen is still dreadfully depressed. After my audience had concluded, General Baudrand, whom I rejoined in the antechamber, took me over the palace. But I cannot now attempt to give you the faintest idea of its splendor and beauty. The pages, courtiers, equerries were all in the deepest mourning. I went in my usual morning costume. I ought to tell you that while, previous to the audience, I was sitting in the chamber of the aide-de-camp, one of the courtiers brought me from the King, by his Majesty's express order, a despatch just received, and which he had not himself read, containing the news of the conquest of Cabul[2] and the release

[1] President of the Chamber from 1832 to 1840.

[2] 'You will be surprised to hear,' wrote his sister from Bradenham, in reply to this letter, 'that it was our first account of the conquest of Cabul, our papers having miscarried, as they always do when there is anything of importance; so that we owed as much as you did to the courteousness of his most Christian Majesty.'

of the prisoners. His Majesty said afterwards he was happy that our meeting took place on a day which had brought such good news for England.

Be very particular and minute in your information about my father's eyes. Scarcely a day passes without some inquiry being made after him here, especially by the *hommes-de-lettres*. His works are universally known here, and Buchon,[1] Sainte-Beuve, Bertin de Vaux, Philarète Chasles,[2] &c., are familiar with every page he has written.

Ever affectionately yours,

D.

Disraeli had sought his audience through General Baudrand, with whom he had become intimate, in order 'to lay before his Majesty some facts respecting the state of parties and the disposition of power in our Parliament, which if properly appreciated might exercise an important and immediate influence on the lasting policy of the two countries.' Palmerston, who in 1830 had begun his rule at the Foreign Office by an attitude so friendly to the new monarchy in France as to provoke Disraeli's ire in his *Gallomania* tract, had, when his rule came to an end in 1841, left a France profoundly irritated by his policy in the Levant; but Aberdeen and Guizot, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, were now endeavouring to restore friendlier relations, and Disraeli, who had travelled far since the days of the *Gallomania*, was anxious to make his contribution to this desirable result. Through General Baudrand he submitted to the King a long memorandum,[3] in which, with a courtly compliment to 'the genius of a great Prince, eminently fertile in resource and strengthened by an unprecedented experience of life,' he suggested a course of action in the English Parliament and Press likely, in the writer's opinion, to lead to the speedy restoration of 'a genuine and hearty alliance' between the two countries. Louis Philippe, who well knew that an understanding with England was almost essential to the existence of his

[1] Historical scholar.
[2] A literary critic like Sainte-Beuve, though of less celebrity.
[3] For the full text see Appendix, p. 807.

throne and dynasty, was impressed by the memorandum; and whatever may have been the political results of the audience that followed, the impression was maintained. Thenceforward the King was prodigal of marks of his favour, and he continued to regard Disraeli as a friend to the hapless end of his own career.

To Sarah Disraeli. *Dec.* 2, 1842.

MY DEAR SA,

... I don't think when I wrote to you last that I had made a visit to Augustin Thierry, or rather a pilgrimage. He is only forty-five, but paralysed to his centre, and quite blind; but he entirely retains his faculties, and even with the aid of amanuenses continues his composition, and even researches. He sent many messages to my father, whose name is very familiar with all the *literati* of Paris. T. is married, and his wife very worthy and devoted, but she takes the words out of his mouth a little too much. After this I called for M. A., and made a visit together to Madame Thiers (the evening of course, when all visits are paid in Paris), and then I made my *début* at the Comtesse de Castellane, a charming woman of the highest fashion, and who smiles on M. Molé—a *grand seigneur*, and once Prime Minister. I was presented to her by Henry Bulwer, and have since presented M. A. to her.

On Tuesday I dined with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, his first dinner for the season, and given only to the great personages; even the Cabinet Ministers only appeared at the soirée. The guests were the English Ambassador, the Austrian Ambassador (Count Apponyi), the Prussian Minister, the Duke Decazes, Grand Referendary of France, Count de Chabot, Baron Alexander Humboldt, General Sebastiani, Governor of Paris, Baron Regnier, the Chancellor of France, Rothschild and myself, and Colonel Fox. Guizot, his mother, very old, his sister-in-law, who heads his establishment, and his private secretary, made up the party. All was sumptuous, servants in rich liveries and guests with every ribbon of the rainbow. Sat between Sebastiani and Rothschild, whom I met for the first time, and whom I found a happy mixture of the French dandy and the orange-boy. He spoke to me without ceremony, with 'I believe you know my nephew?' On Wednesday, after making a preliminary visit to Madame Castellane to present Mary Anne, we went to a grand rout at the British Embassy, where we saw every diplomatic character in Paris, including the fat Nuncio of the Pope, and the Greek Minister, Odelli, in native costume, many of the high French and shoals of the low English.

Returning home, I found a note from General Baudrand, saying that at St. Cloud in the morning the King had said: 'Mr. Disraeli has never been at St. Cloud in the evening. I wish to present him to the Queen.' Accordingly last night I was obliged to go off, and arrived at St. Cloud about nine. The palace, situate on a hill and brilliantly illuminated, had a fine effect. I passed for the first time in my life an evening in the domesticity of a Court. When I arrived the Royal family were still in the apartments of the Duchess of Orleans: a few courtiers and one or two visitors, my friend Count Arnim, the Prussian Minister, loitering in the saloons, and three ladies sitting at a table working. In about a quarter of an hour the Court was announced, and his Majesty entered with the Queen, followed by Madame Adelaide, the Princesse Clémentine, the Duke and Duchess of Nemours, and some attendants. We formed a distant circle. The Queen and the ladies, all in deep mourning, seated themselves around a large round table, working. Ices were handed, and the King commenced speaking a few words to each.

He was extremely gracious when he observed me, and, after saying a few words expressing his pleasure that I had arrived, called to a courtier to present me to the Queen. Her Majesty asked me six questions, to which I replied. She is tall and sad, with white hair; a dignified and graceful phantom. Then I was presented to Madame Adelaide, who is lively like her brother. In the course of the evening the King conversed with me a considerable time. I am a favorite with him, and doubtless owe to his good word my grand dinner with M. Guizot, who told me that the King had observed to him, 'he had had a most interesting conversation with me.' I hope to hear good news of all, to whom a thousand loves. M. A. is very well indeed, and sends many kind loves and messages.

D.

Dec. 21.

Many thanks for your 'happy returns' received this morning. . . . We have attended a meeting of the Académie Française for the reception of a new member, the celebrated Baron Pasquier, Chancellor of France, who made a long eulogium on Frayssinous, the late Bishop of Hermopolis, and was replied to by the president of the day, M. Mignet, in a speech of considerable ability. The grand hall of the institute was crowded, all the genius and fashion of Paris present. My ticket was given me by Comte Molé, Mary Anne's by M. Guizot. Afterwards I dined at a grand party at the Luxembourg, with the Grand Referendary of the Chamber of Peers, the celebrated Duc Decazes, and sat next to his Duchess, a daughter of St.-Aulaire,

the French Ambassador at our Court. In the evening there was a very choice reception at Madame de Castellane's to celebrate the election of Pasquier; the hero of the day was there himself, and many celebrities. I was introduced among others to Barante, now a Baron and an Ambassador and President of the Society of French History, of which I have been elected a member. . . .

On Saturday last I received a command to dine at the Tuileries on the following Monday at six o'clock. I was ushered, through a suite of about twenty illuminated rooms, to the chamber of reception, where I formed one of the circle, and where I found seated the Queen of Sardinia, at present a guest, and her ladies. Soon after the Court entered and went round the grand circle. I was the only stranger, though there were sixty guests. Dinner was immediately announced, the King leading out the Queen of Sardinia, and there were so many ladies that an Italian princess, duchess, or countess fell to my share. We dined in the gallery of Diana, one of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Louis XVI., and one of the most splendid apartments perhaps in the world. . . . In the evening the King personally showed the Tuileries to the Queen of Sardinia, and the first lady in waiting, the Marquise de Dolomieu, invited me, and so did the King, to join the party, *only eight*. It is rare to make the tour of a palace with a King for the cicerone. In the evening there was a reception of a few individuals, but I should have withdrawn had not the King addressed me and maintained a conversation with me of great length. He walked into an adjoining room, and motioned me to seat myself on the same sofa. While we conversed the chamberlain occasionally entered and announced guests. 'S. A. le Prince de Ligne,' the new Ambassador of Belgium. 'J'arrive,' responded his Majesty very impatiently, but he never moved. At last even Majesty was obliged to move, but he signified his wish that I should attend the palace in the evenings. . . .

You must understand that I am the *only* stranger who has been received at Court. It causes a great sensation here. There is no Court at present, on account of the death of the Duke of Orleans; and the Ailesburys, Stanhopes, and Russian princes cannot obtain a reception. The King speaks of me to many with great *kudos*.

It was not only his first taste of the joys of a Court that Disraeli found exhilarating. Social artist as he was, he delighted in the brilliant society of Paris, in its freedom from snobbishness, its homage to intellect, its graceful

ease. In *Coningsby*, which was written in the course of the following year, we can see some of the results of his present observations.

Nothing strikes me more in this brilliant city than the tone of its society, so much higher than our own. What an absence of petty personalities! How much conversation, and how little gossip! Yet nowhere is there less pedantry. Here all women are as agreeable as is the remarkable privilege in London of some half-dozen. Men, too, and great men, develop their minds. A great man in England, on the contrary, is generally the dullest dog in company![1]

Or, again:

What is more consummate than the manner in which a French lady receives her guests? She unites graceful repose and unaffected dignity with the most amiable regard for others. She sees everyone; she speaks to everyone; she sees them at the right moment; she says the right thing; it is utterly impossible to detect any difference in the position of her guests by the spirit in which she welcomes them. There is, indeed, throughout every circle of Parisian society, from the *château* to the *cabaret*, a sincere homage to intellect; and this without any maudlin sentiment. None sooner than the Parisians can draw the line between factitious notoriety and honest fame; or sooner distinguish between the counterfeit celebrity and the standard reputation. In England we too often alternate between a supercilious neglect of genius and a rhapsodical pursuit of quacks.[2]

Or take the description of the Duchesse de G[ramon]t's receptions, where

It seemed that every woman was pretty, every man a wit. Sure you were to find yourself surrounded by celebrities, and men were welcomed there if they were clever before they were famous, which showed it was a house that regarded intellect, and did not seek merely to gratify its vanity by being surrounded by the distinguished.[3]

In some notes written by Disraeli about twenty years later there are sundry reminiscences of this visit to Paris, and another which he paid in the winter of 1845:

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. V. ch. 8. [2] Bk. V. ch. 7.
[3] Bk. VI. ch. 1.

When I was in Paris in 1842, the Court was slowly recovering from the death of the Duke of Orleans. The King, however, was full of confidence in himself and in his dynasty. He dwelt on the resemblance of the position of William III. of England and himself. He had this additional advantage—children.

I had my first audience with King Louis Philippe at St. Cloud at the end of the autumn. The audience was long and not formal. It was the only time in my experience in which the King did not engross the conversation, and few foreigners have enjoyed a greater intimacy with that sovereign than myself. I have been in the habit of remaining after the evening receptions at the Tuileries, and sitting with him in his cabinet until a very late hour, he himself dismissing me by a private way, as all the royal household had retired. In these conversations, or rather communications, he seemed to conceal from me nothing. Sometimes he would speak only of his early life, his strange adventures, escapes, hardships, and necessities. The last time I was alone with him in 1846 he had indulged in this vein, and in reply to an observation which I had made I remember well his saying: 'Ah, Mr. Disraeli, mine has been a life of great vicissitude!' He would always speak English with me. He had a complete command of our language, even of its slang (*argot*). Perhaps it might be said that his English was a little American.

In 1842 the King was entirely master—his own chief Minister in fact. He was fond of affairs, and jealous of the interference or aspirations of his sons. The King had a conviction that he thoroughly understood Frenchmen, and knew how to manage them. He despised his people. More than once, when I had made a suggestion, he would remark: 'Ah, I have to deal with a very different people from you.' And then a peculiar grimace of contempt and dislike. 'The way to manage these people is to give them their head, and then know when to pull them up.'

In the King's time there never was a dinner given at the Tuileries—no matter how stately; I have seen it in the Gallery of Diana with a hundred guests—without a huge smoking ham being placed, at a certain time, before the King. Upon this he operated like a conjurer. The rapidity and precision with which he carved it was a marvellous feat: the slices were vast, but wafer-thin. It was his great delight to carve this ham, and indeed it was a wonderful performance. He told me one day that he had learnt the trick from a waiter at Bucklersbury, where he used to dine once at an eating-house for 9d. per head.

One day he called out to an honest Englishman that he

was going to send him a slice of ham, and the honest Englishman—some consul, if I recollect right, who had been kind to the King in America in the days of his adversity—not used to Courts, replied that he would rather not take any. The King drew up and said: 'I did not ask you whether you would take any; I said I would send you some.' A little trait, but characteristic of the dash of the *grand seigneur*, which I often observed latent in L. Philippe, though from his peculiar temperament and his adventurous life of strange vicissitude he was peculiarly deficient in dignity. . . .

General Baudrand, Governor of the Comte de Paris, and entirely devoted to the House of Orleans, a man who had risen from the ranks, I believe, but a natural nobleman, a man of the highest moral tone as well as social breeding, doing every justice to the King, to whom he was attached, often concluded his confidential observations by saying: 'What the King wants is *dignity*'—'Ce que le roi manque, c'est la dignité.' Baudrand, without stiffness, for he was genial, had as great a share of dignity as I ever met.

King Louis Philippe sent Baudrand on his accession to the Duke of Wellington to explain everything and obtain an immediate recognition. Baudrand's account of his interview with the Duke very interesting. Wellington was not so grieved about the 'three glorious days' as some suppose. The elder branch, in their anxiety to become popular, were going very wrong, and were about to attack the Rhine. The Duke accepted the election of the House of Orleans as a pledge for constitutional and moderate government. Baudrand was exactly the envoy the Duke would appreciate—a distinguished soldier, with a simplicity like his own.

King Louis Philippe vindicated to me one day his refusal in 1830 of the [office of] Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom during the minority of the Duc of Bordeaux (Henri V.). He said he would have preferred leaving France. He said if the Duc had died during the regency nothing would have prevented [him from] being looked upon as a criminal. 'The Duc of Bordeaux would never have had a bellyache without my being denounced throughout the world as a poisoner.'

At Paris in 1842-43, Guizot Minister, but not supposed to be very strong. His strength increased with the strength of Peel, and Madame Lieven consolidated the alliance between Guizot and Lord Aberdeen. His rivals were Thiers, who had been Minister and was leader of the Opposition, and Comte Molé, descendant of the Grande Barbe, and inheriting not merely his name, but the honors and estates of the family; for Molé had been a minor in the days of the emigration, remained in France under wise guardians, and preserved the

whole of his estates, which during his lifetime the Code Napoléon, almost as bad as the emigration, could not diminish. Molé was a *grand seigneur*, of the highest breeding; courtly, finished, dignified if necessary, but easy and simple. Excellent talents, very general information, a complete political culture, and not a mean orator when under pressure. He was supposed to lean to the Russian Alliance, though I believe this was only a newspaper theory. I was on terms of great intimacy with him, and he spoke freely to me of his views as regards England. He was short in stature, like his rivals Guizot and Thiers. His countenance was dark, with regular features of the Jewish cast, and he was supposed to inherit his physiognomy from a famous Hebrew heiress, who married into his family. He lived in the Hôtel Molé in good state, and entertained as became his rank—the only personage in Paris who gave great dinners except the Ministers and high functionaries and Rothschilds.

Affairs were changed in 1846. Guizot was rooted in power, and had persuaded the King that he was the Richelieu of a Louis XIV. Thiers, who had a considerable following in 1842-43, the remains of his position in 1839 of first Minister, was greatly sunk, had reverted to literature, and was very disaffected. The Hôtel Molé had been pulled down, and the Comte lived in a new one in the modish quarter of F. St. Honoré. His chance seemed quite to have vanished.

Guizot's manner had no charm; it was indeed repulsive. Not exactly pedantic, but professional, hard, dogmatic, arrogant. His countenance very fine; a brow of beaming intellect, and a wondrous flashing eye. His general countenance often reminded me of Roubiliac's bust of Pope. Thiers looked and chattered like a little journalist; a monkey, but wonderfully sharp and self-complacent and clever.

Thiers said to me one morning, as we were walking together in the Champs Elysées: 'As for French politics, they are simple. I am forty-seven, M. Guizot is fifty-seven, and Comte Molé is sixty-seven.[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

PARIS,
Jan. 16, 1843.

The uncertainty of our movements and the great pressure of business and pleasure have daily made me delay writing. Our life goes on the same, only more bustling. I have been a great deal at Court; had the honor of drinking tea with

[1] As a statement of fact this remark could not, either in 1842 or 1845, have been literally accurate, but literal accuracy in such matters was never the foible of either Thiers or his reporter.

the Queen and Madame Adelaide alone, and one evening was sent for to the King's cabinet. I am in personal as well as political favor there. We had tickets from the household to witness the opening of the Chambers and to hear the King's speech, which was extremely interesting. The splendid staff of a hundred general officers and the marshals of France, in their gorgeous uniforms, seated on one bench, very fine. We have been also to the Chamber of Peers, worthy of the Roman Senate; to the Luxembourg, to a concert given by the Duchess Decazes, and we were the only English there.

One of our most amusing parties was a strictly French dinner, to which we were invited by the Odilon-Barrots. A capital dinner, and surrounded by names long familiar to me—Lamartine, Tocqueville, Gustave de Beaumont[1]; the first tall and distinguished in appearance, all intelligent. In the evening a *soirée*, in which all the Opposition figured. By-the-by, the Turkish Ambassador dined at Barrot's; I happened to praise some dish which I remembered eating in Turkey; and on Sunday his cook brought one as an offering to Mary Anne. Reschid Pacha is his name, a great celebrity. I went by invitation one evening to talk Eastern politics and smoke a chibouque, which he offered me, brilliant with diamonds. He told me then that since we last met he had been recalled, 'a simple *rappel*.' He knew not whether he was to be disgraced, or to be made Prime Minister; but I suspect the latter will be his destiny.

Another day we went to an assembly at the Hôtel de Ville, given by the wife of the Prefect of the Seine—costly beyond description, in the style of the Renaissance; and after it, where do you think we went at half-past twelve at night, M. and Madame Adolphe Barrot, ourselves, and Odilon? To the masqued ball at the Opera. They had an admirable box, the scene indescribable. Between three and four thousand *devils* dancing and masquerading beyond fancy. A thorough carnival; the *salle* of the Grand Opera formed into one immense Belshazzar's hall with a hundred streaming lustres. The grand galoppe, five hundred figures whirling like a witches' sabbath, truly infernal. The contrast, too, between the bright fantastic scene below and the boxes filled with ladies in black dominoes and masks, very striking, and made the scene altogether Eblisian. Fancy me walking about in such a dissolute devilry, with Odilon-Barrot of all men in the world, who, though an excellent fellow, is as severe as a *vieux parlementaire* of the time of the

[1] De Tocqueville's colleague in his memorable mission to America in 1831.

Fronde. I have omitted much more than I have told; but you must manage to pay your visit to town immediately after our arrival.

CARLTON,
Saturday [*Feb.* 4].

I can give you no news from this; all at present uncertain and unsatisfactory. Peel feeble and frigid, I think, and general grumbling.

Our latter days at Paris were some of our most brilliant: the principal features, the ball at the English Embassy; 1,000 folks and orange-trees springing from the supper-table; my farewell audience with his Majesty; a grand dinner at Molé's[1]; I sat between Humboldt and Tocqueville, and was surrounded with celebrities—Mignet, Victor Hugo, Cousin, &c. But above all spectacles was the ball at Baron Solomon de Rothschild's—an hotel in decoration surpassing all the palaces of Munich; a greater retinue of servants and liveries more gorgeous than the Tuileries, and pineapples plentiful as blackberries.

The taste of this unrivalled palace is equal to the splendor and richness of its decorations. The company all the *élite* of Paris. You must obtain from M. A. when you see her an account of this unrivalled fête.

I saw Hahnemann at Paris, very hale and active, and eighty-eight!

The influence of his stay in Paris and of his conversations with Louis Philippe is clearly visible in Disraeli's conduct in the new session of Parliament. Not only, as we have seen, did he urge the Government to conclude, if possible, a commercial treaty with France: he returned with fresh zest to his attacks on the Palmerston system in foreign affairs, and supported Peel and Aberdeen in their resolution to pursue a less provocative policy. 'I have at last,' he writes to his sister when the session was a month old, 'made a great speech at a late hour, in a full house, and sat down amid general cheering.' The

[1] 'I dined at Comte Molé's,' is the reminiscence of the sixties, 'and sate next to Alexander Humboldt at dinner. He was then a very old man, though he lived ten [really sixteen] years more. But he had none of the infirmities of age, being vivacious and both communicative and sympathising. I am ashamed to recall so little when the effect was so pleasing. Victor Hugo sate opposite to me; a handsome man, not then more than forty, and looking younger.'

subject was the Afghan War, the occasion a motion by Roebuck for a select committee of inquiry; and Disraeli's speech[1] in its general tone was a curious anticipation of speeches to be made against himself a generation later. Before the trouble began we had, he argued, a perfect boundary; but anticipating, as we thought, a movement by Russia, we had invaded Afghanistan, and so courted disaster. Russia, he admitted, was menacing, but only by virtue of her geographical position. Her policy was not offensive. Our late Foreign Minister had been the real aggressor, sending secret agents to the shores of the Black Sea to intrigue against Russia, who naturally had replied by sending similar agents into Central Asia. This speech he followed up by voting, as often before, in a minority mainly Radical, against both the front benches; but when, only a week later, the Opposition forces were mobilised officially for an attack on Lord Ellenborough, the Indian Governor-General, who had brought discredit on a policy that seems in essence to have been statesman-like, by his theatrical proclamation on the recovery of the gates of Somnath, he voted with the Government. Before the end of the month he was helping them again on a question of foreign policy. Palmerston made an attack on the treaty which Lord Ashburton had just negotiated in Washington for the settlement of the Maine boundary and other outstanding differences between Great Britain and the United States, and Disraeli defended it in a speech[2] in which he showed more knowledge of the facts of a very intricate question than Palmerston, or even Peel, who had the Foreign Office to guide him.[3]

By Disraeli's friends in Paris, where Palmerston was detested, these speeches, of course, were read with no little satisfaction.

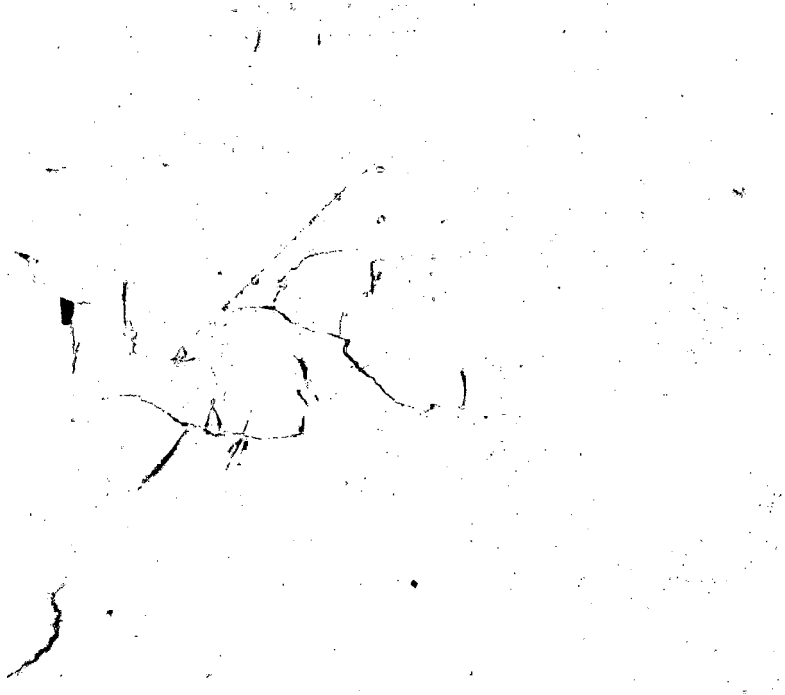
[1] March 1, 1843. [2] March 22, 1843.

[3] So I am assured by an authority who has made a special study of the subject.

From General Baudrand.

PARIS,
1 *Avril.*

J'ai vu sans étonnement, mais avec une véritable satisfaction, la décision avec laquelle vous avez abordé la lutte avec lord Palmerston. Sortir vainqueur du combat contre un athlète aussi redoutable est un glorieux triomphe parlementaire. Cet avantage ne peut manquer d'agrandir votre influence et fortifier votre crédit parmi vos amis politiques. Je vous en fais mon sincère compliment, et je suis chargé de vous en faire un autre, non moins sincère que le mien, de la part d'un personnage dont l'approbation ne peut manquer de vous flatter et de vous donner une vive satisfaction. Le succès de votre attaque contre la politique hostile et agressive de lord Palmerston, et l'appui que vous avez donné aux intentions pacifiques et éclairées et conformes aux véritables interêts de l'Angleterre de l'homme recommendable maintenant placé à la tête de votre gouvernement, justifient la confiance que le roi a montrée dans la loyauté de vos sentiments et la fermeté de vos convictions.



CHAPTER VI.

YOUNG ENGLAND.

1843–1844.

On the Tory side in the Parliament of 1841 there was a little group of young men who had been educated together at Eton and Cambridge, and who were united not only by the memory of their school and college friendship, but by a common stock of ideas on questions of Church and state. Their leading spirit was George Smythe,[1] whom we have already encountered, 'a man,' as Disraeli described him long after his death, 'of brilliant gifts, of dazzling wit, infinite culture, and fascinating manners;'[2] though from lack of serious purpose he was to disappoint his friends, and, in the words in which one[3] of them summed up his career, to prove 'a splendid failure.' Smythe, as is well known, was the original of the hero in *Coningsby*; but the figure there presented is less true to life than a portrait in *Endymion*, where he reappears as Waldershare.

Waldershare was one of those vivid and brilliant organisations which exercise a peculiarly attractive influence on youth. He had been the hero of the debating club at Cambridge, and many believed in consequence that he must become Prime Minister. He was witty and fanciful, and, though capricious and bad-tempered, could flatter and caress. At Cambridge he had introduced the new Oxford heresy. . . . Waldershare prayed and fasted, and swore by Laud and Strafford. He took, however, a more eminent degree at

[1] See p. 524.
[2] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.
[3] Lord Lyttelton.

Paris than at his original Alma Mater, and becoming passionately addicted to French literature, his views respecting both Church and state became modified — at least, in private. His entrance into English society had been highly successful, and as he had a due share of vanity, and was by no means free from worldliness, he had enjoyed and pursued his triumphs. But his versatile nature, which required not only constant, but novel excitement, became palled even with the society of duchesses. . . . Waldershare was profligate, but sentimental; unprincipled, but romantic; the child of whim, and the slave of an imagination so freakish and deceptive that it was always impossible to foretell his course. He was alike capable of sacrificing all his feelings to worldly considerations, or of forfeiting the world for a visionary caprice.[1]

'My morbid, keenly analytic, introspective, Jean-Jacques-like temper' is a phrase in a letter he wrote to Disraeli in the last year of his short life; and again, 'I once heard that you had said of me "that I was the only man who had never bored you."'

Chief among the youths who were Smythe's chosen companions, and who felt the spell of his brilliant mind and fascinating personality, was Lord John Manners, second son of the Duke of Rutland—a man inferior to Smythe in intellectual gifts, but of a loyalty, purity, and kindliness of nature, that amounted almost to genius. He appears as Lord Henry Sydney in *Coningsby* and *Tancred*, and some of the charm of the original character is caught in the portrait. Another member of the coterie who had found his way into the House of Commons was Alexander Baillie Cochrane, a young Scottish laird who appears in *Coningsby* as Buckhurst, 'the fiery and generous Buckhurst.'

It is not easy now to discriminate between the ideas which the little group had brought from Cambridge and those which they acquired later when they came under the influence of Disraeli's riper mind. Like most of the generous youth of the nineteenth century, they were in the first place romantics—in eager sympathy with the

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 22.

protest against a utilitarian age to which romanticism was committed in all its manifestations. From the foremost spirits of the time, Newman, Carlyle, and the others, who with their several voices were bearing similar testimony, they had learnt to deplore the excessive worship of mere wealth and machinery that prevailed to the neglect of all the higher interests of man. Nurtured politically in the romantic school of Scott, they were of course Tories from the first, and their Toryism never lost a certain Jacobite flavour. As in the case of Scott himself, acceptance of the reigning family did not prevent them from cherishing Stuart traditions; and one of the cardinal articles of their political faith was that monarchy, as Smythe put it, was a principle rather than an instrument, one of their primary aims the restoration of dignity and influence to the Throne. On his very first appearance as an active politician, Smythe had found an opportunity of proclaiming these opinions with dramatic effect. He came forward as a candidate for a vacant seat at Canterbury shortly before the dissolution of 1841, and at a time when the Tories were at the height of their irritation over the repeated postponement of their hopes of office since the Bedchamber incident two years before. Attributing the happier fortunes of their rivals, the Whigs, to the favour of the Palace, heated Tory partisans were displaying their resentment openly, or at most under the cover of a barely decent cloak of loyalty; but the boy fresh from Cambridge had the courage to reprove their folly and set them the right example. He embodied in his first speech a glowing eulogy of the young Queen, and so taking the wind out of the sails of his opponents won the election.

By a sure instinct the young Cambridge men had turned their backs on the degenerate Toryism of privilege and immobility, and sought their inspiration in the enlightened principles and practice of the younger Pitt and Canning. In undergraduate days they had seemed to see in Peel the heir to the traditions of these their

favourite statesmen, and had watched with enthusiasm the steady growth of his influence. But Peel was a practical politician with no romantic tendencies, and the views of his young admirers were not to be bounded by the Tamworth manifesto. They desired for the Church a position of greater independence than the Erastian spirit of the eighteenth century had been willing to sanction, or than Peel himself, we may surmise, would have been disposed to concede. Like all true romantics, they had an antipathy to the middle class, which was Peel's political idol; they dreaded its growing influence, and hoped to provide a counterpoise by reawaking the sense of duty in the nobility and gentry, and restoring them to their rightful place as leaders and protectors of the people. With the people at large their sympathy was real and active. They had that faith in the lower orders which the Tory party had lost, and the courage to believe that it might be possible to redeem them from the misery and serfdom into which they had fallen. Their minds were fertile in ideas, some of them too picturesque, perhaps, to be practical, but all of them noble and disinterested, for bringing back joy to the sombre and monotonous lives of the labouring poor, and renewing the harmony between classes that had been one of the characteristics of the 'Merrie England' of the past. The paternity of these ideas is to be traced especially to Manners:

> An indefinite yet strong sympathy with the peasantry of the realm had been one of the characteristic sensibilities of Lord Henry [Sydney] at Eton. Yet a schoolboy, he had busied himself with their pastimes and the details of their cottage economy. As he advanced in life the horizon of his views expanded with his intelligence and his experience; and . . . on the very threshold of his career, he devoted his time and thought, labour and life, to one vast and noble purpose, the elevation of the condition of the great body of the people.[1]

Disraeli had known Smythe before they were brought together in Parliament, and through Smythe in due

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. IX. ch. 1.

course he came to know the others. Between him and the little group there appears from the first to have been a mutual attraction. Disraeli was now nearing forty; but, as we see in his novels, an instinctive love of youth was one of his marked characteristics, and it became more rather than less marked as his own years went by. He could sympathise with the ardour and enthusiasm of the young, admire their generous impulses and tolerate their foibles; and he was altogether free from that insidious form of envy which often causes older men, even though they be themselves quite unconscious of the feeling, to watch with a certain annoyance the progress of the rising generation. Early in the session of 1842 Smythe and his friends began to rally round him. 'I already find myself without effort the leader of a party chiefly of the youth and new members,' he wrote on one occasion, as we have seen, to his wife. For ten years he had been preaching the political truth that was in him to an inattentive public and an indifferent House of Commons, and had only succeeded in adding to his reputation of political adventurer the reputation of political visionary, which was still more damaging. Now at last he had found an audience whose minds were prepared and who listened to him gladly. More than a century earlier his hero Bolingbroke had written to one of 'the Boys' who were then arrayed against Walpole: 'I expect little from the principal actors which tread the stage at present: I turn my eyes from the generation that is going off to the generation that is coming on.' Disraeli, who liked to think of himself as the inheritor of Bolingbroke's mission, turned, doubtless, to the young Cambridge men in much the same spirit.

Presently he or Smythe conceived the idea of a closer association than was implied in mere friendship without formal ties. It happened that Smythe and Cochrane were in Paris in the autumn of 1842, and there, as we saw, they dined with Disraeli one evening in October. A letter written by Smythe a week later from London,

and addressed, according to his habit, to 'Disraeli the Younger, M.P.,'[1] sets forth the sequel.

From the Hon. George Smythe.

Oct. 20, 1842.

DEAR DIZ,

I have fulfilled your instructions and written to John Manners and H. Baillie.[2] The first I have told that we are to sit together and vote as the majority shall decide, and that any overture involving office ought to be communicated to the esoteric council of ourselves. To the Celt I have been more guarded and reserved, having only proposed that we should sit together in the hope that association might engender party. Have you attended to my suggestion and seen much of Cochrane? It cost me three hours' walking over the Place Vendôme after your dinner to reconcile him anew to our plan. He was all abroad—angry, jealous because you had talked to me more than to him. He said you did not appreciate him, that you had known me longer, but that him you did not understand. . . .

Pray lay me at the little feet of Madame, and believe me, dear Diz,

Yours affectionately,
G. SYDNEY SMYTHE.

Disraeli's immediate design is made sufficiently clear by the memorandum which he submitted to the King of the French.[3] In the Ministerial majority of ninety there were already, as he explained, between forty and fifty agricultural malcontents: 'It is obvious, therefore, that another section of Conservative members full of youth and energy, and constant in their seats, must exercise an irresistible control over the tone of the Minister. Sympathising in general with his domestic policy, they may dictate the character of his foreign, especially if they appeal to a conviction which, at the bottom of Sir R. Peel's heart, responds to their own.' Such a party, he added, could easily be found; in fact, 'a party of the youth of England, influenced by the noblest views

[1] On the ground, as he explained, that 'one does not write "Shakespeare, Esq."'

[2] Baillie was a man of Disraeli's own age, who had recently married a relative of Smythe's.

[3] See Appendix, p. 807.

and partaking in nothing of a parliamentary intrigue,' was at the moment only waiting for a leader. This appears, however, to have been an unduly sanguine view. While Disraeli was writing in Paris, Smythe was reporting from London the outcome of his first efforts, Henry Baillie 'is afraid the paucity of our members would provoke the same ridicule now proper to Vyvyan.' Manners, from another Scotsman, 'gets this for answer: "Should you be able to concoct any scheme for the conduct in Parliament of the thirty or forty members you mention, it might prove of essential service." The thirty or forty members he mentions! It must be John Falstaff not John Manners who wrote to him; but clear it is that the two Scots dread our proximity.' Disraeli had been counting on aid from *The Times*, where, though his friend Barnes was now dead, and had been succeeded by Delane in the editorial chair, the proprietor, John Walter, who was in the present Parliament, was expected to be friendly. Hostility to the new Poor Law was still a bond of sympathy between him and Disraeli, and his eldest son and heir, John Walter the third, who was now assisting him in the management of the paper, had been a member of the Smythe and Manners set at Eton; but in spite of these advantages Smythe foresaw difficulties.

As a matter of fact, no party, numbering few or many, bound by formal pledges such as Smythe had suggested to Manners, and voting consistently together, seems ever to have been formed; but in the course of the session of 1843 the little group of friends, Smythe, Manners, and Cochrane, succeeded in winning recognition as a definite coterie, and came to be known in the House by the name of Young England. Whether this name[1] was a heritage from Cambridge days, or, as one of[2] Disraeli's

[1] We have seen (p. 527) Disraeli using it early in the Peel Parliament as a general description of the new members on the Tory side of the House. Monckton Milnes appears (*Life*, I., p. 239) to have invented it at an earlier date as a title for some clique or movement of his own; but no connexion is traceable between this and the later usage.

[2] At Bingley, Oct. 11, 1844.

speeches would seem to imply, was given at first in derision, and afterwards adopted by the coterie itself, is not quite clear. Smythe had once suggested, with characteristic wit and flippancy, that the new party they were projecting should be called the 'Diz-Union.' Smythe, indeed, from the first appears to have meant mischief—probably as much from a freakish love of mischief as with any serious purpose—and there is nothing to indicate that he was encouraged by Disraeli in any designs he may have harboured of hostility to the Government. The enthusiasm which the three friends had once felt for Peel as an enlightened Tory leader had not long survived their entry into Parliament, and daily experience of the Minister's repellent manners, ponderous commonplaces in debate, and opportunist policy; but Cochrane has left it on record that, because 'they were not supposed to adopt a factious line,' the members of Young England sat, not below the gangway, but immediately behind the Ministerial front bench.[1] Here, as we know, Disraeli also had his place; and he was clearly the guiding spirit of the movement from the first, though he seems to have remained ostensibly aloof till the three friends by their own efforts had won a certain recognition.

Faith in the genius of Toryism; a conviction of the possibility of restoring it to vigour by a recurrence to its historic traditions, and a reconstruction of the party on a popular basis; a desire to maintain and strengthen the influence of the upper orders combined with a readiness to trust the masses of the people and a genuine interest in their well-being; above all, dislike of the Whigs, and of the middle-class Liberalism in which Whiggery was merging—these things Disraeli and his younger friends had in common. It was, naturally, the riper man who gave shape and definition to the vague ideas and aspirations of the boys fresh from Cambridge; but if he taught them a great deal, they also taught him

[1] Lord Lamington's *In the Days of the Dandies*, p. 174.

something. When Disraeli was a youth, romanticism had been flowing in the revolutionary channel prepared for it by Byron; it was now flowing strongly in the channel of reaction. That memorable revolt against the domination of liberalism in politics and religion, which had issued from Oxford early in the thirties, and taken thence its name, had soon won a footing in the sister University. One of the earliest workers in this mission-field was Frederick Faber, and among the friends whom he was in the habit of visiting at Cambridge were the undergraduates Smythe and Manners.[1] He is said to have made their acquaintance while they were on a reading tour in the Lake country; and he, at all events, it was who brought them under the sway of the ideas that were now becoming so potent in the Church. 'Waldershare prayed and fasted and swore by Laud and Strafford.' If with Smythe the religious exercises were only a passing affectation, the influence of Laud and Strafford over him and his companions was in other respects enduring. The Oxford movement gave a seventeenth-century colour to their political ideals. They had already carried their political researches into the preceding generation, and found in Pitt and Canning the model Tory statesmen; Disraeli had travelled farther, and drawn inspiration from the age and writings of Bolingbroke; but now the young Cambridge men boldly went behind the glorious Revolution sacred to the Whigs, and sought the fountain-head of Toryism in the reign of Charles I. In the matter of the Church the Oxford movement completed their emancipation from the thraldom of Erastian ideas; in the matter of the Crown it transmuted their sentimental Jacobitism into a reasoned political theory and a serious political purpose; and working through them it produced parallel effects in the mind of Disraeli. If he never wholly sympathised with their views respecting the Church, he speedily assimilated what was novel in their teaching with regard to the monarchy.

[1] *Life of Father Faber*, p. 7. Faber appears in *Sybil* as Aubrey St. Lys.

In the *Vindication*, as we saw,[1] he had accepted the Revolution as wholesome and necessary, and had begun at a subsequent date his attempt to reconstruct our political history on a plan of his own, in sharp opposition to the dominant Whig theory; in *Sybil* we shall find a new point of view, and not only the Revolution but even the Reformation, treated with scant respect. The change is probably to be ascribed in no small degree to the influence of Smythe and Manners and their tractarian ideas, as also is the change of judgment on the Bedchamber affair which has been noted as taking place between the time of that crisis and the writing of *Coningsby*. In his earlier speeches and in the *Vindication*, Disraeli had shown a clear perception of the part the Sovereign had played, and might usefully play again, as the protector of the people from oligarchic ambition; and he had even borrowed the comparison frequent in earlier writers between the shackled monarchs of the Revolution and the doges of Venice; but it was only now that he began to appraise at their full worth the possibilities of the throne as a democratic institution, to see that it was an imperative duty to guard it from the encroachments of the jealous middle classes, and to dream of an eventual restoration of its prestige. It is not fanciful to believe that through the indirect agency of Faber and Young England the Oxford movement helped to shape the policy of Queen Victoria and her favourite Prime Minister a generation later.

'To change back the oligarchy into a generous aristocracy round a real throne; to infuse life and vigor into the Church, as the trainer of the nation . . .; to establish a commercial code on the principles successfully negotiated by Lord Bolingbroke at Utrecht, and which, though baffled at the time by a Whig Parliament, were subsequently and triumphantly vindicated by his political pupil and heir, Mr. Pitt; to govern Ireland according to the policy of Charles I., and not of Oliver Cromwell; to

[1] Page 321.

emancipate the political constituency of 1832 from its sectarian bondage and contracted sympathies; to elevate the physical as well as the moral condition of the people, by establishing that labour required regulation as much as property; and all this rather by the use of ancient forms and the restoration of the past than by political revolutions founded on abstract ideas'—there, conveniently set forth in a retrospective survey,[1] and with very little colouring from the experience of a later time, is the task, as conceived by Disraeli and Young England, that lay before the Tory party. We shall find their conception of the Tory ideal expounded at greater length in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, but this may stand for the present as an adequate summary of their political aims when the process of mutual education was complete.

Across St. George's Channel the movement, which came to be known by the name of Young Ireland, had now begun its career, and, appropriately enough, it was in an Irish debate that Young England first succeeded in arresting attention. Ireland was again in the political foreground, and to govern her 'according to the policy of Charles I., and not of Oliver Cromwell,' was one of the cardinal maxims of Young England politics. O'Connell's agitation for the repeal of the Union had slumbered during the years when he was maintaining the Whigs in office, and had seemed to receive its death-blow when his followers were reduced to a handful in the General Election of 1841; but the problem of Irish government was very far from being solved, and after a year of profound peace the agitation was renewed with fresh spirit and enthusiasm. That movement of conscious effort after national unity and independence, the results of which were to be so memorable in European history, was just beginning to gather force, and the agitation in Ireland now took from it a colour. In the autumn of 1842 a few young Irishmen of genius founded the *Nation*, and by their inspiring appeals to national

[1] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

sentiment contrived to produce a transient and delusive semblance of union between the contending creeds and classes of a sorely distracted country. As the session of 1843 advanced, the movement began to attract attention in Parliament, and Smythe and Manners—the one having family connexions with Ireland, and the other, as on one occasion he reminded the House, being grandson of a popular Tory Lord Lieutenant—crossed the Channel to see for themselves. They returned little satisfied with the policy of the Government, which, as far as it had then been disclosed, was limited to the well-worn expedient of an Arms Bill—in accordance with the tradition that English Governments should atone for their neglect and inaction in periods of calm weather by a resort to spasmodic violence when storms broke out afresh. Graham, who, as Home Secretary, was the Cabinet Minister responsible, had even been foolish enough to declare, in a speech on the Arms Bill, that 'conciliation in Ireland had been carried to its utmost limit'; and the Duke of Wellington, it was well known, thought that this limit had already been transgressed.

Ireland was now, as Disraeli wrote to his sister, 'the only thought and word,' and in July there was a debate which lasted many nights, on a resolution of Smith O'Brien's asking for inquiry with a view to the redress of grievances. Cochrane, Manners, and Smythe all three spoke, and all gave free expression to the discontent they felt. Manners held up the administration of Strafford as an example to be followed, and announced that, as he did not think the question of confidence was involved, he would vote for the motion. Smythe told the Ministry that they ought to govern Ireland in the spirit of Mr. Pitt, who would not have come down with an Arms Bill and an Arms Bill alone; and he also took occasion to express his regret that Catholic Emancipation had been carried by Peel rather than by Canning—by an enemy rather than by a friend—and that so the healing effects of that measure had been lost. Peel was strangely

maladroit in his handling of a situation the difficulties of which, if a little tact had been applied, need hardly have been formidable. With equal lack of good temper and good sense he recommended Smythe to vote against the Government, telling him that this would be a more manly course than to lend them a hollow and seeming support; and it is not surprising to find that the triumvirate[1] all three took him at his word, and voted in the minority for O'Brien's motion. Well might Peel's pupil and admirer, Gladstone, say that his chief 'was not skilful in the management of personal and sectional dilemmas.'[2]

In a subsequent debate Smythe flung out the taunt, which was greeted with loud cheers from both sides of the house, that different language had been heard when majorities were counted by units instead of by hundreds. Others had noted a change in Peel's demeanour towards his supporters since his establishment in office with overwhelming strength;[3] but his arrogance towards Young England is the less easy to understand, as the prestige of his Ministry was now at its lowest ebb. Ireland, if their chief, was by no means their only difficulty. Distress and discontent were still rife in Great Britian. The agricultural interest was in a state of extreme irritation over what it regarded as a fresh attack on its position in the concessions just granted to American corn. The disasters in Afghanistan, for which the responsibility of the present Ministers was really slight, had nevertheless brought them odium; and when the turn of fortune came, Lord Ellenborough, their Governor-General, so managed that the odium was converted into ridicule. To a nation that had grown accustomed to Palmerston's boisterous methods, Aberdeen's foreign policy seemed lacking in spirit, and it did nothing to diminish the unpopularity of the Government. A letter of Macaulay's, written less than a fortnight after the Irish debate, gives

[1] Disraeli was absent. [2] Morley's *Gladstone*, I., p. 253.
[3] See, for instance, some bitter remarks of Lord Ashley's in Hodder's *Life of Shaftesbury*, ch. 9.

a picture of the situation as it presented itself to a keen observer on the front Opposition bench.

As to politics, the Ministers are in a most unenviable situation; and, as far as I can see, all the chances are against them. The immense name of the Duke, though now only a 'magni nominis umbra,' is of great service to them. His assertion, unsupported by reasons, saved Lord Ellenborough. .... But he is 74, and in constitution more than 74. His death will be a terrible blow to these people. I see no reason to believe that the Irish agitation will subside of itself, or that the death of O'Connell would quiet it. On the contrary, I much fear that his death would be the signal for an explosion. The aspect of foreign politics is gloomy. The finances are in disorder. Trade is in distress. Legislation stands still. The Tories are broken up into three or more factions, which hate each other more than they hate the Whigs—the faction which stands by Peel, the faction which is represented by Vyvyan and the *Morning Post*, and the faction of Smythe and Cochrane. I should not be surprised if, before the end of the next session, the Ministry were to fall from mere rottenness.[1]

Hitherto Disraeli, though he had voted against the Government on the Canadian corn question, had uttered no word in criticism of their policy, but when the Irish Arms Bill came up for its third reading in August he took the side of Young England in a speech which shows signs of careful preparation. Ireland being in the foreground, he had, in accordance with his habit, been studying Irish history, a thing that English statesmen have very rarely done. 'Irish policy is Irish history,' he said in the House of Commons a quarter of a century later,[2] 'and I have no faith in any statesman who attempts to remedy the evils of Ireland who is either ignorant of the past or who will not deign to learn from it.' He began on the present occasion by urging that, as the Minister since his accession to office had thrown over the Irish

[1] Macaulay to Napier, July 22, 1843: Trevelyan's *Life*, ch. 9. It would appear, from a letter of General Baudrand's, that Disraeli himself had written a month earlier to his friends in Paris that the Ministry was in danger.

[2] March 16, 1868.

policy which he had advocated while in opposition, his supporters were now free from all bonds of party on this particular subject. An hon. member on his own side (Smythe) had put forward opinions which had excited some surprise, but which he had defended as the old and legitimate Tory doctrines. The defence was at once historically true and politically just. He could find no grounds in history for the common assumption that hostility to the Irish people was a characteristic of Tory policy. The policy of Charles I. had been based on conciliation of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and at no later period, when the Tories had been preponderant, had their policy been different; whereas the Whigs, when they held the command of the Government for the long period of seventy years in the eighteenth century, had been consistently hostile to the Irish Roman Catholics. At a time like the present, when those who had been their leaders no longer led, and they found themselves sinking into a faction without principles, it was their duty to recur to the traditions of the party; and he thought there was nothing more strange than that the gentlemen of England, who were the descendants of the Cavaliers, should be advocates for governing Ireland on the principles of the Roundheads.

Ministers had announced almost with ostentation that they intended to do nothing, and this paralysis of policy appeared to be caused by dissensions in the Cabinet. 'The leader of the Government in another House[1] was chalking "No Popery" on the walls, while the leader of the Government in that House told them that he, for himself, cared nothing about Protestant or Papist.' When he found systems so inconsistent, resulting only in imbecility, he had a right to suppose that there were dissensions in the Cabinet, and he believed that they would destroy this or any other Cabinet which did not address itself to the question of Irish government in a very different spirit. It was perfectly clear that if

[1] The Duke of Wellington.

they abolished the Protestant Church to-morrow and established the Roman Catholic, or chose any isolated remedies one after the other, they would produce no improvement in the condition of Ireland. It had arrived at that pitch which required a great man to have recourse to great remedial measures. They must reorganise and reconstruct, not only the government, but even the social state of the country.

With regard to the present measures he had little to say:

> There are some measures which to introduce is disgraceful, and which to oppose is degrading. I have given no vote on this Bill one way or the other, and I shall continue that course, being perfectly persuaded of its futility. Believing that Ireland is governed in a manner which conduces only to the injury of both countries; that the principles declared by Ministers are not capable of relieving us from the difficult position in which we are placed; believing that the old principles of the party with which I am connected are quite competent, if pursued, to do that, I hope the time will come when a party framed on true principles will do justice to Ireland, not by satisfying agitators, not by adopting in despair the first quack remedy that is offered from either side of the House, but by really penetrating into the mystery of this great misgovernment, so as to bring about a state of society which will be advantageous both to England and Ireland, and which will put an end to a state of things that is the bane of England and the opprobrium of Europe.

The insubordination of Smythe and his friends had attracted little notice, but this speech of Disraeli's was a more serious matter, and evoked a great deal of comment. The Whig press of course made the most of the opportunity. Disraeli spoke from his usual place just behind Peel and Graham, and one malicious journalist describes with graphic detail the behaviour of the two Ministers during the performance. The Prime Minister, he tells us, endeavoured to 'palliate the effects of the castigation by industriously rubbing his nose; while the Home Secretary, edging occasionally round, would look up in the face of the orator with that sort of uneasy smile

by which one sometimes tries to convey the idea of being not only perfectly at ease, but exceedingly amused.'[1] Smythe rose later and resumed his attack on Peel, sheltering himself under the plea that when persons were substituted for principles personality became a duty;[2] and angrily declaring that, talk as they might of the intolerance of the Roman Catholics, their intolerance could be matched on the benches below. Peel when he rose could find nothing better in the way of reply than a sneer at Disraeli's 'new-born zeal' for Ireland; a regret that he could not see in the hon. member himself the man who was to realise his vision of the great statesman with a comprehensive policy; and a renewal of his former invitation to Smythe to vote against the Government.

Disraeli, we may suppose, was not the less willing to criticise the Government, as he was now convinced that Peel had ceased to be conciliatory in his demeanour towards himself. In the course of the present Parliament he had asked half a dozen questions, most of them on matters of current foreign policy; and one seems to detect in the Minister's replies, even as they appear in the dry record of Hansard, a certain needless curtness or hint of disapproval. No offence may have been intended, for Peel's manners even in Parliament, where he was most at his ease, were notoriously ungracious, and he was not skilful in those blandishments of 'my honourable friend' by which a tactful leader knows how to soften the asperity of a refusal of information to an inquisitive supporter. On a recent occasion his discourtesy to Disraeli, whether intentional or not, had been more apparent than usual. An insurrection in Servia had led to the usual difficulties between Russia and the

[1] *Morning Chronicle*, August 11, 1843.

[2] 'I came in with others,' he said in a speech to his constituents a few years later (July 6, 1847), 'full of hot thoughts and ardent speculations, and we sat by men who . . . had but one rule, . . . the will of the sole Minister. When persons were thus substituted for principles, personalities became a duty with those who wished to substitute principles for persons.'

Porte; and Disraeli, already anxious, as he showed in his remarks, about 'the integrity of the Turkish Empire,' and with his anxiety possibly quickened by communications from the King of the French,[1] who had no love for Russia, pressed the Minister as to his policy. He received a rebuff, and did not forget it. A few days[2] after the speech on the Irish Arms Bill, Palmerston opened a debate on the situation in the East, and Disraeli, rising after Peel, criticised severely the inaction of the Government. It was a strange termination of his campaign against Palmerston, and he made the occasion memorable, not only by the support he gave to his former antagonist, but by aiming a personal shot, the first of many, at Peel. 'I remember,' he remarked, 'some time since to have made an inquiry of the right hon. gentleman with respect to the interference of Russia in Servia, an inquiry couched, I believe, in Parliamentary language, and made with all that respect which I feel for the right hon. gentleman, and to which the right hon. gentleman replied with all that explicitness of which he is a master, and all that courtesy which he reserves only for his supporters.' The great Minister was regarded by many of his supporters as schoolboys regard a severe head-master, and as he was well known to have a weakness for the applause of his opponents—a weakness which seems incident to Parliamentary leadership — one can imagine the secret joy with which the sarcasm was hailed on the benches behind him.

In the light of Disraeli's later career the matter of this speech has an interest of its own. The real question, he said, was whether England would maintain the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire. He wished to guard himself from being supposed to hold fanatical opinions as to Russian designs. He believed these designs to be perfectly legitimate. He saw much

[1] During Disraeli's stay in Paris, Louis Philippe had lamented 'l'insouciance avec laquelle l'Autriche et l'Angleterre laissaient tomber l'Empire Ottoman sous le bon vouloir de la Russie.'

[2] On Aug. 15.

to respect in Russia; he respected her nationality, he respected her intelligence, he respected her power. We, too, had nationality and power; but we were deficient in that intelligence, especially with regard to the East, for which Russia was eminent. The great question of foreign policy was simpler than statesmen were inclined to admit. If they looked at the map, they would see that the two strongest positions in the world were the Sound and the Dardanelles, and as long as these positions were held as at present the balance of power was safe. But Russia was approaching them gradually, regularly, sometimes even rapidly, and if she obtained possession of one the balance of power would be disturbed; while if both fell under her authority universal empire would be threatened. Our true policy was, therefore, by diplomatic action to maintain Turkey in a state to hold the Dardanelles. Turkey indeed was prostrate; but what ground was there for the assumption that her regeneration was hopeless? If she had lost her finest provinces, so had England little more than half a century back; if her capital had been occupied, that was a calamity that had befallen every State in Europe with the exception of England. Her resources were still unequalled, and it was the diplomacy of Europe during the last twenty years that had reduced her to her present condition. Once more he imputed no blame to Russia, who was pursuing her own interest by legitimate means. She had a fixed, deep policy founded on ample knowledge; we opposed to it a policy uncertain and superficial, and founded in ignorance, a policy that at the present moment had made us the laughing-stock of Europe.

As a matter of fact, Aberdeen's diplomacy at this time, and his complaisance to the Tsar Nicholas when he visited England in the following year, did not a little to foster the ambitions that led to the Crimean War; but the House of Commons was less occupied with the intrinsic value of Disraeli's criticism than with the fact

that he should have had the temerity to criticise at all. Peel's position in the Conservative party had so long been commanding, and his authority so long unquestioned, that any display of independence was a matter for astonishment; and this speech of Disraeli's, coming after his attack on the Irish policy of the Government, made no small impression. An incident that followed showed the temper that prevailed on the Ministerial benches. Lord Sandon, a prominent supporter of Peel's, rose and rebuked Disraeli's presumption, absurdly accusing him of having heaped 'the grossest terms of contumely and opprobrium' upon Her Majesty's Ministers, whom he affected to support. When challenged to cite the terms of opprobrium, Sandon was unable to recall the exact words he had in mind, and his extravagance was reproved by speaker after speaker in the subsequent debate, including men as little prejudiced in favour of Disraeli as Hume and Palmerston himself. Disraeli, as we shall see, suspected that the attack had been inspired by the Government, and *The Times* would appear to have shared his suspicion, for in its comments on the incident it condemned such attempts to 'cow and bully' private members as fatal to the principle of free and fair debate, and reminded the Minister that it was not for the public benefit, or really for his own, however much for his convenience, that he should be above all question from his own side of the House. Peel declared afterwards that he was innocent in the matter, and Sandon's attack was probably spontaneous; but whether he received encouragement from the front bench or not, a letter from Graham to Croker, written a week later, leaves us in no doubt as to the feelings towards Disraeli that were harboured in that quarter:

> With respect to Young England, the puppets are moved by Disraeli, who is the ablest man among them: I consider him unprincipled and disappointed, and in despair he has tried the effect of bullying. I think with you that they will return to the crib after prancing, capering, and snorting;

but a crack or two of the whip well applied may hasten and insure their return. Disraeli alone is mischievous; and with him I have no desire to keep terms. It would be better for the party if he were driven into the ranks of our open enemies.[1]

The general spirit of this letter may help us to understand why the eminent man who wrote it was so little loved by his contemporaries, and in the light of the disposition towards Disraeli which it reveals subsequent events become a good deal less surprising.

To Sarah Disraeli.

CARLTON CLUB,
Monday [*July* 17].

London, that a little while ago seemed so dull that the shopkeepers were in despair, is suddenly favored by the most animated season, for which the Cockneys are indebted to the King of Hanover, now the most popular man in town—for the first time in his life. Grand *fêtes* every day, and apparently interminable. We have had and are to have our fair share.

On Thursday the Duchess of Buckingham after a banquet held an assembly which was extremely brilliant and well arranged. The Duke had gotten the band of the Life Guards in the galleries of his grand staircase, which is of the Italian style and mounts to the roof of his house, and the effect was stirring. Every guest welcomed with a martial flourish. The Duchess of Gloucester and the Grand-Duke of Mecklenburg and his intended father-in-law were there as well as his Majesty. There were six Dukes: Wellington, Cleveland, Marlboro', Argyll, Buccleuch, and Buckingham. Four of these Knights of the Garter, while two others appeared in the shapes of Salisbury and Jersey, to say nothing of the royal Knights. Richmond himself wore two immense diamond stars—the Grand Cross of the Guelph, in honor of his Guelphic guest, as well as that of the Garter—but persists in wearing the garter itself on pantaloons!

On Friday Lady Lyndhurst had a select reception after a royal dinner. We formed a Court circle, and the King went round. I was presented by the Lord Chancellor in a flowery harangue, and received gracious compliments from His Majesty. He even shook hands with me. The second King who has shaken hands with me in six months!

[1] *Croker Papers*, III., p. 9.

Lady Peel has asked us to a grand rout and royal reception on the 21st, and the St. Aulaires to a ball [at the French Embassy], which is to be the most magnificent ever given in London, on the 27th.

On the 22nd Sir Edward Bulwer gives a grand *déjeuner* at Craven Cottage: and we are engaged to dinner on the same day to the Antony de Rothschilds, but as our host and hostess are going to the breakfast as well as ourselves, I trust we shall none of us get away till night, and so escape the dinner.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
Friday [*July* 21].

Yesterday we were at a most delightful *fête*, Gunnersbury, Madame de Rothschild *mère*. A most beautiful park and a villa worthy of an Italian Prince, though decorated with a taste and splendor which a French financier in the olden times could alone have riva'led.

The bright morning unfortunately ended in a dingy afternoon, which threw us much on the resources of indoor nature, notwithstanding the military bands, and beautiful grounds, temples and illuminated walks. However, we had a cheering concert, a banquet of illimitable delicacies, and, at the end, a ball. All the world of grandeur present: Ernest I., the Cambridges, Duchess of Gloucester. We were much gratified: and I got well waited on by our old friend Amy, who brought me some capital turtle, which otherwise I should have missed.

[*Undated.*]

We returned from Deepdene this morning, after a most agreeable visit, with beautiful weather. One night I sat next to Mrs. Evelyn of Wotton, a widow; her son, the present squire, there also; a young Oxonian and full of Young England. We are going to Manchester and Liverpool—a rapid visit which I must make—and after a respite of forty-eight hours for business we should like to come to Bradenham for as long as you will have us. I am writing [*Coningsby*], and want a workroom; therefore, if it does not inconvenience anybody, let me have my old writing-room next to your room. The journals daily descant on the 'new party' that has arisen to give a new color to modern politics, &c.'

In a letter to a friend, Mrs. Disraeli recounts in detail their movements during the recess.

Nov. 24.

After passing a few days with Sir E. and Lady Sugden, we went to our friend Mr. Hope, and remained all September

with him at the beautiful Deepdene. On our return we went to Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester. At the former place we were much fêted. There was a grand literary meeting at the Free Trade Hall: they sent a deputation to Dis suggesting his presence; he declined, and they sent a deputation of ladies, which, you know, he could not refuse; so he went, and made a fine speech for them—all said by far the finest—literary not political.

At the Manchester meeting Charles Dickens was in the chair. Disraeli in his speech, after a graceful allusion to another of the speakers as 'his hon. friend Mr. Cobden,' denounced as vulgar and superficial the prejudice 'which associated with commerce and manufacture an inability to sympathise with the fair inventions of art or the poetic creations of the human intellect,' and held up before the people of Manchester the stimulating examples of the great merchants of Venice, who were the patrons of Titian and Tintoretto; the merchant family of the Medici, who made Florence the home of genius; and the manufacturers of Flanders, who dwelt in such cities as Bruges, Ghent, and Mechlin.[1] The chairman described the speech as 'very brilliant and eloquent,' and the admiring wife of the orator does not seem to have exaggerated in her report of its success.

Parliament met in February, and its meeting supplied the occasion for an interesting correspondence between Disraeli and Peel. Disraeli would appear to have had little or no suspicion of the manner in which his speeches of the previous summer were resented, or of the strength of the prejudice against him in the Ministry. He had even during the recess been simple enough to write to Graham, of all men, and ask him to bestow some office on one of his brothers. Having returned what he called 'a civil but flat refusal,' Graham informed the Prime Minister of this 'impudent' application, and the answer sent by Peel is worth reproducing:

[1] *Manchester Guardian*, Oct. 7, 1843.

Dec. 22, 1843.

I am very glad that Mr. Disraeli has asked for an office for his brother. It is a good thing when such a man puts his shabbiness on record. He asked me for office himself, and I was not surprised that being refused he became independent and a patriot. But to ask favours after his conduct last session is too bad. However, it is a bridle in his mouth![1]

This letter of Peel's, taken in connexion with Graham's avowed wish to drive Disraeli into open hostility, will help us to interpret the following correspondence:

To Sir Robert Peel.

GROSVENOR GATE, PARK LANE,
Feb. 4, 1844.

DEAR SIR ROBERT,

I was quite unaware until Friday night, when I was very generally apprised of it, that the circumstance of my not having received the usual circular from yourself to attend Parliament was intentional.

The procedure admits, of course, of only one inference.

As a mere fact, the circumstance must be unimportant both to you and to myself. For you, in the present state of parties—which will probably last our generation—a solitary vote must be a matter of indifference; and for me, our relations, never much cultivated, had for some time merged in the mere not displeasing consciousness of a political connexion with an individual eminent for his abilities, his virtues, and his station.

As a matter of feeling, however, I think it right that a public tie, formed in the hour of political adversity, which has endured many years, and which has been maintained on my side by some exertions, should not terminate without this clear understanding of the circumstances under which it has closed.

I am informed that I am to seek the reasons of its disruption in my Parliamentary conduct during the last session.

On looking over the books, I perceive that there were four occasions on which I ventured to take a principal part in debate.

On the first I vindicated your commercial policy on grounds then novel in discussion, but which I believed conducive to your interest and your honor; and the justness

[1] Parker's *Peel*, III., p. 425.

and accuracy of which, though never noticed by yourself or any of your colleagues, were on a subsequent occasion distinctly and formally acknowledged by the leader of the Opposition.

In the second instance I spoke on a treaty of a difficult and delicate nature, against which the Opposition urged no insignificant charges, and to assist you to defend which I was aware you would not be likely to find much efficacious support on your own side. I have reason to believe that my efforts on this occasion were not wholly uninfluential on opinion; although, certainly, I never learned this from any member of her Majesty's Government.

At the very end of the session there were two other occasions on which I spoke, and against isolated points of the policy of the Government—I mean with respect to Ireland and the Turkish Empire. Although an indiscreet individual, apparently premonished, did in the last instance conceive a charge against me of treating the Government with 'systematic contumely,' he was utterly unable to substantiate, scarcely equal to state, the imputation; and the full miscarriage was generally admitted. I can recall no expression in those remarks more critical than others which have been made on other subjects, as on your agricultural policy, for example, by several of the supporters of your general system. Those remarks may indeed have been deficient in that hearty good-will which should be our spontaneous sentiment to our political chief, and which I have generally accorded to you in no niggard spirit; but pardon me if I now observe, with frankness, but with great respect, that you might have found some reason for this, if you had cared to do so, in the want of courtesy in debate which I have had the frequent mortification of experiencing from you since your accession to power. Nor have I had the consolation of believing this fanciful on my part, since it has long been a subject of notice on both sides of the House.

Under these circumstances, stated without passion, and viewed, I am sure, without acrimony, I am bound to say that I look upon the fact of not having received your summons, coupled with the ostentatious manner in which it has been bruited about, as a painful personal procedure, which the past by no means authorised.

I have the honor to remain,

Your faithful servant,

B. DISRAELI.

From Sir Robert Peel.

WHITEHALL,
Feb. 6, 1844.

MY DEAR SIR,

Although the omission on my part to request your attendance at the meeting of Parliament was not an accidental or inadvertent omission, it certainly was not the result of any feeling of personal irritation or ill-will on account of observations made by you in the House of Commons.

I hope I have not a good memory for expressions used in debate which cause surprise or pain at the moment, and it would be quite unsuitable to the spirit in which your letter is written, and in which it is received, were I, after the lapse of several months, to refresh my recollection of such expressions, if such were used.

My reason for not sending you the usual circular was an honest doubt whether I was entitled to send it—whether towards the close of the last session of Parliament you had not expressed opinions as to the conduct of the Government in respect to more than one important branch of public policy, foreign and domestic, which precluded me, in justice both to you and to myself, from proffering personally an earnest request for your attendance.

If you will refer to the debate on the Irish Arms Bill, and to that on Servia, and recall to your recollection the general tenor of your observations on the conduct of the Government, you will, I think, admit that my doubt was not an unreasonable one.

It gives me, however, great satisfaction to infer from your letter—as I trust I am justified in inferring—that my impressions were mistaken and my scruples unnecessary.[1]

I will not conclude without noticing two or three points adverted to in your letter.

I am unconscious of having on any occasion treated you with the want of that respect and courtesy which I readily admit are justly your due. If I did so, the act was wholly unintentional on my part.

Any comments that were made on expressions used by you towards the Government were, so far as is consistent with my knowledge, altogether spontaneous on the part of the member from whom they proceeded. They were at any rate not made at my instigation or suggestion, direct or indirect.

[1] Peel's curious readiness to place the worst construction on the criticisms of a supporter is shown again a few months later in the case of Lord Ashley, who sent him a private remonstrance against the action of the Government in the matter of the sugar duties, and was answered in a letter regretting the withdrawal of his confidence and support (Parker, III., p. 153).

Lastly, I cannot call to mind that I have mentioned to a single person—excepting to the one or two to whom the mention was absolutely unavoidable—that I had omitted to address to you a request for your attendance. Nothing could be farther from my wishes or feelings than that there should be any ostentatious notice of the omission.

I have the honour to be, my dear sir,
Faithfully yours,
ROBERT PEEL.

We may doubt whether Disraeli, though he had not, like us, the advantage of knowing Peel's real sentiments, was led far astray by this very plausible letter; but, as it was conciliatory in tone, he seized the first opportunity of showing that he himself had no desire for an open breach. Ireland was still in the political foreground. The success of the Irish executive in securing the abandonment of the Clontarf meeting in October had averted the danger of immediate revolution; but the Government were now involved in the tangle of the O'Connell trial, and soon after the House met the leader of the Opposition moved what was tantamount to a formal vote of censure on their Irish administration. The debate lasted nine nights, and Disraeli at the close voted with the Government, leading his three friends, Smythe, Manners, and Cochrane, into the same lobby. He explained his position in a speech on the fourth night, which not only had a great immediate success, but is of interest to this day as one of the most remarkable pronouncements on the Irish question ever heard in Parliament. He showed once more that he had been reading Irish history,[1] resuming, with his habitual continuity of thought, every thread of argument in his Irish speech of the previous session; and though he obviously wished to be friendly to Peel, he repeated every offending phrase he had used on that occasion, as if determined to prove that his criticisms had not been prompted by any feeling

[1] 'He is the only English Prime Minister,' says an Irish writer, with this speech in his mind, 'who has appealed to historic incidents that touch the hearts of the Irish people' (*Lord Beaconsfield's Irish Policy*, by Sir John Pope Hennessy, p. 11).

of pique, and that, anxious as he might be for peace with the Government, he was not prepared to purchase it by the sacrifice of opinions deliberately formed.

He began with a picture, rose-coloured, perhaps, of the happy condition of Ireland during the administration of Strafford, when a system of perfect civil and political equality had reconciled the Roman Catholics under a King, a Viceroy, and an established Church all Protestant. The troubles that followed were all to be traced to Puritanism—to Puritanism, and not to Protestantism. It was Puritanism that was responsible for the confiscations[1] and the penal laws; it was Puritanism that had fostered the spirit of exclusion which had so long prevailed; it was a Puritanic spirit that had destroyed the influence of the Church of Ireland. For these things the Tories had no responsibility, and he was anxious to see them rescued from the untenable position they were now supposed to occupy, that it was one of the heirlooms of their party to look with jealousy on Ireland.

He had said the year before that for the settlement of the Irish question two things were necessary—to put down the turbulence by which Ireland was convulsed, and to recognise and remove its causes. They had put down the turbulence, and were beginning to talk of the necessity of inquiring into its causes. If he asked what was their remedy, he might again, perhaps, subject himself to the imputation of new-born zeal; but zeal was a quality so rare in that house, and he feared in that age and country, that he was not overwhelmed by such an imputation. As a matter of fact, his views as to the government of Ireland were the same as they had always been, and he had explained them on the only fitting occasion[2] that had presented itself—in a debate on the subject of municipal corporations, at the close of which

[1] It is to be feared that this is only true because Puritanism triumphed, and so secured the opportunity. Strafford's own record in the matter of confiscations is very far from clean.

[2] See p. 455.

he had voted against the counsel of his leader. He had argued in that debate against the fallacy that justice to Ireland implied an identity between Irish and English institutions.

> I then asked the House whether those forced establishments, those mimetic corporations, those grand juries, those imitative benches of English magistrates, could be expected to produce beneficial results, and I ventured to lay down as a principle that the government of Ireland should be on a system the reverse of England, and should be centralised; that we should have a strong executive and an impartial administration. I beg distinctly to say that I have never changed my principles on Irish policy or in any other respect. I say this without reservation—at no time, at no place, under no circumstances, have I ever professed any other principles than those I now maintain. They are Tory principles, the natural principles of the democracy of England. . . . Let us forget two centuries of political conduct for which Toryism is not responsible; let us recur to the benignant policy of Charles I.; then we may settle Ireland with honor to ourselves, with kindness to the people, and with safety to the realm.

If anyone came forward with a comprehensive plan for the solution of the Irish problem, he would support it at any sacrifice—yea, even though he should afterwards have to retire from Parliament.

> But I confess I have no apprehension of that. I have the honour to represent the oldest Tory constituency in the country, and I have already succeeded in weeding from their minds some most inveterate Whig prejudices. Last year, for example, when I was told that I had lost my seat because I had supported the right hon. gentleman's tariff, I went down to see my friends in the country, and explained the history of England to them (great cheering and laughter); and I can assure the House that after that they took the most enlightened views upon the subject, and were proud to recur to old Tory principles of commerce.

He could not understand the new morality of the House of Commons, which shrank from what was desirable because of difficulties and prejudices. Why, in

1832 it was thought that nothing could be more difficult than to reconstruct the Conservative party; but the right hon. gentleman set to work like a man, and it was done, and done well.

There were prejudices to be removed in that case, too—the prejudices of very eminent personages; but that also was done with time and resolution; and there sits the right hon. baronet at this moment with a Secretary of State on each side of him, whose prejudices he has succeeded most effectually in removing. (Loud cheers and laughter from every part of the house, in which Sir Robert Peel, sitting between Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham, could not refrain from joining.) . . . I do not think it is more difficult to reconstruct the social system of Ireland than to reconstruct a party destroyed by a revolution; nor do I think it a more arduous task to remove the prejudices of those who think little than of those who think a great deal. All the right hon. baronet will have to do will be what public men do not seem to think they have the power of doing—to create public opinion instead of following it; to lead the public instead of always lagging after and watching others.

With regard to the immediate question, he could not vote for the noble lord (John Russell), because he offered nothing more than her Majesty's Ministers. They offered a great deal for them; the noble lord offered little, though he offered it in a great way. That was not what he wanted.

I want to see a public man come forward and say what the Irish question is. One says it is a physical question; another, a spiritual. Now it is the absence of the aristocracy, then the absence of railroads. It is the Pope one day, potatoes the next. Consider Ireland as you would any other country similarly situated, in your closets. You will see a teeming population which, with reference to the cultivated soil, is denser to the square mile than that of China; created solely by agriculture, with none of those sources of wealth which develop with civilisation; and sustained, consequently, upon the lowest conceivable diet, so that in case of failure they have no other means of subsistence upon which they can fall back. That dense population in extreme distress inhabits an island where there is an Established Church which is not their Church (loud cheers from the Opposition),

and a territorial aristocracy the richest of whom live in distant capitals. Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church, and in addition the weakest executive in the world. That is the Irish question.

Anyone reading of such a country would say the remedy was revolution, but here the connexion with England made revolution impossible. What, then, was the duty of an English Minister? To effect by his policy all those changes which a revolution would effect by force.

The moment you have a strong executive, a just administration, and ecclesiastical equality, you will have order in Ireland, and the improvement of the physical condition of the people will follow—not very rapidly, perhaps; you must not flatter yourselves that it will. But what are fifty years, even, in the history of a nation? and I will say, if these recommendations are adopted, that fifty years hence the men who shall succeed the present generation in Parliament will find the people of Ireland a contented and thriving peasantry. . . . I look to no foreign, no illegitimate influences for bringing about that result—not to the passions of the Irish people, not to the machinations of their demagogues, not to the intrigues of distant nations, but to a power far more influential, far more benignant, a power more recently risen in the world, not yet sufficiently recognised ('What, Young England?')—no, not Young England, but a power which Young England respects—that irresistible law of our modern civilisation which has decreed that the system which cannot bear discussion is doomed.[1]

In the subsequent debate Peel took occasion to make graceful mention of 'the very able speech of the hon. member for Shrewsbury—a speech not the less to be admired because it departed from the ordinary routine of Parliamentary eloquence and touched on more comprehensive and general views'; and Macaulay was moved by Disraeli's attack on the Puritans, in his 'very ingenious speech,' to a learned disquisition, which is still worth reading, on the historical causes of Irish discontent. A note in Disraeli's hand, with the date Sunday night, February 18, 1844, and the inscription, 'Written at Mary

[1] *The Times*, Feb. 17, 1844.

Anne's command after dinner,' records some other contemporary comments :

Bernal met Smythe, and said, 'Disraeli's speech was the greatest thing I ever heard.' Smythe said, 'I don't think so, for I have heard Disraeli make as great.' Bernal replies, 'I tell you what it is : if he was a Lord Tom Noddy, that man would revolutionise the nation.' Smythe is all for Tom-Noddyism.

* * * * * *

On Saturday morning a breakfast at Milnes's ; Lord John Manners, Chevalier Bunsen, Hallam, and others. Nothing (Lord J. tells it) spoken of but my speech. Hallam much taunted that the Whigs were only Puritans. Defended the Whigs very much, &c.

* * * * * *

Serjeant Murphy told Eaton that it was the most brilliant speech he ever heard—*nothing but epigrams*. According to Smythe, 'he did not know how any sentence would end or what would come next.'

* * * * * *

Lord Mahon followed me into a corner with outstretched hand to congratulate me on a speech with which he could not on many points agree, but which was unquestionably one of the ablest ever delivered. His panegyric was unqualified.

* * * * * *

Sterling had read all the debates, and there was only one speech of a man of genius. His criticism in detail very interesting. The bit about the Secretaries immortal.

The speech became famous during the Disestablishment debates a quarter of a century later. 'A more closely woven tissue of argument and observation,' said Gladstone on one occasion, praising it for his own purposes, 'has seldom been heard in the debates of this House.' The phrases about the 'alien Church' were of course turned against their author ; but when reminded of them, Disraeli nonchalantly replied that at the time he made the speech nobody seemed to listen. 'It may have been expressed with the heedless rhetoric which I suppose is the appanage of all who sit below the gangway, but in

my historical conscience the sentiment of that speech was right.'[1]

Sarah Disraeli to Mrs. Disraeli.

[*February.*]

Dis must, I think, now be *quite satisfied :* the best speech he has made, and, what is more, the most applauded, is in his own original vein. Are not Young England proud of their leader ?

April 10.

I went yesterday to Turville. . . . I never saw Milord [Lyndhurst] more blooming : he looked as young and as well as Chalon's picture. We did not see much of him, as he was full of work and not dressed ; but when he did appear, he said a great deal in a little time. Almost his first inquiry was after Dis. ' And so he is going to turn us out,' he said : ' I am told he is not exactly one of Young England, but their mentor and guide.' The speech about Ireland was mentioned —' And a very good speech it was,' he added : whereupon I said, ' So it pleased Sir Robert Peel to say.'

Aided by such speeches, Young England during this session steadily grew in influence. It retained, indeed, its original character as a group of personal friends with a common stock of ideas, and did not aspire to become a party formally organised and equipped with definite principles. ' Living much together, without combination we acted together,'[2] was Disraeli's own account of the matter many years later. The house at Grosvenor Gate was their rallying-point in London. In the country they met at the Deepdene, whose owner, Henry Hope, though no longer in Parliament, had from the first been a zealous supporter of the movement ; sometimes at Bearwood, the country-house of the Walters, whose sympathies had been secured, and with them, if not the support, the benevolent interest of *The Times*. In the House of Commons the movement gained several new adherents, who often reinforced the original group of friends. Of these the most notable were Augustus

[1] Hansard, March 16, 1868.
[2] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

Stafford O'Brien, a master of epigram, who was popular on both sides of the House; and William Busfield Ferrand,[1] a Yorkshire squire with 'a Dantonesque appearance,' who denounced in a stentorian voice, and with an embarrassing knowledge of his subject, the crimes of the manufacturers and the woes of their employees. Monckton Milnes fluttered uneasily around the group, hesitating to commit himself. Outside the House they numbered among their friends, in addition to Hope and Faber, Ambrose Lisle Phillips,[2] a well-known Roman Catholic, the Eustace Lyle of *Coningsby*. The social popularity of Smythe and other members caused Young England to be an object of some interest to society, and a dialogue between a couple of dandies[3] in *Coningsby* gives us, we may suppose, a very fair conception of the intelligence with which society made its comments.

'Buckhurst [said Mr. Melton] swears by Henry Sydney, a younger son of the Duke, and young Coningsby; a sort of new set; new ideas and all that sort of thing. . . . When they were staying with the Everinghams at Easter they were full of it. Coningsby had just returned from his travels, and they were quite on the *qui vive*. Lady Everingham is one of their set. I don't know what it is exactly; but I think we shall hear more of it.'

'A sort of animal magnetism, or unknown tongues, I take it from your description,' said his companion.

'Well, I don't know what it is,' said Mr. Melton; 'but it has got hold of all the young fellows who have just come out. . . . I had some idea of giving my mind to it, they made such a fuss about it at Everingham; but it requires a devilish deal of history, I believe, and all that sort of thing.'

'Ah! that's a bore,' said his companion. 'It is difficult to turn to with a new thing when you are not in the habit of it. I never could manage charades.'

Mr. Ormsby, passing by, stopped. . . .

'Here's a new thing that Melton has been telling me of, that all the world is going to believe in,' said Mr. Cassilis; 'something patronised by Lady Everingham. . . . Young

[1] 1809-1889. [2] 1809-1878.

[3] Mr. Melton and Mr. Cassilis, representing Disraeli's friends James Mac donald and George Wombwell.

Coningsby brought it from abroad; didn't you say so, Jemmy?'

'No, no, my dear fellow; it is not at all that sort of thing.'

'But they say it requires a deuced deal of history,' continued Mr. Cassilis. 'One must brush up one's Goldsmith. Canterton used to be the fellow for history at White's. He was always boring one with William the Conqueror, Julius Cæsar, and all that sort of thing.'[1]

But *Coningsby* itself, to which we now come, did far more than the social successes of its hero, or even the speeches of its author, brilliant as they were, to awaken interest in Young England.

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. VIII. ch. 1.

CHAPTER VII.

CONINGSBY.

1844.

English literature owes a debt of gratitude to Peel—or to Stanley, if to Stanley it is more appropriately due; their exclusion of Disraeli from office in 1841 led to *Coningsby* and *Sybil* and the creation of the political novel. Except for *Alarcos* and a few political pieces, Disraeli's pen had been idle since his election to the House of Commons; but he now conceived the idea of applying the methods of fiction to his new world of experience, and began to write again. It was Henry Hope, he tells us,[1] who first urged him to treat in a literary form the political ideas which they were in the habit of discussing; but it was only after reflection, as he elsewhere[2] records, that he chose the form of fiction as that 'which, in the temper of the times, offered the best chance of influencing opinion.' This appears to have been at the Deepdene in the autumn of 1843, and a novel was there and then begun, and continued during the winter at Bradenham and elsewhere.

To Lord John Manners.

BRADENHAM,
Nov. 29, 1843.

MY DEAR LORD JOHN,

. . . I get on to my satisfaction: but authors are not the best critics of their own productions: I am more anxious

[1] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.
[2] Preface to the Fifth Edition of *Coningsby*, 1849.

about your opinion than my own. The sustained labor is, however, very painful: and I am daily more convinced that there is no toil like literature. However once in, etc. It is too late to moralise. I want to clear the deck if I can by the end of January, for action and speculation will never blend. . . . .

Ever yours,

D.

Coningsby was, in fact, itself an attempt to make action and speculation blend.

The main purpose of its writer was to vindicate the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation of the country; a purpose which he had more or less pursued from a very early period of life. The occasion was favorable to the attempt. The youthful mind of England had just recovered from the inebriation of the great Conservative triumph of 1841, and was beginning to inquire what, after all, they had conquered to preserve. It was opportune, therefore, to show that Toryism was not a phrase, but a fact, and that our political institutions were the embodiment of our popular necessities. This the writer endeavored to do without prejudice, and to treat of events and characters of which he had some personal experience, not altogether without the impartiality of the future.[1]

'*Coningsby* wants little but a greater absence of purpose,' says one[2] of its best critics, 'to be a first-rate novel. If Mr. Disraeli had confined himself to the merely artistic point of view, he might have drawn a picture of political society worthy of comparison with *Vanity Fair*.' Here, perhaps, mingled with a certain amount of truth, there is some of the sophistry of 'art for art's sake,' the same spirit of paradox that made the critic wish that 'Disraeli could have stuck to his novels without rising to be Prime Minister.' If Disraeli had been a mere politician, and nothing besides, he could never, of course, have written his political novels; but one wonders whether the mere artist who was not also something besides, who was not, in fact, himself an interested man of action, could have penetrated like Disraeli to the

[1] Preface to the Fifth Edition. [2] Sir Leslie Stephen.

inmost soul of politics, or painted a picture of political society worthy of comparison with *Coningsby*.

The novel was published in May, 1844, its full title being 'Coningsby,[1] or, The New Generation,' and Disraeli on the title-page describing himself as M.P. and author of *Contarini Fleming*. 'Conceived and partly executed amid the glades and galleries of the Deepdene,' it appeared with a dedication to Henry Hope, the friend to whom its inception was due, and whom Disraeli described in the single pregnant sentence written after his death: 'He was learned and accomplished, possessed a penetrating judgment and an inflexible will.' The book issued from the office of Disraeli's old publisher Colburn, and the profits were divided equally between publisher and author, the author's share on 3,000 copies being about £1,000. The success was great and immediate, and Disraeli told his sister that it had exceeded all his hopes. The first edition of 1,000 copies went off in a fortnight. 'Three considerable editions were sold in this country in three months; it was largely circulated throughout the Continent of Europe, and within a very brief period more than 50,000 copies were required in the United States of America.'[2]

The popularity of *Coningsby* has proved to be lasting, and it is still more read than any of Disraeli's works, with the possible exception of *Lothair*. Its success was helped, no doubt, at first by the fact that it was regarded as the manifesto of Young England, which had been making a considerable noise; and still more by the fact that it contained many references, some of them caustic, to living statesmen by name, many figures that were intended to be accepted as portraits, and many others for which the keymakers, with more or less plausibility, were able to suggest originals of whom the author had never dreamt.

[1] Coningsby was the name of a well-known public man of the age of Queen Anne; and it is worth noting as a coincidence, if nothing more, that Carlyle's John Sterling, who died shortly after the appearance of Disraeli's book, had published a forgotten novel called *Arthur Coningsby* in 1833.

[2] Preface to the Fifth Edition.

But the main reason both for the immediate success and the enduring fame of the novel is rather to be sought in its own genuine merits as a first and happiest effort in the new form of art which its author had invented.

'I have seen Hope,' Disraeli wrote in a hurried note to his wife one day in the week after publication; 'he only says he is enchanted, but will say nothing more till he has finished and taken in the whole: Cochrane raving: Manners full of wild rapture.' Let Smythe speak for himself:

From the Hon. George Smythe.

Thursday night.

DEAR DIZ,

I have just finished it. What can I say, or write, or think? I am so dazzled, bewildered, tipsy with admiration the most passionate and wild!

I never read anything, thought of anything, felt anything, believed in anything, before.

Thank God I have a faith at last! 'The blessing of all the prophets be with you,' is the prayer of a disciple more enthusiastically devoted than any they ever counted.

Yours ever most affectionately,

G. S. SMYTHE.

'I stop one minute,' wrote his sister from Bradenham, 'to tell you that we are fascinated and delighted beyond expression. . . . Papa says the man who has made the finest speech of the session has written the best book that ever was written.' 'Even you and Dis's family,' said his old friend Lady Blessington in a letter to Mrs. Disraeli, 'take not a livelier pleasure or a greater pride than I in the brilliant success of *Coningsby*.' 'I have read *Coningsby*—who has not?' wrote another old friend, the Lord Chancellor, Lyndhurst; 'full of wit and talent and splendid pictures.' 'Everybody here, from the Princess of Prussia downwards,' wrote Monckton Milnes from Berlin towards the close of the year, 'is reading and talking *Coningsby*.'

The underlying story of the novel is slight, just enough to link together the politics and history, and

to serve as an excuse for the introduction of the scenes of social and political life, and the long procession of figures, social and political, that marches across the stage. Harry Coningsby, the ostensible hero, who, as has been seen, stands for Smythe, is the grandson of the Marquis of Monmouth, a younger son's child and a solitary orphan, to whom 'the sweet sedulousness of a mother's love or a sister's mystical affection' has never been known. The story opens in the year 1832, when as a boy of fourteen he is summoned to London from Eton to have his first interview with his formidable grandfather, whom the crisis of the Reform Bill has brought over to England from his usual residence abroad. Lord Monmouth, who is presented as a nobleman of vast wealth, great political influence, rare sagacity, unbending will, intense selfishness, and licentious habits, is intended to reproduce that famous voluptuary, the third Marquis of Hertford,[1] who was also the original of Thackeray's Marquis of Steyne; and in the first chapter we make acquaintance with the Right Hon. Nicholas Rigby, who as political adviser and confidential man of business holds to Lord Monmouth much the same relation that John Wilson Croker held to Lord Hertford. Rigby is the type of the clever and resourceful, but base and shallow, parasite; 'bold, acute, and voluble, with no thought but a great deal of desultory information'; 'fruitful in small expedients, and never happier than when devising shifts for great men's scrapes'; at once obsequious to his superiors and tyrannical to his inferiors; a persistent intriguer, 'confided in by everybody, trusted by none'; an adept in subterranean journalism, and the author of many slashing articles in a Tory review 'written in a style apparently modelled on the briefs of those sharp attorneys who weary advocates with their clever commonplace, teasing with obvious comment and torturing with inevitable inference.' 'In most of the transactions of life there is some portion which no one cares to accom-

[1] 1777-1842. See p. 528.

plish, and which everybody wishes to be achieved. This was always the portion of Mr. Rigby. . . . Notwithstanding his splendid livery and the airs he gave himself in the servants' hall, his real business in life had ever been to do the dirty work.'

Rigby has had charge of Coningsby during his patron's absence abroad, but Lord Monmouth, until now indifferent to his grandson, is attracted when he sees him, and henceforth gives him a place in his ambitious calculations. In the first book we have a picture remarkable alike for its truthfulness[1] and charm of the boy's life at Eton. Coningsby is already the centre of a group, his greatest friends being Lord Henry Sydney and Sir Charles Buckhurst, representing, as we have seen, Manners and Cochrane; and a third, Oswald Millbank, a manufacturer's son, who, so far as he is intended to suggest a real person, stands for John Walter,[2] the heir-apparent of the ruling dynasty of *The Times*. Through Millbank, Coningsby discovers, when his interest in politics begins to awaken, that they mean something more than an hereditary struggle between Tory nobles, like his grandfather, and the Whig nobles of whom he hears from his Whig friend Lord Vere. He becomes aware for the first time of the existence of a great class distinct from the nobility, but rivalling it in

[1] Disraeli seems to have taken what for him was unusual pains to make this picture faithful; and he had some assistance from an Eton master, the Rev. W. G. Cookesley, who is mentioned by name in the novel, and who had, in fact, been Smythe's tutor. It is curious, however, to find that Lord Lyttelton (4th Baron, 1817-1876), who appears in the novel as 'the calm and sagacious Vere,' and who wrote as 'a faithful Etonian' to the author that 'the main features were given with admirable fidelity and life,' was able to fill a quarto sheet with critical comments 'on very minute matters'—his 'grave doubts,' for instance, whether the boys ever in practice had a goose for breakfast.

[2] 1818-1894. In an unauthorised key to Coningsby that appeared in the year of its publication, it was absurdly stated that Gladstone was the original of Oswald Millbank, and the statement has often been repeated, a certain resemblance, real or fancied, giving it plausibility. The resemblance, if any, was purely accidental. Disraeli in 1844 had no reason for feeling any particular interest in Gladstone, and certainly none for working him into his Young England scheme by transferring him to an Eton generation nearly ten years later than his own. Walter, on the other hand, was in close relations with Young England, had been a contemporary and friend of Smythe and Manners at Eton, and, like Millbank, had gone to Oxford when they went to Cambridge.

wealth, and determined to acquire power; and in Millbank's crude opinions caught up from his father he finds materials for thought and a stimulus to a mind already predisposed to political inquiry.

Presently we come to the crisis caused by the King's dismissal of Melbourne in 1834, and we have a picture, cynical but amusing, and drawn by a master hand, of the aspect of politics that is most visible at such a time. Two days after Peel's audience of the King, Mr. Ormsby,[1] celebrated for his political dinners, gave one to a numerous party, and we are allowed to catch some fragments of the conversation of his assembling guests.

'Do you hear anything?' said a great noble who wanted something in the general scramble, but what he knew not; only he had a vague feeling he ought to have something having made such great sacrifices.

'There is a report that Clifford is to be Secretary to the Board of Control,' said Mr. Earwig, whose whole soul was in this subaltern arrangement, of which the Minister of course had not even thought; 'but I cannot trace it to any authority.'

'I wonder who will be their Master of the Horse,' said the great noble, loving gossip though he despised the gossiper.

'Clifford has done nothing for the party,' said Mr. Earwig.

'I dare say Rambrooke will have the Buckhounds,' said the great noble, musingly.

'Your Lordship has not heard Clifford's name mentioned?' continued Mr. Earwig.

'I should think they had not come to that sort of thing,' said the great noble, with ill-disguised contempt. 'The first thing after the Cabinet is formed is the Household: the things you talk of are done last;' and he turned upon his heel, and met the imperturbable countenance and clear sarcastic eye of Lord Eskdale.[2]

'You have not heard anything?' asked the great noble of his brother patrician.

'Yes, a great deal since I have been in this room; but unfortunately it is all untrue.'

'There is a report that Rambrooke is to have the Buckhounds; but I cannot trace it to any authority.'

'Pooh!' said Lord Eskdale.

[1] John Irving (d. 1853), a well-known Crœsus of the day, member for Co. Antrim.

[2] Said to be a lifelike picture of the 2nd Earl of Lonsdale, 1787-1872.

'I don't see that Rambrooke should have the Buckhounds any more than anybody else. What sacrifices has he made ?'

'Past sacrifices are nothing,' said Lord Eskdale. 'Present sacrifices are the thing we want: men who will sacrifice their principles, and join us.'

'You have not heard Rambrooke's name mentioned ?'

'When a Minister has no Cabinet, and only one hundred and forty supporters in the House of Commons, he has something else to think of than places at Court,' said Lord Eskdale, as he slowly turned away.

Among Mr. Ormsby's guests were Tadpole and Taper, two political parasites of the type we should now call 'wire-pullers,' members of the class of statesmen 'who believe the country must be saved if they receive twelve hundred a year.'

It is a peculiar class, that; £1,200 per annum, paid quarterly, is their idea of political science and human nature. To receive £1,200 per annum is government; to try to receive £1,200 per annum is opposition; to wish to receive £1,200 per annum is ambition. If a man wants to get into Parliament, and does not want to get £1,200 per annum, they look upon him as daft; as a benighted being. They stare in each other's face, and ask, 'What can * * * * * want to get into Parliament for ?' They have no conception that public reputation is a motive power, and with many men the greatest.

Tadpole and Taper, who were great personal friends, and neither of whom 'ever despaired of the Commonwealth,' withdrew after dinner to a distant sofa for a confidential talk.

'And what do you put our numbers at now ?' inquired Mr. Taper.

'Would you take fifty-five for our majority ?' rejoined Mr. Tadpole.

'It is not so much the tail they have, as the excuse their junction will be for the moderate, sensible men to come over,' said Taper. 'Our friend Sir Everard for example, it would settle him.'

'He is a solemn impostor,' rejoined Mr. Tadpole; 'but he is a baronet and a county member, and very much looked up to by the Wesleyans. The other men, I know, have refused him a peerage.'

'And we might hold out judicious hopes,' said Taper.

'No one can do that better than you,' said Tadpole. 'I am apt to say too much about those things.'

'I make it a rule never to open my mouth on such subjects,' said Taper. 'A nod or a wink will speak volumes. An affectionate pressure of the hand will sometimes do a great deal; and I have promised many a peerage without committing myself, by an ingenious habit of deference which cannot be mistaken by the future noble.'

. . . . . .

'Ah! Tadpole,' said Mr. Taper, getting a little maudlin; 'I often think, if the time should ever come, when you and I should be joint Secretaries of the Treasury!'

'We shall see, we shall see. All we have to do is to get into Parliament, work well together, and keep other men down.'

'We will do our best,' said Taper. 'A dissolution you hold inevitable?'

'How are you and I to get into Parliament if there be not one? We must make it inevitable. I tell you what, Taper, the lists must prove a dissolution inevitable. You understand me? If the present Parliament goes on, where shall we be? We shall have new men cropping up every session.'

'True, terribly true,' said Mr. Taper. 'That we should ever live to see a Tory government again! We have reason to be very thankful.'

'Hush!' said Mr. Tadpole. 'The time has gone by for Tory governments; what the country requires is a sound Conservative government.'

'A sound Conservative government,' said Taper, musingly. 'I understand: Tory men and Whig measures.'

The dramatic struggle between parties during the period of Peel's short administration raised to the highest pitch the enthusiasm of Eton for Conservative principles; but when the enthusiasm had subsided, Coningsby and his friends began to ask the question what Conservative principles meant. The final answer was only to shape itself in Coningsby's mind after several years of thought and study at Cambridge; but before he left Eton he had attained to an earnest though rather vague conviction that the present state of feeling, both in politics and religion, was very far from healthy, that for the prevailing latitudinarianism of belief something deep, fervent, and definite would have to be substituted, and that the priests of the new faith must be sought in the ranks of

the New Generation. With his mind in this condition, he is ready to profit by an adventure that befalls him in the interval between his leaving Eton and beginning residence at Cambridge. On his way to pay a visit to his friend Henry Sydney at his ducal home Beaumanoir, he meets a stranger in a forest inn, one of those men, sometimes encountered, 'whose phrases are oracles, who condense in a sentence the events of life,' and who are able to utter 'words that make us think for ever.' The description of the forest, breathing Disraeli's sympathy with nature in the aspects in which she appealed to him most, of the storm which drove the travellers for refuge to the inn, and of the colloquy that then followed, make what is perhaps the best chapter in the book.

> Coningsby had never met or read of anyone like this chance companion. His sentences were so short, his language so racy, his voice rang so clear, his elocution was so complete. On all subjects his mind seemed to be instructed, and his opinions formed. He flung out a result in a few words; he solved with a phrase some deep problem that men muse over for years. He said many things that were strange, yet they immediately appeared to be true. Then, without the slightest air of pretension or parade, he seemed to know everybody as well as everything. Monarchs, statesmen, authors, adventurers, of all descriptions and of all climes, if their names occurred in the conversation, he described them in an epigrammatic sentence, or revealed their precise position, character, calibre, by a curt dramatic trait. All this, too, without any excitement of manner; on the contrary, with repose amounting almost to nonchalance. If his address had any fault in it, it was rather a deficiency of earnestness. A slight spirit of mockery played over his speech even when you deemed him most serious; you were startled by his sudden transitions from profound thought to poignant sarcasm. A very singular freedom from passion and prejudice on every topic on which they treated, might be some compensation for this want of earnestness, perhaps was its consequence.

The stranger teaches Coningsby to have faith in the divine influence of individual character and in the power of the creative mind, dispensing with experience, to achieve greatness in youth. Almost everything that is

great has, he asserts, been done by youth. For life, indeed, in general 'there is but one decree: Youth is a blunder; Manhood a struggle; Old Age a regret.' But though youth itself is not genius, genius when young is divine. Why, the greatest captains of ancient and modern times both conquered Italy at five-and-twenty; Gaston de Foix at Ravenna and Condé at Rocroy were only twenty-two; Innocent III. and Leo X. were both Popes at thirty-seven; Ignatius Loyola and John Wesley both worked with young brains; Pascal, the greatest of Frenchmen, Raphael, and Byron, all died at thirty-seven; Richelieu at thirty-one was Secretary of State; Pitt and Bolingbroke were both Ministers before other men left off cricket. The history of heroes, in fact, is the history of youth, and the way to be a hero is to believe in the heroic; but when Coningsby remarks that the stranger's own actions should in that case be heroic, he receives the reply: 'Action is not for me; I am of that faith that the Apostles professed before they followed their Master.'

At Beaumanoir we have a picture of high life at its best—grace, beauty, and refinement, dignity and repose, charity, and a strong sense of social and public duty. Here we make acquaintance with the daughters of the house, Lady Theresa Sydney and her married sister Lady Everingham, one of those fascinating women of society whom we find in Disraeli's novels—light, airy, ultra-feminine, with wit, spirit, and breeding, and a spice of delicious mockery.

> Lady Everingham thoroughly understood the art of conversation, which, indeed, consists of the exercise of two fine qualities. You must originate, and you must sympathise; you must possess at the same time the habit of communicating and the habit of listening. The union is rather rare, but irresistible. Lady Everingham was not a celebrated beauty, but she was something infinitely more delightful, a captivating woman. There were combined in her, qualities not commonly met together, great vivacity of mind with great grace of manner. Her words sparkled and her movements charmed.

Among the incidents of Coningsby's visit is an expedition to St. Geneviève,[1] the neighbouring home of Eustace Lyle,[2] a young and wealthy Roman Catholic, in whom we see again Disraeli's feeling for the 'ancient faith.' The Roman Catholic Church attracted him not only as it has attracted so many others, by an appeal to his romantic instincts, but also, it would appear, in its political aspect, as the thing most opposed to Whiggery. Eustace Lyle, though his father had been galled by political exclusion into allying himself with the Whig party, has not forgotten that it was the fall of the Papacy in England that founded the Whig aristocracy; but when he looks about for an alternative he sees nothing but the barren and unhappy cross-breed of Conservatism, a party 'whose rule it is to consent to no change until it is clamorously called for, and then instantly to yield;' which treats our institutions as we do our pheasants, preserving only to destroy them. Lyle, we are expressly told, is one of the three people who do most to influence the ripening mind of the hero.

Coningsby had been told by the mysterious stranger at the inn that the age of ruins was past, and had been asked if he had seen Manchester; and he had also been told that 'adventures are to the adventurous.' To Manchester he accordingly goes on his way from Beaumanoir to Coningsby Castle, where his grandfather expects him; and there for several days he devotes himself to the wonders of industry and machinery. Among other things, he visits the model factory of Millbank, and makes the acquaintance of the father and beautiful young sister of his Eton friend Oswald. The elder Millbank has his own reasons for hating Lord Monmouth, and he has also peculiar opinions about the aristocracy as a whole, which he expounds to the astonished Coningsby. The English aristocracy has, he points out, no special quality to mark it off from other classes; it is not richer, better informed, wiser, or more distinguished for public or private virtue,

[1] Garendon Towers. [2] Ambrose Lisle Phillips; *vide* p. 593.

than the class to which Millbank himself belongs. It cannot even claim birth as a ground of distinction; Millbank has never heard of a peer with an ancient lineage. The Wars of the Roses made an end of the Norman Barons, and the three main sources of the existing peerage of England, and in his opinion disgraceful ones, are 'the spoliation of the Church, the open and flagrant sale of honours by the elder Stuarts, and the boroughmongering of our own times.' Certainly Disraeli cannot be accused of flattering in this novel, or in the next, as we shall see, the class of which he aspired to be the political leader.

At Coningsby Castle, to which we now proceed, we are shown indeed a side of aristocratic life in which Disraeli finds scope for some of his most effective satire—grandeur without heart or soul, ostentatious luxury, riot and confusion, 'nothing of the sweet order of a country life,' a scene in which Coningsby has constantly to practise the lesson he has lived long enough to learn, that it is unwise to wish to have everything explained. Here he finds abundant food for the thoughts that are fermenting in the depths of his mind, and the fermentation is stimulated by his encountering again the stranger of the forest inn, whom he now learns to know by the name of Sidonia. Sidonia is a Hebrew of immense fortune, in the prime of youthful manhood and with an athletic frame which sickness has never tried; affable and gracious, but, though unreserved in manner, impenetrable beneath the surface; and yet with a rare gift of expression, and an intellect that, matured by long meditation, and 'assisted by that absolute freedom from prejudice which is the compensatory possession of a man without a country,' enables him to fathom, as it were by intuition, the depth of every question, however difficult or profound.

> Sidonia had exhausted all the sources of human knowledge; he was master of the learning of every nation, of all tongues dead or living, of every literature, Western and Oriental. He had pursued the speculations of science to their last term, and had himself illustrated them by observation and experiment.

He had lived in all orders of society, had viewed every combination of nature and of art, and had observed man under every phasis of civilisation. He had even studied him in the wilderness. The influence of creeds and laws, manners, customs, traditions, in all their diversities, had been subjected to his personal scrutiny.

Sidonia, in fact, is a type of pure intellect, and he has one great deficiency for which this prepares us. He is a man without affections—not, indeed, heartless, for he is susceptible of deep emotions, and capable of great and unostentatious acts of kindness. But the individual never touched him; woman is to him a toy, man a machine.

The lot the most precious to man, and which a beneficent Providence has made not the least common; to find in another heart a perfect and profound sympathy; to unite his existence with one who could share all his joys, soften all his sorrows, aid him in all his projects, respond to all his fancies, counsel him in his cares, and support him in his perils; make life charming by her charms, interesting by her intelligence, and sweet by the vigilant variety of her tenderness; to find your life blessed by such an influence, and to feel that your influence can bless such a life: this lot, the most divine of divine gifts, that power and even fame can never rival in its delights, all this nature had denied to Sidonia.

Sidonia's function in the novel is to educate Coningsby, who in his turn is to educate the New Generation. He teaches Coningsby to look for the future of England in what is more powerful than laws and institutions—in the national character; and to see the menace to her position rather in class hostility and other signs of a decline of the national character than in those more obvious changes of political institutions to which it is the fashion of the age to ascribe undue importance. How are the elements of the nation to be again blended together? Not by new dispositions of political power, nor even by insistence on those economic causes of which so much is heard, but which are always secondary in their operation. Since the peace there has been in England an attempt to reconstruct

society on a purely rational basis, a basis of material motives, the principle of utility. It has failed, and was bound to fail, for mankind is governed, not by reason, but by imagination.

'We are not indebted to the Reason of man for any of the great achievements which are the landmarks of human action and human progress. It was not Reason that besieged Troy; it was not Reason that sent forth the Saracen from the Desert to conquer the world; that inspired the Crusades; that instituted the Monastic orders; it was not Reason that produced the Jesuits; above all, it was not Reason that created the French Revolution. Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the imagination. Even Mormon counts more votaries than Bentham.'

'And you think, then, that as Imagination once subdued the State, Imagination may now save it?'

'Man is made to adore and to obey: but if you will not command him, if you give him nothing to worship, he will fashion his own divinities, and find a chieftain in his own passions.'

'But where can we find faith in a nation of sectaries? Who can feel loyalty to a sovereign of Downing Street?'

'I speak of the eternal principles of human nature, you answer me with the passing accidents of the hour. Sects rise and sects disappear. Where are the Fifth-Monarchy men? England is governed by Downing Street; once it was governed by Alfred and Elizabeth.'

In another famous chapter Sidonia discourses on the gifts and achievements of his race, and pleads for their emancipation. He is no political sentimentalist, and to illiberality as such he has not the slightest objection if it be an element of power; but he thinks it impolitic in the last degree to make it the interest of a powerful class to oppose the institutions under which they live. The Jews as a race are monarchical in sentiment, deeply religious, and essentially Tories; yet their present disabilities drive them into the same ranks as the levellers and latitudinarians, and every generation they must become more powerful and more dangerous to the society which provokes their hostility.

'Do you think that the quiet humdrum persecution of a decorous representative of an English university can crush those who have successively baffled the Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzar, Rome, and the Feudal ages? The fact is, you cannot destroy a pure race of the Caucasian organisation. It is a physiological fact; a simple law of nature, which has baffled Egyptian and Assyrian Kings, Roman Emperors, and Christian Inquisitors. No penal laws, no physical tortures, can effect that a superior race should be absorbed in an inferior or be destroyed by it. . . .

'Pure races of Caucasus may be persecuted, but they cannot be despised, except by the brutal ignorance of some mongrel breed, that brandishes fagots and howls extermination, but is itself exterminated without persecution, by that irresistible law of Nature which is fatal to curs.'

In every great intellectual movement in Europe the Jews have played and play a principal part. The first Jesuits were Jews; that mysterious Russian diplomacy which so alarms Western Europe is organised by Jews; Jews almost monopolise the professorial chairs of Germany, and are there preparing that mighty revolution of which so little is known in England as yet, but which will, in fact, be a second and greater Reformation. Neander is a Jew; Wehl is a Jew. Jews are to be found among the leading Ministers in nearly every state in Europe. Soult is a Jew; so also were some of his most famous colleagues among Napoleon's Marshals—Masséna, for example. All modern philosophy springs from Spinoza; and if the Jews cannot in the present show great poets or great orators, they have had them in the past. To-day their passionate and creative genius, the nearest link to Divinity, debarred by human tyranny from developing in other fields, has found in music, which is almost an exclusive Jewish privilege, a medium for its expression. In the history of the lords of melody you find the annals of Hebrew genius; and 'almost every great composer,[1] skilled musician, almost every voice that

[1] To a generation for which Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer were the great lights above the musical horizon, this statement may have seemed less astonishing than it seems to us. Joachim, who was a pure Jew, and as proud of his race as Disraeli himself, could speak with more authority; and in

ravishes you with its transporting strains, springs from our tribes.'

From Coningsby Castle we pass to Cambridge, where we see Coningsby again surrounded by his Eton friends. At the end of their first year came the general election that followed the death of William IV., and they had the satisfaction of helping to win a great victory for the Conservative cause in the borough of Cambridge, where its champion was an old Etonian. On the day the member was chaired they met in Coningsby's rooms to talk over their triumph.

'By Jove!' said the panting Buckhurst, throwing himself on the sofa, 'it was well done; never was anything better done. An immense triumph! The greatest triumph the Conservative Cause has had. And yet,' he added, laughing, 'if any fellow were to ask me what the Conservative Cause is, I am sure I should not know what to say.'

'Why, it is the cause of our glorious institutions,' said Coningsby. 'A Crown robbed of its prerogatives; a Church controlled by a commission; and an Aristocracy that does not lead.'

'Under whose genial influence the order of the Peasantry, "a country's pride," has vanished from the face of the land,' said Henry Sydney, 'and is succeeded by a race of serfs, who are called labourers, and who burn ricks.'

'Under which,' continued Coningsby, 'the Crown has become a cipher; the Church a sect; the Nobility drones; and the People drudges.'

'It is the great constitutional cause,' said Lord Vere, 'that refuses everything to opposition; yields everything to agitation; conservative in Parliament, destructive out-of-doors; that has no objection to any change provided only it be effected by unauthorised means.'

'The first public association of men,' said Coningsby, 'who have worked for an avowed end without enunciating a single principle.'

'And who have established political infidelity throughout the land,' said Lord Henry.

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conversation with Sir Charles Stanford he once commented on the curious fact that, while the Jews had great names in literature, science, and philosophy, music, for which in a sense their gift was so exceptional, 'did not possess one Jewish composer of the absolutely first rank' (*Studies and Memories*, by C. V. Stanford, p. 131).

'By Jove!' said Buckhurst, 'what infernal fools we have made ourselves this last week!'

'Nay,' said Coningsby, smiling, 'it was our last schoolboy weakness. Floreat Etona, under all circumstances.'

'I certainly, Coningsby,' said Lord Vere, 'shall not assume the Conservative Cause, instead of the cause for which Hampden died in the field, and Sydney on the scaffold.'

'The cause for which Hampden died in the field and Sydney on the scaffold,' said Coningsby, 'was the cause of the Venetian Republic.'

'How, how?' said Buckhurst.

'I repeat it,' said Coningsby. 'The great object of the Whig leaders in England from the first movement under Hampden to the last most successful one in 1688, was to establish in England a high aristocratic republic on the model of the Venetian, then the study and admiration of all speculative politicians. . . .'

'The Whigs are worn out,' said Vere, 'Conservatism is a sham, and Radicalism is pollution.'

A vacation visit by Coningsby to his grandfather in Paris gives an opportunity for the introduction of those pictures of Parisian society to which allusion has already been made. In Paris Coningsby meets again, and falls in love with, Edith Millbank, his Eton friend's sister, now grown into a beautiful woman; but though his love is returned, the feud between Lord Monmouth and Mr. Millbank is a barrier. This feud is deeper than ever, for Millbank has just succeeded in thwarting the haughty noble in some of his most cherished ambitions, snatching from him a Naboth's vineyard close to Coningsby Castle, and winning from his creature Rigby the representation of the neighbouring borough. The lovers exchange vows, but Coningsby is dismissed by Millbank; and presently Lord Monmouth, ignorant of all that has happened, sends for his grandson, in anticipation of a general election, to arrange that he should come forward as Millbank's opponent. The scene that follows between the old generation and the new is one of the best in the book:

'You are most kind, you are always most kind to me, dear sir,' said Coningsby, in a hesitating tone, and with an air of

great embarrassment, 'but, in truth, I have no wish to enter Parliament.'

'What ?' said Lord Monmouth.

'I feel that I am not yet sufficiently prepared for so great a responsibility as a seat in the House of Commons,' said Coningsby.

'Responsibility !' said Lord Monmouth, smiling. 'What responsibility is there ? . . . All you have got to do is to vote with your party. . . .'

'You mean, of course, by that term what is understood by the Conservative party.'

'Of course ; our friends.'

'I am sorry,' said Coningsby, rather pale, but speaking with firmness, 'I am sorry that I could not support the Conservative party.'

'By —— !' exclaimed Lord Monmouth, starting in his seat, 'some woman has got hold of him, and made him a Whig !'

'No, my dear grandfather . . . nothing of the kind, I assure you. No person can be more anti-Whig.'

'I don't know what you are driving at, sir,' said Lord Monmouth, in a hard, dry tone. . . .

'What I mean to say is, that I have for a long time looked upon the Conservative party as a body who have betrayed their trust. . . .'

'Well, between ourselves, I am quite of the same opinion. . . But what is the use of lamenting the past ? Peel is the only man ; suited to the times and all that ; at least we must say so, and try to believe so ; we can't go back. And it is our own fault that we have let the chief power out of the hands of our own order. It was never thought of in the time of your great-grandfather, sir. And if a commoner were for a season permitted to be the nominal Premier to do the detail, there was always a secret committee of great 1688 nobles to give him his instructions.'

'I should be very sorry to see secret committees of great 1688 nobles again,' said Coningsby.

'Then what the devil do you want to see ?' said Lord Monmouth.

'Political faith,' said Coningsby, 'instead of political infidelity.'

'Hem !' said Lord Monmouth.

'Before I support Conservative principles,' continued Coningsby, 'I merely wish to be informed what those principles aim to conserve. . . .'

'All this is vastly fine,' said Lord Monmouth ; 'but I see no means by which I can attain my object but by supporting Peel. After all, what is the end of all parties and all politics ?

To gain your object. I want to turn our coronet into a ducal one, and to get your grandmother's barony called out of abeyance in your favor. It is impossible that Peel can refuse me. . . . It gratifies me to hear you admired and to learn your success. All I want now is to see you in Parliament. A man should be in Parliament early. There is a sort of stiffness about every man, no matter what may be his talents, who enters Parliament late in life; and now, fortunately, the occasion offers. You will go down on Friday; feed the notabilities well; speak out; praise Peel; abuse O'Connell and the ladies of the Bedchamber; anathematise all waverers; say a good deal about Ireland; stick to the Irish Registration Bill, that's a good card; and, above all, my dear Harry, don't spare that fellow Millbank. Remember, in turning him out you not only gain a vote for the Conservative cause and our coronet, but you crush my foe. Spare nothing for that object; I count on you, boy.'

'I should grieve to be backward in anything that concerned your interest or your honour, sir,' said Coningsby, with an air of great embarrassment.

'I am sure you would, I am sure you would,' said Lord Monmouth, in a tone of some kindness . . .

'But I claim for my convictions, my dear grandfather, a generous tolerance.'

'I can't follow you, sir,' said Lord Monmouth, again in his hard tone. . . . 'You go with your family like a gentleman; you are not to consider your opinions, like a philosopher or a political adventurer.'

'Yes, sir,' said Coningsby, with animation, 'but men going with their families like gentlemen, and losing sight of every principle on which the society of this country ought to be established produced the Reform Bill.'

'D—— the Reform Bill!' said Lord Monmouth; 'if the Duke had not quarrelled with Lord Grey on a coal committee, we should never have had the Reform Bill. . . .'

'You are in as great peril now as you were in 1830,' said Coningsby.

'No, no, no,' said Lord Monmouth; 'the Tory party is organised now; they will not catch us napping again: these Conservative Associations have done the business.'

'But what are they organised for?' said Coningsby. 'At the best to turn out the Whigs. And when you have turned out the Whigs, what then? . . . What we want, sir, is not to fashion new dukes and furbish up old baronies, but to establish great principles which may maintain the realm and secure the happiness of the people. Let me see authority once more honored; a solemn reverence again the habit of our lives; let

me see property acknowledging, as in the old days of faith, that labor is his twin brother, and that the essence of all tenure is the performance of duty; let results such as these be brought about, and let me participate, however feebly, in the great fulfilment, and public life then indeed becomes a noble career, and a seat in Parliament an enviable distinction.'

'I tell you what it is, Harry,' said Lord Monmouth, very drily, 'members of this family may think as they like, but they must act as I please. . . . You will [behave], I oubt not, like a man of sense,' he added, looking at Coningsby with a glance such as he had never before encountered, 'who is not prepared to sacrifice all the objects of life for the pursuit of some fantastical puerilities.'

Coningsby remains firm in his resolution not to contest an election with Edith's father, and not long afterwards Lord Monmouth suddenly dies, leaving the bulk of his vast fortune to an illegitimate daughter whom Coningsby has befriended in ignorance of their relationship. The disinherited grandson is consoled by Sidonia, who treats wealth with a disdain not easy for a millionaire, but easier for Disraeli in spite of his extravagant taste for splendour and display. Sidonia insists that mere possessions are one of the smallest elements in happiness, that Coningsby's loss of his inheritance is only a conventional misfortune, not a real calamity. Coningsby is now free; that is to say—and here we may suppose that Disraeli speaks from the heart—free if he is not in debt. There are two careers between which he can choose. One is diplomacy; but 'a diplomatist is a phantom.' 'I always look upon diplomatists as the Hebrews of politics; without country, political creeds, popular convictions, that strong reality of existence which pervades the career of an eminent citizen in a free and great country.' There remains that other and nobler career, the Bar, and Coningsby resolves to try for the Great Seal.

In the solitude of his chambers, and away from the sustaining influence of Sidonia, he lapses into despair, but a walk through the 'mighty streets' restores his equilibrium.

Whether he inherited or forfeited fortunes, what was it to the passing throng? They would not share his splendor, or his luxury, or his comfort. But a word from his lip, a thought from his brain, expressed at the right time, at the right place, might turn their hearts, might influence their passions, might change their opinions, might affect their destiny. Nothing is great but the personal. As civilisation advances, the accidents of life become each day less important. The power of man, his greatness and his glory, depend on essential qualities. Brains every day become more precious than blood. You must give men new ideas, you must teach them new words, you must modify their manners, you must change their laws, you must root out prejudices, subvert convictions, if you wish to be great. Greatness no longer depends on rentals, the world is too rich; nor on pedigrees, the world is too knowing.

'The greatness of this city destroys my misery,' said Coningsby, 'and my genius shall conquer its greatness!'

This conviction of power in the midst of despair was a revelation of intrinsic strength. It is indeed the test of a creative spirit. From that moment all petty fears for an ordinary future quitted him. He felt that he must be prepared for great sacrifices, for infinite suffering; that there must devolve on him a bitter inheritance of obscurity, struggle, envy, and hatred, vulgar prejudice, base criticism, petty hostilities, but the dawn would break, and the hour arrive, when the welcome morning hymn of his success and his fame would sound and be re-echoed.

From such thoughts, we may believe, Disraeli many a time himself drew consolation in the darker moments of his career; but he is not content to leave his hero to live by fortitude alone. In the midst of the general election of 1841, in which all his friends are candidates, and which was to be an epoch in his own life, Coningsby finds himself a solitary student in the Temple, cut off from the chance of action. But suddenly his prospects change, and fortune, which has been buffeting him, begins to shower her favours. Millbank, coming to a better understanding of things which he had misconstrued, retires from the contest in which he is engaged with Rigby, and nominates Coningsby, who is triumphantly elected. He also bestows on Coningsby the hand of his daughter, and provides for the happy pair an ample establishment. Presently, more-

over, the frail and unhappy girl who had inherited the bulk of Lord Monmouth's vast wealth dies, and bequeathes the whole of it to Coningsby. Thus overladen, in Disraeli's customary manner, with all the goods of fortune, he is left with his friends on the threshold of public life.

> Will they maintain in august assemblies and high places the great truths which, in study and in solitude, they have embraced? Or will their courage exhaust itself in the struggle, their enthusiasm evaporate before hollow-hearted ridicule, their generous impulses yield with a vulgar catastrophe to the tawdry temptations of a low ambition? Will their skilled intelligence subside into being the adroit tool of a corrupt party? Will Vanity confound their fortunes, or Jealousy wither their sympathies? Or will they remain brave, single, and true; refuse to bow before shadows and worship phrases; sensible of the greatness of their position, recognise the greatness of their duties; denounce to a perplexed and disheartened world the frigid theories of a generalising age that have destroyed the individuality of man, and restore the happiness of their country by believing in their own energies, and daring to be great?

Coningsby can be regarded either as a work of art or as the manifesto of Young England. The attempt to disengage the politics from the story will best be reserved till we are in a position to deal with *Sybil* at the same time; but Young England has its place, and a most important place, in the scheme of the novel even as a work of art. 'Some serious creed, however misty and indefinite, is required,' it has been well said,[1] 'to raise the mere mocker into a genuine satirist;' and just such a creed Young England supplies. Disraeli in *Coningsby* has given us a picture of the great world of the thirties, painted with all his feeling for the gorgeous and spectacular, and a gallery of political portraits painted with perfect insight, sympathy, and comprehension. He has reproduced in this gallery every type that is mean or ridiculous in politics: the Tapers and Tadpoles; the 'twelve-hundred-a-yearers'; the candidates who present themselves

[1] By Sir Leslie Stephen.

to the Liberals of Darlford: 'Mr. Donald Macpherson Macfarlane, who would only pay the legal expenses—he was soon despatched; Mr. Gingerly Browne, of Jermyn Street, the younger son of a baronet, who would go as far as £1,000 provided the seat was secured; Mr. Juggins, a distiller, £2,000 man, but would not agree to any annual subscriptions; Sir Baptist Placid, vague about expenditure, but repeatedly declaring that "there could be no difficulty on that head"; he, however, had a moral objection to subscribing to the races, and that was a great point at Darlford;' the Lord Fitzboobys, the Jawster Sharps, down even to the Bully Blucks and Magog Wraths, the *condottieri* leaders of the Liberal and Conservative mobs. All these he renders with the discernment of a master, and the coolest detachment in the presence of every variety of knavery and baseness. But he has the defects of his qualities, and just as his love of splendour often lures him into meretriciousness, so his detachment is sometimes carried to the point of flippancy, or even cynicism. He was, however, no mere cynic, and as the total effect of the picture is not meretricious, but stately and imposing, so it is not flippant or cynical, but serious and inspiring. Nothing that is ignoble in politics is evaded, but the ignoble is never treated in the spirit of the photographic realist, and we have always the romantic ideal of Young England to serve as a resting-place for faith and a centre of illumination, and to give harmony and elevation to the picture as a whole. Bad as things are, the lofty enthusiasm of the New Generation is to set everything right.

If the creed of Young England had been less vague and shadowy, if the purpose of the novel had been political in any crude or narrowly partisan sense, the result must have been failure from the point of view of art. But Young England was less a party than a spirit in the air, or at most a revival of Disraeli's early dream, the dream that haunts the youth of every generation, of a party truly national rising above all factious aims and limitations. The wisdom which Sidonia pours out to Coningsby

is not politics at all, or the politics of the Empyrean in its detachment, not only from party, but even from nationality and from everything but race. To this serene wisdom Coningsby and his friends add a wisdom of their own in which we can distinguish two different elements. One is the boyish sentimentalism, the taste for mere ritual, the maypoles and church architecture, for which Smythe, or more often Manners, is really responsible, and which Disraeli, we may believe, never took very seriously. The other is pure Disraeli, the Disraeli we already know in the *Vindication* and his speeches, with his peculiar political creed compounded in equal measure of Tory and Radical elements, and his comparative indifference to the conventional party divisions. Thus, the politics of Young England are so broad and disinterested as to save the novel from all suspicion of mere party pamphleteering. From his central point of view the author surveys the scene with judicial impartiality, and awards praise and blame with due discrimination. He was depicted in *Punch* as the infant Hercules strangling, one in either hand, the twin serpents Whig and Tory; and certainly Whigs and Tories are alike made to suffer under the lash of his satire.

The politics as a rule are woven so deftly into the texture of the story as not to be obtrusive, though sometimes, especially when Coningsby is speaking, they degenerate into a lecture, and one feels that the longer digressions by the author represent a gritty residuum of unassimilated matter. For all his sense of humour, Disraeli can be over-solemn when his pet ideas are in question; but he has a curious and refreshing habit that atones for such transgressions. If he has no self-conscious fears of making himself absurd, he is always ready to anticipate the laugh against himself. We see this in the dialogue between Lord Monmouth and Coningsby given above; and we see it again in the account of Sir Joseph Wallinger's simple-minded perplexity at the views of the New Generation, or in the sly allusion to a speech by

Buckhurst 'denouncing the Venetian constitution, to the amazement of several thousand persons, apparently not a little terrified by this unknown danger.'

As regards the principal characters, Coningsby himself is not altogether successful. He is hardly a living moving figure, and at times he smacks both of the prig and the bore. Little attempt is made to preserve the resemblance to Smythe, who was very far from being either. Sir Leslie Stephen has remarked that Disraeli's youthful heroes in his early novels are creative, and that in the later they tend to become merely receptive. We see the change in *Coningsby*, and the explanation is that the nominal hero has ceased to be the real. Coningsby derives his wisdom from Sidonia, and Sidonia, not Coningsby, is in fact the central figure in the whole intellectual movement of the novel. Sidonia is said to have been suggested by a member of the Rothschild family, and the resemblance in many points is too obvious to have been accidental; he is, as it were, an ideal Rothschild, a Rothschild equipped not only with great wealth, but with a penetrating and all-embracing intellectual vision. Sidonia is indeed a god, and perhaps as near to the deity of Disraeli's religion as we are ever likely to get. There is in him, of course, much of Disraeli himself. Like Disraeli, and unlike the Rothschilds, he is of the stock of the Sephardim, the descendant of the 'Nuevos Christianos' of Arragon; and when we are told that he 'observed everything, but avoided serious discussion,' and 'if you pressed him for an opinion took refuge in raillery'; or that, at the end of a long appeal addressed to him by Rigby, 'he only bowed his head and said "Perhaps," and then, turning to his neighbour, inquired whether birds were plentiful in Lancashire,' we recognise authentic traits from the manner of his creator.

Henry Sydney and Buckhurst are much more real and true to life than Coningsby. Lord Monmouth is finely conceived and admirably drawn, and is a far more interesting and attractive figure than either his original

or Thackeray's Lord Steyne. Heartless, self-indulgent and devoid of scruple as he is, he has a certain grandeur of his own as the type of Sulla-like patrician, arrogant but dignified, sublimely selfish, but also self-sufficient, and alike in good and evil fortune undaunted in his bearing. There has been no keener or more effective satirist than Disraeli of the vices and follies of the aristocracy which he so much admired; and that partly because of his very admiration. Sympathy gave him insight, comprehension, and tolerance, and he remains cool and collected where Thackeray, for instance, is apt to go off in a sputter of moral indignation which defeats its own purpose. We see in Rigby how Disraeli's own work is marred where animus enters. As a picture of the sycophant, Rigby is perhaps overdrawn, and is certainly overdrawn as a portrait of Croker. That very unimpressive, it may be disagreeable, but from all that appears quite honourable man, had the bad fortune to incur the bitter enmity of two such opposite men of genius as Disraeli and Macaulay. Macaulay was so obviously extravagant in his injustice that it has recoiled upon himself. Disraeli's animosity, of which we have seen the origin, was much less violent, but violent enough in contrast to his usual cool detachment to lead him into something that resembles an artistic blunder.

Of the women, Edith Millbank is not altogether a success. Lady Theresa Sydney is entirely uninteresting, but Lady Everingham, her sister, is the best woman in the book. In a different style, Mrs. Guy Flouncey, who is an anticipation of Becky Sharp, is very good, too.

> She came [to Coningsby Castle] with a wardrobe which, in point of variety, fancy, and fashion, never was surpassed. . . . At first the fine ladies never noticed her, or only stared at her over their shoulders; everywhere sounded, in suppressed whispers, the fatal question, 'Who is she?' After dinner they formed always into polite groups, from which Mrs. Guy Flouncey was invariably excluded. . . . It was, indeed, rather difficult work the first few days. . . . But Mrs. Guy Flouncey . . . had confidence in herself, her quickness, her ever ready accomplishments, and her practised

powers of attraction. And she was right. She was always sure of an ally the moment the gentlemen appeared. . . . . Somehow or other, before a week was passed, Mrs. Guy Flouncey seemed the soul of everything, was always surrounded by a cluster of admirers, and with what are called 'the best men' ever ready to ride with her, dance with her, act with her, or fall at her feet. The fine ladies found it absolutely necessary to thaw; they began to ask her questions after dinner. Mrs. Guy Flouncey only wanted an opening. She was an adroit flatterer, with a temper imperturbable, and gifted with a ceaseless energy of conferring slight obligations. She lent them patterns for new fashions, in all which mysteries she was very versant; and what with some gentle glozing and some gay gossip, sugar for their tongues and salt for their tails, she contrived pretty well to catch them all.

Disraeli is usually happier in his slighter sketches of women than in his more elaborate pictures. He begins well with the Princess Lucretia, who 'generally succeeded in conveying an impression to those she addressed that she had never seen them before, did not care to see them now, and never wished to see them again; and all this, too, with an air of great courtesy'; but her character when developed passes into melodrama.

The habit of Parliamentary speaking has seldom a good effect on literary style, and seven years in the House of Commons had not improved Disraeli's. He rarely rises in *Coningsby* or the subsequent novels to the highest level, for instance, of *Contarini Fleming*. There is less simplicity and directness, more affectation, and, in the matter of solecisms, more carelessness than ever. It is one of the many contradictions in Disraeli's mind and character that, in spite of his strong grasp of fact, his keen sense of the ridiculous, and his intolerance of cant, he never could quite distinguish between the genuine and the counterfeit either in language or sentiment. His taste for fine writing in an artificial style shows no diminution, and his displays of mawkish sentimentalism, as, for instance, in the love passages between Coningsby and Edith, jar on us the more as they no longer have the excuse of youth and inexperience. On the other hand, years and maturity of

mind have developed that pregnant and aphoristic quality which was in his style from the first, and is one of its greatest merits. Disraeli may not be a great moralist, but he is a great master of the art of life in a less lofty sense, and from every chapter of *Coningsby* it would be possible to cull illuminating maxims on this lower plane of wisdom.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Thursday [*May*].

Lord Ponsonby[1] is so 'enchanted with Sidonia' that we are all to dine together at the Lionel [Rothschild]s' on Sunday. There is no particular news except that Bradshaw, the last of the school of Brummell, has read a book, and it is called *Coningsby*. Twice on our way to Longmans in Paternoster Row we were congratulated. Once by Tom Jones [?], who almost embraced M. A.; which she returned, although she denies it. He was 'not surprised to find in Paternoster Row the most successful author of the day.'

[*June* 13.]

Yesterday we dined with B. Wall, and had a most exquisite dinner in a most refined and sumptuous house, and with the most charming society. I sat next to Sydney Smith, who was delightful: we had besides Lady Morley and Luttrell and Labouchere and G. Smythe and Punch Greville[2] and Lord Melbourne. I don't remember a more agreeable party; it sprang from *Coningsby* and from Sydney Smith's wish to make my acquaintance. His wife was there, M. A. says a very agreeable person, and Lady Stepney.

Coningsby keeps moving—about 40 a day on average. We are preparing for a third edition, having only 400 or so on hand of the second, and the demand being steady.

From Henry Hope.

May 18.

To tell you how much I admire the story, the style, the terrible power of wit and sarcasm . . . would merely be to repeat what the newspapers say, but there is besides a spirit of daring and chivalry in attacking people who have always been deemed bugbears . . . which much delights and refreshes me. . . .

[1] Viscount Ponsonby, 1770(?)-1855, a well-known diplomatist, brother of Sir William Ponsonby who was killed at Waterloo.

[2] Charles Greville, the diarist.

It diverts me much to hear the comments of our friends. 'Dreadfully personal!' says one; 'What fun Tadpole and Taper are!' says Ernest Bruce; 'How like Fitzbooby is!' says somebody else; 'Bonham has not appeared,' says another, and if the species ever committed suicide it would be said of him. . . . I saw Lord Lyndhurst, who appeared to enjoy the book beyond measure, and told me of an instance in which he had heard Rigby set Lord Eldon right on law and the Duke of Wellington on military matters on one day.

The following reminiscences relating to Croker are from a manuscript of Disraeli's written in the sixties:

In 1849 there was a grand dinner given in Merchant Taylors' Hall to inaugurate the new organisation of the 'Protectionist Party' under the leadership of Lord Derby and myself. Tom Baring was in the chair. On his right Lord Derby, myself on his left, and then there were alternately peers and commoners. The Duke of Northumberland, whom I did not then know, was to have sate next to me: but his Grace was unwell and prevented attending at the last moment. The commoner next to his Grace's seat was Mr. Croker. He was requested by the directors of the fête to sit up next to me. It was rather embarrassing: but Mr. Croker and myself were not socially acquainted. I had never seen him since I was a boy. Nor was he the person who ought to assume that a character in one of my books, which he deemed odious, was intended for himself. He behaved like a man of the world: informed me that he had had the pleasure of, he hoped, the friendship of my excellent father, talked generally about the political situation, warmed into anecdote, and made himself agreeable. I treated him with great consideration, and spoke enough, but not too much, and took care never to break into cordiality, which I should have done under ordinary circumstances with so eminent a man, met under such conditions.

When I made my speech after dinner, I observed he nodded his head frequently in approbation, and gave other signs of sympathy, and perhaps stronger feeling. I thought all this on his part a very good performance, and that he had extricated himself out of an embarrassing position with dexterity and some grace. A year or two afterwards—February, 1851—I had brought forward a great agricultural motion on the burthens of land, had rallied great numbers, had been beaten by the Government in a full House, by only 15 or 16 votes, or even less; had made a great statement at the commencement of the debate which lasted some days, and had concluded by a brilliant reply which made much noise at the time, and was

doubly effective from the capital division that followed. I was standing in the hall of the Carlton, which was rather full, reading a letter, when a person came up to me and put his hand on my arm, and said: 'The speech was the speech of a statesman, and the reply was the reply of a wit.' It was Croker.

I was surprised, and murmured something about *laudari a laudato*, but he had vanished. He had too much good taste to remain.

Years after this George Smythe brought me, one morning, a letter from Croker, who had long been hopelessly ill, to his father, Lord Strangford (Camoens), with whom Croker had been at college, and always chums; and this letter, if it meant anything, meant a formal reconciliation with me: it seemed even an interview. I remember in the letter this passage: 'Why he attacked me I never could discover, and know no more the cause than I know the man who shot Mrs. Hampden!'

I behaved as kindly as I could under the circumstances: but I could not listen to interviews, or reconciliations, or explanations. It was too late, and my sensibilities, which had [been] played upon in my earlier life, too much required nursing. I told George Smythe to manage the result with the greatest consideration for Croker's feelings and situation; and there it ended.

The moral I draw from all this is that men of a certain age like the young ones who lick them. I think, now that Croker was quite sincere at the Merchant Taylors'.

CHAPTER VIII.

Diverging from the Government.

1844–1845.

Though when the session of 1844 began Disraeli had already been six years in Parliament, we may doubt whether he had yet attained to any high position in the favour of the House of Commons. The successes in debate which he reported from time to time with so much complacency to his sister had failed to produce the cumulative effect that might have been expected. He had shown qualities that would have won him influence and promotion as a Minister, and if he had been taken into the Ministry in 1841 progress would have been easy; but an open and visible check such as he then received is more often than not fatal to a Parliamentary career, and in his case recovery was rendered more difficult by the dubious reputation which, taking its origin from his early political escapades and his affectations of dress and manner, still clung to him persistently. Exclusion from the Government had the appearance of setting the seal on this reputation, and for the moment he seemed to lose much of the ground he had won.

Nor, in spite of all his gifts, had he yet acquired the authentic House of Commons manner. He had courage and originality, unbounded cleverness, and that most effective weapon—'dangerous, though most effective,' he calls it in *Endymion*'—the power of sarcasm. But all these are gifts which require supreme tact for their judicious display in Parliament, and in Parliamentary tact he was

at first a little wanting. Englishmen in general, and the House of Commons in particular, hate everything that savours of pretentiousness and presumption; and though Disraeli, we may believe, was no more of an egoist than many who had greater art in concealing their foible, there was an element of pretentiousness and presumption in his speeches which the House of Commons resented. The oracular manner, which became a positive asset when he had reached a high position, tended to delay his ascent. He was too didactic in tone, and his cleverness, though great, was too ostentatious. It was often amusing, sometimes impressive; but, then, he was a man of letters, from whom cleverness was to be expected, and as an assembly of practical Englishmen the House of Commons knew better than to take such a person seriously.

The House, it has been said, hates a man who makes it think. Disraeli had evolved a political philosophy of his own, and had been lavish of its wisdom; but a still greater master of political philosophy had learnt by bitter experience how little such an instrument profits in Parliament, and where it failed in the hands of Burke, Disraeli could hardly expect to wield it with success. The very qualities which give lasting interest to his early speeches probably tended, as with Burke in every period of his career, to make them ineffective at the moment of delivery. The House of Commons has developed a peculiar style of its own, of which exaggerated verbiage and a deliberate indirectness are the dominant characteristics. But these are qualities which are entirely alien to good and lasting literature, and so House of Commons speeches, when they have served their immediate purpose, are rarely good reading. Peel and Gladstone, who were the great exponents of the Parliamentary manner, are altogether intolerable in the cold pages of Hansard; and Disraeli himself, when he had once fully acquired that manner, becomes much less readable in his speeches in the House than in his speeches in the country.

His best Parliamentary speeches are those of the

middle period, when the quality of thoughtfulness, the breadth of view, and the literary finish which he had shown from the first, are combined with ease and freedom and an appearance of spontaneity. In the session of 1844 he seemed suddenly to catch the peculiar intonation of Parliamentary debate, and, without sacrificing what was best and most characteristic in his own style, to attune it completely to the ear of the House of Commons. The Irish speech in February, though still a little too didactic, marked a great advance in Parliamentary manner. Occupied with *Coningsby*, he was less active than usual in the business of the House, only speaking on two other occasions of any importance in the course of the session; but the advance was maintained in these subsequent efforts, and henceforward his command of the House was complete.

One fact stands out conspicuously about the three speeches of the session: they exhibit a continuous divergence from the Government. The first, in February, as we have seen, was comparatively friendly; the second, in April, was bantering in tone, but could hardly be called hostile; the third, in June, was openly rebellious. When Peel paid his compliment to the Irish speech in February, his sister, Mrs. Dawson, wrote to Mrs. Disraeli:

> I was delighted with my brother's speech, and with no part of it more than that in which he alludes to Mr. Disraeli in a complimentary strain. I wish very much that the next time Mr. Disraeli sees my brother he would put out his hand to him. They are both reserved men, and one must make the first advance; the other would accept it most gladly.

Whether Disraeli's hand would have been accepted gladly or not, it seems never to have been offered, and after the momentary approach to a better understanding the two men began to drift apart again. 'A Parliamentary leader who possesses [the faculty of inspiring enthusiasm] doubles his majority; and he who has it not may shroud himself in artificial reserve and study with undignified arrogance an awkward haughtiness, but he will never-

theless be as far from controlling the spirit as from captivating the hearts of his sullen followers.' In this sentence in *Coningsby* there was an obvious fling at Peel, though his name was not mentioned. But Disraeli was not touchy, and the 'artificial reserve' and 'awkward haughtiness' would have counted for less if they had not been supplemented by deeper causes of division. The question at issue was more than a mere question of outward demeanour. Where two men have their faces set in opposite directions divergence is inevitable.

There was nothing in which Young England was more thoroughly in earnest, or that did more to give a wide popularity to its ideas, than its devotion to the cause of social reform. In this matter Disraeli was no less sincere than Manners himself.

> There is no subject [he said, speaking to his constituents in the summer of this year] in which I have taken a deeper interest than the condition of the working classes. Long before what is called the 'condition of the people question' was discussed in the House of Commons, I had employed my pen[1] on the subject. I had long been aware that there was something rotten in the core of our social system. I had seen that while immense fortunes were accumulating, while wealth was increasing to a superabundance, and while Great Britain was cited throughout Europe as the most prosperous nation in the world, the working classes, the creators of wealth, were steeped in the most abject poverty and gradually sinking into the deepest degradation.[2]

The new Poor Law, he added, of ten years before represented 'a philosophical attempt' by the Whigs to remedy these evils, and the new Poor Law was still one of the centres of contention between opposing schools of thought. Its opponents had not been silenced by the overwhelming defeat which they suffered in the House of Commons in Disraeli's first session.[3] *The Times* with great pertinacity continued to expose and denounce the iniquities of the new system, and Dickens, in *Oliver Twist*,

[1] He was perhaps thinking of *Popanilla*.
[2] *Shropshire Conservative*, Aug. 31, 1844.
[3] See p. 478.

did much by his picture of life in the new union workhouses to fan the agitation. The Act of 1834 was a provisional measure, and when the Whig Government in their last session introduced a Bill for its renewal for ten years, Disraeli had the courage to move the rejection, and was able to muster more than fifty supporters.[1] The Bill was subsequently lost through the dissolution of Parliament, and there is no doubt that in the elections Peel, though he himself had never given to the agitation the slightest encouragement, owed a good deal of his success to the unpopularity which the Whigs had incurred by their Poor Law, and to the definite pledges that were taken by many of his supporters to vote for its amendment or total abolition. The new Government, however, showed little eagerness to do anything for the fulfilment of these pledges. Graham, who as Home Secretary was the Minister responsible, was still completely dominated by the *laisser aller* principles of his Whig or Liberal days, and was, if possible, even less sympathetic than Peel. By relaxing in some respects the severity of the administration, introducing some amendments, and promising others, he persuaded the House of Commons in 1842 to renew the Act for five years; but the hopes of many Tories were deeply disappointed, and the Ministry for some sessions had to encounter a persistent agitation in the House, which estranged them from a section of their natural supporters, and helped to drive them along that path of approximation to their Manchester opponents which they were too ready to tread. Anxious at this time to avoid all appearance of hostility to Peel, Disraeli held aloof, never speaking on the subject, and very rarely voting;[2] but he did not change his opinions. Better times began in 1843 or 1844, and these, aided by the improvements introduced under pressure of the continuous agitation, gradually reconciled the country to the new system;

[1] *Hansard*, Feb. 8, 1841.

[2] In one division in Committee in 1842 (June 27) he voted against the Government.

but as late as 1847, when the Act again expired, Disraeli spoke and voted against the Bill for its renewal.

If the new Poor Law was typical of the remedies put forward by one school of doctors for the social evils of the time, the factory legislation, which was now loudly demanded, was no less typical of the remedies which the other and Tory school suggested. The fight over the Poor Law and the fight over the question of factory reform both tended to become incidents in the larger struggle now raging between the landed gentry and the manufacturers. The country party, seeing in the misery of the factory workers the opportunity for a counter-attack on the assailants of their own position, were the more ready to apply those legislative remedies to which their traditions predisposed them; the factory masters in their turn pointed to the condition of the agricultural labourers as an illustration of the practical working of socialistic theories, and insisted on their own cure for all social evils—the free admission of corn. Disraeli, though he had no doubt in which camp he would be found, as usual steadily surveyed the whole situation from a central point of view.

> I beg to be understood [he said to his constituents in justifying his votes in favour of factory legislation] that I do not join in the absurd cry against the manufacturing interest of the country. I respect the talents, the industry, the indomitable energy, of that powerful class, and I acknowledge them as the primary source of our wealth and greatness; and although I am not blind to the fact that great distress, and perhaps tyranny, exists in the system, I fear—for I was born[1] and have lived in an agricultural county—I fear, nay I am sure, that the condition of the agricultural labourers cannot be cited to the confusion of the manufacturing capitalists.[2]

In the matter of factory reform even more conspicuously than in the matter of the Poor Law, Graham and the Government showed that their sympathies were with

[1] Whether this misstatement is to be put down to rhetoric or to momentary forgetfulness it is needless to inquire.

[2] Speech at Shrewsbury, Aug. 28, 1844.

Manchester. Continuing his great campaign against the oppression of the industrial poor, Lord Ashley in 1840 procured the appointment of a commission to inquire into the facts as to the employment of women and children; and two years later the famous report dealing with mines and collieries made its appearance. The horrors revealed by this lurid document gave so great a shock to the conscience of the nation that Ashley in the same session was able, though receiving little help from the Government, to carry a Bill excluding women and young children from the mines altogether. A second report dealing with trades and manufactures was issued by the commission in 1843, and Graham himself in this session, spurred on by Ashley and an insistent public opinion, introduced a Bill for the regulation of factory labour. It contained also provisions for the education of factory children, and one of those storms that suddenly arise when religious education comes into question caused its abandonment; but it was reintroduced in 1844 with the education clauses omitted. Beside certain restrictions on the employment of children, Graham's Bill proposed to limit the labour of 'young persons'[1] to twelve hours a day; but the factory reformers had long been insisting that ten hours were sufficient, and the bulk of the Tory majority, if left to themselves, were disposed to agree with them. The Government, however, threw the whole weight of their influence into the scale of the mill-owners; and though Ashley in committee twice succeeded[2] in defeating them by narrow majorities on the question of twelve hours, he failed, also by a narrow majority, to carry ten hours as a substantive proposal. It was expected that the compromise of eleven hours would be adopted, but the Government were unyielding. They withdrew their Bill, introduced another, and when Ashley again proposed his ten-hours amendment, Graham informed the House that if it were carried it would be his

[1] Boys from thirteen to eighteen, and girls up to twenty-one.
[2] March 15 and 22

duty to seek a private station; and when it seemed doubtful, in view of his great unpopularity, whether this might not be regarded by the Tory members as a blessing, Peel himself got up and stated that if the question were decided against them he also would retire. Against such a threat as this Ashley could make no headway, and he was beaten in the division [1] by nearly two to one.

Disraeli and Young England[2] supported Ashley throughout the struggle. Disraeli remained silent, but he told his constituents later that he was anxious to speak before the last fatal division, and was prevented by the excitement from obtaining a hearing. Most of the official Whigs voted with Ashley—some of them, like Palmerston, from sincere interest in the question; others, no doubt, with an eye to mere party advantage. Macaulay, who in his youth had treated Sadler so unworthily, and who had now become a convert, was, we may hope, among the former. Bright was a bitter advocate for the mill-owners throughout, and with him were most of the Radical free traders; but Cobden stood aside, watching with secret joy the embarrassment of the Government, and feeding himself inwardly with the prescient hope 'that men like Graham and Peel would see the necessity of taking anchor upon some sound principles, as a refuge from the socialist doctrines of the fools behind them.'[3] When Graham and Peel had found the anchorage he desired, the fools behind them, freed from the constraint of their leadership, acted in obedience to their natural instincts, and carried the Ten Hours Bill before the end of this Parliament.

The occasion for Disraeli's second speech of the session was a personal dispute. Ferrand, the member for Knaresborough, who, as we have seen, had affiliations with the Young England group, was one of the most zealous of the Tory social reformers, strenuous and out-

[1] May 13.
[2] With the exception of Smythe. He was under constant pressure from his father to support Peel, and this may have determined his vote.
[3] Morley's *Cobden*, I., p. 302.

spoken both in support of the Ten Hours Bill and in opposition to the new Poor Law. He had become involved on the latter subject in an endless controversy with Graham about a report from a Poor Law official called Mott, with regard to which there were grounds for a suspicion of chicanery; and in a speech in the country he had roundly accused Graham of having procured a false report in order to crush an opponent, and also of having induced the chairman of an election committee to give a partial vote in order to deprive the great enemy of the new Poor Law, Walter of *The Times*, of his seat in the House of Commons. Graham made the charges a question of privilege, and Disraeli, who had been a member of the election committee, intervened in the debate with a speech which delighted the House by its wit and adroitness. Without attempting to justify Ferrand or his charges, he pleaded in his behalf against an injudicious penalty, and he contrived before he sat down to make fun of all concerned—of Peel, of Graham, of Stanley, and even of the House itself—and yet carry his audience with him. The hon. member, he thought, had a very bad case, and, he added, greatly daring, a still worse tribunal; but the House only laughed. He had heard the hon. member himself, the Home Secretary, and the Prime Minister, all three discourse on the subject of the great Mott case,[1] but he never could annex a definite idea to any single circumstance of that most complicated transaction. Something in it there certainly was — there was a case, there was a subcommissioner, a report that was quoted and not printed, a commissioner that was quoted and dismissed. No one, however, believed, in spite of the suspicious circumstances, that the Secretary of State in his exalted position would pervert his power for so slight an object. But because a mere member of Parliament, supposing himself engaged

[1] The controversy about the report lasted for several years, and ever afterwards, both in Parliament and the press, was known as 'the great Mott case.'

in a contest with a powerful Government, had taken an extreme view, was a man like the right hon. gentleman to come with that demure countenance which he could so well put on, and say that the State was in danger, and 'that the House of Commons must interfere to vindicate the reputation of this, I believe still strong, though not popular Ministry?'[1] The Prime Minister, he thought, had treated the subject in the right way when, with that historical research and that unrivalled memory for which he was famed, he had referred to the case of the bottle conjurer;[2] but after he had set this good example it was surprising to find him followed by the noble lord (Stanley) in such a different strain.

> There is always something chivalric about the noble lord, and one cannot but admire him when hastening to the rescue of his right hon. friend the Secretary of State. But . . . I could not suppress my surprise at seeing him get up, and, in his zeal to inform the hon. member for Knaresborough, first denounce his statements as calumnies, and then charge him with having made those statements knowing them to be calumnious. That is the model by which the hon. member will profit when he returns to the House . . . and we shall find his speeches hereafter distinguished for all that amenity of manner and that choice selection of conciliatory phrase which have hitherto distinguished the speeches of the noble lord. The noble lord declares the hon. member is an intentional calumniator. . . . How will he substantiate that assertion? Better than the hon. member has substantiated his? The noble lord in this case, as in so many others, first destroys his opponent, and then destroys his own position. The noble lord is the Prince Rupert of Parliamentary discussion; his charge is resistless; but when he returns from the pursuit he always finds his camp in the possession of the enemy (cheers and laughter).

The name clung to Stanley, and to this day he is best known as the Rupert of debate. It was now again the turn of Graham, and the mockery became malicious:

[1] This sally, we are told, was received with 'roars of laughter.'

[2] Peel's speech had contained a reference to 'the public performer who undertook to compress himself into a quart bottle.'

As if all these great guns were not sufficient to sink this unfortunate craft, then comes the Secretary of State to keep up the solemn inspiration of the farce, and rising tells us, 'This is the British House of Commons. This is not a hustings. Gentlemen may tell lies upon the hustings, but gentlemen may not tell lies in the British House of Commons.' This is the political morality of the Secretary of State. Now, I entirely differ from the right hon. gentleman on this point. I certainly do not think that gentlemen ought to tell lies in the House of Commons, but I also think hon. gentlemen ought to be as careful in what they say on the hustings. I even go farther than that: I say that hon. gentlemen ought not to make pledges on the hustings which they do not mean to keep in the House of Commons. I don't think that a gentleman on the hustings, for example, ought to denounce the new Poor Law, and then come into the House of Commons and vote for it. I call that corrupt and unprincipled conduct; and if there be any gentleman in this House who has been guilty of that conduct, why, he may rise in his place and propose a vote of censure on me for saying so (cheers and laughter).

A more genial laugh at Peel brought the speech to a conclusion:

No attempt by this House, whether right or wrong in the beginning, from the time of Sacheverell to our friend Mr. Stockdale, to run down an individual has ever succeeded or has ever terminated to their advantage. Remember what another Sir Robert—not a greater man than our Sir Robert, but still a most distinguished one—said with respect to the case of Dr. Sacheverell. He said he had had 'enough of roasting a parson'; and I think the right hon. gentleman, taking as he did the great historical view of the case, the bottle conjurer view of the case, might really, after what has occurred, allow the matter to drop, feeling assured that the hon. member has received a great moral lesson, and that when he appears on the hustings in future he will, not adopting the distinction of the Secretary of State, be almost as cautious there as he is in the House of Commons.[1]

He sat down, we are told, amid loud and continued cheering, and, whether or not in deference to the advice he had given, the House eventually contented itself with

[1] *The Times*, April 25, 1844.

a formal resolution that Ferrand's imputations were wholly unfounded and calumnious.

From Henry Hope.

April 25.

MY DEAR DISRAELI,

I cannot resist the temptation of expressing to you the delight I felt at reading your speech of last night. Any remark from me on the beauty of the composition or the keenness of the wit would be superfluous, and almost impertinent; but independently of that there is about it a high feeling which pleases me more than I can tell—tearing off the mask from hypocrites, exposing the turbulence of bullies, and showing, what I so long have felt, that the measure of public virtue and public sympathy was the plausibility and power of the assailants and assailed.

Ever yours,
HENRY T. HOPE.

In May Peel had succeeded in compelling the House of Commons to reverse its decision on the question of the Factory Bill, and in June he repeated the performance on a question of sugar duties. Skilful finance, aided by two good harvests and a revival of trade, had at last produced a surplus, and the Budget of this year proposed among other changes a reduction of these duties. Sugar was then, as often before and since, a political explosive; it had caused the fall of the Whigs in 1841, and Peel's proposals were regarded by many of his supporters as resembling too closely those which he had then resisted. This section of the Conservative members, anxious to increase the preference to free-grown sugar from the colonies over foreign slave-grown sugar, combined with the Opposition, and carried[1] against the Government an amendment reducing the duties on all free-grown sugar. Young England[2] voted in the majority, though Disraeli, 'out of his great personal regard for the Prime Minister,' as he told his constituents later, gave his vote in silence; while Cobden and Bright and the orthodox free traders, dis-

[1] June 14. The figures were 241 to 221.
[2] All except Cochrane.

liking the sugar-growers as allies of the landed gentry, and notwithstanding the fact that the amendment implied a step in the direction of free trade, supported the Government. In those days, it must be remembered, the House of Commons had not been reduced to that dependence on the Ministry to which we are now accustomed, and such incidents as the acceptance of this amendment were not uncommon; but Peel determined to insist on his original proposals, and summoned a party meeting to consider the situation. At this meeting, according to Gladstone, he 'stated his case in a speech which was thought to be haughty and unconciliatory;'[1] and although the open dissentients, among whom were Disraeli and Ferrand, were only five or six, the general tone was so bad that Peel wrote to the Queen to prepare her for the defeat of the Government.[2]

Disraeli also seems to have believed that the Government were doomed. The original division had been on a Friday, and on the Monday following the House of Commons was to be asked to rescind its vote. On the Sunday night Cam Hobhouse met the Disraelis at dinner at Baron Lionel de Rothschild's, the party, which included Lord and Lady Lansdowne and Lord and Lady John Russell, having, it seems, been made to bring Disraeli and the Whig leaders together. Disraeli told Hobhouse that he believed the Ministers would be out by five o'clock the next day, and he thought the Whigs would have no difficulty in filling their places.

> He said Ireland was no obstacle; we could govern it although the Tories could not. The Corn Laws might be settled as well by us as by Peel; and as to the Poor Law, some modification must be made by anyone who could govern. . . . Peel had completely failed to keep together his party, and must *go*—if not now, at least very speedily. He said Russell was one of the very few men in the House of Commons who had a *strong will* and was fit to govern. He thought nothing of Stanley; Graham he admired for his capacity.[3]

[1] Morley's *Gladstone*, I., p. 644. [2] Parker's *Peel*, III., p. 153.
[3] *Lord Broughton's Recollections*, VI. p. 114.

On the Monday, Peel, who was usually, Disraeli told his constituents, 'the most prudent of orators if not of statesmen,' made a speech so unconciliatory as to draw a vigorous protest even from the faithful Sandon. 'His own friends said afterwards that they were astonished at the want of caution, the want of temper, and the arrogant and imperious tone he adopted on this occasion.' Disraeli himself made a speech, the third of the session, which produced a great effect. 'I could not silently,' he explained in his subsequent justification, 'obey the imperious mandate, and I warmly and passionately and quite unpremeditatedly expressed my feelings on the subject.' For a second time within a month, he told the House of Commons, they had been placed in a position which no one on either side could call other than degrading; for a second time they were asked to repeal a solemn decision. To rescind one vote in the session was, he really thought, enough; he did not think they ought to be called on to endure this degradation more than once a year. The Prime Minister should introduce some Parliamentary tariff for the regulation of their disapproval; he ought to tell them the bounds within which they were to enjoy their Parliamentary independence. His was not the most agreeable way of conducting the affairs of the country; it was not the most constitutional. He had a horror of slavery, but it seemed to extend to every place except the benches behind him. 'There the gang is still assembled, and there the thong of the whip still sounds.' At this gibe, Hobhouse tells us, 'there was a tremendous cheer, and Peel, Stanley, and Graham, sat in most painful silence and submission to the rebuke amidst the applause of many near and all opposite to them. I never saw them look so wretched.'[1]

The Prime Minister, Disraeli proceeded, deserved a better position in the eye of the country than one which he could only maintain by menacing his friends and dealing out threats to keep them to their allegiance.

[1] Broughton, VI., p. 118.

> The right hon. gentleman came into power upon the strength of our votes, but he relies for the permanence of his Ministry upon his political opponents. He may be right—he may even be to a certain degree successful in pursuing the line of conduct which he has adopted, menacing his friends and cringing to his opponents; but I for one am disposed to believe that in this case his success will neither tend to the honor of the House nor to his own credit. I therefore, for one, must be excused if I declare my determination to give my vote upon this occasion as I did on the former occasion, and . . . it only remains for me to declare, after the mysterious hint which fell from the right hon. baronet in the course of his speech, that if I, in common with other hon. members, am called upon to appear again upon the hustings, I shall at least not be ashamed to do so, nor shall I feel that I have weakened my claims upon the confidence of my constituents by not changing my vote within forty-eight hours at the menace of a Minister.

He sat down amid cheers that were loud and sustained, and till near the close of the debate it seemed almost certain that the Government would be beaten. But Lord Howick intervened from the front Opposition bench with a blundering free trade speech, and Stanley, seizing the opportunity with his customary readiness, appealed to Tory sentiment in an adroit party reply, and restored the fortunes of the day. The House rescinded its vote by a majority of twenty,[1] and the Government were saved. It was Stanley's last great appearance in debate in the House of Commons, for at the close of this session he was called to the Upper House by his own desire, and seven years before, in the order of nature, he succeeded to his father. Disraeli probably gave no more than a passing thought to his removal at the time, but it was none the less an event that a few years later was to prove decisive in its influence on his own political career.

[1] The figures were 253 to 233. Disraeli and his friends voted in the minority, even Cochrane, who had at first voted with the Government, now declaring that, as the question at issue had become the independence of the House, he could no longer support them. On the day after the division Queen Victoria wrote to her uncle, the King of the Belgians: 'We were really in the greatest possible danger of having a resignation of the Government without knowing to whom to turn, and this from the recklessness of a handful of foolish half "Puseyite," half "Young England" people' (*Letters of Queen Victoria*, ch. 13).

To Sarah Disraeli.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
July 9.

MY DEAREST SA,

I have been intending to write every day, but in the struggle of existence have daily postponed it. M. A. has, I think, written frequently; therefore when we meet you will have the map of our life tolerably fresh in your memory. . . .

At Bearwood we found all the Walters, his married daughter and her husband, the Ferrands, John Manners, Smythe, Cochrane. We came up on Monday by the 2 o'clock train from Twyford, the most beautiful day for sylvan scenery. And at night we went to the Waverley Ball, which would have been as fine a thing as possible had not the illusion been marred, or rather destroyed, by numerous gentlemen in black coats and white cravats, and among them Lord Wilton and some of the first dandies.

Ld. Castlereagh as a Bedouin chief was very accurate and undiscoverable; young Hogg as Lovell in *The Antiquary* bore the belt, I think, of the beaus, beyond Cantelupe as Cœur de Lion and Granby as Quintin [*sic*] Durward, not Quintin Dick, which it was reported he represented.

Smythe's book[1] was published on Saturday, but as yet its fate is undecided, though I think it will not rank among the stillborn.

In the course of the month I hope to see my way in many things, which look on the whole favorable.

Manchester has invited me to take the chair at their literary meeting, which delights M. A. much and is a *coup:* and the Buck[ingham]s to commemorate the majority of Chandos.

Thousand loves to all.

Your affectionate

D.

Before going to Manchester he had 'three fatiguing days of triumph' at Shrewsbury.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

SHREWSBURY,
Aug. 27.

Wherever I go, I hear of nothing but 'Mrs. Disraeli,' and why she did not come, and when she will come. When the railway is finished, then they count on seeing her very often. Among the shopkeepers, whom I wish most to please, your

[1] *Historic Fancies.*

name and memory are most lively and influential. 'Such a gay lady, sir! You never can have a dull moment, sir!'—and I tell them all that you are a perfect wife as well as a perfect companion, and that, separated from you for the first[1] time after five years, we are (alas! alas!) parted on our wedding day. The women shed tears, which indeed I can barely myself restrain. It is only half an hour to post, and I have come in pretty well, but very tired. A sort of amateur canvass to-day, calling on all the reputable and influential tradespeople, who seek no other reward for their good offices but such notice. It is understood, I find, that I am *the tradesmen's member*: so I don't trouble myself much about the pseudo-aristocracy and less about the real. The Lawrences, Groves, Taylors, Lees, are the men. They quite approve as to the attack on the Government, but a little alarmed in some quarters, I find, about Popery, monasteries, and John Manners. This I shall quietly soften down. . . . Our wedding feast must be on Thursday, but if I die for it I will write you some verses to-morrow.[2]

Wednesday [*Aug.* 28].

Yesterday at 8 o'clock to the Bull—a capital meeting. I made an admirable speech. Enthusiasm very great indeed, and all malcontents apparently silenced. Taylor the maltster in the chair. His speech proposing your health a miracle of rhetoric. He said being your husband was a very good reason why I was fit to be member for Shrewsbury. Indeed, the feeling for you here is beyond all imagination. Everybody enquires after you: high and low. Taylor's speech gave me a good opening about our first separation and the wedding day, which is now known all over Shrewsbury. The effect was very great. . . .

At 8 o'clock to-night a very great meeting at the Lion, some hundreds and reporters engaged. . . . The only thing that consoles me for our separation is my strong conviction that my presence here was absolutely necessary. What might have injured me, I have now turned to good account. The feeling of the people is genuine and may be depended on. They seem all of them quite to appreciate my start this year, both literary and political.

In his two speeches[3] on this occasion he passed in review his conduct in Parliament from the time of his previous

[1] He forgets the separation in the spring of 1842.

[2] In accordance with an annual custom.

[3] They are reported at length in the *Shropshire Conservative* for Aug. 31, 1844.

visit, immediately after which hostilities to the Government, as we have seen, had begun. The local Conservative paper had welcomed with an exultant shout of 'unqualified satisfaction' the speech on the sugar duties; and Disraeli's task of defending his present attitude towards the Government proved far easier than the task he had essayed at the time of his previous visit, of defending the support he had up to then given them. The two speeches have been freely quoted in the foregoing pages, but one passage, in which he proclaimed his disinterestedness and independence, must be added here:

I supported the Conservative party as long as they kept to their principles, and when they deserted those principles I voted against them. . . . I have always expressed my feelings with regret when I have differed from the party to which I am attached, but I would rather be nothing than be the mute registrar of the decrees of a Government. The situation of an independent representative is by no means an enviable one. If you sit on the benches behind the Ministers and speak in favor of the Ministers, you are sneered at, and it is said you want a place; and if you speak against the Ministers you are again sneered at, and it is said you have been refused a place. I can assure you, gentlemen, I am not frightened at these sneers and taunts; I never asked Sir Robert Peel for a place, and they pass me harmless. When such taunts are used by the Opposition I laugh at them, and consider them as the fair play of party . . . but let Sir Robert Peel, or any of his friends who are likely to know anything of the matter, say that I asked for a place, and I will undertake to give them an answer which shall be perfectly satisfactory.

How he reconciled the statement that he had never asked for a place with the correspondence of September, 1841, there will be a more fitting opportunity hereafter to consider; but desire for place excluded, there still remained the question of the motive for his exertions, and he faced it with his usual boldness:

There is no doubt, gentlemen, that all men who offer themselves as candidates for public favor have motives of some sort. I candidly acknowledge that I have, and I will tell you what they are: I love fame; I love public reputation; I love

to live in the eyes of the country ; and it is a glorious thing for a man to do who has had my difficulties to contend against.

A few months before he had written in a higher strain of 'that noble ambition which will not let a man be content unless his intellectual power is recognised by his race . . . the heroic feeling ; the feeling that in old days produced demigods ; without which no State is safe ; without which political institutions are meat without salt ; the Crown a bauble, the Church an establishment, Parliaments debating clubs, and Civilisation itself but a fitful and transient dream.'[1]

To Manchester the Disraelis were accompanied by Manners and Smythe, much to the annoyance of their fathers, the Duke of Rutland and Lord Strangford, who exchanged letters[2] on the subject. 'I lament,' wrote the Duke, 'the influence which Mr. Disraeli has acquired over several of the young British senators, and over your son and mine especially. I do not know Mr. Disraeli by sight, but I have respect only for his talents, which I think he sadly misuses.' Strangford had himself been on terms of intimacy with Disraeli, but he had now, it would appear, begun to harbour doubts as to his former friend's integrity. The doubts may have been engendered by the chagrin with which he watched his son following Disraeli into open opposition, when he hoped to see him repair the ruined fortunes of his house by the aid of Peel's favour. The dialogue between Lord Monmouth and Henry Coningsby has been already given. We seem in this dialogue to hear the authentic voices of the old political order which was passing away, and of that which Young England desired to see in its place, and incidentally we have a wholesome reminder of the realities of politics on which Young England, in its enthusiasm for its own romantic ideal, had boldly declared war, but of which Disraeli, we may be certain, though he could share the enthusiasm, never lost sight. However, on this occasion

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. V., ch. 1.
[2] *Lives of the Lord Strangfords*, by E. B. de Fonblanque, p. 224.

at least romanticism prevailed, and Smythe and Manners supported Disraeli at the Athenæum meeting. It was the culminating point in the glory of Young England. The meeting, Disraeli wrote,[1] was, he believed, 'the largest assemblage ever collected within four walls'; and the three friends made eloquent speeches, which were received with great enthusiasm, and republished in pamphlet form for the benefit of a wider audience. Disraeli's contained a sentence which his sister thought 'sublime,' and which he used afterwards to recall himself with a certain complacency:

> Knowledge is like the mystic ladder in the patriarch's dream: its base rests on the primeval earth, its crest is lost in the shadowy splendor of the empyrean; while the great authors who for traditionary ages have held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and erudition, are the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and heaven.

Disraeli appears to have stayed in the North for some time, and it was now, probably, that he made that study of the industrial districts of which we see the results in *Sybil*. We find him at Worsley Hall as the guest of Lord Francis Egerton, at Bingley, in the West Riding, as the guest of the Ferrands, and at Fryston as the guest of Monckton Milnes or his father. At Bingley the Ferrands were establishing a system of garden allotments for the benefit of industrial operatives, and endeavouring in other ways to bring classes together; and there Disraeli made a speech in which he tried to expound the aims of Young England, and insisted on class and party divisions as the crying evil of the time.

> We are asked sometimes what we want. We want in the first place to impress upon society that there is such a thing as duty. We don't do that in any spirit of conceit or arrogance; we don't pretend that we are better than others, but we are anxious to do our duty, and, if so, we think we have a right to call on others, whether rich or poor, to do theirs.

[1] To Lord Londonderry.

If that principle of duty had not been lost sight of for the last fifty years, you would never have heard of the classes into which England is divided. . . .

We want to put an end to that political and social exclusiveness which we believe to be the bane of this country. . . . We don't come out like a pack of pedants to tell you we are prepared to remedy every grievance by the square and rule. . . . It is not so much to the action of laws as to the influence of manners that we must look. . . . But how are manners to influence men if they are divided into classes—if the population of a country becomes a body of sections, a group of hostile garrisons? . . . We see but little hope for this country so long as that spirit of faction that has been so rampant of late years is fostered and encouraged. We call it a spirit of faction, for the principles on which the parties who nominally divide this country were originally formed have worn out and ceased to exist; and an association of men, however powerful, without political principles is not a party, but a faction. Of such a state of society the inevitable result is that public passions are excited for private ends, and popular improvement is lost sight of in particular aggrandisement.

At Fryston Disraeli met a young lawyer called Gathorne Hardy, who was to be in later days one of his closest political associates. Hardy has left on record his first impressions of his future chief, and they were not wholly favourable. Disraeli's conversation he found 'far from striking'; there was too much striving to be epigrammatic. His judgments of men were 'equally clever and just'; but his vanity and self-esteem prevented him from talking freely 'lest he should lose ground.'[1]

To Sarah Disraeli.

Jan. 20, 1845.

You have heard of our sudden expedition to Stowe, and its brilliant success; her Majesty, Peel, Aberdeen, and all equally distinguishing us by their courtesy. The whole scene sumptuous and a great success for the Duke. The Wednesday before I kept my engagement at Stationers' Hall, where I sat on the right hand of the master, and had to make a speech, which was rather ridiculous, as there were only thirty or forty citizens, grubbing like boys a table of delicacies; but I seemed

[1] *Memoir of Gathorne Hardy*, I., p. 53.

to please them, and all came up to be presented in turn to the great man. Most present were of the time of the first red sandstone, and before Mercury or Venus were created.

A letter of Mrs. Disraeli's had already conveyed to Bradenham an account of the party at Stowe:

We were for the first hour in the vestibule, like a flock of sheep, half lit up, and no seats or fire, only a little hot air and a great deal of cold wind; a marble floor. Fancy, dear, shivering Dizzy, and cross-looking Mary Anne, in black velvet, hanging sleeves looped up with knots of blue, and diamond buttons. Head-dress, blue velvet bows and diamonds. After a time we passed her Majesty and the Prince, the Duke and Duchess and the rest standing behind, the Duke giving our names exactly the same as an ordinary groom, and we making our curtseys and bows. About eleven, or soon after, her Majesty retired, and then all became joy and triumph to us. First Sir Robert Peel came to us, shaking hands most cordially, and remained talking for some time, then Lord Nugent, introducing his lady, Col. Anson, Sir James Graham, Lord and Lady de la Warr, Lord Aberdeen. The Duke almost embraced Dizzy, saying he was one of his oldest friends; and then he offered me his arm, taking me all through the gorgeous splendid scene, through the supper room and back again, down the middle and up again—all making way for us, the Queen and your delighted Mary Anne being the only ladies so distinguished. After this I retired to a sofa, with the Duchess, who told me that her Majesty had pointed Dizzy out, saying '*There's Mr. Disraeli.*' Do you call all this nothing? The kind Duchess asked me to luncheon the next day and to see the Queen's private apartments.

CHAPTER IX.

SYBIL.

1845.

Sybil; or, The Two Nations, appears to have been begun very soon after the publication of *Coningsby*. 'How are the two nations?' writes George Smythe in the summer of 1844, the two nations signifying the rich and the poor. With the condition of the rural poor Disraeli had become familiar in his long struggle over the Poor Law, and his visits to the North in the autumns of 1843 and 1844 had shown him the facts of life in the great industrial towns. The publication of the reports of the Children's Employment Commission, and the debates on the Factory Bill in the session of 1844, had fixed attention on the social problem; and as *Coningsby* treated of party, *Sybil* treated of the people and social conditions. The original design of *Coningsby* had been larger than was then executed.

The derivation and character of political parties; the condition of the people which had been the consequence of them: the duties of the Church as a main remedial agency in our present state, were the three principal topics which I intended to treat, but I found they were too vast for the space I had allotted to myself. These were all launched in *Coningsby;* but the origin and condition of political parties, the first portion of the theme, was the only one completely handled in that work.

Next year, in *Sybil*, I considered the condition of the people. . . . At that time the Chartist agitation was still fresh in the public memory, and its repetition was far from improbable. I had mentioned to my friend, the late Thomas Duncombe, and who was my friend before I entered the House of

Commons, something of what I was contemplating; and he offered and obtained for my perusal the whole of the correspondence of Feargus O'Connor, when conductor of the *Northern Star*, with the leaders and chief actors of the Chartist movement. I had visited and observed with care all the localities introduced;[1] and as an accurate and never exaggerated picture of a remarkable period in our domestic history, and of a popular organisation which in its extent and completeness has perhaps never been equalled, the pages of *Sybil* may, I venture to believe, be consulted with confidence.[2]

The new novel was published in May, a year after *Coningsby*.

To Sarah Disraeli.

May Day, 1845.

Sybil was finished yesterday; I thought it never would be; the printers were on my heels, and have been for the last month, but I don't think it can be published till the middle of the month.... I have never been through such a four months, and hope never again. What with the House of Commons, which was itself quite enough for a man, and writing 600 pages, I thought sometimes my head must turn. I have never had a day, until this, that I have felt, as it were, home for the holidays.

Sybil made its appearance with a dedication which has become famous:

I would inscribe this work to one whose noble spirit and gentle nature ever prompt her to sympathise with the suffering; to one whose sweet voice has often encouraged, and whose taste and judgment have ever guided, its pages; the most severe of critics, but a perfect Wife!

Among the odds and ends from Disraeli's pen preserved by his wife's pious care, there is a bundle of little notes which he wrote to her while he was composing *Coningsby* and *Sybil*: reports of his progress, inquiries after her

[1] In his preface to *Sybil* itself, Disraeli stated, with regard to his pictures of industrial life, that 'the descriptions generally were written from his own observation'; he said nothing of his great indebtedness to the reports of the Children's Commission, partly, no doubt, because those reports were very widely known, and still more, perhaps, because a confession that the novel was founded on a Blue Book would not have been alluring.

[2] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

health, invitations to a stroll, requests for a glass of wine or permission to smoke a cigar, and one calling her to a consultation—'I wish you would come up and talk a little over a point, if you are not particularly engaged'—which seems to show that his compliment to her taste and judgment was no mere pretence. What was certainly not pretence was his desire that the world should believe in her possession of these and all good qualities. Throughout their married life, when conversing with others, even on subjects beyond the range of her cultivation, he was in the habit, it is said, of bringing her tactfully in by references to her opinions or appeals to her critical judgment; and woe betide those who fell short in the respect which he himself gave and thought due to her pronouncements!

Sybil received from the critics more praise than even *Coningsby*, and ran through its three editions in the course of the summer. With the critics and with the elect it has remained a favourite ever since. It has been variously praised as 'the sincerest'[1] of Disraeli's novels, as 'the grandest and the most valuable'[2] and as the foremost in interest both to the student of social history and to the critic of English literature—to the one for its picture of social conditions, and to the other for 'the high comedy of its social and political intrigue.'[3] But it has never really enjoyed the popularity of *Coningsby*. *Sybil* suffers more from being a novel with a purpose, even though the purpose is so high and inspiring. Its real interest is possibly deeper, but it is an interest of classes and of situations, not the interest of personalities that was so piquant in *Coningsby*. When Disraeli is recalled as the creator of the political novel, it is usually *Coningsby*, not *Sybil*, that his readers have in mind.

Sybil, like *Coningsby*, has very little plot, but is a succession of scenes, as *Coningsby* of characters. We begin with a scene of admirable comedy in the golden

[1] Lord Morley. [2] Lord Iddesleigh, in his edition of the novel.
[3] H. D. Traill.

saloons of a sumptuous London club, obviously meant for Crockford's, on the eve of the Derby of 1837. The object from the first is to emphasise the contrast between the two nations—between riches and poverty, luxury and suffering; between gilded youth of the type of Alfred Mountchesney, whom we meet at the club, and who 'rather likes bad wine because one gets so bored with good,' and the miserable toilers whom we afterwards encounter. In the company of youthful patricians assembled at Crockford's to discuss the odds on the coming race, we make the acquaintance of Charles Egremont, the hero of the novel, a younger brother of the Earl of Marney and heir-presumptive to the title. An account of the Marney pedigree and of the origin of the family in the plundering of the Church by Henry VIII. leads to a long digression on 'the cause of civil and religious liberty,' the politics of the Venetian party, the careers of Shelburne and Pitt, who finally broke their power, and other phases of the recent political history of England which had not been presented in *Coningsby*. To all this we shall return. Then we have the famous scene 'in a palace in a garden,' the accession of Queen Victoria, which is adroitly made the occasion for the introduction of the real theme and purpose of the novel:

> In a sweet and thrilling voice, and with a composed mien which indicates rather the absorbing sense of august duty than an absence of emotion, THE QUEEN announces her accession to the throne of her ancestors, and her humble hope that divine Providence will guard over the fulfilment of her lofty trust.
>
> The prelates and captains and chief men of her realm then advance to the throne, and, kneeling before her, pledge their troth, and take the sacred oaths of allegiance and supremacy.
>
> Allegiance to one who rules over the land that a great Macedonian could not conquer; and over a continent of which even Columbus never dreamed: to the Queen of every sea, and of nations in every zone.
>
> It is not of these that I would speak; but of a nation nearer her footstool, and which at this moment looks to her with anxiety, with affection, perhaps with hope. Fair and serene,

she has the blood and beauty of the Saxon. Will it be her proud destiny at length to bear relief to suffering millions, and, with that soft hand which might inspire troubadours and guerdon knights, break the last links in the chain of Saxon thraldom?

In Charles Egremont and his brother Lord Marney we have the two contrasted types of aristocrat—the good and the bad. Marney was 'cynical, devoid of sentiment, arrogant, literal, hard. He had no imagination, had exhausted his slight native feeling; but he was acute, disputatious, and firm even to obstinacy. He believed he could pass through existence in adamantine armour, and always gave you in the business of life the idea of a man who was conscious you were trying to take him in, and rather respected you for it, but the working of whose cold, unkind eye defied you.' His character as a landlord was revealed by the condition of the rural town of Marney: a collection of ruined hovels arranged in narrow and crowded lanes, in which the agricultural labourers lived amid surroundings of indescribable squalor, till pestilence or famine released them from their misery. Their sufferings caused no qualms of conscience in Lord Marney.

> I wish the people were as well off in every part of the country as they are on my estate. They get here their eight shillings a-week, always at least seven, and every hand is at this moment in employ, except a parcel of scoundrels who prefer wood-stealing and poaching, and who would prefer wood-stealing and poaching if you gave them double the wages. The rate of wages is nothing; certainty is the thing; and every man at Marney may be sure of his seven shillings a week for at least nine months in the year; and for the other three, they can go to the House, and a very proper place for them; it is heated with hot air, and has every comfort. . . . The poor are well off, at least the agricultural poor, very well off indeed. Their incomes are certain, that is a great point, and they have no cares, no anxieties; they always have a resource, they always have the House. People without cares do not require so much food as those whose life entails anxieties.

Egremont, unlike his brother, had a generous spirit and a tender heart. By birth one of the happy few for

whom the world was then made, and by charm of disposition a favourite with all, he had spent an idle youth, and had barely withstood the efforts of his parents and society to spoil him; but a disappointment in love at the age of twenty-four had arrested him in his career of frivolity and pleasure, and though, after a period spent in travel and reflection, he had come back to his old life, it was with the difference that he was now conscious of wanting an object. By the contrivance of his mother, who happened to be a distinguished 'stateswoman,' he was returned to Parliament in 1837; but it was not there that he was to find the object he was seeking, but in a chance meeting with three strangers in the ruins of Marney Abbey. One of the strangers was Walter Gerard, who, as Egremont discovers, was an adherent of the old faith, and, though a leader of the people, had a refinement of spirit and a feeling for the past which we should look for in vain in the typical blatant demagogue or the utilitarian Radical. His sense of present-day wrongs did not hinder him from sympathising with the monks who were so foully driven from the beautiful abbey they had created:

> If the world but only knew what they had lost! . . . There were on an average in every shire at least twenty structures such as this was; in this great county double that number: establishments that were as vast and as magnificent and as beautiful as your Belvoirs and your Chatsworths, your Wentworths and your Stowes. Try to imagine the effect of thirty or forty Chatsworths in this county, the proprietors of which were never absent. You complain enough now of absentees. The monks were never non-resident. They expended their revenue among those whose labor had produced it. . . . They made the country beautiful, and the people proud of their country. . . .
>
> As long as the monks existed, the people, when aggrieved, had property on their side. And now 'tis all over, and travellers come and stare at these ruins, and think themselves very wise to moralise over time. They are the children of violence, not of time. It is war that created these ruins, civil war, of all our civil wars the most inhuman, for it was waged with the unresisting. The monasteries were taken by storm, they were sacked, gutted, battered with warlike instruments,

blown up with gunpowder; you may see the marks of the blast against the new tower here. Never was such a plunder. The whole face of the country for a century was that of a land recently invaded by a ruthless enemy; it was worse than the Norman Conquest; nor has England ever lost this character of ravage. I don't know whether the union workhouses will remove it. They are building something for the people at last. After an experiment of three centuries, your gaols being full, and your treadmills losing something of their virtue, you have given us a substitute for the monasteries.

The second of the three strangers was Stephen Morley, a socialist editor, eager, high-strung, and fanatical, who found so much to lament in the world in which he lived that he could spare no pang for the past; and the third was Gerard's daughter Sybil.

Sybil among Disraeli's heroines is like Eva in *Tancred* or Theodora in *Lothair*—rather, as has been well said,[1] 'the symbol of a great idea' or the embodiment of a great enthusiasm than a mere individual, or even the representative of a class. She stands for the people, for the nation of the poor, for pity of their sufferings, for their hopes of redemption. In an ordinary Chartist heroine there would have been some strident note of vulgarity or self-assertion to chill and estrange; but Sybil, like her father, is refined and ennobled by her devotion to the old faith, with its long historical memories, its poetry and romance, its spiritual mystery, its world-wide charity, and its soul-subduing power. Egremont first hears her singing, in tones of almost supernatural sweetness, the evening hymn to the Virgin from the Lady's Chapel of the abbey, and then sees her standing in a vacant and starlit arch in seraph-like beauty. From that moment Sybil Gerard is all the world to him. Haunted by the memory of her voice and appearance, he pursues her to Mowbray, a manufacturing town, where her father is a mill-manager; and there, living for a time under an assumed name, he finds, in conversation with Gerard, with Morley the socialist, and, above all, with Sybil herself, the mission

[1] By Dr. Brandes.

of his life—love of Sybil, and vindication of the wrongs of the poor; for the two things are one.

Close to Mowbray is a Gothic castle, the seat of Earl de Mowbray, formerly Lord Fitz-Warene, whose Norman name and pedigree are traced with bitter satire to his father, John Warren, a St. James's Street waiter, who had become an Indian nabob and been ennobled by Mr. Pitt. The present peer's mother was the daughter of an Irish Earl, and he himself had married the daughter of a ducal house, and now fully believed in the authenticity of his pedigree. His children had been 'christened by names which the ancient records of the Fitz-Warenes authorised,' and the memory of the waiter was completely obliterated.

Pomp and luxury reign in Mowbray Castle; in poignant contrast is the misery of the people outside its gates. The career of a Devilsdust, the exactions of the mill-owners Shuffle and Screw, and the picture of the sufferings of the hand-weaver Warner and his starving family, help us to realise the price which England has to pay for her manufacturing greatness. Accompanying Stephen Morley on a mission from Mowbray into some neighbouring mining districts, we are shown other phases of our industrial civilisation. We see a gang issuing from a mine:

> Bands of stalwart men, broad-chested and muscular, wet with toil, and black as the children of the tropics; troops of youth, alas! of both sexes, though neither their raiment nor their language indicates the difference; all are clad in male attire; and oaths that men might shudder at, issue from lips born to breathe words of sweetness. Yet these are to be, some are, the mothers of England! But can we wonder at the hideous coarseness of their language, when we remember the savage rudeness of their lives? Naked to the waist, an iron chain fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen hours a day, hauls and hurries tubs of coals up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous, and plashy; circumstances that seem to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. Those worthy gentlemen too appear to have been singularly

unconscious of the sufferings of the little trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ.

See, too, these emerge from the bowels of the earth! Infants of four and five years of age, many of them girls, pretty and still soft and timid; entrusted with the fulfilment of responsible duties, and the nature of which entails on them the necessity of being the earliest to enter the mines and the latest to leave it. Their labor indeed is not severe, for that would be impossible, but it is passed in darkness and in solitude. They endure that punishment which philosophical philanthropy has invented for the direst criminals, and which those criminals deem more terrible than the death for which it is substituted.

We are witnesses of a scene outside a truck-shop which is so harrowing as a picture of cruelty and oppression as to be almost unbearable. And then at the nadir of civilisation we find the squatters' town of Wodgate, with its natural aristocracy of master-workmen, who, though ruthless tyrants, are not unpopular with their vassals; its 'Bishop' at the apex, the leader of all in ruthlessness and skill; and its people without names, morality, or religion, or believing at the best 'in our Lord and Saviour Pontius Pilate, who was crucified to save our sins, and in Moses, Goliath, and the rest of the Apostles.' For this travesty of a creed, as for nearly all that is most startling in Disraeli's pictures of industrial life, there is literal warrant in the Blue Books of the time.

The scene shifts to London in the year 1839, the year of the Chartist petition and of Disraeli's speech thereon. Walter Gerard is a leader in the Chartist Convention, and Sybil is in London with him. In a round of visits to members of Parliament which is made the occasion for the portrayal of a number of amusing types, Gerard meets with Egremont, and discovers that the man whom he had previously known as Franklin, and believed to be a journalist, is an aristocrat, the brother of the tyrant Lord Marney, and presumably, therefore, an enemy of the people. Egremont, however, has been pondering on all that he learnt at Mowbray, and is now in ardent sympathy with the cause of the people—sympathy, that is to

say, with their deeper aspirations, combined with faith in the possibility of these aspirations being gradually realised; for he is under no illusion about the crude methods of the demagogues or the crude remedies put forward by the people themselves.

> The People are not strong [he says to Sybil]; the People never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only in their suffering and confusion. It is civilisation that has effected, that is effecting, this change. It is that increased knowledge of themselves that teaches the educated their social duties. There is a dayspring in the history of this nation, which perhaps those only who are on the mountain tops can as yet recognise. You deem you are in darkness, and I see a dawn. The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors, Sybil, as you persist in believing. Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts, are open to the responsibility of their position. But the work that is before them is no holiday-work. It is not the fever of superficial impulse that can remove the deep-fixed barriers of centuries of ignorance and crime. Enough that their sympathies are awakened; time and thought will bring the rest. They are the natural leaders of the People, Sybil; believe me they are the only ones.

Sybil, who at first is full of prejudice and suspicion in presence of the newly-discovered aristocrat, and thinks that the gulf between them is impassable, is gradually won over by Egremont's devotion. The awakening and progress of her love for him are treated with the delicacy which Disraeli has always at command in such a situation, and so that no breath of commonplace passion touches a figure so ethereally pure and spiritual in conception. It is Egremont's devotion to the cause she has at heart rather than to herself that awaken's Sybil's interest. The turning-point is his speech on the Chartist petition, in that debate in the House of Commons which had been otherwise so disappointing.

> Yes! there was one voice that had sounded in that proud Parliament, that, free from the slang of faction, had dared to express immortal truths: the voice of a noble, who, without being a demagogue, had upheld the popular cause; had pronounced his conviction that the rights of labor were as sacred

as those of property; that if a difference were to be established, the interests of the living wealth ought to be preferred; who had declared that the social happiness of the millions should be the first object of a statesman, and that, if this were not achieved, thrones and dominions, the pomp and power of courts and empires, were alike worthless.

When the Chartist crisis comes, Egremont is able to render great services to Sybil, as well as to her father, who has, however, to undergo a lengthy term of imprisonment. Though gratitude is now added to Sybil's other emotions, Egremont's suit still appears to be hopeless; but three years later he wins her consent, after rescuing her from imminent peril during a strike riot in Lancashire, in the course of which Gerard and Lord Marney are killed, and Mowbray Castle sacked and burnt. Egremont by his brother's death has become Earl of Marney; and quite needlessly, though in accordance with the Disraelian practice of piling fortune upon fortune, Sybil is now herself proved to be of noble blood, and the real inheritor of the great estates attached to Mowbray Castle. Before the curtain falls all our other friends are happily provided for; and even the tension of the general distress is relaxed, for, as the author slyly tells us, 'the great measures of Sir Robert Peel, which produced three good harvests, have entirely revived trade.'

Sybil has many faults. There are scenes of mere melodrama scattered through its pages; the dialogues of low life are often rather Cockney than genuine North-country, and even regarded as Cockney are not very happy; and the character of Morley, the socialist-editor, is a great and obvious failure. He is quite incoherent, at one moment a kindly and well-meaning theorist, at another a melodramatic villain. There is no character in the book so arresting as Sidonia in *Coningsby*, and Sidonia does not reappear. With his millions, his lack of sympathy, and his purely intellectual outlook, he would have been completely out of harmony with the spirit and motive of the novel. The part he played in *Coningsby* is filled by Sybil herself; and Sybil, though very winning,

is almost too impersonal and too purely ethereal to awaken the deepest interest.

But the defects of the book are far outweighed by its merits. If Sidonia is missing, our old friends Taper and Tadpole reappear, and delight us by their naïve and elementary plotting. It is, indeed, in the chapters of social and political satire that Disraeli here, as always, is found at his best. Nothing could excel the picture of the scramble for office after the Jamaica division of 1839, with the subsequent disappointment of the hopes of the intriguers by the Bedchamber crisis. Admirable, too, are the great political ladies who 'think they can govern the world by what they call their social influences.' There is first Lady St. Julians, who represents the famous Sarah, Countess of Jersey, and whose theory of political motives is so simple and so cynical.

> People get into Parliament to get on; their aims are indefinite. If they have indulged in hallucinations about place before they enter the House, they are soon freed from such distempered fancies; they find they have no more talent than other people, and if they had, they learn that power, patronage, and pay are reserved for us and our friends. Well then, like practical men, they look to some result, and they get it. They are asked out to dinner more than they would be; they move rigmarole resolutions at nonsensical public meetings; and they get invited with their women to assemblies at their leader's, where they see stars and blue ribbons, and above all, us, who, they little think, in appearing on such occasions, make the greatest conceivable sacrifice. . . . Ask them to a ball, and they will give you their votes; invite them to dinner, and, if necessary, they will rescind them; but cultivate them, remember their wives at assemblies, and call their daughters, if possible, by their right names; and they will not only change their principles or desert the party for you, but subscribe their fortunes, if necessary, and lay down their lives in your service.

Then there is the more attractive Marchioness of Deloraine, who is intended as a portrait of Disraeli's friend Frances Anne, Marchioness of Londonderry.[1]

[1] A copy of *Sybil* which he sent to Lady Londonderry led to the revival of a friendship which had been in abeyance since his marriage.

She had great knowledge of society, and some acquaintance with human nature, which she fancied she had fathomed to its centre; she piqued herself upon her tact, and indeed she was very quick, but she was so energetic that her art did not always conceal itself; very worldly, she was nevertheless not devoid of impulse; she was animated, and would have been extremely agreeable, if she had not restlessly aspired to wit; and would certainly have exercised much more influence in society, if she had not been so anxious to show it.

Thirdly there is Lady Firebrace, from whom nothing appeared to be concealed, either in the inmost mind of the Sovereign, the cabinets of the Whigs, or the clubs of the Tories.

'I would sooner meet any woman in London than Lady Firebrace,' said Mr. Berners; 'she makes me uneasy for the day; she contrives to convince me that the whole world are employed behind my back in abusing or ridiculing me.'

'It is her way,' said Egerton; 'she proves her zeal by showing you that you are odious. It is very successful with people of weak nerves. Scared at their general unpopularity, they seek refuge with the very person who at the same time assures them of their odium and alone believes it unjust. She rules that poor old goose, Lady Gramshawe, who feels that Lady Firebrace makes her life miserable, but is convinced that if she break with the torturer, she loses her only friend.'

Other characters in *Sybil* that live in the memory are Lady Firebrace's husband, Sir Vavasour, the baronet whose great aim in life is the vindication of the rights of his order until his zeal is quenched in the glory of a higher title; Baptist Hatton, the peerage lawyer, and his strangely contrasted brother, the Bishop of Hellhouse Yard; the Ladies Joan and Maud Fitz-Warene; Captain Grouse, the parasite, who was

a kind of aide-de-camp of the earl, killed birds and carved them, played billiards with him and lost, had, indeed, every accomplishment that could please woman or ease man, could sing, dance, draw, make artificial flies, break horses, exercise a supervision over stewards and bailiffs, and make everybody comfortable by taking everything on his own shoulders:

and finally the generic portrait of

those middle-aged nameless gentlemen of easy circumstances who haunt clubs, and dine a great deal at each other's houses and chambers; men who travel regularly a little and gossip regularly a great deal; who lead a sort of facile, slipshod existence, doing nothing, yet mightily interested in what others do; great critics of little things; profuse in minor luxuries, and inclined to the respectable practice of a decorous profligacy; peering through the window of a club-house as if they were discovering a planet; and usually much excited about things with which they have no concern, and personages who never heard of them.

Some of the humbler characters are perhaps less surely drawn than those in politics and society; though, in spite of his love of grandeur, Disraeli had a remarkable power of entering into the minds and feelings of the poor, and exhibits it in many of his pictures of low life in *Sybil*.

'I understand he is crotchety,' says Mr. Egerton of Mr. Charles Egremont. 'Well, that will not do for Peel. He does not like crotchety men,' Mr. Berners replies. This is one of several shots at the Minister which betray Disraeli's growing resentment. Elsewhere, in a bitter aside, he writes of 'the times in which we live . . . when there is no treason except voting against a Minister, who, though he may have changed all the policy which you have been elected to support, expects your vote and confidence all the same.' But most noteworthy of all is the Aristophanic outburst against the solemn humbug of politics, of which Peel was the incarnation, in the following dialogue between 'a gentleman of Downing Street' and Mr. Hoaxem:

'Well, Mr. Hoaxem,' said the gentleman in Downing Street, as that faithful functionary entered, 'there are some deputations I understand to-day. You must receive them, as I am going to Windsor. What are they?'

'There are only two, sir, of moment. The rest I could easily manage.'

'And these two?'

'In the first place, there is our friend Colonel Bosky, the members for the county of Calfshire, and a deputation of tenant farmers. . . .'

'Well, you knowwhat to say,' said the gentleman in Downing Street. 'Tell them generally, that they are quite mistaken; prove to them particularly that my only object has been to render protection more protective, by making it practical, and divesting it of the surplusage of odium; . . . and that as for the income-tax, they will be amply compensated for it, by their diminished cost of living through the agency of that very tariff of which they are so superficially complaining.'

'Their diminished cost of living!' said Mr. Hoaxem, a little confused. 'Would not that assurance, I humbly suggest, clash a little with my previous demonstration that we had arranged that no reduction of prices should take place?'

'Not at all; your previous demonstration is of course true, but at the same time you must impress upon them the necessity of general views to form an opinion of particular instances. As for example, a gentleman of five thousand pounds per annum pays to the income-tax, which by-the-bye always call property-tax, one hundred and fifty pounds a-year. Well, I have materially reduced the duties on eight hundred articles. The consumption of each of those articles by an establishment of five thousand pounds per annum cannot be less than one pound per article. The reduction of price cannot be less than a moiety; therefore a saving of four hundred per annum; which, placed against the deduction of the property-tax, leaves a clear increase of income of two hundred and fifty pounds per annum; by which you see that a property-tax, in fact, increases income.'

'I see,' said Mr. Hoaxem, with an admiring glance. 'And what am I to say to the deputation of the manufacturers of Mowbray, complaining of the great depression of trade, and the total want of remunerating profits?'

'You must say exactly the reverse,' said the gentleman in Downing Street. 'Show them how much I have done to promote the revival of trade. First of all, in making provisions cheaper; cutting off at one blow half the protection on corn, as, for example, at this moment under the old law the duty on foreign wheat would have been twenty-seven shillings a quarter; under the new law it is thirteen. To be sure, no wheat could come in at either price, but that does not alter the principle. Then, as to live cattle, show how I have entirely opened the trade with the Continent in live cattle. . . . . This cheapness of provisions will permit them to compete with the foreigner in all neutral markets, in time beat them in their own. It is a complete compensation, too, for the property-tax, which, impress upon them, is a great experiment and entirely for their interests. Ring the changes on great measures and great experiments till it is time to go down and

make a House. Your official duties, of course, must not be interfered with. They will take the hint. I have no doubt you will get through the business very well, Mr. Hoaxem, particularly if you be "frank and explicit"; that is the right line to take when you wish to conceal your own mind and to confuse the minds of others. Good morning!'

'That the author is a man of talent there can be no doubt,' said a reviewer of *Sybil*, 'and scarcely any that if he had deeper passions and a larger heart he would be a man of genius.' Disraeli's most conspicuous limitations as an artist are, indeed, a certain lack of emotional depth, of warmth in his sympathy and geniality in his laughter—all associated with a tendency to look at life too exclusively through the eyes of ambition. But these limitations are less visible in *Sybil* than in any other of his novels. For once he came near forgetting himself in the enthusiasm of occupation with his subject. 'The sincerest of his novels' is the verdict, already quoted, of one eminent critic. If the satire of the rich and powerful is unsparing, it is relieved by a sympathy with the poor and lowly, of which no one can fail to see the depth and sincerity. Nor, though the attack on the existing order, or, rather, the existing temper, in politics and society is more daring than in *Coningsby*, and the satire more pungent, is there any excess of gloom or bitterness in the book. The most lurid scenes in the panorama of industrial life are relieved by genuine touches of humour and pathos; and if we are shown the darkness, there is always light to make it visible. Against the mill-owners Shuffle and Screw there is to be set Mr. Trafford; against the tyrant Lord Marney there is to be set his brother Charles Egremont; against the Vicar, who was Lord Marney's model of a priest because 'he left everybody alone,' there is to be set Aubrey St. Lys. We see in fact, the manufacturers, the aristocracy, and the Church, all awaking to a sense of duty in the new generation.

'The author of *Sybil*,' says Lord Morley, 'seems to have apprehended the real magnitude, and even the nature, of the social crisis [brought about by the rapid

growth of an industrial population]. Mr. Disraeli's brooding imaginativeness of conception gave him a view of the extent of the social revolution as a whole which was wider, if it did not go deeper, than that of any other contemporary observer.'[1] To have rightly grasped the problem was no slight step towards finding a solution. Disraeli in practice was earnest in his purpose to seek and find a remedy for the ailment of which his diagnosis was so sure; but from the point of view of art it matters little that the remedy suggested in the novel is not very definite. Comprehension and cure, he tells us at the end, go hand in hand; 'it is the past alone that can explain the present, and it is youth that alone can mould the remedial future.' Whatever it be as social or political theory, the conception of the multitude being emancipated by the energy and devotion of our youth from their long yoke of bondage, and converted into a privileged and prosperous people, is in the true romantic manner. 'We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can no longer be synonymous. We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the future are represented by suffering millions, and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of posterity.'

[1] *Life of Cobden*, I., p. 297. Lord Morley proceeds: 'To accidents of his position in society and necessities of personal ambition, it must, I suppose, be attributed that one who conceived so truly the seriousness of the problem, should have brought nothing better to its solution than the childish bathos of Young England.' This sentence was written many years ago, and it is perhaps best regarded as an attempt, by a writer who had just been betrayed into needless generosity to a political opponent, to restore the political balance. No one knew better than Lord Morley himself that to have given a sincere and vivid picture of the social state of England was, even in the field of practice, a very great achievement; and whatever point there may be in the gibe at Young England, Lord Morley does not explain what Disraeli could have done either as novelist or statesman more than in fact he did. Before *Sybil* appeared Young England had practically ceased to exist, but Disraeli's exertions in the cause of social regeneration run through his subsequent life. Lord Morley in his book proceeds at once to show that Cobden's *laisser faire* solution, which it was his immediate business to exalt, left untouched the whole question of the relations between capital and labour, and that the Factory Acts and other social legislation which Cobden opposed were necessary to progress. This legislation Disraeli strenuously supported while he was only a private member; and when he finally came to power he put, as we shall see, the coping-stone on the edifice.

CHAPTER X.

THE TORY IDEA.

1844–1845.

Coningsby and *Sybil* are not only works of art, but the manifesto of Young England, and, as such, political documents. Woven into their texture there is a theory of English history and of modern English politics which is nowhere else in Disraeli's works so explicitly developed, though we have seen it in the *Vindication* in an embryonic form. As expounded in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, it bears some marks of a merely transient bias due to the esoteric influence of Young England; but in all essentials it represents Disraeli's permanent conception of what may be called the Tory Idea, and of the background of history in which he found that idea; and it is worth disengaging, as it lies at the root of all his convictions and conduct as a statesman.

Let us begin with the following passage from the concluding pages of *Sybil*:

> The written history of our country for the last ten reigns has been a mere phantasma, giving to the origin and consequence of public transactions a character and color in every respect dissimilar to their natural form and hue. In this mighty mystery all thoughts and things have assumed an aspect and title contrary to their real quality and style: Oligarchy has been called Liberty; an exclusive Priesthood has been christened a National Church; Sovereignty has been the title of something that has had no dominion, while absolute power has been wielded by those who profess themselves the servants of the People. In the selfish strife of factions, two great existences have been blotted out of the history of England, the Monarch and the Multitude; as the power of the

Crown has diminished, the privileges of the People have disappeared; till at length the sceptre has become a pageant, and its subject has degenerated again into a serf.[1]

The real story opens with an event anterior even to 'the last ten reigns,' the fall of the Papacy in England, and the simultaneous foundation of the modern English aristocracy.

It is in the plunder of the Church that we must seek for the primary cause of our political exclusion. . . . That unhallowed booty created a factitious aristocracy, ever fearful that they might be called upon to regorge their sacrilegious spoil. To prevent this, they took refuge in political religionism, and paltering with the disturbed consciences, or the pious fantasies, of a portion of the people, they organised them into religious sects. These became the unconscious Prætorians of their ill-gotten domains. At the head of these religionists, they have continued ever since to govern, or powerfully to influence, this country. They have in that time pulled down thrones and churches, changed dynasties, abrogated and remodelled parliaments; they have disfranchised Scotland, and confiscated Ireland. One may admire the vigor and consistency of the Whig party, and recognise in their career that unity of purpose that can only spring from a great principle; but the Whigs introduced sectarian religion, and sectarian religion led to political exclusion.[2]

In the pursuit of their policy of political religionism, the great families came into conflict with the Crown and the Church of England, which interposed to save the Catholics from Puritan persecution, but only brought upon themselves odium and mistrust. From one point of view, Charles I. may be regarded as the victim of 'the dark and relentless bigotry of Calvinism.' If 'he had hanged all the Catholic priests that Parliament petitioned him to execute, he would never have lost his crown.'[3] From another point of view, this 'virtuous and able monarch' laid down his life in the cause of the poor martyred

because, among other benefits projected for his people, he was of opinion that it was more for their advantage that the

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. VI. ch. 13. [2] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 1.
[3] *Ibid.*, Bk. III. ch. 5.

economic service of the state should be supplied by direct taxation levied by an individual known to all, than by indirect taxation, raised by an irresponsible and fluctuating assembly. But, thanks to parliamentary patriotism, the people of England were saved from ship-money, which money the wealthy paid, and only got in its stead the customs and excise, which the poor mainly supply. Rightly was King Charles surnamed the Martyr; for he was the holocaust of direct taxation. Never yet did man lay down his heroic life for so great a cause: the cause of the Church and the cause of the Poor.[1]

The great object of the Whig leaders from the first movement under Hampden was, in words quoted already, 'to establish in England a high aristocratic republic on the model of the Venetian, then the study and admiration of all speculative politicians.' 'We should have had the Venetian Republic in 1640, had it not been for the Puritans.'[2] Geneva on that occasion prevailed over Venice, but the turn of Venice came in 1688. The Revolution of that year has been much misunderstood. 'That the last of the Stuarts had any other object in his impolitic manœuvres than an impracticable scheme to blend the two Churches there is now authority to disbelieve'; nor is it credible 'that the English nation (at all times a religious and Catholic people, but who even in the days of the [illegible]re anti-papal) were in any danger [illegible] under the yoke of the Pope of [illegible]

If James II. had really attempted to re-establish popery in this country, the English people, who had no hand in his overthrow, would doubtless soon have stirred and secured their 'Catholic and Apostolic Church,' independent of any foreign dictation; the Church to which they still regularly profess their adherence; and, being a practical people, it is possible that they might have achieved their object and yet retained their native princes; under which circumstances we might have been saved from the triple blessings of Venetian politics, Dutch finance, and French wars.[3]

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. IV. ch. 1. [2] *Coningsby*, Bk. VII. ch. 4.
[3] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 3.

James's indiscretions gave, however, a colour to the pretext that the cause of civil and religious liberty, 'the cause for which Hampden had died in the field, and Russell on the scaffold,' was once more in danger; and under this pretext, but really 'alarmed at the prevalent impression that King James intended to insist on the restitution of the Church estates to their original purposes, to wit, the education of the people and the maintenance of the poor,' the great Whig families joined 'in calling over the Prince of Orange and a Dutch army, to vindicate those popular principles which, somehow or other, the people would never support.'[1] Religious liberty, when achieved, 'took the shape of a discipline which at once anathematised a great portion of the nation, and, virtually establishing Puritanism in Ireland, laid the foundation of those mischiefs which are now endangering the Empire.' Civil liberty took the shape of the Venetian constitution, though not without a struggle. William III., when he became King, did not prove a pliant instrument in the hands of the oligarchy.

He told the Whig leaders, 'I will not be a Doge.' He balanced parties; he baffled them as the Puritans baffled them fifty years before. The reign of Anne was a struggle between the Venetian and the English syste[illegible] great Whig nobles, Argyle and Somerset, wo[illegible] Council of Ten, forced their Sovereign [illegible] ministry. They accomplis[illegible] their object. T[illegible] ought in a new family on their own terms. George I. was a Doge; George II. was a Doge; they were what William III., a great man, would not be. George III. tried not to be a Doge, but it was impossible materially to resist the deeply-laid combination. He might get rid of the Whig magnificoes, but he could not rid himself of the Venetian constitution. And a Venetian constitution did govern England from the accession of the House of Hanover until 1832.[2]

The motive of 'the Dutch invasion of 1688' was on the side of the invaders wholly financial.

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 3. [2] *Coningsby*, Bk. V. ch. 2.

The Prince of Orange had found that the resources of Holland, however considerable, were inadequate to sustain him in his internecine rivalry with the great sovereign of France. In an authentic conversation which has descended to us, held by William at the Hague with one of the prime abettors of the invasion, the prince did not disguise his motives; he said, 'Nothing but such a constitution as you have in England can have the credit that is necessary to raise such sums as a great war requires.' The prince came, and used our constitution for his purpose: he introduced into England the system of Dutch finance. The principle of that system was to mortgage industry in order to protect property: abstractedly, nothing can be conceived more unjust; its practice in England has been equally injurious. . . . It has made debt a national habit; it has made credit the ruling power, not the exceptional auxiliary, of all transactions; it has introduced a loose, inexact, haphazard, and dishonest spirit in the conduct of both public and private life; a spirit dazzling and yet dastardly; reckless of consequences and yet shrinking from responsibility. And in the end, it has so overstimulated the energies of the population to maintain the material engagements of the state, and of society at large, that the moral condition of the people has been entirely lost sight of.[1]

To William we also owe the tradition of hostility to France which ranks with Venetian politics and Dutch finance as the third of the triple blessings conferred on us by the Revolution. Against these, 'in their happiest days, and with their happiest powers, struggled the three greatest of English statesmen — Bolingbroke, Shelburne, and, lastly, the son of Chatham.' Bolingbroke had been dealt with at length in the *Vindication*, but in a list of twenty English statesmen given in that tract neither Shelburne nor Pitt had even been mentioned. Shelburne, we are told in *Sybil*, is 'one of the suppressed characters of English history.' As early as 1842 Disraeli had discovered that he was 'the most remarkable man of his age,'[2] and he now introduces him as 'the ablest and most accomplished minister of the eighteenth century.' After endeavouring to establish a succession

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 3. [2] See p. 531.

of influence and ideas between Bolingbroke and Shelburne, through Carteret, whose daughter Shelburne had married, he proceeds:

Lord Shelburne, influenced probably by the example and the traditionary precepts of his eminent father-in-law, appears early to have held himself aloof from the patrician connexion, and entered public life as the follower of Bute in the first great effort of George III. to rescue the sovereignty from what Lord Chatham called 'the Great Revolution families.' He became in time a member of Lord Chatham's last administration; one of the strangest and most unsuccessful efforts to aid the grandson of George II. in his struggle for political emancipation. Lord Shelburne adopted from the first the Bolingbroke system; a real royalty, in lieu of the chief magistracy; a permanent alliance with France, instead of the whig scheme of viewing in that power the natural enemy of England; and, above all, a plan of commercial freedom, the germ of which may be found in the long-maligned negotiations of Utrecht, but which, in the instance of Lord Shelburne, were soon in time matured by all the economical science of Europe, in which he was a proficient.

Lord Shelburne seems to have been of a reserved and somewhat astute disposition: deep and adroit, he was however brave and firm. His knowledge was extensive and even profound. He was a great linguist; he pursued both literary and scientific investigations; his house was frequented by men of letters, especially those distinguished by their political abilities or economical attainments. He maintained the most extensive private correspondence of any public man of his time. The earliest and most authentic information reached him from all courts and quarters of Europe; and it was a common phrase, that the minister of the day sent to him often for the important information which the Cabinet could not itself command. Lord Shelburne was the first great minister who comprehended the rising importance of the middle class, and foresaw in its future power a bulwark for the throne against 'the Great Revolution families.' Of his qualities in council we have no record; there is reason to believe that his administrative ability was conspicuous; his speeches prove that, if not supreme, he was eminent, in the art of parliamentary disputation, while they show on all the questions discussed a richness and variety of information, with which the speeches of no statesman of that age except Mr. Burke can compare.[1]

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 3.

The place of Burke himself in Disraeli's historical scheme is explained in the following passage:

> The situation of the Venetian party in the wane of the eighteenth century had become extremely critical. . . . Whiggism was putrescent in the nostrils of the nation; we were probably on the eve of a bloodless yet important revolution; when Rockingham, a virtuous magnifico, alarmed and disgusted, resolved to revive something of the pristine purity and high-toned energy of the old whig connexion, appealed to his 'new generation' from a degenerate age, arrayed under his banner the generous youth of the whig families, and was fortunate to enlist in the service the supreme genius of Edmund Burke.
>
> Burke effected for the whigs what Bolingbroke in a preceding age had done for the tories: he restored the moral existence of the party. He taught them to recur to the ancient principles of their connexion, and suffused those principles with all the delusive splendor of his imagination. He raised the tone of their public discourse; he breathed a high spirit into their public acts.... He fought the whig fight with a two-edged weapon: he was a great writer; as an orator he was transcendent. In a dearth of that public talent for the possession of which the whigs have generally been distinguished, Burke came forward and established them alike in the parliament and the country. And what was his reward? No sooner had a young and dissolute noble, who, with some of the aspirations of a Cæsar, oftener realised the conduct of a Catiline, appeared on the stage, and, after some inglorious tergiversation, adopted their colors, than they transferred to him the command which had been won by wisdom and genius, vindicated by unrivalled knowledge, and adorned by accomplished eloquence. . . .
>
> Hard necessity made Mr. Burke submit to the yoke, but the humiliation could never be forgotten. Nemesis favours genius; the inevitable hour at length arrived. A voice like the Apocalypse sounded over England, and even echoed in all the courts of Europe. Burke poured forth the vials of his hoarded vengeance into the agitated heart of Christendom; he stimulated the panic of a world by the wild pictures of his inspired imagination; he dashed to the ground the rival who had robbed him of his hard-earned greatness; rent in twain the proud oligarchy that had dared to use and to insult him; and, followed with servility by the haughtiest and the most timid of its members, amid the frantic exultation of his country, he placed his heel upon the neck of the ancient serpent.[1]

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 3.

Lord Shelburne had been 'the man selected by George III. as his champion against the Venetian party after the termination of the American war.'

The prosecution of that war they had violently opposed, though it had originated in their own policy. First minister in the House of Lords, Shelburne entrusted the lead in the House of Commons to his Chancellor of the Exchequer, the youthful Pitt. The administration was brief, but it was not inglorious. It obtained peace, and, for the first time since the Revolution, introduced into modern debate the legitimate principles on which commerce should be conducted. It fell before the famous Coalition with which 'the Great Revolution families' commenced their fiercest and their last contention for the patrician government of royal England.

In the heat of that great strife, the king, in the second hazardous exercise of his prerogative, entrusted the perilous command to Pitt. Why Lord Shelburne on that occasion was set aside, will perhaps always remain a mysterious passage of our political history, nor have we space on the present occasion to attempt to penetrate its motives. Perhaps the monarch, with a sense of the rising sympathies of his people, was prescient of the magic power of youth in touching the heart of a nation. Yet it would not be an unprofitable speculation, if for a moment we pause to consider what might have been the consequences to our country if Mr. Pitt had been content for a season again to lead the Commons under Lord Shelburne, and to have secured for England the unrivalled knowledge and dexterity of that statesman in the conduct of our affairs during the confounding fortunes of the French revolution. Lord Shelburne was the only English minister competent to the place: he was the only public man who had the previous knowledge requisite to form accurate conclusions on such a conjuncture; his remaining speeches on the subject attest the amplitude of his knowledge and the accuracy of his views; and in the rout of Jena, or the agony of Austerlitz, one cannot refrain from picturing the shade of Shelburne haunting the Cabinet of Pitt, as the ghost of Canning is said occasionally to linger about the Speaker's chair, and smile sarcastically on the conscientious mediocrities who pilfered his hard-earned honors.[1]

During the happier years of Pitt's own career 'the influence of the mind of Shelburne may be traced throughout his policy.'

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 3.

It was Lansdowne House that made Pitt acquainted with Dr. Price, a dissenting minister, whom Lord Shelburne, when at the head of affairs, courageously offered to make his private secretary, and who furnished Mr. Pitt, among other important suggestions, with his original plan of the sinking fund. The commercial treaties of '87 were struck in the same mint, and are notable as the first effort made by the English government to emancipate the country from the restrictive policy which had been introduced by the 'glorious revolution'; memorable epoch, that presented England at the same time with a corn-law and a public debt. But on no subject was the magnetic influence of the descendant of Sir William Petty more decided than in the resolution of his pupil to curb the power of the patrician party by an infusion from the middle classes into the government of the country. Hence the origin of Mr. Pitt's famous and long-misconceived plans of parliamentary reform. Was he sincere, is often asked by those who neither seek to discover the causes, nor are capable of calculating the effects of public transactions. Sincere! Why, he was struggling for his existence! And when, baffled, first by the Venetian party, and afterwards by the panic of Jacobinism, he was forced to forego his direct purpose, he still endeavoured partially to effect it by a circuitous process. He created a plebeian aristocracy and blended it with the patrician oligarchy. He made peers of second-rate squires and fat graziers. He caught them in the alleys of Lombard Street, and clutched them from the counting-houses of Cornhill. When Mr. Pitt, in an age of Bank restriction, declared that every man with an estate of ten thousand a-year had a right to be a peer, he sounded the knell of 'the cause for which Hampden had died on the field, and Sydney on the scaffold.'

In ordinary times the pupil of Shelburne would have raised this country to a state of great material prosperity, and removed or avoided many of those anomalies which now perplex us; but he was not destined for ordinary times; and, though his capacity was vast and his spirit lofty, he had not that passionate and creative genius required by an age of revolution. The French outbreak was his evil dæmon: he had not the means of calculating its effect upon Europe. He had but a meagre knowledge himself of continental politics: he was assisted by an inefficient diplomacy. His mind was lost in a convulsion of which he neither could comprehend the causes nor calculate the consequences; and, forced to act, he acted not only violently, but in exact opposition to [? accordance with] the very system he was called into political existence to combat; he appealed to the fears, the prejudices, and the passions of a privileged class, revived the old policy of the

oligarchy he had extinguished, and plunged into all the ruinous excesses of French war and Dutch finance.[1]

From the death of the younger Pitt to 1825 'the political history of England is a history of great events and little men.'[2] Among the statesmen that have figured in England since the accession of the present family, 'we may doubt whether there be one, with the exception, perhaps, of the Duke of Newcastle, who would have been a worthy colleague of the council of Mr. Perceval, or the early cabinet of Lord Liverpool.' 'Assuredly the genius of Bolingbroke and the sagacity of Walpole would have recoiled from such men.'

This factious league had shuffled themselves into power by clinging to the skirts of a great minister, the last of Tory statesmen, but who, in the unparalleled and confounding emergencies of his latter years, had been forced, unfortunately for England, to relinquish Toryism. His successors inherited all his errors without the latent genius, which in him might have still rallied and extricated him from the consequences of his disasters. His successors did not merely inherit his errors; they exaggerated, they caricatured them. They rode into power on a spring-tide of all the rampant prejudices and rancorous passions of their time. From the King to the boor their policy was a mere pandering to public ignorance. Impudently usurping the name of that party of which nationality, and therefore universality, is the essence, these pseudo-Tories made Exclusion the principle of their political constitution, and Restriction the genius of their commercial code. . . .

The peace of Paris found the government of this country in the hands of a body of men of whom it is no exaggeration to say that they were ignorant of every principle of every branch of political science. So long as our domestic administration was confined merely to the raising of a reveune, they levied taxes with gross facility from the industry of a country too busy to criticise or complain. But when the excitement and distraction of war had ceased, and they were forced to survey the social elements that surrounded them, they seemed, for the first time, to have become conscious of their own incapacity. These men, indeed, were the mere children of routine. They prided themselves on being prac-

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 3. [2] *Ibid.*

tical men. In the language of this defunct school of statesmen, a practical man is a man who practises the blunders of his predecessors.

Now commenced that Condition-of-England Question of which our generation hears so much. During five-and-twenty years every influence that can develop the energies and resources of a nation had been acting with concentrated stimulation on the British Isles. National peril and national glory; the perpetual menace of invasion, the continual triumph of conquest; the most extensive foreign commerce that was ever conducted by a single nation; an illimitable currency; an internal trade supported by swarming millions, whom manufactures and inclosure-bills summoned into existence; above all, the supreme control obtained by man over mechanic power, these are some of the causes of that rapid advance of material civilisation in England, to which the annals of the world can afford no parallel. But there was no proportionate advance in our moral civilisation. In the hurry-skurry of *money-making, men-making, and machine-making, we had* altogether outgrown, not the spirit, but the organisation, of our institutions.

The peace came; the stimulating influences suddenly ceased; the people, in a novel and painful position, found themselves without guides. They went to the ministry; they asked to be guided; they asked to be governed. Commerce requested a code; trade required a currency; the unfranchised subject solicited his equal privilege; suffering labor clamored for its rights; a new race demanded education. What did the ministry do?

They fell into a panic. Having fulfilled during their lives the duties of administration, they were frightened because they were called upon, for the first time, to perform the functions of government. Like all weak men, they had recourse to what they called strong measures. They determined to put down the multitude. They thought they were imitating Mr. Pitt, because they mistook disorganisation for sedition.[1]

Presently, however, 'the Arch-Mediocrity who presided, rather than ruled, over this Cabinet of Mediocrities' began to realise the necessity of importing into his Ministry talents and knowledge in order to equip it for the task of government.

The Arch-Mediocrity had himself some glimmering traditions of political science. He was sprung from a laborious

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 1.

stock, had received some training, and though not a statesman, might be classed among those whom the Lord Keeper Williams used to call 'statemongers.' In a subordinate position his meagre diligence and his frigid method might not have been without value; but the qualities that he possessed were misplaced; nor can any character be conceived less invested with the happy properties of a leader. In the conduct of public affairs his disposition was exactly the reverse of that which is the characteristic of great men. He was peremptory in little questions, and great ones he left open.

In the natural course of events, in 1819 there ought to have been a change of government, and another party in the state should have entered into office; but the Whigs, though they counted in their ranks at that period an unusual number of men of great ability, and formed, indeed, a compact and spirited opposition, were unable to contend against the new adjustment of borough influence which had occurred during the war, and under the protracted administration by which that war had been conducted. New families had arisen on the Tory side that almost rivalled old Newcastle himself in their electioneering management; and it was evident that, unless some reconstruction of the House of Commons could be effected, the Whig party could never obtain a permanent hold of official power. Hence, from that period, the Whigs became Parliamentary Reformers.

It was inevitable, therefore, that the country should be governed by the same party; indispensable that the ministry should be renovated by new brains and blood. Accordingly, a Mediocrity, not without repugnance, was induced to withdraw, and the great name of Wellington supplied his place in council. . . . Another, and a very distinguished Mediocrity, who would not resign, was thrust out, and Mr. Peel became Secretary of State. . . . A short time after this, a third and most distinguished Mediocrity died; and Canning, whom they had twice worried out of the cabinet, where they had tolerated him some time in an obscure and ambiguous position, was recalled just in time from his impending banishment, installed in the first post in the Lower House, and intrusted with the seals of the Foreign Office. . . .

The accession of Mr. Canning to the cabinet, in a position, too, of surpassing influence, soon led to a further weeding of the Mediocrities, and, among other introductions, to the memorable entrance of Mr. Huskisson. In this wise did that cabinet, once notable only for the absence of all those qualities which authorise the possession of power, come to be generally esteemed as a body of men, who, for parliamentary eloquence, official practice, political information, sagacity in council, and

a due understanding of their epoch, were inferior to none that had directed the policy of the empire since the Revolution.

If we survey the tenor of the policy of the Liverpool Cabinet during the latter moiety of its continuance, we shall find its characteristic to be a partial recurrence to those frank principles of government which Mr. Pitt had revived during the latter part of the last century from precedents that had been set us, either in practice or in dogma, during its earlier period, by statesmen who then not only bore the title, but professed the opinions, of Tories. Exclusive principles in the constitution, and restrictive principles in commerce, have grown up together; and have really nothing in common with the ancient character of our political settlement, or the manners and customs of the English people. Confidence in the loyalty of the nation, testified by munificent grants of rights and franchises, and favor to an expansive system of traffic, were distinctive qualities of the English sovereignty, until the House of Commons usurped the better portion of its prerogatives. A widening of our electoral scheme, great facilities to commerce, and the rescue of our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects from the Puritanic yoke, from fetters which have been fastened on them by English Parliaments in spite of the protests and exertions of the English Sovereigns; these were the three great elements and fundamental truths of the real Pitt system.[1]

We must not, however, assume that the Liverpool Cabinet in the later stages of its career was guided by any desire to recur to the principles of historical Toryism.

That was not an epoch when statesmen cared to prosecute the investigation of principles. It was a period of happy and enlightened practice. A profounder policy is the offspring of a time like the present, when the original postulates of institutions are called in question. The Liverpool Cabinet unconsciously approximated to these opinions, because from careful experiment they were convinced of their beneficial tendency, and they thus bore an unintentional and impartial testimony to their truth. Like many men, who think they are inventors, they were only reproducing ancient wisdom.

But one must ever deplore that this ministry, with all their talents and generous ardor, did not advance to principles. It is always perilous to adopt expediency as a guide; but the choice may be sometimes imperative. These statesmen, however, took expediency for their director, when prin-

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. I.

ciple would have given them all that expediency ensured, and much more.

This ministry, strong in the confidence of the sovereign, the parliament, and the people, might, by the courageous promulgation of great historical truths, have gradually formed a public opinion, that would have permitted them to organise the Tory party on a broad, a permanent, and national basis. They might have nobly effected a complete settlement of Ireland, which a shattered section of this very cabinet was forced a few years after to do partially, and in an equivocating and equivocal manner. They might have concluded a satisfactory reconstruction of the third estate, without producing that convulsion with which, from its violent fabrication, our social system still vibrates. Lastly, they might have adjusted the rights and properties of our national industries in a manner which would have prevented that fierce and fatal rivalry that is now disturbing every hearth of the United Kingdom.

We may, therefore, visit on the *laches* of this ministry the introduction of that new principle and power into our constitution which ultimately may absorb all, AGITATION. This cabinet, then, with so much brilliancy on its surface, is the real parent of the Roman Catholic Association, the Political Unions, the Anti-Corn-Law League.[1]

The dispersion of 'this clever and showy Ministry' is a fine illustration of the singular influence of individual character—an influence that arises as often from the weakness of the character as from its strength.

One morning the Arch-Mediocrity himself died. At the first blush, it would seem that little difficulties could be experienced in finding his substitute. His long occupation of the post proved, at any rate, that the qualification was not excessive. But this cabinet, with its serene and blooming visage, had been all this time charged with fierce and emulous ambitions. They waited the signal, but they waited in grim repose. The death of the nominal leader, whose formal superiority, wounding no vanity, and offending no pride, secured in their councils equality among the able, was the tocsin of their anarchy. There existed in this cabinet two men, who were resolved immediately to be prime ministers; a third who was resolved eventually to be prime minister, but would at any rate occupy no ministerial post without the lead of a House of Parliament; and a fourth, who felt

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 1.

himself capable of being prime minister, but despaired of the revolution which could alone make him one; and who found an untimely end when that revolution had arrived.

Had Mr. Secretary Canning remained leader of the House of Commons under the Duke of Wellington, all that he would have gained by the death of Lord Liverpool was a master. Had the Duke of Wellington become Secretary of State under Mr. Canning he would have materially advanced his political position, not only by holding the seals of a high department in which he was calculated to excel, but by becoming leader of the House of Lords. But his Grace was induced by certain court intriguers to believe that the King would send for him, and he was also aware that Mr. Peel would no longer serve under any minister in the House of Commons. Under any circumstances it would have been impossible to keep the Liverpool Cabinet together.[1]

Disraeli's account of Peel's part in the intrigue against Canning has an interest of its own.

We have seen that at an early period of his career Mr. Peel withdrew from official life. His course had been one of unbroken prosperity; the hero of the University had become the favourite of the House of Commons. His retreat, therefore, was not prompted by chagrin. Nor need it have been suggested by a calculating ambition, for the ordinary course of events was fast bearing to him all to which man could aspire. One might rather suppose, that he had already gained sufficient experience, perhaps in his Irish Secretaryship, to make him pause in that career of superficial success which education and custom had hitherto chalked out for him, rather than the creative energies of his own mind. A thoughtful intellect may have already detected elements in our social system which required a finer observation, and a more unbroken study, than the gyves and trammels of office would permit. He may have discovered that the representation of the University, looked upon in those days as the blue ribbon of the House of Commons, was a sufficient fetter without unnecessarily adding to its restraint. He may have wished to reserve himself for a happier occasion, and a more progressive period. He may have felt the strong necessity of arresting himself in his rapid career of felicitous routine, to survey his position in calmness, and to comprehend the stirring age that was approaching. . . .

Adopting this view of the position of Mr. Peel, strengthened

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 1.

as it is by his early withdrawal for awhile from the direction of public affairs, it may not only be a charitable but a true estimate of the motives which influenced him in his conduct towards Mr. Canning, to conclude that he was not guided in that transaction by the disingenuous rivalry usually imputed to him. His statement in Parliament of the determining circumstances of his conduct, coupled with his subsequent and almost immediate policy, may perhaps always leave this a painful and ambiguous passage in his career; but in passing judgment on public men, it behoves us ever to take large and extended views of their conduct; and previous incidents will often satisfactorily explain subsequent events, which, without their illustrating aid, are involved in misapprehension or mystery.[1]

The struggle 'between the Duke of Wellington and "my dear Mr. Canning"' ended unexpectedly in the victory of Canning; but death soon removed him, and after the disappearance of his successor, Lord Goderich, 'the transient and embarrassed phantom,' as he is called in *Endymion*, the Duke's turn came.

The Duke of Wellington brought to the post of first minister immortal fame; a quality of success which would almost seem to include all others. His public knowledge was such as might be expected from one whose conduct already formed an important portion of the history of his country. He had a personal and intimate acquaintance with the sovereigns and chief statesmen of Europe, a kind of information in which English ministers have generally been deficient, but without which the management of our external affairs must at the best be haphazard. He possessed administrative talents of the highest order.

The tone of the age, the temper of the country, the great qualities and the high character of the minister, indicated a long and prosperous administration. The only individual in his Cabinet who, from a combination of circumstances rather than from any intellectual supremacy over his colleagues, was competent to be his rival, was content to be his successor. In his most aspiring moments, Mr. Peel, in all probability, aimed at no higher reach; and with youth and the leadership of the House of Commons, one has no reason to be surprised at his moderation. The conviction that the Duke's government would only cease with the termination of his public career

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 1.

was so general, that, the moment he was installed in office, the whigs smiled on him; political conciliation became the slang of the day, and the fusion of parties the babble of clubs and the tattle of boudoirs.

How comes it, then, that so great a man, in so great a position, should have so signally failed; should have broken up his government, wrecked his party, and so completely annihilated his political position, that, even with his historical reputation to sustain him, he can since only reappear in the councils of his sovereign in a subordinate, not to say equivocal, character?

With all those great qualities which will secure him a place in our history not perhaps inferior even to Marlborough, the Duke of Wellington has one deficiency which has been the stumbling-block of his civil career. Bishop Burnet, in speculating on the extraordinary influence of Lord Shaftesbury, and accounting how a statesman, so inconsistent in his conduct and so false to his confederates, should have so powerfully controlled his country, observes, 'HIS STRENGTH LAY IN HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLAND.'

Now that is exactly the kind of knowledge which the Duke of Wellington never possessed. . . . Throughout the brief but eccentric and tumultuous annals [of his administration] we see continual proof. . . . In twenty-four months we find an aristocracy estranged, without a people being conciliated; while on two several occasions, first, the prejudices, and then the pretensions of the middle class, were alike treated with contumely. . . . This administration, which commenced in arrogance, ended in panic. . . . The growl of reform was heard, but it was not very fierce. There was yet time to save himself. His grace precipitated a revolution which might have been delayed for half a century, and need never have occurred in so aggravated a form. He rather fled than retired. He commenced his ministry like Brennus, and finished it like the tall Gall sent to murder the rival of Sylla, but who dropped his weapon before the undaunted gaze of his intended victim.[1]

We now reach a period when the history begins to be politics—the politics in which Disraeli had himself been an actor. The revolution which followed the fall of the Duke of Wellington overthrew the aristocracy, but it did not emancipate either the Crown or the people. Disraeli judged the Reform Act in the light of his doctrine of the

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. I. ch. 3.

Three Estates of the Realm, on which, as we have seen, he had insisted in the *Vindication*.

In England, under the Normans, the Church and the Baronage were convoked, together with the estate of the Community, a term which then probably described the inferior holders of land, whose tenure was not immediate of the Crown. This Third Estate was so numerous that convenience suggested its appearance by representation; while the others, more limited, appeared, and still appear, personally. The Third Estate was reconstructed as circumstances developed themselves. It was a Reform of Parliament when the towns were summoned.

In treating the House of the Third Estate as the House of the People, and not as the House of a privileged class, the Ministry and Parliament of 1831 virtually conceded the principle of Universal Suffrage. In this point of view the ten-pound franchise was an arbitrary, irrational, and impolitic qualification. It had, indeed, the merit of simplicity, and so had the constitutions of Abbé Sieyès. But its immediate and inevitable result was Chartism.[1]

Bad, however, as was the principle on which the Reform Bill was founded, it was not so much the Bill itself, Sidonia remarks, as the means by which it was carried, that shook the aristocracy. For this result the blame must rest with the Duke of Wellington.

The future historian of the country will be perplexed to ascertain what was the distinct object which the Duke of Wellington proposed to himself in the political manœuvres of May, 1832. It was known that the passing of the Reform Bill was a condition absolute with the King; it was unquestionable, that the first general election under the new law must ignominiously expel the Anti-Reform Ministry from power; who would then resume their seats on the Opposition benches in both Houses with the loss not only of their boroughs, but of that reputation for political consistency, which might have been some compensation for the parliamentary influence of which they had been deprived. It is difficult to recognise in this premature effort of the Anti-Reform leader to thrust himself again into the conduct of public affairs, any indications of the prescient judgment which might have been expected from such a quarter. . . . Even temporary success could only

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. I. ch. 7.

have been secured by the utmost decision, promptness, and energy. These were all wanting: some were afraid to follow the bold example of their leader; many were disinclined. In eight-and-forty hours it was known there was a 'hitch.' The Reform party, who had been rather stupefied than appalled by the accepted mission of the Duke of Wellington, collected their scattered senses, and rallied their forces. The agitators harangued, the mobs hooted. The City of London, as if the King had again tried to seize the five members, appointed a permanent committee of the Common Council to watch the fortunes of the 'great national measure,' and to report daily. Brooks', which was the only place that at first was really frightened and talked of compromise, grew valiant again; while young Whig heroes jumped upon club-room tables, and delivered fiery invectives. Emboldened by these demonstrations, the House of Commons met in great force, and passed a vote which struck, without disguise, at all rival powers in the State; virtually announced its supremacy; revealed the forlorn position of the House of Lords under the new arrangement; and seemed to lay for ever the fluttering phantom of regal prerogative.[1]

When the Whigs had triumphed, there was a general conviction that, 'by a great stroke of state similar in magnitude and effect to that which in the preceding century had changed the dynasty,' they had secured to themselves the government for at least a generation. Yet before the new Parliament had existed two years, the Reform Ministry was upset and the Parliament dissolved. The fact is, 'the success of the Reform Ministry, on their first appeal to the new constituency which they had created, had been fatally complete.'

No government can be long secure without a formidable Opposition. It reduces their supporters to that tractable number which can be managed by the joint influences of fruition and of hope. It offers vengeance to the discontented, and distinction to the ambitious; and employs the energies of aspiring spirits, who otherwise may prove traitors in a division or assassins in a debate.

The general election of 1832 abrogated the Parliamentary Opposition of England, which had practically existed for more than a century and a half. And what a series of equiv-

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. I. ch. 7.

ocal transactions and mortifying adventures did the withdrawal of this salutary restraint entail on the party which then so loudly congratulated themselves and the country that they were at length relieved from its odious repression! In the hurry of existence one is apt too generally to pass over the political history of the times in which we ourselves live. The two years that followed the Reform of the House of Commons are full of instruction, on which a young man would do well to ponder. It is hardly possible that he could rise from the study of these annals without a confirmed disgust for political intrigue; a dazzling practice, apt at first to fascinate youth, for it appeals at once to our invention and our courage, but one which really should only be the resource of the second-rate. Great minds must trust to great truths and great talents for their rise, and nothing else.[1]

Disraeli, we may believe, was not oblivious of the opening which this grave admonition afforded to an enemy for pointed comments on his own career; but he had not the sort of self-consciousness that shrinks from such a trial. Elsewhere he traces 'all that insubordination, all those distempered ambitions, and all those dark intrigues' that finally broke up the Whig Government and the Whig party, to a deeper cause than the weakness of the Opposition, to 'the absence of individual influence and of the pervading authority of a commanding mind.' Lord Grey's supremacy was 'the supremacy of a tradition rather than of a fact,' and by the time that he retired his intended successor (Stanley) was no longer in the Whig ranks. And yet Disraeli adds, seizing the opportunity of making graceful reparation to Lord John Russell for the ruthless punishment inflicted on him by Runnymede, that the interval that elapsed between 1835 and 1837 proved that from the first there had been 'in the Whig army one entirely competent to the office of leading a great party, though his capacity for that fulfilment was too tardily recognised.'

Lord John Russell has that degree of imagination, which, though evinced rather in sentiment than expression, still enables him to generalise from the details of his reading and

[1] *Coningsby*. Bk. II. ch. I.

experience; and to take those comprehensive views, which however easily deprecated by ordinary men in an age of routine, are indispensable to a statesman in the conjunctures in which we live. He understands, therefore, his position; and he has the moral intrepidity which prompts him ever to dare that which his intellect assures him is politic. He is consequently, at the same time, sagacious and bold in counsel. As an administrator he is prompt and indefatigable. He is not a natural orator, and labours under physical deficiencies which even a Demosthenic impulse could scarcely overcome. But he is experienced in debate, quick in reply, fertile in resource, takes large views, and frequently compensates for a dry and hesitating manner by the expression of those noble truths that flash across the fancy, and rise spontaneously to the lip, of men of poetic temperament when addressing popular assemblies. If we add to this, a private life of dignified repute, the accidents of his birth and rank, which never can be severed from the man, the scion of a great historic family, *and born, as it were, to the hereditary service of the State*, it is difficult to ascertain at what period, or under what circumstances, the Whig party have ever possessed, or could obtain, a more efficient leader.[1]

We now come to Peel and the organisation of the Conservative party. On the very eve of their return to office in 1834, 'the Tory party, according to those perverted views of Toryism unhappily too long prevalent, was held to be literally defunct, except by a few old battered cronies of office, crouched round the embers of faction which they were fanning, and muttering "reaction" in mystic whispers.'

It cannot be supposed indeed for a moment, that the distinguished personage who had led that party in the House of Commons previously to the passing of the act of 1832, ever despaired in consequence of his own career. His then time of life, the perfection, almost the prime, of manhood; his parliamentary practice, doubly estimable in an inexperienced assembly; his political knowledge; his fair character and reputable position; his talents and tone as a public speaker, which he had always aimed to adapt to the habits and culture of that middle class from which it was concluded the benches of the new Parliament were mainly to be recruited,—all these were qualities the possession of which must have assured a

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. V. ch. 4.

mind not apt to be disturbed in its calculations by any intemperate heats, that with time and patience the game was yet for him.[1]

Peel had stood aloof from the Duke's impolitic manœuvres of 1832. It would seem, indeed, that from an early period he had 'meditated his emancipation from the political confederacy in which he was implicated, and that he had been continually baffled in this project.'

He broke loose from Lord Liverpool; he retired from Mr. Canning. Forced again into becoming the subordinate leader of the weakest government in parliamentary annals, he believed he had at length achieved his emancipation, when he declared to his late colleagues, after the overthrow of 1830, that he would never again accept a secondary position in office. But the Duke of Wellington was too old a tactician to lose so valuable an ally. So his Grace declared after the Reform Bill was passed, as its inevitable result, that thenceforth the Prime Minister must be a member of the House of Commons; and this aphorism, cited as usual by the Duke's parasites as demonstration of his supreme sagacity, was a graceful mode of resigning the pre-eminence which had been productive of such great party disasters. It is remarkable that the party who devised and passed the Reform Bill, and who, in consequence, governed the nation for ten years, never once had their Prime Minister in the House of Commons: but that does not signify; the Duke's maxim is still quoted, as an oracle almost equal in prescience to his famous query, 'How is the King's government to be carried on?'[2]

One result of the Duke's tactics was that Peel, who had escaped so often, was caught at last in 1834—the victim of 'short-sighted intriguers who persisted in looking upon a revolution as a mere party struggle, and would not permit the mind of the nation to work through the inevitable phases that awaited it.' 'Had Sir Robert Peel been in England in the autumn of 1834,' the Whig Government might probably never have been dismissed. The dismissal was a 'premature movement which necessarily led to the compact reorganisation of the Liberal party.' Peel probably never believed in the success of his

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 1. [2] *Ibid.*

administration, and 'its mere failure could occasion him little dissatisfaction; he was compensated for it by the noble opportunity afforded to him for the display of those great qualities, both moral and intellectual, which the swaddling clothes of a routine prosperity had long repressed.' But though his brief tenure of office 'elevated him in public opinion, and even in the eye of Europe,' the effect of the premature effort on his future position was far from being so satisfactory. If he had waited, he would have 'acceded to power as the representative of a creed, supported by earnest and enduring enthusiasm'; as it was, he came into office as the leader of a confederacy supported only by 'that churlish sufferance which was the result of a supposed balance of advantages in his favor.' He was forced before the time was ripe into attempting to form a great Conservative party on a comprehensive basis'; and that he did his work 'like a dexterous politician, who can deny?' But let us consider the performance with 'the impartiality of the future.'

The Tamworth Manifesto of 1834 was an attempt to construct a party without principles; its basis therefore was necessarily Latitudinarianism; and its inevitable consequence has been Political Infidelity.

At an epoch of political perplexity and social alarm, the confederation was convenient, and was calculated by aggregation to encourage the timid and confused. But when the perturbation was a little subsided, and men began to inquire why they were banded together, the difficulty of defining their purpose proved that the league, however respectable, was not a party. The leaders indeed might profit by their eminent position to obtain power for their individual gratification, but it was impossible to secure their followers that which, after all, must be the great recompense of a political party, the putting in practice of their opinions; for they had none. . . .

Conservatism was an attempt to carry on affairs by substituting the fulfilment of the duties of office for the performance of the functions of government; and to maintain this negative system by the mere influence of property, reputable private conduct, and what are called good connexions. Conservatism discards Prescription, shrinks from Principle, dis-

avows Progress; having rejected all respect for Antiquity, it offers no redress for the Present, and makes no preparation for the Future. It is obvious that for a time, under favourable circumstances, such a confederation might succeed; but it is equally clear, that on the arrival of one of those critical conjunctures that will periodically occur in all states, and which such an unimpassioned system is even calculated ultimately to create, all power of resistance will be wanting: the barren curse of political infidelity will paralyse all action; and the Conservative Constitution will be discovered to be a *Caput Mortuum*.[1]

The old Tory party had possessed definite principles and a definite tradition. It was

the party that resisted the ruinous mystification that metamorphosed direct taxation by the Crown into indirect taxation by the Commons; that denounced the system which mortgaged industry to protect property; the party that ruled Ireland by a scheme which reconciled both churches, and by a series of parliaments which counted among them lords and commons of both religions; that has maintained at all times the territorial constitution of England as the only basis and security for local government, and which nevertheless once laid on the table of the House of Commons a commercial tariff negociated at Utrecht, which is the most rational that was ever devised by statesmen; a party that has prevented the Church from being the salaried agent of the State, and has supported through many struggles the parochial polity of the country which secures to every labourer a home.[2]

But the Tory party had now ceased to exist, and its place had been taken by 'the great Conservative party,'

that for ten years in an age of revolution had never promulgated a principle; whose only intelligible and consistent policy seemed to be an attempt, very grateful of course to the feelings of an English Royalist, to revive Irish Puritanism; who when in power in 1835 had used that power only to evince their utter ignorance of Church principles; and who were at this moment [1840] in open insurrection against the prerogatives of the English Monarchy?[3]

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. II. ch. 5. [2] *Sybil*, Bk. IV. ch. 14.
[3] *Coningsby*, Bk. VIII. ch. 3.

The final result is that the Liberal revolution of 1832 and the Conservative reconstruction of 1834 have given us two parties: one 'the destructive party; a party with distinct and intelligible principles: they seek a specific for the evils of our social system in the general suffrage of the population'; the other the Conservative party, 'who, without any embarrassing promulgation of principles, wish to keep things as they find them as long as they can.'

Whenever public opinion, which this party never attempts to form, to educate, or to lead, falls into some violent perplexity, passion, or caprice, this party yields without a struggle to the impulse, and, when the storm has passed, attempts to obstruct and obviate the logical and, ultimately, the inevitable results of the very measures they have themselves originated, or to which they have consented.[1]

With regard to the first school, it was hard to have any faith 'in the remedial qualities of a government carried on by a neglected democracy, who, for three centuries, had received no education'; yet if democracy were combated only by conservatism, democracy must triumph, and at no distant date. The men who entered public life at this epoch had to choose between Political Infidelity and a Destructive Creed. That was the dilemma to which we had been brought by nearly two centuries of Parliamentary rule.

But Parliamentary rule would prove no more enduring than other forms of government.

'You will observe one curious trait,' said Sidonia to Coningsby, 'in the history of this country: the depository of power is always unpopular; all combine against it; it always falls. Power was deposited in the great Barons; the Church, using the King for its instrument, crushed the great Barons. Power was deposited in the Church; the King, bribing the Parliament, plundered the Church. Power was deposited in the King; the Parliament, using the People, beheaded the King, expelled the King, changed the King, and, finally, for a King substituted an administrative officer. For one hundred

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. VII. ch. 2.

and fifty years Power has been deposited in the Parliament, and for the last sixty or seventy years it has been becoming more and more unpopular. In 1830 it was endeavoured by a reconstruction to regain the popular affection; but, in truth, as the Parliament then only made itself more powerful, it has only become more odious. As we see that the Barons, the Church, the King, have in turn devoured each other, and that the Parliament, the last devourer, remains, it is impossible to resist the impression that this body also is doomed to be destroyed; and he is a sagacious statesman who may detect in what form and in what quarter the great consumer will arise.'[1]

Elsewhere we are given a clue to Disraeli's own theory of the identity of 'the great consumer.' 'If the peers have ceased to be magnificoes,' he remarks in his account of the overthrow of the House of Lords in 1832, 'may it not also happen that the Sovereign may cease to be a Doge? It is not impossible that the political movements of our time, which seem on the surface to have a tendency to democracy, may have in reality a monarchical bias.'[2] Sidonia himself, in a later conversation with Coningsby, is more confident and explicit:

> The tendency of advanced civilisation is in truth to pure Monarchy. Monarchy is indeed a government which requires a high degree of civilisation for its full development. It needs the support of free laws and manners, and of a widely-diffused intelligence. Political compromises are not to be tolerated except at periods of rude transition. An educated nation recoils from the imperfect vicariate of what is called a representative government. Your House of Commons, that has absorbed all other powers in the State, will in all probability fall more rapidly than it rose. Public opinion has a more direct, a more comprehensive, a more efficient organ for its utterance, than a body of men sectionally chosen. The Printing-press is a political element unknown to classic or feudal times. It absorbs in a great degree the duties of the Sovereign, the Priest, the Parliament; it controls, it educates, it discusses. That public opinion, when it acts, would appear in the form of one who has no class interests. In an enlightened age the Monarch on the throne, free from the vulgar prejudices and the corrupt interests of the subject, becomes again divine![3]

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. IV. ch. 13.
[2] *Ibid.*, Bk. I. ch. 7.
[3] *Ibid.*, Bk. V. ch. 8.

In a conversation with Oswald Millbank, Coningsby develops Sidonia's ideas:

'The only way [said Coningsby] to terminate what, in the language of the present day, is called Class Legislation, is not to entrust power to classes. You would find a locofoco majority as much addicted to Class Legislation as a factitious aristocracy. The only power that has no class sympathy is the Sovereign.'

'But suppose the case of an arbitrary Sovereign, what would be your check against him?'

'The same as against an arbitrary Parliament.'

'But a Parliament is responsible.'

'To whom?'

'To their constituent body.'

'Suppose it was to vote itself perpetual?'

'But public opinion would prevent that?'

'And is public opinion of less influence on an individual than on a body?'

'But public opinion may be indifferent. A nation may be misled, may be corrupt.'

'If the nation that elects the Parliament be corrupt, the elected body will resemble it. The nation that is corrupt deserves to fall. . . .'

'Do you then declare against Parliamentary government?'

'Far from it: I look upon political change as the greatest of evils, for it comprehends all. But if we have no faith in the permanence of the existing settlement, . . . I would accustom the public mind to the contemplation of an existing though torpid power in the constitution, capable of removing our social grievances, were we to transfer to it those prerogatives which the Parliament has gradually usurped, and used in a manner which has produced the present material and moral disorganisation. The House of Commons is the house of a few; the Sovereign is the sovereign of all. The proper leader of the people is the individual who sits upon the throne.'

'Then you abjure the Representative principle?'

'Why so? 'Representation is not necessarily, or even in a principal sense, Parliamentary. . . . Opinion is now supreme, and Opinion speaks in print. The representation of the Press is far more complete than the representation of Parliament. Parliamentary representation was the happy device of a ruder age, to which it was admirably adapted: an age of semi-civilisation, when there was a leading class in the community; but it exhibits many symptoms of desuetude. It is controlled by a system of representation more vigorous and comprehensive; which absorbs its duties and fulfils them more efficiently,

and in which discussion is pursued on fairer terms, and often with more depth and information.'[1]

Here, then, we have the suggestion of a new political ideal:

Let us propose to our consideration the idea of a free monarchy, established on fundamental laws, itself the apex of a vast pile of municipal and local government, ruling an educated people, represented by a free and intellectual press. Before such a royal authority, supported by such a national opinion, the sectional anomalies of our country would disappear. Under such a system, where qualification would not be parliamentary, but personal, even statesmen would be educated; we should have no more diplomatists who could not speak French, no more bishops ignorant of theology, no more generals-in-chief who never saw a field.[2]

There we have 'a polity adapted to our laws, our institutions, our feelings, our manners, our traditions; a polity capable of great ends and appealing to high sentiments; a polity which would render government an object of national affection.' There, also, we have the material of a programme and a creed for a rejuvenated Tory party.

In a parliamentary sense, that great party has ceased to exist; but I will believe that it still lives in the thought and sentiment and consecrated memory of the English nation. It has its origin in great principles and in noble instincts; it sympathises with the lowly, it looks up to the Most High; it can count its heroes and its martyrs; they have met in its behalf plunder, proscription, and death. Nor, when it finally yielded to the iron progress of oligarchical supremacy, was its catastrophe inglorious. Its genius was vindicated in golden sentences and with fervid arguments of impassioned logic by St. John; and breathed in the intrepid eloquence and patriot soul of William Wyndham. Even now it is not dead, but sleepeth; and, in an age of political materialism, of confused purposes and perplexed intelligence, that aspires only to wealth because it has faith in no other accomplishment, as men rifle cargoes on the verge of shipwreck, toryism will yet rise from the tomb over which Bolingbroke shed his last tear, to bring back strength to the Crown, liberty to the Subject, and to announce that power has only one duty: to secure the social welfare of the People.[3]

[1] *Coningsby*, Bk. VII. ch. 2. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Sybil*, Bk. IV. ch. 14.

We began with a passage from the last chapter of *Sybil*; let us end with another which immediately follows it, and brings the novel to a conclusion:

> It is nearly fourteen years ago, in the popular frenzy of a mean and selfish revolution which emancipated neither the Crown nor the People, that I first took the occasion to intimate, and then to develope, to the first assembly of my countrymen that I ever had the honor to address, these convictions. They have been misunderstood, as is ever for a season the fate of Truth, and they have obtained for their promulgator much misrepresentation, as must ever be the lot of those who will not follow the beaten track of a fallacious custom. But Time, that brings all things, has brought also to the mind of England some suspicion that the idols they have so long worshipped, and the oracles that have so long deluded them, are not the true ones. There is a whisper rising in this country that Loyalty is not a phrase, Faith not a delusion, and Popular Liberty something more diffusive and substantial than the profane exercise of the sacred rights of sovereignty by political classes.
>
> That we may live to see England once more possess a free Monarchy, and a privileged and prosperous People, is my prayer; that these great consequences can only be brought about by the energy and devotion of our Youth is my persuasion. We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can be no longer synonymous. We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the Future are represented by suffering millions; and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity.[1]

To disengage this theory of English history and English politics, and present it in consecutive form, is at once in some degree to criticise and appraise it. That the history contains an element of paradox is obvious enough; that it also contains a large measure of truth, originality, and insight, few competent historians would now care to deny. We are beginning to be emancipated from the tyranny of the Whig writers, and Disraeli startles us less than he startled the generation for which his views were first promulgated. One of his objects, indeed, was doubtless to produce a travesty of the rival Whig theory

[1] *Sybil*, Bk. VI. ch. 13.

that held the field, to show that it was perfectly possible to formulate another no less plausible and coherent, in appearance just as water-tight and floating just as securely. We have always in Disraeli's case to guard against the temptation of taking him too literally. An element of subtle irony is usually in his mind even—indeed, especially—when he is most grave and solemn. He likes to be oracular and to ignore the other side; but he is all the time, we may be certain, perfectly conscious of its existence. Toryism may not be the spirit of light, but it was something to show that it was just as easy so to present it as Macaulay found it easy so to present Whiggery; and for a generation which was inclined to be excessively self-complacent, and which was peculiarly in mental bondage to existing political fact, it was a salutary discipline to be reminded that the whole history of England might have been different and yet have ended happily, and that we might have been conducted by another and easier route to a similar, or possibly even to a better, end.

Disraeli had the speculative, *a priori* mind which finds pleasure in the exercise of fitting facts to theories; but in the region of politics and history this type of mind, as long as it is active, flexible, and receptive, is, if not more likely to arrive at truth, more likely to be illuminating than the other laborious type, often overpraised, which clings timidly to detail, and shrinks from independent and imaginative flight. That the facts in Disraeli's history are sometimes wrested to fit the theory there is no need to deny. The process is especially visible in his reconstruction of the history of the seventeenth century. His version of the quarrel between Charles I. and the Parliament is too fanciful to be quite serious, and we may believe that he was here consciously paying tribute to the historical caprices of Manners and Smythe. When we come to the eighteenth century, the elements of caprice in his picture of Bolingbroke, and in the exaltation of Shelburne as Pitt's tutelary genius, are more peculiarly his own. Between Shelburne and Disraeli

there is a certain affinity of character which perhaps helps to explain Disraeli's admiration. The words applied to Shelburne—'Deep and adroit, he was, however, brave and firm'—probably made the reader think of Disraeli himself, and the resemblance goes farther. Shelburne, like Disraeli, was far in advance of his time, and to us who know the issue appears to have been nearly always right in the controversies of that age; yet he inspired among his contemporaries dislike and distrust to a degree which we find it most difficult to explain. He seems not only, like Disraeli, to have been deficient in the faculty of winning the confidence of his fellows, but also, like Disraeli, to have had the unfortunate art of making himself distrusted more even than was justified by anything we can discern in his motives and conduct. At a point, indeed, the resemblance ceases. Shelburne's want of tact and skill in handling men made his career a comparative failure; Disraeli had even greater disadvantages to contend with, but overcame them all.

As we draw nearer to his own times, Disraeli's history gains in seriousness and value. His estimate of the younger Pitt shows real discernment and insight; though in an account of the two periods of Pitt's career which he gave in later life in a letter[1] to Sir William Harcourt the note of banter and exaggeration seems to become audible:

> I do not at all agree with you in your estimate of Pitt's career. It is the first half of it which I select as his title-deed to be looked upon as a Tory Minister—hostility to borough-mongering, economy, French alliance, and commercial treaties, borrowed from the admirable negotiations of Utrecht; the later half is pure Whiggism; close Parliaments, war with France, national debt and commercial restriction, all prompted and inspired by the arch-Whig trumpeter, Mr. Burke.

When we come to Pitt's successors, and especially to the period between the conclusion of the war and the passage of the Reform Act, Disraeli is illuminating and

[1] 1873. Quoted in Lord Rosebery's *Pitt*, p. 278.

suggestive, and most helpful to an understanding of subsequent English politics. He does not spare the Tory party of that generation, and he makes us realise how easily, with more breadth and statesmanship, they might have guided national progress on safe and conservative lines, and avoided the catastrophic developments which their blunders made inevitable; yet he effectively dispels the traditional Liberal prejudice, not yet extinct, that all before the Reform Act is a period of Cimmerian darkness, and all that follows light. After 1832 the hegemony of Peel begins, and we are in the disputable region of modern party politics. Disraeli's view of Peel is possibly nearer to that which posterity will adopt than to any that would gain general acceptance even in the present generation. Peel has been fortunate in the treatment he has received from both political parties. Nominally a great Conservative statesman, he has escaped severe criticism from the quarter whence criticism was most natural and necessary: really one of the chief apostles of modern Liberalism, he has been regarded, of course, by Liberals with sympathetic eyes. Peel, to adopt the language of Disraeli's later life,[1] found two parties—one 'exclusive and odious,' the other 'liberal and cosmopolitan,' neither of them national. When the power of the exclusive party had been shattered, it became his business to reconstruct it, and to make it once more a truly national organ of government; and for a time his labours seemed to be attended with great success. But he was labouring in the spirit of the mere opportunist who was guided by momentary expediency, and who had laid firm hold of no great principle as the distinctive possession of the party he was building up; and he ended, after espousing the principles of the enemy, by abandoning his task and deserting to the other side.

It is time to come to Disraeli's own conception of Toryism and of the Tory ideal. For him in the political cosmos there are two great realities—the Throne at the

[1] 1870. In the General Preface to the Novels.

centre, and the People at the circumference; and on the maintenance of their normal and unimpeded interaction the health and balance of all depends. 'The privileges of the multitude and the prerogatives of the Sovereign had grown up together, and together they had waned;' together also they were to be redeemed from the selfish oligarchy which had usurped them, and the not less selfish and only less narrow middle class which had now taken the place of the oligarchy. That, briefly stated, is the Disraelian position. There is no shrinking, as we can see, from democracy as such, though there is a shrinking from a sudden transference of power to a neglected and entirely uneducated democracy. There is, however, a clear perception of the rapid and almost inevitable drift towards democracy which had already begun, and to which Disraeli himself was to give so great an impetus. Since he wrote *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, the whole story of English politics has been the story of the gradual awakening of the multitude below, and of confused attempts to secure attention to their interests and recognition of their privileges. In that his prevision was right, as was also in one sense his prevision that by a parallel process there would come to the monarchy a revival of its prestige. Nothing is more marked than the steady growth of its popularity and indirect influence since the advent of democracy. Disraeli himself did much, when he acceded to power, to foster this growth; but if he had ever cherished the hope of a formal restoration of direct personal prerogative in the government of the kingdom and the empire, he made no serious attempt to give it fulfilment. He was a dreamer of dreams, but he had also the peculiarly hard grasp of fact to which only the imaginative dreamer can attain, and he saw the impossibility of any movement in that direction. Indeed, on Sidonia's principle that the depository of power in England is always unpopular, such a movement was not desirable, even in the best interests of the monarchy itself.

But if we substitute for the Sovereign the governing

executive which acts in his name and exercises his functions, then the forecast of political developments given in *Coningsby* has been verified to the letter. Parliament, as foreshadowed, has rapidly declined, and 'the great consumer,' if not the Crown, is its reflection, the Cabinet, to which Parliament transferred the power it had wrested from the Crown. In a sense, indeed, the Cabinet is the creature of the House of Commons, which can at any moment overthrow it; but only at the suicidal cost of putting an end to its own existence, and the Cabinet, while it is in being, has an independent life, and is more and more monopolising not only the executive power, but control of legislation and of the House of Commons itself. The House, in fact, is being crushed between the upper and nether millstones of the executive and the people. Coningsby's ideal of a Crown emancipated from serfdom to Parliament, placed at the apex of a vast pyramid of municipal and local institutions, and dispensing government to a people represented by a free press, seems in a certain perverted sense on the way to being realised; but as it approaches realisation it ceases to be an ideal. The supreme Government, instead of being a thing above party, is the very incarnation of the spirit of party; and so far from having reached a haven of rest, we are obviously in rapid movement to some new goal which is not discernible.

Disraeli's great merit as a political thinker is his ability to penetrate through names and appearances to the realities beneath, with the power he thereby gains of emancipating us from formula. Sometimes, indeed, he becomes, before he has finished, the slave of formula himself; and, like Matthew Arnold, he can repeat a phrase till he is persuaded that it is more than words, and has acquired some sovereign virtue of its own. There is a certain amount of mere formula in the politics of Young England, in its vague and shadowy programmes, and even in the statements of its aspirations and ideals. But the programmes and ideals of one generation are apt to

be consigned to the lumber-room of the next; and in Disraeli's exposition of the Tory idea it is not the letter, but the spirit, that is permanently valuable. From him the ethics of Toryism receives its best and deepest expression. 'The feudal system may have worn out, but its main principle—that the tenure of property should be the fulfilment of duty—is the essence of good government. The divine right of kings may have been a plea for feeble tyrants, but the divine right of government is the keystone of human progress, and without it governments sink into police, and a nation is degraded into a mob.'[1] In a passage such as that, which contains the kernel of Disraeli's teaching, we feel the sentiment that gives to Toryism its power over the imagination; and for lack of which Liberalism, in spite of its self-confident and triumphant advance, remains in comparison mechanical and uninspiring, invested in mediocrity, stamped with the seal of the commonplace, and profoundly unsatisfying to the deeper spirits of every age.

The following letter shows that Disraeli was at some pains to verify his theory of a chain of personal influence connecting Bolingbroke, Shelburne, and Pitt, 'the three greatest of English statesmen.'

From Lord Lansdowne.[2]

BOWOOD,
Jan. 29, [1845].

MY DEAR SIR,

I can have no hesitation in answering, as far as it is in my power, your enquiries relating to my father, and with the greater pleasure as I am already sensible of the justice you have already done to his views on public questions, and the favourable spirit in which you have referred to them.

My father did not marry Lord Granville's[3] daughter till after Lord Granville's death, and, though he had seen him, was too young to have lived in any habits of intercourse with him. He of course knew and heard a great deal about him,

[1] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

[2] The 3rd Marquis, 1780-1863. His father, Disraeli's Lord Shelburne, was the first.

[3] Carteret.

and considered him to have been acknowledged the person of his day of greatest talent for debate in the House of Lords, Lord Bolingbroke being incapacitated from sitting.

Then as to Mr. Pitt, my father, having been much connected with Lord Chatham during the last years of his life, knew him from his boyhood ; and I am sure he was a visitor at this place both before and after he came into Parliament, though long before my recollection.

You do not mention the precise object of the work in which, whatever it may be, I am glad to hear you are engaged ; but [if] there are any other points respecting which I could give you information, I shall feel happy to do so when I settle in town next month, where I could refer to my father's papers. . . .

I remain, dear sir,

Your very faithful servant,

LANSDOWNE.

CHAPTER XI.

DISRAELI AND PEEL.

1845–1846.

Coningsby and *Sybil* had sprung from Young England, and were, indeed, its most notable outcome; but by the time *Sybil* appeared Young England was no more, and Disraeli was winning a fame in comparison with which the greatest literary success is feeble in its resonance. The significance of Young England in the story of his political career has sometimes been overrated. It had supplied him with a motive for the systematic formulation of his political ideas, and led to the development of those ideas in a monarchical direction; and it had given him for the time something of the position of a leader, and for his life some cherished friends. But there was a good deal in the movement which he had taken over mechanically from his younger associates, and in which he never had his heart, and he did not let it deflect him even for the moment from the path of his ambition. Young England was, in fact, little more than a beautiful dream, and no dream could long detain a man like Disraeli from the world of reality.

In the session of 1844 he had won the ear of the House of Commons, but he had not yet succeeded in winning its confidence. His bad reputation clung to him persistently and impeded his progress. It clung to him all the more because, in subtle combination with high and serious qualities, the element of wayward fantasy in his character was still there, ever tending to renew the sus-

picions which it had helped to engender at the first. With all his self-complacency, he had too much sagacity to be under any illusion as to the real situation. He had now reached the age of forty, and the years as they had gone by had brought him success of a kind, but not the success he sought. He had compelled the House of Commons to listen to him, to laugh with him, and even to cheer him ; but it cared nothing for his ideas, and he was making no visible progress to the attainment of the power for which his ambition craved. The Ministers had driven him into opposition, and from them he had no longer anything to hope. His dream of a reconstructed Toryism was clearly past realisation, for Peel was now marching straight towards Manchester. The reputation of a brilliant speaker and the homage of a picturesque coterie were not enough to satisfy a man of his temper, yet of any higher reward there appeared to be little prospect.

But he had one supreme quality which neither Ministers nor the House of Commons, while noting his more obvious endowments and limitations, had yet learnt to appraise—the power of patient, unflagging, yet intense resolve. Everything comes at last, he wrote in *Sybil*, if men are firm and calm, and will such as his was certain in the end to carve a way to success. Will in his case was reinforced by a rare insight in discerning opportunity, and by a rare courage in seizing opportunity when it came. Thirty years later, in conversation with Lord Rowton, he cited in application to the present emergency the maxim of Cardinal de Retz : 'Il n'y a rien dans le monde qui n'ait son moment décisif ; et le chef d'œuvre de la bonne conduite est de connaître et de prendre ce moment.' Few could have seen that at the beginning of 1845 the decisive moment had come. The Government, which had been tottering in 1843, had survived all its troubles, and was now to all appearance stronger than ever. The country was again prosperous. Peel's reform of the tariff in 1842 had done something to revive

trade, the development of railways had done a great deal more, and a series of good harvests had done most of all. Disraeli told Lord Campbell, who came up to him in the lobby at the beginning of the session to ask his opinion of affairs, that he thought they were in the third year of the Walpole administration; and he said the same thing in a speech in the House itself a few weeks later. One seems, indeed, to feel something of his usual subtle irony lurking in the phrase; but he confided to his sister, in the letter in which he reported the conversation with Lord Campbell, that he did not see many signs of trouble before Peel. He at once, however, added the cautious reflection that the storms in Parliament, like squalls in the Mediterranean, rose in a moment.

Probably, indeed, with his strange gift of prescience, he saw clearly enough that the current on which the Government were floating must bear them to disaster. 'I have observed,' he had said in *Contarini Fleming*, 'that, after writing a book, my mind always makes a great spring;' and as he wrote *Coningsby* and *Sybil* his eyes had been opened to the realities of the situation. We have seen in *Sybil*, as compared with *Coningsby*, an increased distrust of Peel and an increased estrangement from his policy; and Disraeli no doubt realised that, with all its apparent strength, the Peel Ministry was a house built upon the sand. At all events, while it stood his path was barred, and he now determined to advance to the assault upon it alone, to strike openly and persistently, and extort by sheer aggression from a reluctant House of Commons the recognition which it had denied to his more persuasive methods; and having determined to strike, he characteristically chose to strike at the highest, at the First Minister himself.

After all that has preceded, it is hardly necessary to enlarge on the character and achievements of the statesman whom Disraeli now singled out for attack. When an appreciation of Sir Robert Peel at once judicial and discerning is sought by historians, it is to the man who

overthrew him that they most frequently turn. In the year after Peel's death Disraeli wrote what follows:

Nature had combined in Sir Robert Peel many admirable parts. In him a physical frame incapable of fatigue was united with an understanding equally vigorous and flexible. He was gifted with the faculty of method in the highest degree; and with great powers of application which were sustained by a prodigious memory; while he could communicate his acquisitions with clear and fluent elocution. . . .

Thus gifted and thus accomplished, Sir Robert Peel had a great deficiency; he was without imagination. Wanting imagination, he wanted prescience. No one was more sagacious when dealing with the circumstances before him; no one penetrated the present with more acuteness and accuracy. His judgment was faultless provided he had not to deal with the future. Thus it happened through his long career, that while he always was looked upon as the most prudent and safest of leaders, he ever, after a protracted display of admirable tactics, concluded his campaigns by surrendering at discretion. He was so adroit that he could prolong resistance even beyond its term, but so little foreseeing that often in the very triumph of his manœuvres he found himself in an untenable position. And so it came to pass that Roman Catholic emancipation, Parliamentary reform, and the abrogation of our commercial system, were all carried in haste or in passion and without conditions or mitigatory arrangements.

Sir Robert Peel had a peculiarity which is perhaps natural with men of very great talents who have not the creative faculty; he had a dangerous sympathy with the creations of others. Instead of being cold and wary, as was commonly supposed, he was impulsive, and even inclined to rashness. When he was ambiguous, unsatisfactory, reserved, tortuous, it was that he was perplexed, that he did not see his way, that the routine which he had admirably administered failed him, and that his own mind was not constructed to create a substitute for the custom which was crumbling away. Then he was ever on the lookout for new ideas, and when he embraced them he did so with eagerness, and often with precipitancy. . . . Although apparently wrapped up in himself and supposed to be egotistical, except in seasons of rare exaltedness, as in the years 1844-5, when he reeled under the favour of the Court, the homage of the Continent, and the servility of Parliament, he was really deficient in self-confidence. There was always some person representing some theory or system exercising an influence over his mind. In

his 'sallet-days' it was Mr. Horner or Sir Samuel Romilly; in later and more important periods it was the Duke of Wellington, the King of the French, Mr. Jones Lloyd—some others—and finally Mr. Cobden. . . .

The Roman Catholic Association, the Birmingham Union, the Manchester League, were all the legitimate offspring of Sir Robert Peel. No Minister ever diminished the power of government in this country so much as this eminent man. No one ever strained the constitution so much. He was the unconscious parent of political agitation. He literally forced the people out of doors to become statesmen, and the whole tendency of his policy was to render our institutions mere forms. In a word, no one with all his conservative language more advanced revolution. In an ordinary period he would have been a perfect Minister, but he was not a Minister for stormy times: he wanted depth, and passion, and resource for such an occasion.

Sir Robert Peel had a bad manner of which he was sensible; he was by nature very shy, but forced early in life into eminent positions, he had formed an artificial manner, haughtily stiff or exuberantly bland, of which, generally speaking, he could not divest himself. . . . Generally speaking he was never at his ease, and never very content except in the House of Commons. Even there he was not natural, though there the deficiency was compensated for by his unrivalled facility, which passed current with the vulgar eye for the precious quality for which it was substituted. He had obtained a complete control over his temper, which was by nature somewhat fiery. His disposition was good; there was nothing petty about him; he was very free from rancour; he was not only not vindictive, but partly by temperament, and still more perhaps by discipline, he was even magnanimous. For so very clever a man he was deficient in the knowledge of human nature. The prosperous routine of his youth was not favourable to the development of this faculty. It was never his lot to struggle; although forty years in Parliament, it is remarkable that Sir Robert Peel never represented a popular constituency or stood a contested election. As he advanced in life he was always absorbed in thought, and abstraction is not friendly to a perception of character, or to a fine appreciation of the circumstances of the hour. . . .

As an orator Sir Robert Peel had perhaps the most available talent that has ever been brought to bear in the House of Commons. . . . His statements were perspicuous, complete, and dignified; when he combated the objections or criticised the propositions of an opponent, he was adroit and acute; no speaker ever sustained a process of argumentation in a

public assembly more lucidly, and none as debaters have united in so conspicuous a degree prudence with promptness. In the higher efforts of oratory he was not successful. His vocabulary was ample and never mean; but it was neither rich nor rare. His speeches will afford no sentiment of surpassing grandeur or beauty that will linger in the ears of coming generations. He embalmed no great political truth in immortal words. His flights were ponderous; he soared with the wing of the vulture rather than the plume of the eagle; and his perorations, when most elaborate, were most unwieldy. In pathos he was quite deficient; when he attempted to touch the tender passions, it was painful. His face became distorted, like that of a woman who wants to cry but cannot succeed. Orators certainly should not shed tears, but there are moments when, as the Italians say, the voice should weep. The taste of Sir Robert Peel was highly cultivated, but it was not originally fine; he had no wit; but he had a keen sense of the ridiculous and an abundant vein of genuine humour. Notwithstanding his artificial reserve, he had a hearty and a merry laugh; and sometimes his mirth was uncontrollable. He was gifted with an admirable organ; perhaps the finest that has been heard in the House in our days, unless we except the thrilling tones of O'Connell. Sir Robert Peel also modulated his voice with great skill. His enunciation was very clear, though somewhat marred by provincialisms. His great deficiency was want of nature, which made him often appear even with a good cause more plausible than persuasive and more specious than convincing. . . .

One cannot say of Sir Robert Peel, notwithstanding his unrivalled powers of despatching affairs, that he was the greatest Minister that this country ever produced, because, twice placed at the helm, and on the second occasion with the Court and the Parliament equally devoted to him, he never could maintain himself in power. Nor, notwithstanding his consummate Parliamentary tactics, can he be described as the greatest party leader that ever flourished among us, for he contrived to destroy the most compact, powerful, and devoted party that ever followed a British statesman. Certainly, notwithstanding his great sway in debate, we cannot recognise him as our greatest orator, for in many of the supreme requisites of oratory he was singularly deficient. But what he really was, and what posterity will acknowledge him to have been, is the greatest Member of Parliament that ever lived.[1]

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 17.

In a stray fragment in Disraeli's hand written in the early forties, one finds grouped together under the legend 'Similarity of characters in different ages and countries,' and without other comment, the names Augustus, Pompeius, Peel. The underlying thought may not improbably have been that here were three men all in a sense mediocre, and with little of the eagle quality of the great men of action, yet all in the course of events constrained to play lofty parts. Augustus, heir to the achievements and political ideas of a man of supreme genius, established the most famous monarchy that the world has ever seen; while, coming into collision with the same man of genius, Pompey was a tragic failure. Peel's career, of course, is at a far lower pitch of dramatic intensity than that of either of the Romans, and the time has hardly come for any attempt at a final estimate of its value and significance. Though nearly two generations have elapsed since his death, his reputation is still involved in current political controversy, and he still suffers from the excessive praise, and in a less degree from the excessive blame, that fall to statesmen while they live. Perhaps he is best regarded as the typical statesman of a middle-class era, with all the excellences and limitations appropriate to the part. A dominant middle class having none of the proud confidence in its own character and ideals that gives to an aristocracy strength and persistence, and not resting like a democracy on the broad basis that endures, is always in a condition of unstable equilibrium, and is never able long to maintain itself in power. Without genius, without ideas, and without imagination, but with a strong business instinct and great practical talents, it aims rather at the establishment of honest and efficient administration than at achievements of creative statesmanship. And so it was with Peel. He was never sure of himself, and was always in a state of uneasy transition or of violent revolt against his own past. Mainly interested in finance and in practical measures of administration, he cared little for

the imperial ideas of generations that had preceded and were to follow his own. But, as Mr. Gladstone once remarked, he was the best man of business who was ever Prime Minister; and he was that not only by virtue of what Disraeli calls his 'unrivalled powers of despatching affairs,' but also by his possession of many of the higher moral qualities of the ideal man of business. There was, indeed, a good deal more of egoism and ambition in his character than has often been recognised, but he was incapable of any petty or ignoble self-seeking; and in point of industry, rectitude, and devotion to public duty, he set an example which has served permanently to raise the standard of English government. That is a better title to fame than the dubious distinction, which Disraeli assigned him, of having been the greatest Member of Parliament that ever lived.

His weakness as a statesman lay in his failure to understand the significance of a great historic party as an organ of government not easily to be created, not lightly to be destroyed. In his eager pursuit of mere measures he forgot what was more essential than even the greatest measure. He shattered the Conservative party, and not wholly, it would seem, in a spirit of inattention, but acting in some degree on a theory, which he appears to have borrowed from the Court, that party was an evil, and that he could govern better without it. His theory broke down, and he left parties in the state of confusion in which they long remained, and to which, among other evils, that most needless of our foreign adventures, the Crimean War, may not unreasonably be traced. It was to this neglect and disparagement of party connexion that, as we shall see, Disraeli steadily directed his assault in the struggle that now began.

Peel by his tactless arrogance had seemed to invite a declaration of war, and war, if he sought it, he was now to have with a vengeance. The campaign began with a skirmish in the first weeks of the session of 1845. In the course of the previous year the public had been much

excited over the famous affair of the opening of Mazzini's letters in the post under a Home Office warrant. On Graham, as Home Secretary, most of the obloquy descended, but as a matter of fact he was only technically responsible, having acted at the instance of the Foreign Secretary, Aberdeen; and though the particular occasion chosen for the exercise of an invidious but necessary power was singularly unfortunate,[1] neither of the Ministers had in theory exceeded his rights.

Secret committees of the Lords and Commons had investigated the matter, and reported in a sense favourable to the Government; but when Parliament reassembled, Disraeli's Radical friend, Duncombe, returned to the attack, and demanded a public investigation by a select committee. Lord Howick moved an amendment for an inquiry by a select committee into a new specific charge brought forward by Duncombe, that his own letters had been opened, and this amendment, which had first been suggested by Manners, was seconded by Disraeli. Having accepted the Government's defence on the foreign part of the question, he proceeded to his favourite pastime of mocking Graham and Peel:

> The noble lord at the head of the Foreign Office, accurate as he is in the discharge of his duties, is a man of generous impulses, and is much more likely to have erred on the side of leniency than any other. But, even if the noble lord had erred, who could have ventured to criticise his conduct with such a stake on the die? When that great master of analytical narrative the Secretary of State traced the other night the vast and precise consequences of the non-interception of the letter of Mr. Mazzini, all must have felt he offered a complete vindication under any circumstances of his colleague. The letter sent, the solitary colony in the Mediterranean in commotion, the invasion of Calabria by an expedition of twenty men without arms, Italy in insurrection, the Austrians crossing the Apennines, and the French crossing the Alps, and England, who the right hon. Secretary assures us could not have been a silent spectator in a general war—and all prevented by intercepting the letter of Mr. Mazzini. (Loud cheers

[1] The story, however, that it led to the execution of the brothers Bandiera by the Bourbon Government at Naples is now completely disproved.

and laughter.) Certainly, since the celebrated narrative of the *House that Jack Built* never was detail so consecutively precise.

He now came to Peel:

The right hon. gentleman will pardon me for observing it, but he displayed an unusual warmth. I am aware that it by no means follows that the right hon. gentleman felt it. The right hon. baronet has too great a mind, and fills too eminent a position, ever to lose his temper; but in a popular assembly it is sometimes expedient to enact the part of the choleric gentleman. The right hon. gentleman touched the red box with emotion. I know from old experience that when one first enters the House these exhibitions are rather alarming, and I believe that some of the younger members were much frightened, but I advised them not to be terrified. I told them that the right hon. baronet would not eat them up, would not even resign; the very worst thing he would do would be to tell them to rescind a vote. (Loud cheering and shouts of laughter.)

Having indulged in these sallies, he hastened to disclaim personal feeling against Graham. Of the Secretary of State he knew nothing but honour, and had experienced nothing but courtesy, a declaration which was received with laughter by the Opposition. When, with equal emphasis, he disclaimed hostility to the Government, he was similarly rewarded with an ironical cheer from Peel. In making the last disclaimer, Disraeli had contrived to sound, whether intentionally or not, the special note of the coming conflict. The First Minister, he said, was superior to all parties; he governed by pure reason, not by party. They were now in the third year of a Walpolian administration, and party feeling was extinct. This was not a question of confidence, and he therefore hoped that without offence he might give an independent vote. The motion was not brought forward in a hostile spirit, and as far as he was concerned was not supported in a hostile spirit.[1]

Peel was acutely sensitive to ridicule, and speaking

[1] *The Times*, Feb. 21, 1845.

on the following day he took up the insinuation that his warmth had been simulated:

> It is certainly very possible to manifest great vehemence of action, and yet not to be in a great passion. On the other hand, it is possible to be exceedingly cold, indifferent, and composed in your manner, and yet to cherish very acrimonious feelings. Notwithstanding the provocations of the hon. gentleman, I will not deal so harshly with him as he has dealt with me. He undertakes to assure the House that my vehemence was all pretended, and warmth all simulated. I on the contrary will do him entire justice; I do believe that his bitterness was not simulated, but that it was entirely sincere. The hon. gentleman has a perfect right to support a hostile motion . . . but let him not say that he does it in a friendly spirit.
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> 'Give me the avowed, the erect, the manly foe;
> Bold I can meet, perhaps may turn, the blow;
> But of all plagues, good Heaven, Thy wrath can send,
> Save, save, O save me, from the candid friend!' [1]

The retort was effective, but the quotation very unlucky. Peel's behaviour to Canning was still remembered by many on both sides of the House, and regarded as one of the doubtful passages of his life; and his use of Canning's well-known lines therefore gave Disraeli an opening. A week later Duncombe brought the subject of the opened letters before the House again, and Disraeli again supported him. He dwelt at length on the relations between Peel and his Conservative followers, accusing the Prime Minister of having introduced a system for preventing fair discussion on questions not of a party character. The system was established on two principles, or rather processes—innuendo and imputation; the insinuation of base motive and the allegation of factious conduct. He protested against it. The system was not founded in justice or fair-play; it was not founded upon a real understanding of the principles on which party connexion should exist. It was, in fact, a system of tyranny, and as degrading to those who exercised it as to those who endured it.

[1] Hansard, Feb 21, 1845.

He illustrated its working from the debates on the present grievance, and gradually, and as it were without premeditation, he led up to his real object, Peel's reply to his previous speech. Peel in this reply had complained of the inconvenience of having an unexpected blow aimed at your right flank while you were engaged with the enemy in front. Disraeli retorted that the enemy in front never wished to fight, and that, with a large party to support him, Peel was in a position in which he could afford to be indulgent.

There is another reason why he should not adopt this tone —he should not forget, after all, that a great many of his supporters were elected on the hustings under very different circumstances to those under which they sit here. (Loud cheers from the Opposition benches.) Really a little philosophical consideration from so great a statesman under such circumstances is the least we might expect. I admit that I for one was sent here by my constituents to sit on this side. He may object to me, although I think he has no great occasion to object that I am sometimes in a different lobby to himself; but I was sent to swell a Tory majority—to support a Tory Ministry. Whether a Tory Ministry exists or not I do not pretend to decide; but I am bound to believe that the Tory majority still remains, and therefore I do not think that it is the majority that should cross the House, but only the Ministry. (Loud cheers and much laughter.) I hope that the right hon. gentleman, on reflection, will take a more condescending and charitable view of our conduct than he has hitherto been pleased to do. I am sure myself I never misinterpret the conduct of the right hon. gentleman. I know there are some who think that he is looking out for new allies. I never believed anything of the kind. The position of the right hon. gentleman is clear and precise. I don't believe he is looking to any coalition, although many of my constituents do. The right hon. gentleman has only exactly to remain where he is. The right hon. gentleman caught the Whigs bathing, and walked away with their clothes. (Much cheering and great laughter.) He has left them in the full enjoyment of their liberal position, and he is himself a strict conservative of their garments. (Continued cheers and laughter.) I cannot conceive that the right hon. gentleman will ever desert his party; they seem never to desert him. There never was a man yet who had less need to find new friends. I therefore hope all these rumours will cease. I

look on the right hon. gentleman as a man who has tamed the shrew of Liberalism by her own tactics. He is the political Petruchio, who has outbid you all.

If we could only induce the right hon. gentleman, therefore, to take a larger and more liberal view of his Parliamentary position than he seems to adopt in moments too testy for so great a man to indulge in, he would spare us some imputations which I assure him are really painful. If the right hon. gentleman may find it sometimes convenient to reprove a supporter on his right flank, perhaps we deserve it—I for one am quite prepared to bow to the rod; but really, if the right hon. gentleman, instead of having recourse to obloquy, would only stick to quotation, he may rely on it it would be a safer weapon. It is one he always wields with the hand of a master; and when he does appeal to any authority, in prose or verse, he is sure to be successful, partly because he never quotes a passage that has not previously received the meed of Parliamentary approbation, and partly and principally because his quotations are so happy. The right hon. gentleman knows what the introduction of a great name does in debate—how important is its effect, and occasionally how electrical. He never refers to any author who is not great, and sometimes who is not loved—Canning, for example. That is a name never to be mentioned, I am sure, in the House of Commons without emotion. We all admire his genius. We all, at least most of us, deplore his untimely end; and we all sympathise with him in his fierce struggle with supreme prejudice and sublime mediocrity—with inveterate foes and with candid friends. (Loud cheering.) The right hon. gentleman may be sure that a quotation from such an authority will always tell. Some lines, for example, upon friendship, written by Mr. Canning, and quoted by the right hon. gentleman! The theme, the poet, the speaker—what a felicitous combination! (Loud and long-continued cheers.) Its effect in debate must be overwhelming; and I am sure, if it were addressed to me, all that would remain would be for me thus publicly to congratulate the right hon. gentleman, not only on his ready memory, but on his courageous conscience.[1]

In a contemporary publication[2] there is a description of Disraeli's Parliamentary manner which helps us to reconstruct the scene in the House of Commons during the delivery of this speech:

[1] *The Times*, March 1, 1845.
[2] *Fraser's Magazine*, Feb., 1847.

As an orator Mr. Disraeli cannot be pronounced highly eloquent. He never abandons himself to his theme, but always holds it in subjection to his purpose. In both voice and manner there is much monotony. He wants variety in action, gesture, expression, and elocution—always excepting when he breathes his sarcastic vein.... His whole manner as an orator is peculiar to himself. It would scarcely be tolerated in another; he seems so careless, supercilious, indifferent to the trouble of pleasing.... His action, where he has any, is ungraceful; nay, what is worse, it is studiously careless—even offensively so. With his supercilious expression of countenance, slightly dashed with pomposity, and a dilettante affectation, he stands with his hands on his hips, or his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, while there is a slight, very slight, gyratory movement of the upper part of his body, such as you will see ballroom exquisites adopt when they condescend to prattle a flirtation. And then, with voice low-toned and slightly drawling, without emphasis, except when *he strings himself up for his points*, *his words are not so* much delivered as that they flow from the mouth, as if it were really too much trouble for so clever, so intellectual—in a word, so literary a man to speak at all....

So much for his ordinary level speaking. When he makes his points, the case is totally different. Then his manner changes. He becomes more animated, though still less so than any other speaker of equal power over the House. You can then detect the nicest and most delicate inflexions in the tones of his voice; and they are managed, with exquisite art, to give effect to the irony or sarcasm of the moment.... In conveying an innuendo, an ironical sneer, or a suggestion of contempt, which courtesy forbids him to translate into words—in conveying such masked enmities by means of a glance, a shrug, an altered tone of voice, or a transient expression of face, he is unrivalled. Not only is the shaft envenomed, but it is aimed with deadly precision by a cool hand and a keen eye, with a courage fearless of retaliation. He will convulse the House by the action that helps his words, yet leave nothing for his victims to take hold of. He is a most dangerous antagonist in this respect, because so intangible. And all the while you are startled by his extreme coolness and impassibility.... You might suppose him wholly unconscious of the effect he is producing; for he never seems to laugh or to chuckle, however slightly, at his own hits. While all around him are convulsed with merriment or excitement at some of his finely-wrought sarcasms, he holds himself, seemingly, in total suspension, as though he had no existence for the ordinary feelings and passions of humanity; and the moment the

shouts and confusion have subsided, the same calm, low, monotonous, but yet distinct and searching voice, is heard still pouring forth his ideas, while he is preparing to launch another sarcasm, hissing hot, into the soul of his victim.

With the aid of this writer we can almost see Disraeli standing with pale face and impassive manner as he delivers his philippic ; hear the tone of every sentence as it falls from his lips ; and follow the emotions of his audience as it listens, now perplexed, now expectant, now hilarious. We have first the low, level speaking in no way remarkable that makes the preparation ; the gradual development of the theme of Peel's disregard of party, till it leads to the great strokes of the bathing and the shrew ; then, when the House has been wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, the sudden descent by the speaker, who is alone grave and unmoved, to the low level again ; the feigned humility of his readiness to bow to the rod, and the seeming compliment to Peel's mastery of quotation ; Peel nervous and expectant, the House still puzzled ; the stealthy approach to the position from which the spring is to be made ; the name which is the keyword dropped as if by accident—'Canning, for example' ; Peel visibly uncomfortable ; the House beginning to be excited ; the drawling allusion to Canning's fierce struggle with 'sublime mediocrity'—perhaps aimed at Peel, though all are still doubtful—and 'with—candid friends'—when the pause, the inflexion of the speaker's voice, and the direction of his glance, convert doubt into certainty ; and then the culminating blow, 'Some lines upon friendship written by Mr. Canning, and quoted by the right honourable gentleman !' and, where a lesser artist would have spoilt all by some crudity of comment, only the restrained but mordant words : 'The theme, the poet, the speaker—what a felicitous combination !'

The effect of the speech on the House was stupendous. 'It would have made you cry with delight,' wrote George Smythe to Mrs. Disraeli, 'to have heard the thunders of

cheering'; and the excitement at the close was so great that it was some time before Graham, who rose to follow, could make himself heard. When he was able to proceed, he professed to rejoice that the time was now come when they were to have from the member for Shrewsbury open and avowed rebellion instead of covert mutiny. Peel spoke later, and hoped that Disraeli, 'having discharged himself of the accumulated virus of the last week,' now felt more at ease. He would not condescend to reciprocate personalities. The hon. member must have been aware in 1841 of his relations with Mr. Canning, and ought not to have waited for a quotation from a poem before withdrawing his confidence; and so forth in the same vein.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
Half-past six [*Monday, March* 3].

MY DEAREST SA,

I much regretted I could not get out on Saturday to send you a line from myself as to the great scene in the Commons the night before, from which that respectable assembly has not yet recovered. There never was an instance of a trip being succeeded by such a leap; and the only thing I have now which can give you an idea of it is a sketch by Horace Walpole of a sudden ebullition by the elder Pitt in a drowsy House. As for P[eel], he was stunned and stupefied, lost his head, and, vacillating between silence and spleen, spoke much and weakly. Never was a greater failure! Assuring me that I had not hurt his feelings, that he would never reciprocate personalities again, having no venom—The bell!

D.

His sister had already sent to Mrs. Disraeli her account of the joy and excitement at Bradenham; of the old blind father's delight with the 'bathing,' the 'taming of the shrew,' and 'the tremendous closing personality'; and of his sitting by her murmuring, 'The theme, the poet, the speaker!' ceaselessly as she wrote.

About a fortnight later Disraeli advanced to the attack again. Amid the general prosperity of the country, the

agricultural interest alone was still in a state of depression. Wheat, which in 1843 had been over sixty shillings, was now down to forty-five, and Cobden, who had never based his case for the repeal of the Corn Laws on an expectation of low prices, thought he saw his opportunity. He had once condemned Peel for proposing to lower prices by his simplification of the tariff, 'instead of aiming to maintain them by enlarging the circle of exchange'; and he now moved for an inquiry into the effect of the Corn Laws on agriculture, and made a highly successful speech on similar lines of argument. Peel, who had already been almost completely mastered by Cobden's *a priori* theory, listened, it is said, with ever lengthening face, till, crumpling up the notes he had been taking for a reply, he turned to Sidney Herbert, who sat next him on the bench, and said: 'You must answer this, for I cannot.'[1] Herbert obeyed, and in the course of his answer made the unlucky remark that it was 'distasteful to the agriculturists to come whining to Parliament at every period of temporary distress.' But Cobden's motion was defeated, Disraeli voting with the Government.

A few days later, however, the question was reopened by a county member with a motion that in the disposal of the surplus due regard should be paid to the necessity of affording relief to the agricultural interest, and Disraeli supported him. Peel, having failed to secure any of the commercial treaties of which he had held out hopes in 1842, had now abandoned reciprocity, and was engaged in a second revision of the general tariff, which represented a great concession to the Manchester theory and a great advance towards the system which in the modern phrase is called 'insular free trade.' While the opinions of the Ministers had been in a state of flux, Disraeli had not changed his standpoint; he still clung to the central position from which he could see all around him, and he was as little moved by the abstract reasoning of Cobden and his friends on the one side as by the narrow selfishness

[1] Morley's *Cobden*, I., p. 318.

of the bigoted protectionists on the other. Lord John Russell in the present debate had just made a speech in the high *a priori* vein. Disraeli reminded him that protection was an expedient, not a principle, and that the question was therefore not to be settled by quotations of abstract dogmas. Alluding to Cobden's speech of a few days before, he said it was a speech not easily to be forgotten by anyone who heard it; but the real problem was, Would they have protection, or would they have, not free trade, for that was not the alternative, but a system of free imports? Cobden had convinced himself that if we dispensed with protection the rest of the world would speedily follow our lead; and Disraeli thus placed his finger precisely on the spot where Cobden's theories broke down.

Coming to the immediate question, he recalled the debate and division on a similar resolution moved in 1836 in a Whig House of Commons by his friend Lord Chandos; reminded several Ministers of their votes on that occasion; and with an allusion to the complaints made by his agricultural friends of the present conduct of the Prime Minister, and an ironical declaration that these complaints were unreasonable, he reached his peroration:

> There is no doubt a difference in the right hon. gentleman's demeanour as leader of the Opposition and as Minister of the Crown. But that's the old story; you must not contrast too strongly the hours of courtship with the years of possession. 'Tis very true that the right hon. gentleman's conduct is different. I remember him making his protection speeches. They were the best speeches I ever heard. It was a great thing to hear the right hon. gentleman say: 'I would rather be the leader of the gentlemen of England than possess the confidence of Sovereigns.' That was a grand thing. We don't hear much of 'the gentlemen of England' now. (Great cheering.) But what of that? They have the pleasures of memory—the charms of reminiscence. They were his first love, and, though he may not kneel to them now as in the hour of passion, still they can recall the past; and nothing is more useless or unwise than these scenes of crimination and reproach, for we know that in all these cases, when the beloved object has ceased to charm, it is in vain to appeal to the

feelings. (Great laughter.) You know that this is true. Every man almost has gone through it. My hon. friends reproach the right hon. gentleman. The right hon. gentleman does what he can to keep them quiet; he sometimes takes refuge in arrogant silence, and sometimes he treats them with haughty frigidity; and if they knew anything of human nature they would take the hint and shut their mouths. But they won't. And what then happens? What happens under all such circumstances? The right hon. gentleman, being compelled to interfere, sends down his valet, who says in the genteelest manner: 'We can have no whining here.' And that, sir, is exactly the case of the great agricultural interest —that beauty which everybody wooed and one deluded. There is a fatality in such charms, and we now seem to approach the catastrophe of her career. Protection appears to be in about the same condition that Protestantism was in in 1828. The country will draw its moral. For my part, if we are to have free trade, I, who honour genius, prefer that such measures should be proposed by the hon. member for Stockport than by one who through skilful Parliamentary manœuvres has tampered with the generous confidence of a great people and a great party. For myself, I care not what may be the result. Dissolve, if you please, the Parliament you have betrayed, and appeal to the people, who, I believe, mistrust you. For me there remains this at least—the opportunity of expressing thus publicly my belief that a Conservative Government is an organised hypocrisy.[1]

'No report,' says a contemporary journalist, writing of this speech, 'can give an idea of the effect produced in the House of Commons. The manner of the delivery, the perfect intonation of the voice, the peculiar looks of the speaker—all contributed to a success that we believe to be perfectly unparalleled. No man within our recollection has wielded a similar power over the sympathies and passions of his hearers.'[2] The sentence at the close denouncing a Conservative Government as 'an organised hypocrisy' called forth, as we are told by Disraeli himself, a demonstration of 'tumultuous sympathy; but the cheers,' he adds, 'were in a great degree furnished by the voices opposite, and the Tory gentlemen beneath the gangway who swelled the chorus did so with downcast

[1] Hansard, March 17, and *The Times*, March 18, 1845.
[2] *Weekly Chronicle*, March 23, 1845.

eyes, as if they yet hesitated to give utterance to feelings too long and too painfully suppressed.'[1] Peel, speaking later, again protested that he would not engage in a war of personal recrimination; but he recalled Disraeli's speech in defence of the tariff of 1842, and bitterly declared that he then held the panegyric in the same estimation as he at present held the attack.

The House had now begun to await Disraeli's risings on the tiptoe of expectation. The writer quoted on a previous page unfolds the drama of the situation as it gradually developed—the complacency with which Peel sat at first in his place, confident in his strength and despising his assailant; the cool audacity with which Disraeli advanced to the attack on a reputation established by a long career of Parliamentary triumph; the comparative indifference which the House at first displayed, rising gradually to the point of malicious curiosity, and then changing into a sustained excitement and attention as it began to be manifest that Disraeli was working on a deliberate plan.

> For him to rise late, in a stormy debate, cool, even to iciness, amidst the fever-heat of party atmosphere around, was suddenly to arrest all passions, all excitement, all murmurs of conversation, and convert them into one absorbing feeling of curiosity and expectation. They knew not on whom to fix their watch—whether on the speaker, that they might not lose the slightest gesture of his by-play, or whether they should concentrate their attention on his distinguished victim, whom he had taught them almost to regard with levity. The power of the orator was more confessed, perhaps, in the nervous twitchings of Sir Robert Peel, and his utter powerlessness to look indifferent, or to conceal his palpable annoyance, than even in the delirious laughter with which the House accepted and sealed the truth of the attacks—followed, in justice, let us add, by a sort of compunction that they should thus have joined in ridiculing their former idol.

Peel, said Mr. Gladstone nearly half a century later, only tried once to answer, but 'failed utterly';[2] his

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. i.
[2] *Notes from the Life of an Ordinary Mortal*, by A. G. C. Liddell, p. 271.

personal followers, afraid alike of the assailant and the assailed, did not dare to intervene; and Disraeli was thus left to march unmolested from triumph to triumph.

The occasion of the next philippic, the last of this session, was furnished by Ireland. Peel's attempts to find a policy for that country had now led to something definite. The Whigs had persisted in regarding the Irish difficulty as purely political, or at the utmost religious, and had concentrated their energies on political and religious questions, such as the reform of corporations and the position of the Irish Church. Peel in a moment of insight had seemed to divine the truth that the trouble was really agrarian, and had appointed the Devon Commission, whose report, if it had been acted upon, would have averted unnumbered woes, social and political. But before the report appeared O'Connell's triumph in the House of Lords, and the rapid growth of the Repeal movement, impressed the Minister with the importance of finding a policy that would be speedier in its action.

> The tranquillity which might result from a reformed tenure of the soil must, if attainable, be a distant blessing, and at present he saw only the obstacles to its fulfilment. . . . He required a policy for the next post and the next division. There was in his view only one course to take, to outbid his predecessors as successfully in Irish politics as he was doing in taxes and tariffs. He resolved to appropriate the Liberal party of Ireland, and merge it into the great Conservative confederation which was destined to destroy so many things. He acted with promptitude and energy, for Sir Robert Peel never hesitated when he had made up his mind. His real character was very different from his public reputation. Far from being timid and wary, he was audacious, and even headstrong. It was his cold and constrained demeanour that misled the public. There never was a man who did such rash things in so circumspect a manner . . . and so Sir Robert Peel, without a qualm, suddenly began to govern Ireland by sending it 'messages of peace.'[1]

One of the messages of peace was the famous Maynooth Bill. Since the time of Perceval a grant of £9,000 had

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 7.

been voted annually to Maynooth, the Roman Catholic seminary for the education of priests, and Peel now proposed to convert this grant into a permanent endowment of £30,000 a year. In introducing the Bill, he urged that the principle was already conceded, and justified the increase by dwelling on the wretched condition of the students, who at present had to be maintained on £23 a year, a sum too small to allow them even separate beds. But this tactful presentation of the case did not avail to appease Protestant feeling, which was soon roused to such fury that no one but Peel himself could have made headway against the storm. The Bill had already cost him the services of Gladstone, who had resigned at the beginning of the session, not disapproving, but feeling bound by declarations in his book on *State and Church*. Gladstone had explained his resignation in a speech which puzzled his best friends, and caused Disraeli to write to his sister, 'He may have an *avenir*, but I hardly think it'; and when the second reading came, he made the puzzle greater by declaring himself dissatisfied with Peel's temporising arguments and supporting the Bill on the very principle of concurrent endowment which he had formerly denounced. When he sat down Disraeli rose, but, giving way for the moment to the heir to the Norfolk dukedom, he was chosen next by the Speaker out of half a dozen competitors, in obedience to loud calls from all parts of the House.

They had been told, he said, in the speech that introduced the Bill, that there were three courses open to them. He had never heard the Prime Minister bring forward a measure without making the same confession. In a certain sense, and looking to his own position, he was right. There was the course he had left; there was the course he was pursuing; and there was usually the course he ought to pursue. The right. hon. gentleman sent them back to precedents. With him a great measure was always founded on a small precedent; he always traced the steam-engine back to the tea-kettle. In the

present case he appealed to the action of Mr. Perceval and some odd vote in a dusty corner from which he inferred that the principle was admitted.

'Now, I deny that it is admitted, even in the limited sense. In the first place that was a temporary vote, and this is not; in fact, it is a permanent one. But I will not make that the ground of opposition. I will go to the arguments founded on circumstances of the late President of the Board of Trade [Gladstone]. I am astonished that he seems in his argument so completely to have supplanted principles. I looked upon the right hon. gentleman as the last paladin of principle, the very abstraction of chivalry; and, when a question was raised which touched the elementary principle of constitutional settlement and ecclesiastical arrangement, I never believed that it would be the right hon. gentleman who would come down and give the House the small change of circumstances to settle this great account. (Laughter and cheers.)

He then dealt at some length with Gladstone's plea for concurrent endowment, the positions of the two men being curiously the reverse of those they were to occupy a quarter of a century later on the question of the Irish Church. The right hon. gentleman was a subtle casuist, said Disraeli, but what was the result of his adroit argumentation? That the principle upon which the State had hitherto been connected with religion in this country was now worn out, that they must seek a new principle, and that the Government which he had left because he supported it had discovered a new principle. But wherein did their new principle differ from that which underlay the measures proposed by the Whig Government, opposition to which was the bond of union of the Conservative party and the foundation of the Conservative theory? Where were they to stop in the application of the new principle? Why should they stop? They found their Erastian system crumbling under their feet; were they to adopt a pantheistic principle, and was any body of sectarians who could satisfy Downing Street to have a claim for endowment? He had no great confidence in the cure of souls in that quarter, and he could conceive

nothing more at variance with the feelings of this country than a police surveillance over the religious ordinances of the people. He denied that in the existing order the Church of England was the creature of the state. The alliance between them had been formed and was maintained on equal terms; and if it were attempted to introduce a species of Prussian discipline in ecclesiastical affairs, the people of this country would never submit to such a system.

That alone was a sufficient ground for opposition to the Bill, but he had other reasons for opposing it. He opposed it on account of the manner in which it had been introduced, and also on account of the men by whom it had been brought forward. He did not think the gentlemen who were now seated on the Treasury bench were morally entitled to bring such a measure forward. It involved a principle against which they had all along signally struggled. Because they had crossed the floor and abandoned with their former seats their former professions, had they a right to ask the House to look to the merits of their measures and forget themselves and their protestations? Such pretensions led to the question whether party, as a political instrument, was to continue to govern them. To object to party government was nothing more or less than to object to Parliamentary government. A popular assembly without parties—500 isolated individuals—could not stand five years against a Minister with an organised government without becoming a servile senate. Here was a Minister who habitually brought forward as his own measures those very schemes and proposals to which, when in Opposition, he always avowed himself a bitter and determined opponent. The result was the country was left without an Opposition, and they heard the low murmurs of the people because there was no exponent in that House of a great national opinion. On constitutional grounds he might say that the noble lord (John Russell), the hereditary leader of the Whig party, which

founded Parliamentary government, ought, even though he approved of it, to oppose the present measure.

He hoped he would not be accused of 'bandying personalities' in making observations which were in entire and complete relation to the motion before the House. Certainly they lived in strange times, when a person in so eminent a position as that of First Minister of the Crown could stop Parliamentary criticism by calling it 'personality.' This system of putting down Parliamentary discussion had been tried in another place, but he did not know that the position occupied by 'another place' in the public estimation was one of which the House of Commons was particularly ambitious. It was not Radicalism, it was not the revolutionary spirit of the nineteenth century, that had consigned the place in question to illustrious insignificance; it was Conservatism and a Conservative dictator. The same arts that had broken the spirit of 'another place' might lower the tone of the House of Commons; as the one had been drilled into a guard-room,[1] the other might be degraded into a vestry. If they chose to maintain a Government that announced no distinctive principles, and an Opposition that did not oppose, he was certain that no degree of spirit could resist the influence of such a system.

If you are to have a popular Government, if you are to have a Parliamentary administration, the conditions antecedent are, that you should have a Government which declares the principles upon which its policy is founded, and then you can have on them the wholesome check of a constitutional Opposition. What have we got instead? Something has risen up in this country as fatal in the political world as it has been in the landed world of Ireland—we have a great Parliamentary middleman. (Immense cheering.) It is well known what a middleman is; he is a man who bamboozles one party. and plunders the other (great laughter), till, having obtained a position to which he is not entitled, he cries out: 'Let us have no party questions, but fixity of tenure.' I want to have a commission issued to inquire into the tenure by which Downing

[1] The Duke of Wellington, it will be remembered, was leader of the House of Lords.

Street is held. I want to know whether the conditions of entry have been complied with, and whether there are not some covenants in the lease which are already forfeited. I hope I shall not be answered by Hansard. I am not surprised the right hon. gentleman should be so fond of recurring to that great authority; he has great advantages; he can look over a record of thirty, and more than thirty, years of an eminent career. But that is not the lot of everyone, and I may say, as a general rule, I am rather surprised that experienced statesmen should like to recur to that eminent publication. What, after all, do they see on looking over a quarter of a century or more even of their speeches in Hansard? What dreary pages of interminable talk, what predictions falsified, what pledges broken, what calculations that have gone wrong, what budgets that have blown up! And all this, too, not relieved by a single original thought, a single generous impulse, or a single happy expression! Why, Hansard, instead of being the Delphi of Downing Street, is but the Dunciad of politics. But I want something more than quotations from Hansard to account for how parties have been managed in this House. It is a system so matter-of-fact and yet so fallacious, taking in everybody, though everybody knows he is deceived; so mechanical, and yet so Machiavellian that I can hardly say what it is, except a humdrum hocus-pocus, in which the order of the day is read to take in a nation.

If it were a vote which concerned the social and political equality of the Roman Catholic population, he would go as far as any man, perhaps farther than many. But no one pretended that that was now the question. This measure was not flattering to the pride of the Roman Catholics or solacing to their feelings. It was not a great grant; he thought it was a mean, a meagre, and a miserable grant.

If the Roman Catholic priesthood are to be educated by the State, it must be something greater than the difference between £23 and £28, something higher than the difference between three in a bed and two. That is not the way in which I would approach a reverend priesthood. I cannot believe, therefore, that the Roman Catholic gentlemen, on reflection—and I hope they will have time for reflection—will vote for this measure, when they consider what it is. Who is he who introduces it? It is the same individual whose bleak shade fell on the sunshine of your hopes for more than a quarter of

a century. Will not these considerations affect you ? What if it be a boon ?—I deny that it is one—but if it were such a boon as it is said to be, would you accept it from hands polluted ? It is not from him you ought to accept it—not from him who, urged on, as he reluctantly admitted, by a fatal State necessity, accompanied the concession of your legitimate political claims by the niggardly avowal that he was obliged to concede them.

As for the Whigs, he was almost in despair of appealing to their hereditary duties, their constitutional convictions, or their historical position, but he should have thought that the noble lord was weary of being dragged at the triumphal car of a conqueror who did not conquer him in fair fight. He hoped, then, for their aid, and the aid of the Roman Catholic gentry, in opposing this measure, as well as for the aid of those who would reject it on exclusive Protestant principles or on the general principle he had tried to uphold against state interference.

But, whatever may be the various motives and impulses which animate these different sections of opinion, there is at least one common ground for co-operation—there is one animating principle which is likely to inspire us all. Let us in this House re-echo that which I believe to be the sovereign sentiment of this country ; let us tell the people in high places that cunning is not caution, and that habitual perfidy is not high policy of state. On that ground we may all join. Let us bring back to this House that which it has for so long a time past been without—the legitimate influence and salutary check of a constitutional Opposition. That is what the country requires, what the country looks for. Let us do it at once in the only way in which it can be done, by dethroning this dynasty of deception, by putting an end to the intolerable yoke of official despotism and Parliamentary imposture. (Loud cheers.)[1]

Hobhouse, who was watching the scene from the front bench opposite, has recorded his impressions during the delivery of this speech :

Peel hung his head down, changing colour and drawing his hat over his eyes ; and Graham grinned a sort of compelled

[1] *The Times*, April 12, 1845.

smile, and looked a good deal at me, who happened to be just opposite, to see how we took the attack. Our front row was well behaved, but Russell and Palmerston and George Grey whispered to me, 'It is all true'; and even Ellice laughed, and Macaulay[1] looked happy. The speech was listened to with profound attention, and spoken without the slightest hesitation or reference to notes.[2]

Disraeli said subsequently that it was his opposition to the Maynooth Bill that broke up Young England, and as a matter of fact Smythe and Manners both supported the Government; but the same thing had happened on the agricultural motion which was the occasion of the previous philippic, and the soul was out of Young England before the Maynooth speech was delivered.[3]

To Lord Carrington.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
April 15, 1845.

MY DEAR LORD,

I am meditating the moment that Parliament will permit me to make a visit to Berlin; and I am afraid that I must not appear there except in a red coat. If your lordship would therefore kindly appoint me one of your lieutenants, I will endeavour to maintain the honor of the cloth at foreign Courts, and shall feel extremely obliged to you.

The petitions this afternoon *re* Maynooth are more numerous than ever, and the debate has the aspect of a long protraction.

Ever, my dear Lord,
Your obliged and faithful servant,
B. DISRAELI.

Eight years earlier, when the Whigs were in office, Disraeli, through Lord Chandos, had unsuccessfully tried

[1] Macaulay himself in the debate made an attack on Peel, which, though in some respects it sounds like an echo of Disraeli's, is really more violent: 'Did you think,' he asked, 'when you went on, session after session, thwarting and reviling those whom you knew to be in the right, and flattering all the worst passions of those whom you knew to be in the wrong, that the day of reckoning would never come? It has come. There you sit, doing penance for the disingenuousness of years.'

[2] *Lord Broughton's Recollections*, VI., p. 140.

[3] Maynooth, it may be noted, was equally disruptive in its effect on the Manchester School, Cobden voting with the Government, and Bright against.

to obtain the coveted red coat. He got it on the present occasion, but the visit to Berlin was not, it would seem, paid till after the lapse of a generation; when, though he had garments in his wardrobe even more resplendent, he was great enough in himself to be content to make his impression by ostentatious simplicity.

To Sarah Disraeli.

CASSEL,
Sept. 17.

We are here without having had the slightest intention of coming. But hearing that the place had beauty and seclusion, we agreed to pitch our tent here, if we could find any sort of accommodation. This was difficult, as it is an extremely savage place; few of the inhabitants, and none of the humbler classes, talk French. There is no library, bookseller's shop, nor newspaper of any sort; they never heard of *Galignani*, and I hardly know whether the majority of the people are conscious of the three glorious days. It is quite French Flanders; their provisions come from Holland; the Hôtel de Ville was built by the Spaniards, and religion is supreme. The country around is rich, and the landscape a vast panorama, and as the place is high, we conclude it is healthy. We have taken a house for a month and have hired a Flemish cook, who, Mary Anne desires me to tell my mother, stews pigeons in the most delicious way: eggs, cloves, and onions, ending in a red-brown sauce, a dish of the time of the Duke of Alva. Fruit and poultry plentiful and cheap. Six fowls for 5 francs, meat 6d. per pound. We crossed from Dover to Boulogne, a very rough passage. Our first walk at Boulogne we found *Sybil affichéd* in a large placard, 'Disraeli's New Novel,' in every window. We travelled from Boulogne *en voiture* to this place, sleeping the first night at St. Omer.

CASSEL,
Oct. 26.

The tragedy of Ely Cathedral[1] has shaken me to the centre. It is vain to speak of such a catastrophe: impossible not to think of it. Since the death of the Duke of Orleans, no sudden end has been more terrible.

I get up at half-past five, and don't find it difficult, going to bed by nine. The effort was great at first, and the house very unmanageable. You cannot expect any news from us;

[1] Disraeli's cousin, George Basevi (1794-1845), the well-known architect, had been killed by falling from the belfry.

we know no one and hear nothing, except from you. I have been able to write very regularly, and made better progress than usual, which is encouraging. Your life is as secluded as our own, yet you always make your letters interesting. We have a pretty garden, which gives us mignonette and Alpine strawberries; and the autumn there is mellow, fine, and mild, though we live on the top of a mountain. We look upon a most charming landscape, and can see thirty or forty miles ahead, and the sea, on a clear day. We now see *Galignani* regularly, and an unknown Englishwoman—Miss King, as I observe by the direction of her paper—sends me the *Illustrated Times*, and another unknown, *Bell's Life*.

D.

By the beginning of December the Disraelis are in Paris, in their old quarters in the Rue de Rivoli.

To Baron Lionel de Rothschild.

HÔTEL DE L'EUROPE, RUE DE RIVOLI,
Dec. 3, 1845.

MY DEAR BARON,

The journals of to-day give us the interesting information of the birth of your son.[1] I hope he will prove worthy of his pure and sacred race, and of his beautiful brothers and sisters. We are anxious to hear that Madame Lionel is as well as we could all wish, and that you are happy.

We arrived here on Sunday, after having passed more than two months in a perfect solitude at Cassel, French Flanders, a rich rural country. My wife walked 300 miles in two months, of which she is very proud, and by which she has much benefited. She had no companions, except those boxes of books at which you laughed, and which are all exhausted. We rose every morn at half-past five, and retired at half-past nine: our greatest adventure the discovery of a village.

Yesterday I had the honor of a very long and interesting audience of his Majesty. The fate of the English Ministry, the Oregon question, and what the King calls 'the commercial crisis,' the staple of our talk. They seem, all three, much to disquiet him. I apprehend that, though the Corn Laws must eventually break up the Government, it will not sink before one bad harvest. The movement of Lord John was able, and absolutely required by the interests of the Whig party. He was resolved that Peel should no longer jockey him.

[1] Mr. Leopold de Rothschild.

The King told me that it was not true, as frequently stated, that the arbitration of the Oregon question had ever been proposed to him. He seemed to think that it would have been well if it had been so, but that it was now too late. The American Government is a *mauvaise plaisanterie*, for it governs nothing except the Customs-houses. It has no more influence over the Western States, than over Devonshire or Dorset. . . .

I have not yet seen a human being here ; nor have we even left a card, except yesterday at your families. The weather is soft and charming. . . .

Ever, dear Lionel,
Yours sincerely,
B. DISRAELI.

Events during the autumn had been hastening on in England, and this letter has anticipated. Disraeli's onslaughts of the previous session had produced no visible effect on the position of the Ministry, as he himself confesses.

Practically speaking, the Conservative Government at the end of the session of 1845 was far stronger than even at the commencement of the session of 1842. If they had forfeited the hearts of their adherents, they had not lost their votes, while both in Parliament and the country they had succeeded in appropriating a mass of loose, superficial opinion not trammelled by party ties, and which complacently recognised in their measures the gradual and moderate fulfilment of a latitudinarian policy both in Church and State. Their position was also aggrandised and confirmed by a conviction then prevalent, and which it is curious to observe is often current on the eve of great changes, that the Ministry of Sir Robert Peel were the only body of men then competent to carry on affairs.[1]

The Opposition, he adds, was split into sections, the condition of the Whig party absolutely forlorn, and the Anti-Corn-Law League nearly reduced to silence. 'The Manchester confederates seemed to be least in favour with Parliament and the country on the very eve of their triumph.'

But the weather during the summer and autumn was

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. i.

bad. In reply to an inquiry by Disraeli as to the harvest, his sister wrote from Bradenham in the middle of October:

> It rains here so much that I do not think a dove would find a dry spot to rest upon. It cannot be called autumn, for nearly all the leaves have been washed off the trees these weeks past. It is a very bad harvest—half the ear blighted, the yield consequently very short. . . . There is a good deal of corn out here still, and a great deal in the North, which must be entirely spoilt. But our present despair and everyone's is 'the potato cholera.'

The potato disease was first reported from the South of England; but it soon declared itself in Ireland, where there was far more at stake, and before the end of October the accounts became alarming. 'This mysterious but universal sickness of a single root' was, in fact, to quote *Endymion*, to 'change the history of the world.' Peel summoned the Cabinet for October 31, and it met four times in the course of a week. '"There is no gambling like politics," said Lord Roehampton, as he glanced at *The Times*. "Four Cabinets in one week; the Government must be more sick than the potatoes."'[1] During the last couple of years Peel's mind had been gradually mastered by Cobden's abstract reasoning, and he had completely changed his views on the question of the tariff. He had hoped there would be no need for a public recantation during the term of the existing Parliament, which had been expressly returned to support him as a protectionist Minister; and towards the close of the session of 1845 he had stated in Parliament on three different occasions that his policy was one of gradual relaxation of duties, and that he could not consent to the total and immediate abolition of the Corn Laws. But the failure of the potato crop upset all his plans. Something had to be done, and his judgment of what was required by the practical emergency was affected by the fermentation proceeding in his mind. In the first days of realising that scarcity was threatened in Ireland, he wrote to his Lord Lieu-

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 82.

tenant: 'The remedy is the removal of all impediments to the import of all kinds of human food—that is, the total and absolute repeal for ever of all duties on all articles of subsistence.'[1] When the Cabinet met, the policy he proposed was to open the ports at once by an Order in Council, call Parliament together to sanction the Order, and then proceed after Christmas with a Bill for the permanent modification of the Corn Laws. He was supported in these proposals only by Aberdeen, Graham, and Sidney Herbert. Stanley, who alone had much acquaintance with Ireland, showed their futility as a measure of relief, pointing out quite truly that what was required by the Irish cottiers was, not reduction of price, but the absolute means of purchase; that the two great crops of the small farmers in Ireland were potatoes and oats; and that at the moment when they had lost one it was proposed to relieve them by reducing the price of the other. After its four meetings, the Cabinet separated early in November without having reached a decision.

It was now that Lord John Russell, watching the proceedings from Edinburgh, and divining the perplexity of Ministers, divining also, no doubt, that the clothes of the Whigs were again in danger of being stolen, executed the movement to which Disraeli alludes in his letter to Baron Rothschild. Without consultation with any of his colleagues, he issued a manifesto to his constituents in the City of London proclaiming the gravity of the crisis, condemning the inertness of the Government, and on his own side abandoning the fixed duty to which the Whigs had hitherto clung, and ranging himself with Cobden as an advocate of total repeal. The movement has often been praised as bold, but is perhaps better described as rash,[2] and it certainly, as we shall see, proved a constant cause of embarrassment to the Whigs in the subsequent session. The manifesto, though dated November 22, did not appear

[1] Parker's *Life of Peel*, III., p. 224.

[2] Even Disraeli, who commended it in his letter to Baron Rothschild, soon came, as we shall see, to regard it as a great blunder.

in *The Times* till November 27, and the Cabinet had begun a fresh series of meetings on November 25. Russell's letter had, of course, an effect on their deliberations, but the effect would appear to have been greatly exaggerated.[1] Peel, though he recognised that the policy of opening the ports might now seem to have been adopted at the dictation of the Whig leader, was ready to go on if supported by a united Ministry; but he had been determined from the first that their next step must be the virtual repeal of the Corn Laws, and it was his determination that told with his colleagues, not the Edinburgh letter. The Duke of Wellington, though not persuaded of the necessity of action, announced that it was his intention to support the Prime Minister; and the majority who had gone with Stanley a few weeks before now followed the Duke's lead. Even Stanley, when he found that he stood almost alone, took two days for reflection, and then offered to consent to suspension of the Corn Laws if suspension alone was intended.

But when he was told that the temporary emergency of apprehended scarcity in Ireland was not to lead to a remedy commensurate in duration with the expected evil, but was to be made the groundwork of suspending, for the purpose of not re-enacting, the Corn Law, he felt that he could not take that course consistently with his own feelings as an honourable man; and that, with such ulterior views, to propose to Parliament to sanction the opening of the ports would be to lead those who were disposed to support the Government into a snare. He said that he had tried to school himself into the belief that, under certain circumstances, the interests of the country might require even a sacrifice of personal and public character, but he had failed in bringing himself to so humiliating a conclusion.[2]

The fatal Cabinet meeting was on December 4; and *The Times* of that day had contained an announcement that the Government had decided to call Parliament together for the first week in January, and propose total

[1] Among others by Disraeli in his *Lord George Bentinck*, writing without documents that have now become accessible.
[2] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 2.

repeal. This announcement, which, it is now known, was founded on information that came from Aberdeen, caused great public excitement; and it probably did not tend to restore harmony in the divided Cabinet. Peel waited a day after Stanley's ultimatum, and then told his colleagues that he thought it impossible to go on; and on the 6th he went to the Queen and tendered his resignation. Russell, who was sent for, did not at first either accept or decline, so Peel's resignation was not at once made effective. It did not become public for nearly a week, and the situation remained ambiguous for nearly a fortnight in all, while Russell was on the way from Edinburgh to Osborne or engaged in consulting his friends as to the possibility of forming a Government.

To Lord John Manners.

HÔTEL DE L'EUROPE, RUE DE RIVOLI,
Dec. 17.

MY DEAR LORD JOHN,

What is going to happen? After living three months in profound solitude in a Flemish wilderness, really never having conversed with a single being or even read a journal, I arrived here a fortnight ago, and found myself in a political atmosphere of fever heat. The King sent for me the day after my arrival, and from that moment I have conversed with none but Ministers and Ambassadors, of all parties and all countries, and all equally distracted.

As I see you are at Melton, furiously hunting, this will reach you. Where is G. S[mythe]? I have not heard from him for months, and expected to find him here, but in vain. Has he gone on to Stamboul? If not, and in England, I wish you would send him a line and beg him to write to me, or come over.

I heard last night from a good quarter that the Whigs had resolved to decline the enterprise. The King inquired whether Gladstone, who is not compromised in the 'four Cabinet Councils in one week,' could not lead the *personnel* of the Commons, with the Duke in the Lords. It is quite clear that the feeling in favor of protection is much stronger than was supposed by many, and that it will be impossible to carry repeal.

Conjecture is quite baffled here in high places. In lower ones there is a general opinion that Peel will return in triumph;

but this appears to me a superficial conclusion, and I cannot but believe it highly improbable. At all events he has lost his prestige. Every resignation weakens a Minister, and is almost as foolish a thing as frequent Cabinet Councils. No one will now talk of a Walpolian Government; yet he might have completed his term. I am told that a month ago Thiers said: 'If it be a *real* famine, Sir Robert will be a great man, and will command his party; but if it be a *false* famine, and he tries to play tricks, he is lost.' Now, I think it is a false famine; and the question is not ripe enough for his fantastic pranks. He is so vain that he wants to figure in history as the settler of all the great questions; but a Parliamentary constitution is not favorable to such ambitions: things must be done by parties, not by persons using parties as tools — especially men without imagination or any inspiring qualities, or who, rather, offer you duplicity instead of inspiration. Pray write.

Ever yours,
D.

The King inquired a great deal about Gladstone of me. It was evident that his name had recently been suggested to his Majesty by some high quarter. I told the King that he was quite equal to Peel, with the advantage of youth.

Meanwhile Disraeli, in Paris, had been endeavouring to simplify the problem before Russell by smoothing the way for the return of Palmerston to the Foreign Office.

To Lord Palmerston.

[PARIS,
Sunday, December 14.]

MY DEAR LORD,

M. Guizot invited me to a private conversation on Friday evening on the intelligence which had arrived from London that morning. In some casual talk previously with the Duc Decazes I had ascertained that it was M. Guizot's opinion that Sir Robert Peel would be restored to power *dans une quinzaine*; M. Guizot did not express this opinion to me, but he elicited mine that the return of Sir Robert Peel, assuming the supposed causes of his retirement to be correct, was highly improbable.

Yesterday the King, whom I have had the honor occasionally to see during the throes of the last fortnight, during which, though anxious, he seemed confident as to Peel's triumph, sent for me to St. Cloud. I found his Majesty grave and

calm, more ready to listen than to talk, very consecutive and keeping to the point [and not in any degree indulging in those amusing but rambling details which sometimes distinguish his conversation].[1] His Majesty told me that Guizot had mentioned at the morning Council that he had seen me on the previous eve; his Majesty's belief in Peel had evaporated: he repeated more than once that Guizot was disabused of his idea that Peel would return; that every resignation weakened a Minister, and was almost as silly a thing as frequent Cabinet Councils. After some conversation on this head, the probable materials of the new Ministry, etc., the King, assuming that there would be a Whig Government, spoke to me very much of your lordship's accession to office.

Your lordship is doubtless aware of the apprehensions which the people of this country entertain on that subject, and therefore I will not dwell on them. Your lordship is a man of too great experience and of too great a mind either to exaggerate or to depreciate the importance of such circumstances. Being not unfamiliar with the subject, it was in my power to discuss it in all its bearings, and to make those representations to the King, and enter into those explanations and details, which were desirable. I impressed on his Majesty with delicacy, but without reserve, that your lordship was our first Foreign Minister who had taken the French intimacy as an avowed element of our national policy, and that the original want of cordiality had not been manifested by you; that from your frank character you required frankness and decision; that if these were not wanting on the part of the French Government I felt sure that your lordship would never take a litigious view of the policy of France, but would rather assist in any fair development of its external influence, which had for its object to popularise the throne and satisfy the public. There followed on the part of the King before repeated explanations of Spanish and Egyptian affairs, but expressed with gravity, much earnestness, and clearness.

This conversation lasted about half an hour, when the King, rising, said: ['We must not lose all the music.' There was a concert.][2] 'There are persons here to whom I must give a word, but do not go, as I wish to speak to you again.' Accordingly, about half-past ten o'clock, the concert having finished [which, by-the-by, was very choice, as there was no one but the Court],[2] His Majesty approached me, and

[1] In the draft from which this letter is given, the words in brackets are lightly erased.

[2] The words in brackets are pencilled interpolations, apparently of a later date.

invited me to follow him into his cabinet. He said, the moment we were seated: 'What you have said of Lord Palmerston has given me much pleasure. I have been thinking of it. I feel also persuaded that Peel cannot be brought back again in triumph; and if he were to return, he is no longer the same man. I will not deny I regret Lord Aberdeen. But if Lord Palmerston will enter the administration without *rancune*, and with a friendly disposition, all may be well. I consider that affairs are very serious. It is not isolated questions now—Spain, Turkey—as before. Isolated questions settle themselves. Or even American, the same. It is the state of the Continent that occupies me.' His Majesty then entered at great length on this subject. I perceived that the state of Germany disquiets him, and that he believes that a vast revolutionary movement in Central Europe is not to be avoided. Approaching midnight his Majesty dismissed me.

Notwithstanding my attempts at brevity, my letter has already grown much longer than I intended, and I have not even yet expressed its purpose. It is this: I suspect, from many circumstances, that a sort of cry of (affected terror) will be raised up in England against your lordship, sure to be re-echoed here, which may add to the embarrassments of your Government, which I doubt not are sufficient without it. Do not you think some means might be devised to terminate this for ever? Had you made your projected visit to Paris,[1] and become known to this impressionable people, all would have been right. But now that is, of course [illegible]. I do not think that any mere representation by the Press will effect the purpose. These representations are important when they reiterate and amplify the words of some eminent personage, but the world requires the reality of the individual for the original impulse. On the meeting of Parliament, under circumstances which render developments of policy on the part of a Government not unusual, it would not be difficult to arrange something which would elicit a satisfactory exposition. I am sure I should be very happy to assist you in this respect, were I present; but if the Parliament be summoned speedily, I do not think I shall be tempted to quit this agreeable residence—especially as the great object of my political career is now achieved. However, you would not find much difficulty in devising the requisite machinery.

Our Embassy here, I am credibly informed, have been left perfectly in the dark. Lord Cowley has dislocated his shoulder, but 'Lord' Hervey, as the Deputies call him, was

[1] Palmerston visited Paris the following Easter, and succeeded by his social tact in dispelling for the moment the prejudice against him.

active at Guizot's levée on Friday, assuring all that the Whigs can never form a Government while St. Aulaire wrings his hands and shrugs his shoulders like a doctor, and asks in a whisper what you can do against *la majorité des Lords*.

I see no change in the King since 1842, and I know, from an authentic quarter, that his health is perfect.

From Lord Palmerston.

3, CARLTON TERRACE,
Dec. 18, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am extremely obliged to you for your letter of the 14th, which I was accidentally prevented from answering yesterday. I thank you very much for the just explanation which you have given to the King and Guizot and others of my feelings and policy in regard to France, and you may confidently speak in the same sense on the subject to anybody with whom you may converse upon it. *I have the strongest conviction* that the great foundation of the foreign policy, both of an English and of a French Government, ought to be a cordial and sincere good understanding between England and France; and though two great and independent nations must from time to time have on particular subjects somewhat separate views and interests, I can see no reason why, with a right good-will on all sides, that cordial good understanding should not be firmly maintained; and it will always [be] my anxious endeavour to use any power which I may possess to accomplish so important a purpose.

Nothing is yet finally settled, but I should think that before many hours have elapsed it will be known which of the three possible Governments the country is to have: John Russell's, Peel's, or a Protection Cabinet. Whatever may be the allurements of Paris, I think you will hardly refrain from being in your place on so curious and interesting an occasion as the opening of the approaching session of Parliament.

My dear sir,
Yours sincerely,
PALMERSTON.

It is worth while to add Disraeli's account of this transaction in his *Lord George Bentinck*:[1]

About this time Louis Philippe of Orleans, King of the French, exercised a great influence over public affairs. This

[1] Ch. 14.

Prince had entirely identified himself with the Peel administration. There existed between his Majesty and the English Minister not only a sentiment of sympathy, but one of reciprocal admiration. Each believed the other the ablest man in their respective countries; their system of government was the same, to divert the public mind from political change by the seduction of physical enjoyment, and to neutralise opinion in the pursuit of material prosperity; finally, they agreed in another point, that their tenure of power was as interminable as the nature of things admitted, and that it was insured by mutual co-operation.

No one was more amazed and more alarmed by the breaking up of the Conservative Government in November, 1845, than the King of the French. With the quickness of perception which with him always seemed rather instinct than thought, he instantly trembled before a long vista of war and revolution. His fears of Lord Palmerston were fed by all the diplomacy of Europe, and especially by the connexions of the late Conservative Cabinet, who still hoped that the repugnance of the European Courts to the appointment of that Minister might, in conjunction with the domestic weakness of the Whig party, yet bring back the game to Sir Robert.

One to whom the King had disburdened his mind in an hour of intolerable anxiety, and from whom his Majesty asked that counsel which circumstances permitted to be given, tried to relieve him from these bugbears of state, in a truer appreciation of the position than those around him cared to encourage. It was represented to the King that a cordial understanding between the two countries had become a necessity for every English administration; that the Parliament and the people of England would never support a Minister whom they believed to be inclined to treat the French connexion with levity or disregard; and that it was especially the interest of the Whigs in their present feeble condition to prove to the country that they took office with no prejudice against their neighbours. With these views, and in order at once to relieve his mind, it was suggested to the King that through the medium of some private friend it might be wise to make an effort to disembarrass this question of the personal complications with which it had been the interest of certain individuals too long to invest it; and that he should seek for some frank explanation of the feelings with respect to France with which the new English Minister returned to office.

The King, who was a man of great impulse, grasped at the suggestion, and acted upon it immediately. The appeal was promptly attended with the most satisfactory results, and

the King of the French, with a countenance radiant with smiles, was assuring the whole diplomatic circle that he was never less uneasy as to the prospects of Europe, and that Lord Palmerston had resumed office with a determination to act cordially with France, when, to the astonishment of his Majesty, he learnt that Lord John Russell had resigned his mission, in consequence of an absurd and really discreditable intrigue against Lord Palmerston by a portion of his own party, on the plea that his appointment to the Foreign Office would endanger our friendly relations with the Tuileries.

It was not till December 18 that Russell definitely undertook the task of forming a Government, and he abandoned it on the following day. All who were to be his colleagues had agreed to the total repeal of the Corn Laws;[1] but Lord Grey,[2] who was to have the Colonial Office, refused to join a Ministry in which Palmerston should be Foreign Secretary. 'The intrigue,' says Disraeli, 'was neither contrived with dexterity nor conducted with temper, but it extricated the Whig leader from a false position. . . . He endured the mortification of confessing to his Sovereign his inability to serve her, and handed back with courtesy the poisoned chalice to Sir Robert.'[3]

Peel accepted it eagerly, and set about the task of reconstructing his Government. Stanley remained obdurate, but Peel was not, like Russell, to be frightened by the loss of his Minister for the Colonies. The Duke of Wellington, with his curious habit of carrying ideas of military discipline into the sphere of constitutional government, thought it his duty 'to fall in,' only giving vent to his feelings in the characteristic comment: 'Rotten potatoes have done it all; they put Peel in his damned fright.'[4] The other Ministers, except Stanley, again followed the Duke's lead; and Gladstone[5] came back to take Stanley's

[1] So Russell wrote to Cobden. See Morley's *Cobden*, I., p. 345.

[2] The Lord Howick of previous chapters. He had succeeded on the death of his father in the course of the present year.

[3] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 2.

[4] The Greville *Memoirs*, under date Jan. 13, 1846.

[5] Disraeli, in his Maynooth speech, had described him as 'one who had quitted the Cabinet for some reason not given, and might join it again in circumstances equally obscure.' In the rearrangement of minor offices, George Smythe became Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

place. At the end of all the tumult it seemed likely that the schism would end with Stanley's retirement, and that the Government would resume its course hardly, if at all, weakened. Peel himself was fully convinced that he would carry his party with him in abolishing the Corn Laws ; and Disraeli a few years later gave it as his opinion that if he had called the party together, and taken them into his confidence, they would again have followed his lead.[1] But, whether as a result of excessive assurance or of a disposition that was naturally autocratic and secretive, the Minister chose the course of haughty isolation ; and the outcome was far different.

The warmest admirers of Sir Robert Peel have never attempted to deny that there is much in his conduct during this crisis that calls for explanation. Quite apart from any question as to the intrinsic merits of the great measure which he now proceeded to pass stands the question of the manner in which he precipitated the crisis, and of his right to be the principal agent in carrying the measure through. Here the judgment of his contemporaries was decisively against him. Melbourne dining at Windsor, when the subject was referred to, broke out indignantly, regardless of the Queen's feelings : 'Ma'am, it's a damned dishonest act !'[2] Even Cobden thought it was wrong to ask the Protection Parliament to violate its pledges, and years after Peel's death still held that his conduct was difficult to defend.[3] Peel had once before, on the question of Catholic emancipation, broken faith with his party ; and, instead of feeling that it was undesirable to repeat the experiment, he seems rather to have been encouraged by its comparative success to expect an equally easy course on the present occasion. While condemning the lack of wisdom and foresight that he had shown in his attitude to the Catholic claims, most historians have conceded that he had the justification in that matter of a real and urgent necessity for his sudden change of

[1] Broughton, VI., p. 228. [2] Greville, Jan. 13, 1846.
[3] Morley's *Cobden*, I., p. 348.

front; and, according to the legendary view, he had a similar justification in the matter of the Corn Laws. Precisely, it is said, as in 1829 he sacrificed consistency and character to the public duty of averting revolution, so in 1846 he sacrificed them again to the great national need created by the Irish famine. The legendary view will hardly bear examination in the light of the facts. It was the potato disease indeed that set the train of events in motion, but poor Ireland was afterwards little thought of in the matter.[1] No one has ever been able to show that the repeal of the Corn Laws did anything to alleviate the horrors of the Irish famine, while the injury that it caused to permanent Irish interests is obvious and confessed. It was soon found, as a matter of fact, that the extent of the potato disease had at first been exaggerated, and the real crisis in Ireland did not come till the following season; and so completely in the meantime had the pretence of an immediate emergency been abandoned, that the Act carried by Peel retained substantial duties[2] on corn for a period of years.

But on any view of the gravity of the Irish situation in the winter of 1845, an Order in Council suspending the Corn Laws was all that was called for, and to this even Stanley, as we have seen, would have assented. It had been the frequent practice to suspend duties in times of scarcity, as the Minister himself showed; and if he had been content with this remedy, no charge of breaking faith could fairly have been brought against him. Peel harped, indeed, on the difficulty of renewing the Corn Laws once they were suspended, but this harping only suggests the embarrassment of a man who was conscious

[1] Croker, who knew both Ireland and Peel, wrote to Graham under date Feb. 21, 1846: 'Ireland has no more to do with the grand convulsion than Kamschatka, and I think facts will show hereafter that the only way that Ireland is concerned in the revolution is that the measures taken in England, and for English views and no other, have increased the dangers and misery of Ireland.' (*Croker Papers*, III., p. 64).

[2] Ten shillings the quarter when the price was under 48s., sinking to four shillings when the price was above 53s. These duties were subsequently suspended during the crisis of the famine, but their suspension only serves to strengthen the argument.

that his real object had from the first been to get rid of the Corn Laws for ever. 'If we open the ports,' he asked, 'do you expect us to guarantee that they will ever be closed again?' As Manners answered in debate, no one on the Tory side had looked for such a guarantee. 'Suspend the Corn laws, open the ports, and leave it to the good sense of the English people to decide whether they should be closed again.'[1] All, in fact, that was needed to keep the Cabinet and party together was that Peel should refrain from an explicit declaration of his intention to go out of his way to violate his pledges.

The truth is, Peel had got entangled in the meshes of an economic theory, and was in a state of intense intellectual discomfort and excitement. The real crisis was in his own mind rather than in the facts. Peel was a typical Englishman of the middle classes from which he sprang, with their practical concrete intellect and a certain scorn and incapacity for theoretical principles; and theory had her revenge by mastering him periodically. His justification in practice on this occasion has been that the English people followed him into the same prison-house of economic dogma, and have remained there in tolerable contentment ever since. But for anyone who retains his freedom of mind moral dogma will seem to have a higher validity than economic; and whether he thinks the repeal of the Corn Laws a good thing or a bad, he will find it hard to discern any such pressing necessity for their repeal at the particular moment chosen as to justify a statesman in violating his pledges and breaking up his party.

Let it be granted, however, that Peel, whether with sufficient warrant or not, was honestly convinced that the instant repeal of the Corn Laws was imperatively necessary, and there is still something in his conduct that requires explanation. He himself admitted more than once in the House of Commons that he was not the right person to propose such a measure, but excused himself

[1] Hansard, Feb. 17, 1846.

on the ground that he only undertook the task because of the failure of the Whig leader to form an administration. On one occasion, waxing warm, he even said that to suggest that he had wished to interfere with the settlement of the question by Lord John Russell was 'as foul a calumny as a vindictive spirit ever dictated against a public man.'[1] Disraeli in reply then and always pressed the question why, if this were so, he tried to induce his own Cabinet to adopt the policy of repeal a week before he gave the opportunity to Russell. No answer was ever given, and none[2] is easily conceivable. In spite of Peel's protestations, the conclusion irresistibly suggested by the whole transaction is that he was anxious from first to last to keep the matter in his own hands. If he had shown half the determination to avoid the breach of faith involved in his repealing the Corn Laws himself that he showed to get the Corn Laws somehow repealed, he could have secured both objects. He acquiesced far too readily in Russell's failure to form a Government. If the Corn Laws were to be repealed, Russell was the man clearly designated for the task. By his Edinburgh letter he had invited the country to entrust it to him; and in the majority by which the Bill was actually carried, if we take the test of the second reading, his followers were to Peel's as two to one. The excuse which he gave for his desertion of the Queen was wholly inadequate,[3] and would not have held against a little

[1] Hansard, June 12, 1846.

[2] The answer suggested by Gladstone (Morley, I., p. 286), that the measure proposed by Peel at the beginning of December was less sweeping than that to which he was eventually led, is devoid of substance. In his Cabinet Memorandum of December 2, Peel expressly recommended such a modification of the Corn Laws 'as would secure the ultimate and not remote extinction of protective duties.'

[3] So it seemed to Peel himself. He wrote to Lord Heytesbury (Parker, III., p. 289) that Russell had thrown up the task on which he entered for no better reason than 'that one intemperate and headstrong man objected to another gentleman having one particular office.' It has been urged, indeed, that the Whigs could not have carried the Corn Bill through the House of Lords; but Peel himself thought otherwise, as he expressly wrote to the Queen (on Dec. 12, 1845: Parker, III., p. 242), so he cannot be given shelter under this plea. In any case, Russell could have met the immediate emergency by an order of suspension, and thrown on the opposite party the responsibility of refusing the sanction of Parliament.

resolution on the part of the retiring Minister. The Whigs[1] were, of course, glad that Peel, in Disraeli's words, should have the glory and the odium of settling the question ; but Peel himself, it is clear, was more attracted by the glory than repelled by the odium.

Here, indeed, the latent egoism of his character came into play. Disraeli's judgment in his letter[2] to Manners is expressed in harsher terms than he would have used at a later date, but it contains a large element of truth. That there was no petty or deliberate self-seeking in Peel's motives everyone would agree, but to a man of his type temptation presents itself in forms more subtle. Like many other statesmen with long experience of office, he had begun to think, not, perhaps, that he was indispensable, but that all the great things that had to be done could best be done by himself. Ambition combined with the fermentation in his mind to lead him astray, and he sacrificed his pledges and his party to a supposed urgent necessity that had no real existence. He made the higher obligation of preserving good faith in political life subservient to the lower of repealing the Corn Laws, and both his character as a man and his reputation as a statesman must suffer in consequence.

Parliament met on January 22. In the House of Lords the Duke of Wellington, by a curious manœuvre, deprived Stanley of the opportunity of explaining his resignation ; but in the House of Commons the Prime Minister made a long statement, of which Disraeli gives us a graphic account in his *Lord George Bentinck*.[3] While the House was ' on the tenters ' for the explanations of the crisis, Peel plunged into a tedious fat-cattle speech, discoursing at great length on the price of flax and wool, salt beef, and domestic lard ; inquiring ' whether employment, low prices, and abundance, contributed to the

[1] Not all of them, however, believed that they were wise in shirking their duty. ' We stayed in,' said Macaulay, ' when we ought to have gone out ; and now we stay out when we ought to have gone in ' (Greville, Dec. 23, 1845).

[2] See p. 735.

[3] Ch. 3.

diminution of crime,' and gravely stating that 'he would no longer resist the inference that they did—as if any human being ever resisted the inference'; and then closing 'this eulogium of the effect of low prices' with a demonstration that all preceding reductions of the tariff had greatly increased the prices of the articles affected.

Some fine judges have recognised in all this only the artifice of a consummate master of the House of Commons, lowering the tone of an excited assembly by habitual details, and almost proving by his accustomed manner of addressing them that, after all, he could have done nothing very extraordinary. When a senate after a long interval and the occurrence of startling transactions assembles, if not to impeach, at least to denounce, a Minister, and then are gravely anointed with domestic lard, and invited to a speculation on the price of salt pork, an air of littleness is irresistibly infused into the affair from which it seems hopeless to extricate the occasion.

Finally the speaker slid into a long and confused narrative of the Cabinet Councils and their consequences; and concluded with a fierce reply to threats of mutiny that had been heard from some of his own followers.

Turning round with great scorn to his former supporters, and with an expression of almost malignant haughtiness, he exclaimed: 'I see constantly put forth allusions to the power of those men to remove me from office.' He should therefore define the relation in which he conceived himself to stand with respect to party and to his Sovereign. But dilating on the latter point with considerable feeling, and full, perhaps, of an important subject which he was fast approaching, he entirely forgot the former and on this occasion far more interesting topic. He concluded by a vindication of what he held to be true Conservative policy in his best style; earnest without being solemn, and masculine without turgidity. Yet the well-considered conclusion contained a somewhat portentous confession for a Conservative Minister of England —that 'it was no easy task to insure the united action of an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a reformed House of Commons.'

Peel was followed by Russell with what Disraeli calls 'the authentic statement of Whig disasters'; and when

Russell sat down, in a House tame and dispirited, and with the country members unorganised, helpless, and dumb, the debate nearly collapsed.

It seemed that the curtain was about to fall, and certainly not to the disadvantage of the Government. In their position the first night of the session passed in serenity was comparatively a triumph. With the elements of opposition, however considerable, so inert and desponding, the first night might give the cue to the country. Perceiving this, a member, who, though on the Tory benches, had been for two sessions in opposition to the Ministry, ventured to rise and attack the Minister. The opportune in a popular assembly has sometimes more success than the weightiest efforts of research and reason. The Minister, perhaps too contemptuous of his opponents, had not guarded all his approaches. His depreciation of those party ties by which he had risen, in an assembly, too, in which they are wisely reverenced; his somewhat ostentatious gratitude for the favour of successive Sovereigns; his incautious boast that his Conservative Government had discouraged sedition and extinguished agitation, when it was universally felt that he was about to legislate on the most important of subjects in deference to agitation; and, above all, his significant intimation that an ancient monarchy and a proud aristocracy might not be compatible with a reformed House of Commons—at least, unless he were Minister—offered some materials in the handling of which the least adroit could scarcely fail. But it was the long-constrained passion of the House that now found a vent far more than the sallies of the speaker that changed the frigid silence of this senate into excitement and tumult.

The speaker was, of course, Disraeli himself. He began by explaining that, as an early day was to be appointed for the discussion of the great question, he would not at this moment have intruded on the House but for the peculiar tone of the Prime Minister's speech. He admired a Minister who said that he held power to give effect to his own convictions, and he had no doubt that in the present case the convictions were conscientious. But, looking to all the circumstances, he must say that the Minister, however conscientious, was very unfortunate, and that he ought to be the last man in the world to

turn round and upbraid his party in the tone of menace he had adopted.

Sir, there is a difficulty in finding a parallel to the position of the right hon. gentleman in any part of history. The only parallel which I can find is an incident in the late war in the Levant, which was terminated by the policy of the noble lord opposite. I remember when that great struggle was taking place, when the existence of the Turkish Empire was at stake, the late Sultan, a man of great energy and fertile in resources, was determined to fit out an immense fleet to maintain his empire. Accordingly a vast armament was collected. The crews were picked men, the officers were the ablest that could be found, and both officers and men were rewarded before they fought. (Much laughter.) There never was an armament which left the Dardanelles similarly appointed since the days of Solyman the Great. The Sultan personally witnessed the departure of the fleet; all the muftis prayed for the expedition, as all the muftis here prayed for the success of the last general election. Away went the fleet, but what was the Sultan's consternation when the Lord High Admiral steered at once into the enemy's port. (Loud laughter and cheers.) Now, sir, the Lord High Admiral on that occasion was very much misrepresented. He, too, was called a traitor, and he, too, vindicated himself. 'True it is,' said he, 'I did place myself at the head of this valiant armada; true it is that my Sovereign embraced me; true it is that all the muftis in the empire offered up prayers for the expedition; but I have an objection to war. I see no use in prolonging the struggle, and the only reason I had for accepting the command was that I might terminate the contest by betraying my master.' (Tremendous Tory cheering.)

It was all very well for the right hon. gentleman to say: 'I am the First Minister'—he might as well, by-the-by, adopt the phraseology of Walpole, and call himself the sole Minister, for his speech was rich in egoistic rhetoric; it was all very well for him to come forward and say: 'My sentiments are magnanimous, my aim is heroic, and, appealing to posterity, I care neither for your cheers nor your taunts'; but how did he acquire his position, how did he obtain power to turn round on his supporters and treat them with contempt?

Well do we remember on this side of the House—perhaps almost with a blush—well do we remember the efforts which we made to raise him to the bench on which he now sits. Who does not remember the 'sacred cause of protection'—the cause for which Sovereigns were thwarted, Parliaments dissolved, and a nation taken in? Delightful indeed was it to have the right hon. gentleman entering into all his confidential details when, to use his courtly language, he 'called' upon his Sovereign. Sir, he called on his Sovereign, but would his Sovereign have called on the right hon. baronet, if, in 1841, he had not placed himself, as he said, at the head of the gentlemen of England? (loud Ministerial cheers)—that well-known position, to be preferred to the confidence of Sovereigns and of courts. It is all very well for the right hon. baronet to take this high-flying course; but I think myself—I say it without any wish to achieve a party triumph, for I believe I belong to a party which can triumph no more; for we have nothing left on our side except the constituencies which we have not betrayed (loud cheering); but I do say that my idea of a great statesman is of one who represents a great idea—an idea which may lead him to power, an idea with which he may connect himself, an idea which he may develop, an idea which he may and can impress on the mind and conscience of a nation. That, sir, is my notion of what makes a man a great statesman. I do not care whether he be a manufacturer or a manufacturer's son. That is a grand—that is indeed an heroic—position. But I care not what may be the position of a man who never originates an idea—a watcher of the atmosphere, a man who, as he says, takes his observations, and when he finds the wind in a certain quarter trims to suit it. Such a person may be a powerful Minister, but he is no more a great statesman than the man who gets up behind a carriage is a great whip. (Tremendous cheering and laughter.) Certainly both are disciples of progress. Perhaps both may get a good place. (More laughter.) But how far the original momentum is indebted to their powers, and how far their guiding prudence applies the lash or regulates the reins, it is not necessary for me to notice.

The right hon. gentleman, giving it as his own recommendation that he had served four Sovereigns, asked them to follow him. Follow him! Who was to follow him, or why was anybody to follow him, or where was anybody to follow him to? What did he mean to do—this great statesman who talked with a sneer of an ancient

monarchy and a proud aristocracy, and told them they were but drags on the wheel, and he the only driver? He told them he was still a Conservative, for had not, he asked, his Government put down agitation?

Sir, I confess when I heard this, that great as undoubtedly are the powers of Parliamentary face of the right hon. gentleman (loud laughter)—I confess, sir, that I was thunderstruck. I could forget the agitated councils called without a cause and dismissed without a consequence, the candid explanation of the situation of his Cabinet—his admission that the only man in that body who dared to speak the truth differed from him; the almost humble confession that he had been misled in his information; that his Viceroy, who, being a diplomatist, communicated his principal information in a postscript, had caused such false impressions in the Cabinet that the Secretary of State was obliged to send a courier for an explanation—all these frank details I could afford to admire in one who has taken up so lofty a position as the right hon. baronet says he has taken, and who can afford to speak the truth. But, really, when he told us that his Conservative administration had put down agitation, when he said this in the face of the hon. member for Stockport [Cobden], in the face of the hon. member for Durham [Bright]—then, sir, I confess that the right hon. baronet did manage to achieve the first great quality of oratory, that he did succeed in making an impression on his audience! Put down agitation! Will he rise and deny that he is legislating or about to legislate with direct reference to agitation? (Loud cheers.) What other excuses has he, for even his mouldy potatoes have failed him, even the reports of his vagrant professors have failed him.

Sir, I remember, in the midst of a great revolution, when all the principles of our social system were called into question, when we heard much of the inconvenience of ancient monarchies and proud aristocracies, when it was necessary to invent some means, to devise some expedient, to manage reformed constituencies—well do I remember that great mind which was to control divided counsels, to guide a distracted people, delivering itself of that oracle which rang so solemnly over the land, 'Register, register, register.' (Loud cheers.) Register, some thought, to save the Corn Laws, some to save the monarchy, some to save the Church. (Loud cheers). We went on registering, and the right hon. gentleman went on making protection speeches—a great orator before a green table, beating a red box. (Laughter.) Then he showed us the sovereign passion—we were to register

to make him a Minister. The statesman who opposed Catholic Emancipation against arguments as cogent as any which the gentlemen of the League can now offer, in spite of political expediency a thousand times more urgent than that which now besets them ; always ready with his arguments and amendments ; always ready with his fallacies, ten thousand times exploded ; always ready with his Virgilian quotations to command a cheer — the moment that an hon. and learned gentleman was returned for the county of Clare, then immediately we saw this right hon. gentleman not ashamed to recall his arguments, not ashamed to confess that he was convinced, but telling us, on the contrary, he should be ashamed if he had not the courage to come forward and propose a resolution exactly contrary to his previous policy. And so is it always with the right hon. gentleman. Nursed in the House of Commons, entertaining no idea but that of Parliamentary success, if you wish to touch him to the quick, you must touch him on the state of the poll. (Cheers and laughter.)

It was really too much for a Minister with such a career to talk to them in high-pitched language about his lofty spirit, about posterity and the love of fame.

What an advantage to a country to be governed by a Minister who thinks only of posterity ! The right hon. gentleman has before assured us that he and his colleagues are only thinking of the future. Who can doubt it ? Look at them. Throw your eyes over the Treasury bench. See stamped on every ingenuous front 'the last infirmity of noble mind.' They are all of them, as Spenser says, 'imps of fame.' They are just the men in the House you would fix upon as thinking only of posterity. The only thing is, when one looks at them, seeing of what they are composed, one is hardly certain whether 'the future' of which they are thinking is indeed posterity or only the coming quarter-day. (Cheers and laughter.) I should like to know what posterity may think of a Cabinet which resigns office because it cannot support a policy, and accepts office for the same reason. (Loud cheers.) In the history of England, in the history of parties, I defy any man, I defy even the right hon. member for Edinburgh [Macaulay], with his disciplined memory and cultivated mind—I defy any man learned in British history to adduce me a case parallel to this.

And what is to be the result ? If 'coming events cast their shadows before,' I suppose no gentleman in a sane state of mind can doubt it. We resisted the moderate proposal of

the Whigs. We rejected it, confiding in the experience of that practised individual—the gentleman who has served four Sovereigns. (Loud laughter.) We were blind enough to believe that a gentleman of such great ability, of such long experience, who had had such immense advantages, could not make very gross and palpable blunders. We accepted him for a leader to accomplish the triumph of protection, and now we are to attend the catastrophe of protection. (Loud laughter.) Of course the Whigs will be the chief mourners. (Loud laughter.) They cannot but weep for their innocent, although it was an abortion (loud cheers and laughter); but ours was a fine child. Who can forget how its nurse dandled it, fondled it? (Loud laughter.) What a charming babe! Delicious little thing! so thriving! (Loud laughter.) Did you ever see such a beauty for its years? This was the tone, the innocent prattle; and then the nurse, in a fit of patriotic frenzy, dashes its brains out (loud laughter), and comes down to give master and mistress an account of this terrible murder. The nurse, too, a person of a very orderly demeanour, not given to drink, and never showing any emotion, except of late, when kicking against protection.

Away with this talk about going down to Windsor and finding that Lord John this or Lord William that could not form a Ministry, and saying: 'Then I must form one, and bring all my colleagues to support measures of which they do not approve.' Was that the constitution that governed England? If so, the sooner they could get rid of such a constitution, the better. He could understand an absolute Sovereign in a country of high civilisation governing through a council of state, selected by his arbitrary but intelligent will from the ablest men of the country; but the House of Commons still formed a part of the constitution, though if the principles they had just heard from the Prime Minister were once admitted, it must soon cease to count. Six hundred men met together without the sympathy of great ideas, to wield all the power of a country, with all the patronage at the command of one man appointed by the Sovereign to direct them as he willed—who could doubt what the result would be?

If you had a daring, dashing Minister, a Danby or a Walpole, who tells you frankly, 'I am corrupt, and I wish you to be corrupt also,' we might guard against this; but what I cannot endure is to hear a man come down and say: 'I will rule without respect to party, though I rose by party; and I care not for your judgment, for I look to posterity.' Sir, very few people reach posterity. And who amongst us may arrive at that destination I presume not to vaticinate. Posterity is a most limited assembly. Those gentlemen who reach posterity are not much more numerous than the planets. But one thing is quite evident, that whilst we are appealing to posterity—while we are admitting the principles of relaxed commerce—there is extreme danger of our admitting the principles of relaxed politics. I advise, therefore, that we all—whatever may be our opinions about free trade—oppose the introduction of free politics. Let men stand by the principle by which they rise, right or wrong. I make no exception. If they be in the wrong, they must retire to that shade of private life with which our present rulers have often threatened us.... It is not a legitimate trial of the principles of free trade against the principle of protection if a Parliament, the majority of which are elected to support protection, be gained over to free trade by the arts of the very individual whom they were elected to support in an opposite career. It is not fair to the people of England.

The Opposition would err if they admitted the principle that they were to support any man who acted on their opinions. A Minister in the position of the right hon. gentleman was not the Minister who ought to abrogate the Corn Laws.

Whatever may be the fate of Government: whether we are to have a Whig administration or a Conservative; whether the noble lord or the right hon. gentleman is to wield the sceptre of the state—whatever, I say, may be the fate of Cabinets (and they are transitory and transient things, things which may not survive the career of many men in this House), on Parliament as an institution, and still a popular institution in this country, is dependent, and not upon the Government, the consideration of the vast majority of the members of this House. Do not, then, because you see a great personage giving up his opinions—do not cheer him on, do not give so ready a reward to political tergiversation. Above all, maintain the line of demarcation between parties, for it is only by maintaining the independence of party that you

can maintain the integrity of public men, and the power and influence of Parliament itself.

The cheers at the close lasted for several minutes, and the effect of the speech did not end when the cheers died away. It helped greatly to foster the rising spirit of revolt among the country members, and preparations were at once begun for organising resistance. Disraeli's bold example of rebellion had told at last, and his warfare against the Government was no longer to be solitary.

CHAPTER XII.

The Overthrow of Peel.

1846.

The preparations for resistance were arrested for a moment by a rumour launched by the Duke of Wellington, that the Government meant to offer the agricultural interest such countervailing advantages as would completely reconcile it to the modification of the Corn Laws. As the actual proposals were to be explained to the House of Commons in a few days, it was decided to wait for details. Peel's speech unfolding his plan is described by Disraeli as eminently characteristic.

"This remarkable man, who in private life was constrained and often awkward, who could never address a public meeting or make an after-dinner speech without being ill at ease, and generally saying something stilted or even a little ridiculous, in the senate was the readiest, easiest, most flexible and adroit of men. He played upon the House of Commons as on an old fiddle. And to-night the manner in which he proceeded to deal with the duties on candles and soap, while all were thinking of the duties on something else; the bland and conciliatory air with which he announced a reduction of the impost on boot-fronts and shoe leather; the intrepid plausibility with which he entered into a dissertation on the duties of foreign brandy and foreign sugar; while visions of deserted villages and reduced rentals were torturing his neighbours, were all characteristic of his command over himself and those whom he addressed.[1]

Eventually the House learnt that there was to be a total repeal of the Corn Laws, though three years were

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 4.

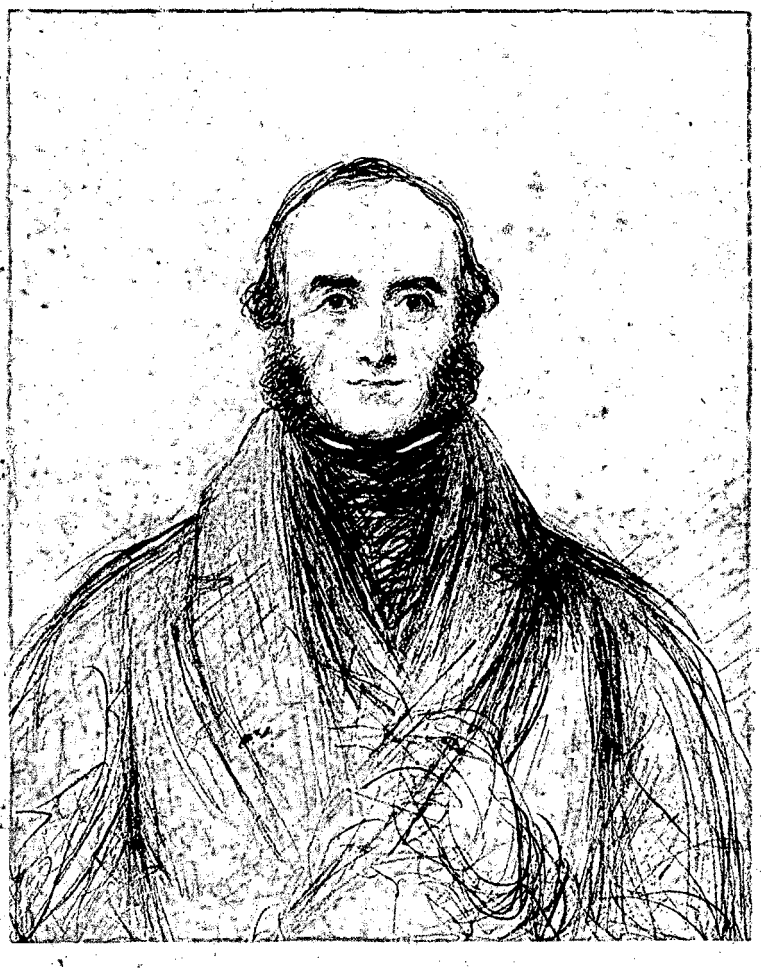
to elapse before the ports were to be really open. The measures of compensation, of which so much had been heard, turned out to be trivial readjustments of expense between the counties and the national exchequer; and as far as Ireland was concerned—'and "if there were any part of the United Kingdom which was to suffer by the withdrawal of protection," the Minister "had always felt it would be Ireland"'—a remission of local taxation similar in amount and character. 'No degree of rhetorical skill could invest with any semblance of substance these shadowy schemes of compensation.' A feeling of blank disappointment ran along the Conservative benches; indignation resumed its sway; and the Tory magnates and county members at once resumed their arduous enterprise of creating a third party.

The leading spirit among them was Lord George Bentinck, second son of the Duke of Portland, and a man better known for his prowess in the hunting-field, and his devotion to the turf, where he reigned as 'lord paramount,' than for his activity as a politician. He had, to use his own expression, 'sat in eight Parliaments without having taken part in any great debate.' In his youth he had been private secretary to Canning, who was his uncle by marriage; and, following the friends of Canning into the Whig camp, he had supported the Reform Bill, but had subsequently seceded from the Whigs with Stanley. He had been trained as a soldier, and, apart from his lack of serious political education and experience, he suffered from a certain rigidity of character that became the soldier better than the politician. But he was now in the prime of life, and, in addition to a noble presence and his rank and social standing, he had many of the qualities of which leaders are made—a vehement and imperious spirit, unflinching courage, a mind of great native vigour directed by a will that never knew submission, and the reputation for unbending rectitude that wins the confidence of men. Of frank and severely truthful nature himself, he was fiercely intolerant of

anything like deception; and it was a sense of betrayal rather than any motive drawn from selfish or class interests that stirred him to unwonted exertions on the present occasion. He had trusted Peel implicitly, and, as he afterwards confessed, when Disraeli, in the session of 1845, 'predicted and denounced the impending defection of the Minister, there was no member of the Conservative party who more violently condemned the unfounded attack, or more readily impugned the motives of the assailant.'[1] On the eve of the meeting of Parliament he wrote to Lord Stanley: 'I agree with Gladstone (in 1843), and think that to unsettle the Corn Law of 1842 "would be dishonourable to Parliament as well as to the Government," and, therefore, if anything is said about Corn Laws in the Queen's speech, if no better man can be found, I mean to move an amendment.' 'I keep horses in three counties,' he said to a political opponent, 'and they tell me that I shall save fifteen hundred a year by free trade. I don't care for that: what I cannot bear is being sold.' His activity in organising the third party at once led to the suggestion that he should accept the position of leader; but he shook his head 'with an air of proud humility that was natural to him,' and said: 'I think we have had enough of leaders; I shall remain the last of the rank and file.'

Such was the man with whom Disraeli now found himself in the closest relations. When the Session began the two were not, it would seem, even acquainted with each other; but a common political purpose soon brought them together, and in no long time they were fast friends as well as allies. Bentinck's social position made him the better fitted for playing ostensibly the first part in the control of the new movement; but Disraeli showed his usual power of winning the confidence of those with whom he was brought into close contact, and was soon established as Bentinck's chief counsellor and lieutenant. With his commanding will and vehement character,

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 2.



Lord George Bentinck
from a pencil drawing by John Doyle (H.B.)
at Hughenden

Bentinck was not the man to be the mere puppet he is sometimes represented as having been; but Disraeli, we may believe, with his greater knowledge and experience, his patient tact in the management of men, his remarkable freedom from jealousy and his power of self-suppression, was able throughout to guide his friend much as he desired. At all events, the combination worked with great smoothness, and Bentinck, who quarrelled with many, seems never, to the day of his death, to have had even a moment of angry difference with Disraeli.

The new party, from the nature of the case, was an army without officers, and the first business was to organise a Parliamentary staff and make preparations for a Parliamentary campaign. The motion for going into committee on the Minister's proposals was down for February 9, and the Government no doubt hoped that the occasion would pass with nothing worse than one of Disraeli's now customary ebullitions. But when the appointed day came, an amendment was moved from the Protectionist benches that the House should go into committee that day six months, and the lately forlorn party showed unexpected powers of sustaining the debate. New speakers were brought forward, and those who had already ventured were encouraged to try again. At the end of the fifth night the Prime Minister rose and made a speech to divide on; but no division came. Disraeli spoke on the eighth night, and it was not till the twelfth that, after lasting three full Parliamentary weeks, the debate came to an end. It was wound up by Bentinck in a speech of great length, packed with detail, and delivered, as Disraeli says, in a style of 'dignified diffidence.' When the division was called, the West India and shipping interests deserted the land and supported the Minister; but even so the Protectionist amendment was only defeated by a majority of 97 in a House of 581. No more than 112 of their usual supporters voted with the Government, while 242 voted

against them. Peel, in fact, had lost control of the Conservative party, and the knell of his Ministry was rung.

Disraeli's speech was long and in an entirely different vein from the speech on the Address and the philippics of the previous session. Pledging himself to meet the question on its merits, he first lodged a protest against the Prime Minister's appeal from party to public opinion. Party, said Disraeli, was public opinion embodied, and his quarrel with the Prime Minister was not that he had deferred too much to public opinion, but that he had outraged it by preventing its legitimate action. The right hon. gentleman had said that their business was not to discuss party, but to meet an emergency and to construct a system. That was where he went wrong in his very first step: a system should be permanent, an emergency was temporary. With regard to the emergency, he and his friends were prepared to do for Ireland everything that human judgment could devise; but they could not understand the Prime Minister's position. He was prepared to open the ports, and had shown by a rapid review of economic policy that they had often been opened, and beneficially opened. There was no difficulty about that; the real difficulty was that he was not prepared to close them again. He had resolved, in fact, from the first that the existing system of corn and provision laws should cease — as was shown, indeed, by his proposing his present measures in Council, and insisting on their adoption before the idea could have been conceived by any other human being.

As we have seen more than once, Cobden was always certain that, if we abandoned protection, other countries would speedily follow our example. Peel could never make up his mind whether this was probable or not, or even whether it was necessary to the success of his measure. In his last speech he had argued that they had been relaxing protection for more than thirty years, and the country was now more flourishing than ever.

It flourishes, retorted Disraeli, because you have given to its trade a just, a judicious, and a moderate protection.

The whole speech only proved the advantage of the principle of a moderate protection ('Oh!'). I am sorry, sir, to have excited that groan from a free trader in distress. (Great laughter.) I want to ask the right hon. gentleman a very important question: Does he believe that he can fight hostile tariffs with free imports? That is the point ('Hear, hear!'). 'Hear, hear!' from the disciples of the school of Manchester![1] A most consistent cheer! They have always maintained they can; and if their principles are right, as they believe they are —as I believe they are not—I can easily understand that, their premises being assumed, they may arrive at that conclusion. They believe they can fight hostile tariffs with free imports, and they tell us very justly: 'Let us take care of our imports, and everything else will take care of itself.' But is that the conviction of the right hon. gentleman? We want to know that, because, if that be his conviction, why all these elegies over defunct diplomatic negotiations to preserve commercial treaties? If he believes that we can meet hostile tariffs with free imports, he need not trouble himself about commercial treaties. But if the right hon. gentleman does not believe that, if he has not the conviction of the school of Manchester, then he is not justified in offering this measure.

They were told that great things would follow from a good example—that the Americans were on the point of changing their tariff, that Prussia was shaken, that the French were votaries of free trade. Let him offer them some facts. Did the House understand the power of the manufacturing interest—the protected interest in America? In 1840 there were 800,000 manufacturing operatives in the United States, and since 1840 under their tariff there had been the greatest development of manufacturing industry known in the history of the country. When he was told that Prussia was shaken, he could only say that he had just been reading a book about Prussia, published within the month, from which

[1] According to Cobden himself (in Elliot's *Life of Goschen*, I., p. 75), the phrase 'the Manchester school,' which passed into general use as a title for his party, was invented by Disraeli; and this was not improbably the first occasion when it was heard.

he found that that country was most obstinately determined in its resistance to free trade, and till he was given a more detailed account of the shaking he must remain sceptical. With regard to France, he could speak with some knowledge of her public men, and with the exception of an occasional individual who attempted to humour an English Minister he did not believe that there was a single leading statesman in France who was not in favour of a high restrictive policy. There was only one way of gaining any relaxation of the French mercantile system, and that was by diplomacy; but they now proposed to open their ports without condition, and France had no longer an object to negotiate for. It all came to this, that if the right hon. baronet was not prepared to meet hostile tariffs with free imports he had no ground to stand on.

On other aspects of their measure Peel and his colleagues were no less undecided, and Disraeli was not slow to note their inconsistencies. The Secretary at War,[1] he said, who had addressed the House as a martyr when he was only a convert, had asserted that the fallacy of cheap bread was now discarded by all parties; the Secretary of State[2] on the following night had declared that unless the question before the House involved a cheaper and more abundant supply of food to the people there was no question before them. He was not surprised that there should be such distraction in their councils when there was such discord in their speeches. The Secretary at War asked what they feared from free imports—where were they to come from? He had investigated the subject as well as he could, and he had not the slightest doubt that when this system was established they could get from the corn-growing countries any quantity of corn they liked. It was idle to say that capital and railways were wanting; both would be supplied. There was no fallacy so great as to suppose that when there was an established market here prices would rise in proportion to the demand. The examples of tea and

[1] Sidney Herbert. [2] Graham.

cotton showed prices continually falling as the demand increased. The Secretary at War asked them again, Why all this agitation about a mere question of the repeal of a duty on one article of imports ? He forgot that last year it was a social revolution ; and even now they were told by the consistent Secretary of State that if they refused to pass this measure they would bring upon England anarchy, misery, and ruin.

I have observed that ever since the right hon. baronet [Graham] has been a Minister of a Conservative Cabinet he has annually brought forward a very extensive measure, which has as regularly produced great alarm and excited great odium in the country ; and that the right hon. gentleman, alarmed at his own proceedings, has ended by withdrawing the measure. Bold in opposition, not too scrupulous, it seems somewhat extraordinary that the responsibilities of office should bring to him, not prudence, but panic. (Renewed cheers and laughter.) And these are the Ministers who turn round and say : ' You are alarmed at our measure, but you will not suffer at all except from your own panic.' Why, they are the children of panic, they are an alarmist Cabinet. (Loud cheers.) I know not from what cause, but fright is stamped on their very forehead—whether it arises from a deficiency of food in Ireland or a superabundance of suffrages in Lancashire.[1]

He had now something to say on the question of protection, and he began by showing historically that England in her commercial arrangements had generally taken the middle course. Protection in England had never been protection to every branch of native industry. We had once had a commercial system founded on principle, definite in its details, and, in a certain sense, beneficial in practice—the colonial system. At an earlier date there had been a very liberal system of commerce with the Continent ; but in the middle of the eighteenth century our foreign trade had been sacrificed to the upholding of our colonial system. The range of our transactions had thereby been curtailed ; but our merchants were compensated by more secure markets and

[1] In allusion to a by-election that had been lost by the Government.

larger profits. When we lost our principal colonies, Mr. Pitt saw that it was necessary to establish a new system—a large system of commercial intercourse on the principle of reciprocal advantage. This in turn was upset by the revolutionary war; but the moment the war was over they had gone back to the Pitt system, under the guidance of Lord Liverpool, Mr. Huskisson, and at a later date the present Prime Minister. He himself had given a conscientious vote for the Prime Minister's tariff as embodying a system of moderate and judicious protection in complete harmony with what he thought were their true commercial principles. If they sought examples of a different policy, they would see in Spain the effects of absolute prohibition, and in Turkey the effects of absolute free trade. In the one case unbridled competition had been as pernicious as excessive protection in the other.

The Prime Minister had said there was a *prima facie* case in favour of free trade. He never cared much about *prima facie* cases; it would be just as easy for him to say that there was a *prima facie* case in favour of protection, for to protect the industry of our fellow-subjects was *prima facie* desirable. He could find in the speeches of the gentlemen of the League no single reasonable objection to the principle involved. Their arguments had perpetually changed; they began by promising cheap bread to the labourer, and had ended by promising high rents to the landlord. They said that protection aimed at two objects—to feed the people and to employ the people—and that it had failed in both. Had it failed? Fifty years ago we could not feed the people; the population had since doubled, and in average years we could now feed them, and at a lower rate of cost. Nowhere in the world was there any great breadth of land with an agriculture to be compared to that of Great Britain. It was only natural that it should be so, for the land of England received the tribute of the world. There was not an Englishman in any of our colonies, not a resident

at the Court of any Indian Prince, whose great ambition was not to return, purchase land, and become a justice of the peace or deputy-lieutenant. 'Riding on elephants, surrounded by slaves, he is always dreaming of quarter-sessions.' Our territorial constitution, which had conferred on the possession of land an honour peculiar to itself, would always secure the investment of capital in the soil of England.

But look, said the gentlemen of the League, at the condition of the peasantry: has protection provided them with sufficient employment? It was not there alone that he had tried to call attention to the condition of the peasantry; but when they came with their cool assumptions and daring charges, he asked what was the condition of the peasantry before the protective system was instituted? Worse even than at present. He might just as well take them to Stockport or Manchester, show them human suffering and human degradation, and say, Competition has done this; but he knew that these were exceptional cases, and that the industry of Lancashire was a noble and well-ordered industry, and he could not condescend to such vile arts of faction. In the same way, if protection had given the peasant of Wiltshire seven shillings a week, it had equally given the peasant of Lincolnshire an ample remuneration. He found the people employed, though not so well as he could wish; their condition in many instances bad, but superior generally to that of the other nations of Europe; and he could not assent to the bold assumption that they would improve their condition by introducing foreign labour into competition with theirs, or that they would elevate their character by diminishing their wages.

He had endeavoured not to make a mere Corn Law speech. He had never rested his defence of the Corn Laws on the burdens to which the land was subject. There were heavy burdens on the land, but the land had great honours, and he who had great honours must also have great burdens. He wished his friends to bear in

mind that their cause must be sustained by principles of high policy, and he would venture feebly and slightly to indicate those principles. In every country, he said, it was the first interest of the state to maintain a balance between the two great branches of national industry; that was a principle which had been recognised by all great Ministers for the last two hundred years. But he went farther, and said that in England there were special reasons why they should not only maintain the balance, but give a preponderance—he did not say a predominance, which was not the proper word—to the agricultural branch; and the reason was that in England they had a territorial constitution.

You have thrown upon the land the revenues of the Church, the administration of justice, and the estate of the poor; and you value that territorial constitution, not as serving to gratify the pride or pamper the luxury of the proprietors of the land, but because in that constitution you, and those whom you have succeeded, have found the only security for self-government; and, more than that, the only barrier to that system of centralisation which has taken root and enslaved the energies of surrounding nations. (Great cheering.) That is why I have ever supported, and that is why I will still support, this principle of preponderance. My constituents are not landlords; they are not aristocrats; they are not great capitalists; they are, in fact, the children of industry—born only to employment; but they believe not only that their material interests are involved in a system which favours native industry, by insuring at the same time real competition, but also that their social and political interests are involved in a system under which their rights and liberties have been guaranteed; and I agree with them. I know these are old arguments; but I know also that they are strong, and that it is necessary they should not be forgotten. (Continued cheering.)

I know we are told, and by one [Cobden] who on this subject should be the highest authority, that we shall derive from this great struggle not merely the repeal of the Corn Laws, but the transfer of power from one class to another—to one distinguished for its intelligence and wealth, the manufacturers of England. My conscience assures me that I have not been slow in doing justice to the intelligence of that class; I do not envy them their wide and deserved prosperity, but I must

confess my deep mortification that in an age of political regeneration, when all social evils are ascribed to the operation of class interests, it should be suggested that we are to be rescued from the alleged power of one class only to sink under the avowed dominion of another. I for one, if this is to be the end of all our struggles—if this is to be the great result of this enlightened age—I for one protest against the ignominious catastrophe. I believe that the monarchy of England, its sovereignty mitigated by the power of the established estates of the realm, has its root in the hearts of the people, and is capable of securing the happiness of the people and the power of the state. If this be a worn-out dream—if indeed there is to be a change—I for one, anxious as I am to maintain the present polity of this country, ready to make as many sacrifices as any man for that object—if there is to be this great change, I for one hope that the foundations of it may be deep, the scheme comprehensive, and that, instead of falling under such a thraldom, under the thraldom of capital, under the thraldom of those who, while they boast of their intelligence, are more proud of their wealth —if we must find new forces to maintain the ancient throne and immemorial monarchy of England, I for one hope we may find that novel power in the invigorating energies of an educated and enfranchised people. (Loud and long-continued cheers.)[1]

Having been content with this comparatively sedate speech on the great question, Disraeli a few days later delighted the House by a return to his more characteristic style. Roebuck, the Radical member for Bath, had made enemies in all parties by indulging a bitter tongue, and a personal wrangle of which Ferrand, as usual, was the centre, but in which Roebuck was involved, gave Disraeli an opportunity of reading him a lesson. In a rather inflated speech, Roebuck had laid stress on the resolution against Ferrand passed in a previous session. Disraeli followed, and remarked that a more ridiculous resolution never had been passed, and that he believed the Prime Minister, who had a natural taste for humour, was keenly sensible of the fact. Neither he nor the Home Secretary had originated the proceedings; they originated

[1] Hansard, Feb. 20, 1846; and *The Times* and *Morning Post*, Feb. 21, 1846.

in the quarter where the most disagreeable proceedings naturally originated—with the member for Bath, who now dilated upon them with all the dramatic effect worthy of a minor theatre. 'Sir,' the speaker added with imperturbable gravity, 'I have not had any resolution passed yet against me, and if my hon. friend had taken my advice never to abuse anybody (shouts of laughter), but rather to resort to such language as our English tongue and the forms of the House permit for the expression of opinion, he would never have been in the position in which that resolution, I think, unjustly placed him.' The member for Bath himself was in the habit of infringing the rules of the House by imputing motives most corrupt, most sinister, and most ungentlemanlike.

Some of my hon. friends have noticed it; I never have. I always felt that in this world you must bear a good deal (great laughter), and that even in this indulgent though dignified assembly, where we endeavour, as far as possible, to carry on public affairs without any unnecessary acerbity—still, we must occasionally submit to some things which the rules of this House do not permit. I could, no doubt, easily have vindicated my character; but that would only have made the hon. member for Bath speak once or twice more, and, really, I have never any wish to hear him. (Loud cheers and laughter.) I have had the most corrupt motives imputed to me. But I know how true it is that a tree must produce its fruit—that a crab tree will bring forth crab apples (loud laughter), and that a man of meagre and acid mind, who writes a pamphlet or makes a speech, must make a meagre and acid pamphlet or a poor and sour speech. (Shouts of laughter.) Let things, then, take their course. But, for the member for Bath—extraordinary purist as he is—I think that he, though now assuming the functions of general instructor, as formerly of general accuser, would do well to profit by his own precepts, and eschew his melodramatic malignity and Sadler's Wells sort of sarcasm. (Loud and general laughter and cheering.)[1]

[1] This speech, which was delivered on the night of the Corn Law division before the resumption of the chief debate, is also notable as having led to the public reconciliation between Cobden and Peel. Bright had accused Ferrand of having charged the League with abetting assassination, and had talked of a prosecution. Disraeli recalled the fact that a similar charge had been made in the House of Commons itself 'by the very distinguished

Roebuck sought his revenge in season and out of season for the remainder of the session. On one occasion he went out of his way to recall the old affair of Disraeli's appearing at Wycombe with Hume and O'Connell as his sponsors. To this 'arranged impromptu' Disraeli replied as usual, that he had never changed his opinions.

I am not in a condition to have had hereditary opinions carved out for me, and all my opinions, therefore, have been the result of reading and thought. I never was a follower of either of the two great aristocratic parties in this country. My sympathies and feelings have always been with the people from whom I spring; and when obliged as a member of this House to join a party, I joined that party with which I believe the people sympathise. I continue to hold substantially the same opinions as I have always professed; and when the hon. member talks of my going 'into his camp,' I never heard that he had a camp. How the solitary sentry talks of his garrison! He a leader of the people! In my opinion there is no greater opponent of real democracy than a modern Liberal; and as to popular principles, I believe they are never more in danger than when they are professed by political economists. Three months of solitude for an attack on the consistency of my political opinions! never was any senator struck with a rhetorical paralysis more remarkable; never was anything more malignant, and certainly never was anything more futile.[1]

After the defeat of the protectionist amendment on the principle of the new proposals, Disraeli and Bentinck made it their object to delay the Government measures so that they should not reach the House of Lords before the Easter adjournment. Time appeared to be on their side. The chapter of accidents might at any moment cause the fall of a Government which had no majority for anything except its tariff policy. The failure of the potato crop was proving to have been exaggerated, and if the course of events should dispel panic it was possible

individual at the head of the administration.' Why not prosecute him? Here was an antlered monarch of the woods: why hunt small deer? Peel rose afterwards and explained that it had been his intention to relieve Cobden completely of the imputation he had put upon him by a misapprehension; Cobden accepted the disavowal; and peace was established.

[1] Hansard, May 8, 1846.

that the House of Lords might have the courage to reject the Bill when eventually it reached them. There was no excitement in the country in favour of the new policy, and a good deal of excitement among the farmers against it. The Ministerial changes had led to a number of by-elections; and Lord Ashley and other members who had been elected as protectionists, more sensitive as to their pledges than the Minister and his colleagues, thought it right to vacate their seats. Nearly every vacant seat was carried against the Government. Lord Lincoln, who had been promoted to the office of Chief Secretary, was defeated through the influence of his father, the Duke of Newcastle, and Gladstone through the same influence left without a seat for the remainder of the Parliament.

Thus encouraged, the protectionists gathered confidence and force. Bentinck, who still persisted in refusing to accept the formal position of leader, was indefatigable in debate and in all the work of organisation that properly falls to a leader. The resolutions on which the Government's Bills were to be based abounded in detail, and several weeks were consumed in getting them through committee. It was not till March 27 that the Bill for the repeal of the Corn Laws was read a second time, and the majority for the Government had now sunk to 88. Disraeli, who at this time appears to have been in poor health, and soon afterwards was definitely ill, took no part in the debate of four nights that preceded; and its only remarkable feature was a speech by Palmerston, in which, after an abstract eulogy of free trade, he astonished the free traders by unfurling the standard of a moderate fixed duty.

The cheers suddenly stopped; and a member for a metropolitan district who had been applauding vociferously whispered to a neighbour: 'He has spoilt a capital speech; what could have induced him to bring in a fixed duty!' Penetrating member for a metropolitan district! As if the 'capital speech' had been made for any other purpose than to introduce the very declaration which you looked upon as so damaging! There is diplomacy even in debate: Lord

Palmerston threw a practised and prescient eye over the disturbed elements of the House of Commons, and two months afterwards, when a protectionist Ministry on moderate principles (principles moderate and not fixed) was not impossible, the speech of the noble lord was quoted by many as a rallying-point.[1]

How disturbed the elements were, and how uncertain the protectionist position, in spite of the good division, is shown by a letter from Stafford O'Brien to Disraeli on the following day. 'I am altogether unsanguine,' he writes, 'as to our compactness, and I believe that we shall go to pieces so fast that it will soon be a question how far we shall be authorised in maintaining ourselves as a party at all.' In political history, when we look beneath the surface, we find the key to most events in personal will and influence; and here there is no exception. Nothing could seem more natural and inevitable now than the permanence of the party which seceded from Peel; as a matter of fact, but for the exertions of Disraeli and Bentinck it would either never have been born at all or its life would have been brief and flickering, and the resistance to the Minister have speedily collapsed.

Fortune rarely fails to favour a bold and determined policy, and the protectionist leaders now began to be helped by a blunder of which the Minister had been guilty. The distress in Ireland during the winter, not severe enough to produce the paralysis of famine, had been severe enough to provoke a serious outbreak of agrarian crime; and in the Queen's speech at the beginning of the session a measure for the protection of life had been promised. A month had been allowed to elapse, and then, in fulfilment of this promise, a stringent 'Coercion' Bill had been brought into the House of Lords. It had been supported there by the Whigs as well as by the Tories, but had been passed through its stages in a

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 6. Palmerston wrote to Disraeli on March 29, in reply to some note; probably, of congratulation: 'I could not refrain from affording one "pitying tear to grace the obsequies" of fixed duty. Many would, I am persuaded, be glad to revive it; but to all appearance its life seems entirely extinct.'

leisurely fashion; and, reaching the Commons in the middle of March, had been allowed to remain dormant till after the Corn Bill had received its second reading. If such a measure as the Coercion Bill was needed at all, it was obviously needed at once, and ought to have been pressed through both Houses with all the force of the Government in the first weeks of the session. Probably in that case it would have met with little resistance; but the opportunity was missed. Peel, in fact, had put forward two opposite remedies for the troubles in Ireland, but inverted their logical order. His passionate eagerness in the matter of the Corn Bill had blinded his judgment, and led him into an error of political strategy which was to pursue him throughout the session, and finally cause his overthrow.

The first reading of the Coercion Bill was to be taken in the Commons on March 30, and before the appointed day the protectionists met to consider the course to be adopted. With assassination rife, and the Whigs, as was supposed, already committed to the Bill by their leaders in the Lords, the result was never in doubt. Disraeli alone urged them to pause before they gave a Government, 'against which they were arrayed in circumstances of urgent and unusual opposition,' the striking proof of confidence that would be involved in their pledging themselves to support such a measure; but his arguments, as he tells us, 'though received with kindness, elicited little sympathy.' Bentinck, marking the general feeling, intervened with the adroit suggestion that they should make their support conditional on the Minister's proving his sincerity by pressing forward with the Coercion Bill in preference to every other measure; and this suggestion, promising the advantage of an indefinite delay of the Corn Bill, was adopted with enthusiasm.

Thus authorised, Bentinck made an arrangement with the Government Whip by which the third reading of the Corn Bill was to be postponed till after Easter, and the protectionists were to support the Government

in pushing forward the Coercion Bill. For some reason Peel repudiated this arrangement, and, while adhering to his determination to give the Coercion Bill a first reading at once, refused his assent to the postponement of the Corn Bill. Meanwhile the Whigs, though feeling no dislike for coercion as such, decided to insist that the Corn Bill should have precedence, and the Government suddenly found themselves in a false and dangerous position. They had in the same breath to argue that the urgency of the Coercion Bill made it necessary to postpone everything till its principle had been affirmed, and to promise that, if this Bill had once been granted a first reading, it should not be allowed to interfere with the progress of the Corn Bill. Even so, on the night of the 30th, though supported by all the protectionists present, they only escaped defeat, on a dilatory amendment moved from the Whig benches, by a majority of 39.

The division of the House of Commons between free traders and protectionists had now ceased to be paramount, and for the next three months the fate of the Government hung on a nice balance of factions. There were about 120 Peelites, the old guard of the Government; a rather more numerous body of Radicals and O'Connellites, who were opposed to coercion on principle; perhaps 150 Whigs, who, though not opposed to coercion, wished the Corn Bill to have precedence; and 250 protectionists, who wished the order of the Bills reversed. In this situation the Irish members began a course of obstruction, and when the Easter adjournment came, though all the Government time had been given to the Irish Bill, it had not received a first reading. The obstinate Minister even announced that, when the House met again in the middle of April, he would proceed with it again till the stage was completed.

The Irish members glanced defiance, and the protectionists could scarcely conceal their satisfaction. The reputation of Sir Robert Peel for Parliamentary management seemed to be vanishing; never was a Government in a more tottering

state; and the Whigs especially began to renew their laments that the Edinburgh letter and its consequences had prevented the settlement of the corn question from devolving to the natural arbitrator in the great controversy, their somewhat rash but still unrivalled leader, Lord John Russell.[1]

In such a situation intrigue was, of course, rife.

The lovers of compromise, always the strongest party in this country, were now active. Why did not the Whigs step in and settle the question in a spirit consistent with all their previous declarations, which even the protectionists would now willingly accept? A moderate fixed duty was the Whig policy; it would save the honour of the landed party; it would meet the scientific objections of those economical authorities who, however favourable to interchange, were of opinion that it was injurious to encounter hostile tariffs by free imports; it might prove a fruitful source of revenue; finally, it would permit the formation of a strong Government, and the Whigs would only be in their natural position as the leaders of the aristocracy of the country.[2]

Perhaps foreseeing the possibility of some such development, Disraeli, as the reader may have noticed, had during the last couple of years greatly moderated the violence of his attacks on the Whigs, had treated Russell with some deference both in his novels and in the House of Commons, and with Palmerston had even contrived to establish a sort of friendship. When intrigue was going, Disraeli was not likely to be wholly without a hand in it, but his papers throw little light on his activities at this moment. Such evidence as is to be gleaned from them indicates that he was anxious for the formation of a strong Government, and the only possible basis for such a Government was an arrangement between Whigs and protectionists. If Palmerston, not Russell, had been leader of the Whigs, there can be very little doubt that such an arrangement would have been effected, and that Peel would have fallen.

The Whigs were sufficiently patriotic not to shrink from office; they were as a party both from feeling and conviction

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 9. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. 11.

unanimous in favour of a fixed duty; Lord Palmerston's speech was still ringing in the ears of the House of Commons, and not to run the risk of its being forgotten his lordship had properly taken care to have it printed; they were sure under the circumstances of the unanimous support of the Irish members, who would have got rid at the same time of the Corn and the Coercion Bills; they would have received from the landed interest a permanent support; and if Lord George Bentinck had entered the new Cabinet, which many among the Whigs talked of and desired, he would have only reverted to that ancient political connexion of which his house for generations had been one of the main props.[1]

A junction between the two aristocratic parties, the Whigs and the protectionists, leaving Peel, if he liked, to join forces with the middle-class Liberals under Cobden, with whom he was now most in sympathy, would have been the best and healthiest outcome of the situation. It would have anticipated in a sense a rearrangement which was delayed till 1886, and averted much of the confusion of the intervening period. But Russell, embarrassed by his Edinburgh letter, which had been intended to embarrass others, and even more, perhaps, by his engagement with the Queen to support Peel in a settlement of the Corn Laws, proved an insuperable obstacle, and the plan came to nothing.

Another combination was possible, however, which we may believe was not without attractions for Disraeli. The protectionists and the Irish members together formed a clear majority of the House, and united would be able to defeat the Government. O'Connell, the Irish leader, still, indeed, clung to his old allies the Whigs, and was anxious to hasten the passing of the Corn Bill in order to facilitate their return to power; but O'Connell was now at the end of his career, and his influence almost gone. The younger generation, whose aims were national and social rather than religious and political, had no particular love either for the Whigs or the Corn Bill; and they were at present in a state of fury against Peel. They had long been familiar with Disraeli's broad views on the

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 11.

subject of Ireland; and in the debate on the Coercion Bill Bentinck had made a speech that attracted their attention, and proved that his views were as liberal as Disraeli's. This was before Easter, and after the holidays, while the debate on the Coercion Bill was still dragging slowly along, Smith O'Brien, who was the leader of the Young Ireland party in the House, made overtures to Bentinck. In order to clear the air, O'Brien by arrangement rose in his place, and, accepting the protectionist position that the Government had no right to couple the question of Irish famine with the question of free trade —nay, accusing the Prime Minister of a singular want of candour in putting forward the famine as a pretext for what was clearly not an Irish but an English measure—he asked whether Bentinck and his friends would support a Bill to suspend the existing Corn Laws with respect to Ireland, so as to admit grain duty-free. Bentinck, who had just at last been persuaded to accept the formal office of leader, made a statesmanlike reply. He argued against the assumption that O'Brien's suggested remedy would afford any relief, pointing out that corn was still being exported from Ireland, and that its price there was lower than the price in England of foreign corn in bond; and insisting very justly that the real trouble in Ireland was not the want of food, but the want of money to buy it, and that the only immediate remedy was to break the rigid rules of political economy and make provision for the needy. But he wished to dispel the illusion that the protectionist party stood between the people of Ireland and their food; and if the Irish members proposed a suspension of the Corn Laws, he and his friends, though convinced of the futility of such a measure, were willing to support it.

The story at once went round that a compact had been arranged between the protectionists and the Irish members, and the Government and the free traders took serious alarm. Cobden presently rose and rated the protectionists in vigorous style; threatening them with

dissolution, at which they only cheered, and reminding O'Brien and Bentinck that there were other parties to be consulted on the proposition they were making. 'There are the people of England—I don't mean the country party, but the people living in the towns, and who will govern this country.' At this Peel was supposed to cheer; and Disraeli, rising after Cobden, said he had defined the people, with whose indignation he threatened them, as those who lived in towns, and the Prime Minister, who had once been proud of being the head of the gentlemen of England, had cheered that definition. Peel jumped up and exclaimed: 'I totally deny it'; whereupon Disraeli said: 'The right hon. gentleman totally denies it. If he means to say that anything I stated is false, of course, I sit down.' Peel remained silent, and a scene of confusion and excitement followed till at length satisfactory explanations were exchanged and all again became tranquil.

The incident, however, had a sequel. The Prime Minister's brother, Colonel Jonathan Peel, coming up to Disraeli in the House when peace had been restored, said: 'There shall be no doubt as to what *one* person thinks of your assertion, and *I* say it *is* false.' The last duel in England had not yet been fought, and Disraeli at once placed the matter in the hands of Bentinck, who called on Peel to retract. He was referred by Peel to a friend,[1] and Disraeli went to bed to prepare for a visit to Wormwood Scrubbs with pistols in the morning; but a conference between the seconds late at night at White's Club led to the withdrawal of the offensive expression, with an ample apology. Disraeli was supposed to have behaved well throughout the affair.[2]

[1] Captain (afterwards Admiral) Rous. The apology in Bentinck's hand and signed by him and Rous, is preserved among Disraeli's papers. There have been stories of a challenge from Sir Robert Peel himself, but this incident appears to be their only foundation; though Disraeli in later years told Lord Rowton that 'Sir Robert was a very "fightable" man, and wished to challenge me often, but was restrained by Lord Granby and others.'

[2] See Broughton's *Recollections*, VI., p. 168, where Brougham, in the midst of some vulgar abuse, gives his testimony to this effect.

It was now the last week of April, and the Coercion Bill was still awaiting its first reading, while the Corn Bill had not been heard of for a month. The general feeling was that the situation had become critical, and Peel himself saw that he must make a great effort to end the deadlock. When the House next met he spoke on the Coercion Bill, and, alluding to insinuations that the Government were becoming indifferent to the progress of the Corn Bill, said that he was more than ever determined to carry the Corn Bill through; that his opinions indeed had changed in the course of the debates, but the change was that restrictions which he had at first believed to be impolitic he now believed to be unjust. A sense of their injustice precluded any compromise, and he would be perfectly ready to testify, by any public act, the sincerity of his intentions. This was generally interpreted as a threat of dissolution, but Bentinck was undismayed. He never would believe that Peel would dissolve, because, 'whatever might be the national decision as to the principle of policy which was to be adopted, he was convinced that the whole body of the present men in office, at least with rare exceptions, must lose their seats.' The Whigs, however, were frightened by the threat of dissolution, and Young Ireland was discouraged by the loss of its leader, Smith O'Brien, who had been imprisoned by the House for refusing to serve on a railway committee. A few days after this speech of Peel's the division on the Coercion Bill was taken at last, and the first reading carried by a great majority. Neither Whigs nor protectionists had yet advanced to a position of hostility to the principle, and Russell and Bentinck, and most of their followers, voted with the Government. Disraeli walked out of the House.

The way was now clear for the Corn Bill again, but on the motion to go into committee Bentinck demanded an explanation of Peel's remark that he now regarded the Corn Laws as not only impolitic, but unjust. In rallying his colleagues and attempting to rally his followers after

Russell's failure in December, Peel[1] had justified his course by the assurance that the only alternative to a free trade Conservative Ministry was a Government dominated by Cobden. The position which he assumed at the meeting of Parliament 'was that of the patriotic individual who by great sacrifices had succeeded in preventing Cobden from becoming a Minister.' But the revolt of his followers had entirely changed his tone, and his declaration that the repeal of the Corn Laws was a matter of justice rather than of policy marked a fresh approximation to the Manchester League which greatly irritated the protectionists. His reply to Bentinck on the present occasion did not diminish their irritation.

Both sides of the House listened with no little astonishment while the Minister, with an apparent interest in the subject which it would have been supposed novelty could have alone inspired, recapitulated all those arguments which for years the Anti-Corn-Law League had presented to the consideration, not only of the community, but even of the House of Commons, in every form which ingenuity could devise and a versatile and experienced rhetoric illustrate and enforce. But when, with an air of discovery, he availed himself of one of the most subtle but certainly not least hackneyed tactics of Mr. Cobden, and, in order to depreciate the importance of wheat-growing, called upon the House to take the map of Great Britain, and divide the island by a line from Inverness to Southampton, and observe that, generally speaking, to the westward of the line the country had no interest in the restrictions on the importation of wheat, the gentlemen who had left their agricultural constituents in the lurch because they had been told that, unless Sir Robert Peel were permitted to repeal the Corn Laws, Mr. Cobden might actually become a Minister, began to ask themselves whether, after all, such an event would not have been the honestest arrangement of the two. Unlike the Corn Laws, the exclusion of Mr. Cobden might have been

[1] See, for instance, his letter to the Queen, in *Queen Victoria's Letters*, under date Dec. 21, 1845: 'Sir Robert Peel . . . has written . . . very strongly to the Duke [of Buccleuch], stating that the present question is not one of Corn Law, but whether your Majesty's former servants or Lord Grey and Mr. Cobden shall constitute your Majesty's Government. Sir Robert Peel defied the wit of man to suggest now another alternative to your Majesty.'

politic, but, 'after the discussion of the last three months,' it certainly seemed unjust.[1]

Disraeli in the course of the evening happily ridiculed 'the fervour of Peel's mimetic rhetoric.' Taking up a remark of the Minister's that the debate was unexpected, he said:

> Though not prepared for a debate, I can scarcely say that is an excuse for not being prepared to answer the speech of the right hon. baronet. That is not a speech heard now for the first time. It has been heard in other places, in different localities, and, I may be permitted to add, from a master-hand. That speech has sounded in Stockport; it has echoed in Durham.[2] There has been on the stage of the classical theatre a representation of it on the finest scale, and, as is usual in such cases, the popular performance is now repeated by an inferior company. Especially, when I heard the line drawn which marks on the map the corn-growing districts of Great Britain, I thought I might say, as I hear sometimes said on railway committees upon rival lines, 'That is surely the line of the hon. member for Stockport' (Mr. Cobden).

But, in spite of Disraeli's wit and Bentinck's zeal and energy, the Minister, backed by the Whigs, now made steady progress, and the Corn Bill soon reached the stage of third reading. It was read a third time on May 15, after a debate of three nights, by a majority of 98 in a House of 560. Disraeli on the last night made the speech of the debate. According to the fashion of the time, it was a speech of great length, occupying no less than three hours in the delivery, and throughout its greater part it was a closely-reasoned performance on the lines of the speech in February. Clinging to his central position, he had little difficulty in showing the contradictions in which the theorists of free trade were involved by their *a priori* dogmas; and many of his own arguments are curious anticipations of the arguments that have become familiar during the revival of the controversy in the last ten years. He believed, for instance, 'that the effect

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 12.

[2] Bright's constituency.

of the present Corn Laws was to raise the price of the necessaries of life in this country'; but he also believed 'that they increased in an infinitely greater ratio the purchasing powers by the community of the necessaries of life.' He believed, again, that it could be 'laid down as a principle of commerce, that where an article could be progressively produced to an indefinite extent, precisely as the demand increased the price would decrease.' Even the colonial argument was touched upon. 'I am not one of those who think it the inevitable lot of the people of Canada to become annexed to the United States. Canada has all the elements of a great and independent country, and is destined, I sometimes believe, to be the Russia of the new world. . . . But I will ask the gentlemen of Manchester to consider what may become of the trans-atlantic market for their manufactures if the whole of that continent belong to one power.' All this was lit up by occasional flashes of Disraelian wit: the suggestion, for instance, of a limbo for political economists, to which their exhausted arguments and exploded fallacies might be consigned after serving their turn; the picture of the member for Lincoln placing the arch-fiend of political economy on the celebrated tower that overlooks the city, to take a survey of the agriculture spread out before him; and the often-quoted description of Cobden and his friends: 'I find that a body of men have risen in this country eminent for their eloquence, distinguished for their energy, but more distinguished, in my humble opinion, for their energy and their eloquence than for their knowledge of human nature or for the extent of their political information.'

This led him on to the conclusion of the speech, which was a long and sustained invective against Peel. The Anti-Corn-Law League had been successful, he said, because the party who were hostile to their ideas had not unnaturally slumbered at their posts, trusting to their leaders—to those who had clambered into power by accepting, or rather by eagerly seeking, the trust of

guarding them—to one who in this way had obtained the greatest place in the country, and at that moment governed England. More than a year ago he had said in his place that protection appeared to him to be in about the same state that Protestantism was in in 1829. His friends, he remembered, were very indignant at that assertion, but they had since been so kind as to observe that, instead of being a calumny, it was only a prophecy. But with that very humble exception the Prime Minister, he thought, had been completely successful in deceiving his party to the very last moment. How ingenuous was his conduct he left the House to decide; but was it not strange that after all his Machiavellian manœuvres, when he met them at last, he acted as if they had deserted him, instead of his having deserted them? Who could forget those tones and that indignant glance?

> Vectabor humeris tunc ego inimicis eques:
> Meæque terra cedet insolentiæ:[1]

which was as much as to say: 'I, a protectionist Minister, mean to govern England by the aid of the Anti-Corn-Law League; and as for the country gentlemen, why, I snap my fingers in their faces.'

Yet even then the right hon. gentleman had no cause to complain of his party. It is very true that, on a subsequent occasion, 240 gentlemen recorded their sense of his conduct. But then he might have remembered the considerable section of converts that he obtained, even in the last hour. (Loud laughter.) Why, what a compliment to a Minister—not only to vote for him, but to vote for him against your opinions (much cheering), and in favour of opinions which he had always drilled you to distrust. (Loud cheers.) That was a scene, I believe, unprecedented in the House of Commons. Indeed, I recollect nothing equal to it, unless it be the conversion of the Saxons by Charlemagne, which is the only historical incident that bears any parallel to that illustrious occasion. (Great cheers and laughter.) Ranged on the banks of the Rhine, the Saxons determined to resist any further movement on the part of the great Cæsar; but when the Emperor appeared, instead of conquering he converted

[1] Horace, *Epod.* XVII., 74, 75.

them. How were they converted? In battalions—the old chronicler informs us they were converted in battalions and baptised in platoons. (Roars of laughter.) It was utterly impossible to bring these individuals from a state of reprobation to a state of grace with a celerity sufficiently quick. When I saw the hundred and twelve fall into rank and file, I was irresistibly reminded of that memorable incident on the banks of the Rhine. (Loud cheers.)

He must say, in vindication of the right hon. gentleman, that a great injustice had been done him throughout these debates. He had been accused of foregone treachery, of long-meditated deception, of always having intended to abandon the opinions by which he rose to power.

Sir, I entirely acquit the right hon. gentleman of any such intention. I do it for this reason: that when I examine the career of this Minister, which has now filled a great space in the Parliamentary history of his country, I find that between thirty and forty years, from the days of Mr. Horner to the days of the hon. member for Stockport, that right hon. gentleman has traded on the ideas and intelligence of others. (Loud cheering.) His life has been a great appropriation clause. (Shouts of laughter and cheers.) He is a burglar of others' intellect. Search the Index of Beatson, from the days of the Conqueror to the termination of the last reign, there is no statesman who has committed political petty larceny on so great a scale. (Renewed laughter.) I believe, therefore, when the right hon. gentleman undertook our cause on either side of the House, that he was perfectly sincere in his advocacy; but as, in the course of discussion, the conventionalisms which he received from us crumbled away in his grasp, feeling no creative power to sustain him with new arguments, feeling no spontaneous sentiments to force upon him conviction, the right hon. gentleman, reduced at last to defending the noblest cause, one based on the most high and solemn principles, upon the 'burdens peculiar to agriculture'[1]—the right hon. gentleman, faithful to the law of his nature, imbibed the new doctrines, the more vigorous, bustling, popular, and progressive doctrines, as he had imbibed the doctrines of Mr. Horner—as he had imbibed the doctrines of every leading man in this country for thirty or forty years, with the exception of the

[1] The words in inverted commas, we are told, were uttered in a tone of sarcasm that elicited very great laughter.

doctrine of Parliamentary reform, which the Whigs very wisely led the country upon, and did not allow to grow sufficiently mature to fall into his mouth.

The right hon. gentleman told them that he did not feel humiliated. It was impossible for anyone to know what were the feelings of another; but this he would tell him, that, though he might not feel humiliated, his country ought to feel humiliated. Was it grateful to the pride of England that her foremost citizen should be one of whom it might be said, as Dean Swift said of another, that 'he was a gentleman who had the perpetual misfortune to be mistaken'? Even now in this the last scene of the drama, when the party which he had unintentionally betrayed was to be intentionally annihilated, faithful to the law of his being, he was going to pass a project which it was a matter of notoriety was not of his own invention.

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After the day that the right hon. gentleman made his first exposition of his scheme, a gentleman well known in this House, and learned in all the political secrets behind the scenes, met me, and said: 'Well, what do you think of your chief's plan?' Not knowing exactly what to say, but, taking up a phrase which has been much used in the House, I observed: 'Well, I suppose it's a "great and comprehensive" plan.' 'Oh!' he replied, 'we know all about it! It was offered to us! It is not his plan; it's Popkins's plan!' (Peals of laughter from all parts of the House.) And is England to be governed, and is England to be convulsed, by 'Popkins's plan?' (Cheers and laughter.) Will he go to the country with it? Will he go with it to that ancient and famous England that once was governed by statesmen—by Burleighs and by Walsinghams; by Bolingbrokes and by Walpoles; by a Chatham and a Canning—will he go to it with this fantastic scheming of some presumptuous pedant? (Great cheering.) I won't believe it. I have that confidence in the common sense, I will say the common spirit of our countrymen, that I believe they will not long endure this huckstering tyranny of the Treasury bench (loud cheers)—these political pedlars that bought their party in the cheapest market, and sold us in the dearest. (Enthusiastic cheering.)

I know, sir, that there are many who believe that the time is gone by when one can appeal to those high and honest impulses that were once the mainstay and the main element

of the English character. I know, sir, that we appeal to a people debauched by public gambling, stimulated and encouraged by an inefficient and a short-sighted Minister. I know that the public mind is polluted with economic fancies—a depraved desire that the rich may become richer without the interference of industry and toil. I know, sir, that all confidence in public men is lost. (Great cheering.) But, sir, I have faith in the primitive and enduring elements of the English character. It may be vain now, in the midnight of their intoxication, to tell them that there will be an awakening of bitterness; it may be idle now, in the springtide of their economic frenzy, to warn them that there may be an ebb of trouble. But the dark and inevitable hour will arrive. Then, when their spirits are softened by misfortune, they will recur to those principles that made England great, and which, in our belief, will only keep England great. (Prolonged cheers.) Then too, sir, perchance they may remember, not with unkindness, those who, betrayed and deserted, were neither ashamed nor afraid to struggle for the 'good old cause'—the cause with which are associated principles the most popular, sentiments the most entirely national, the cause of labour, the cause of the people, the cause of England!

'Mr. Disraeli,' it is recorded, 'here resumed his seat amid cheers which for duration and vehemence are seldom heard within the walls of Parliament.' It was eight years since he had told them that the time would come when they would hear him.

From Lord Ponsonby.[1]

May 15, 1846.

MY DEAR DISRAELI,

'A cat may look at a king, and a country parson may praise a Bishop.' Such is the beginning of a letter from Sydney Smith to the Bishop of Oxford.

Fortified by the above assertion of right, I will venture to praise you. I heard your speech—all but the first few minutes. It lasted, they say, three hours, and when it was over I wished it to last three hours more. I thought your argument admirably managed, and perfectly sound in essence, and I doubt if any classic orator of Rome or England ever did anything so well as you crucified Peel. Had I been him, I would have rushed at and murdered you, or run home and hanged myself.

[1] See note, p. 623.

John Russell tired me in a quarter of an hour, and I left the House dissatisfied.

I never in my life heard any speech so much cheered as yours was; I never saw so much effect produced by one. I think you will no longer talk of flying your country; I think you will no longer talk of difficulties of position, but will feel that you were born to the foremost rank of its chiefest ornaments and leaders. From the first of my acquaintance with you I felt your power.

Tell Mrs. Disraeli that I wish her joy.

Yours most truly,

PONSONBY.

Hobhouse also bears his testimony to the great impression made by the speech:

His conclusion for a good twenty minutes was a steady philippic against Peel, which was very powerful indeed, and produced a great effect on all parts of the House. Peel looked miserable, and his brother Jonathan more wretched still, and bursting with mortification; even Macaulay told me he thought the effect very powerful, and the speech the best Disraeli ever made. Russell, who followed, was unable to go on for some time on account of the prolonged cheering![1]

The final cheer is recalled by Disraeli himself in a note of the sixties reminiscent of an incident to which the speech gave rise.

After my great speech in 1846, on the second [*sic*] reading of the Bill for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and which was followed by the loudest and the longest cheer that ever was heard in the House of Commons, a gentleman who was obliged to be a protectionist, but no friend of mine, but very much of Sir R. Peel, met O'Connell in the lobby, and asked him what he thought of my speech. 'I should have said,' replied the great Dan, 'that it was one of the ablest speeches I ever heard in the House of Commons, but for the invective.' 'Ah!' said the protectionist, shaking his head and looking quite mournful at the mention of the sacrilege. 'But for the invective,' continued O'Connell, 'and that made it incomparable.'

'What a sell!' said Lord March, who heard it and came and told me.

[1] Broughton, VI., p. 170.

The speech was followed by another incident which has become too celebrated. Peel, who had an angry reception[1] from the members of the country party, spoke later in the evening, and, after the customary prelude that he would not condescend to bandy personalities, remarked that, when he entered on his present course from a sense of public duty, he foresaw that it would expose him to many serious sacrifices; but the smallest of all the penalties which he then anticipated were the continued venomous attacks of the member for Shrewsbury.

> Sir, I will only say of that hon. gentleman, that if he, after reviewing the whole of my public life—a life extending over thirty years previously to my accession to office in 1841—if he then entertained the opinion of me which he now professes; if he thought I was guilty of these petty larcenies from Mr. Horner and others, it is a little surprising that in the spring of 1841, after his long experience of my public career, he should have been prepared to give me his confidence. It is still more surprising that he should have been ready, as I think he was, to unite his fortunes with mine in office, thus implying the strongest proof which any public man can give of confidence in the honour and integrity of a Minister of the Crown.

The retort was not overwhelming; nor was the taunt very chivalrous, though the provocation may have excused it. Disraeli might well have remained silent; or, still better, if he had risen and frankly told the story of his application to Peel in 1841, in which there was nothing really discreditable, he would, in all probability, have carried the House with him, and effectually have turned the tables on his antagonist. But, frightened, we may believe, by a consciousness that his character did not stand high, he for once lost his head, and grievously blundered. Rising after Peel, he asked for a moment's attention to the

[1] 'When he talked of honour and conscience' (Greville tells us under date May 21, 1846), 'they assailed him with shouts of derision and gestures of contempt. Such treatment in a House of Commons, where for years he had been an object of deference and respect, nearly overcame him. The Speaker told me that for a minute or more he was obliged to stop; and, for the first time in his life, probably, he lost his self-possession, and the Speaker . . . expected him to burst into tears.'

'peculiarly personal' subject of the Prime Minister's insinuation, and then embarked on a shambling and obviously embarrassed statement, of which, however, the general effect is only too clear. He began by denying that his opposition to the Government had been inspired by personal motives, pointing out, fairly enough, that he had supported them for two years, and that his first step in opposition had only been taken when his constituents in 1843 called on him to explain his views on protection. He then proceeded:

> I understand the insinuation of the right hon. gentleman, if it meant anything, to be this—that my opposition, or, as he called it, my 'envenomed opposition' to him, was occasioned by my being disappointed of office. Now, having been for five years in opposition to the late Government, an active, though I well know not an influential, supporter of the right hon. gentleman, and having been favoured by him with an acknowledgment of his sense of my slight services, I do not think there would have been anything dishonourable for me if, when the new Government was formed in 1841, I had been an applicant for office. It might have been in good taste or not, but at least there would have been nothing dishonourable; but I can assure the House nothing of the kind ever occurred. I never shall—it is totally foreign to my nature—make an application for any place. But in 1841, when the Government was formed . . . an individual possessing, as I believe him to possess, the most intimate and complete confidence of the right hon. gentleman called on me and communicated with me. There was certainly some conversation—I have certainly never adverted to these circumstances, and should not now unless compelled, because they were under a seal of secrecy confided in me. There was some communication, not at all of that nature which the House perhaps supposes, between the right hon. gentleman and me, but of the most amicable kind. I can only say this—it was a transaction not originated by me, but which any gentleman, I care not how high his honour or spirit, might entertain tomorrow.

After an allusion to the rumours of interested motives that were put in circulation from the moment that he began to criticise the Government, he concluded:

I never asked a favour of the Government, not even one of those mechanical things which persons are obliged to ask . . . and, as regards myself, I never directly or indirectly solicited office. . . . It is very possible if, in 1841, I had been offered office, I dare say it would have been a very slight office, but I dare say I should have accepted it. I have not that high opinion of myself as to suppose that the more important offices of the Government would have been offered to my acceptance; but I can only say that I am very glad I did not accept it. But with respect to my being a solicitor of office, it is entirely unfounded. Whatever occurred in 1841 between the right hon. gentleman and myself was entirely attributable to the intervention of another gentleman, whom I supposed to be in the confidence of the right hon. baronet, and I dare say it may have arisen from a misconception.

Peel was content to rejoin that he had not attributed personal motives for Disraeli's opposition. He had only asked why, if Disraeli really believed he deserved the character he had given him to-night, he should in 1841 'have intimated to me that he was not unwilling to give me that proof of confidence that would have been implied by the acceptance of office.' The impression in the House was that Disraeli had better have remained silent, and there the matter ended.

Of the mysterious 'individual' of Disraeli's speech, and his 'communication' from Peel, authorised or not, in 1841, we know nothing besides. It might conceivably have been someone—Lyndhurst or another—who endeavoured to soothe Disraeli's feelings by hinting at the real difficulties in the way of Peel's giving him office; but there is no reason to think that if we knew more the whole transaction would wear any very different aspect. We have already seen that as early as 1844 Disraeli denied before his constituents that he had ever asked Peel for office, and it is impossible to believe that in the short space of three years he could have forgotten his letter of 1841.[1] Speaking among his constituents, he might have thought he was safe from challenge; but it

[1] There is nothing in Disraeli's papers to indicate that he kept a copy of this letter.

is very hard to understand how he could have risen in the House of Commons, and, with his position clearly before his eyes, have taken the terrible risk of Peel's crushing him for ever by producing the correspondence.[1] By way of meeting this difficulty, it has been pointed out that in the letter of 1841 there is no explicit request for office, and that it might therefore have been just possible to reconcile it with the speech of 1846. But the House of Commons would have been little impressed by such ingenious refinements, and Disraeli himself, to do him justice, in his moments of complete self-possession, would have scorned to seek shelter beneath them. 'The general effect is the thing'—that is his own canon; and though some element of mystery may remain in this affair, the general effect is clear enough. Having asked Peel for office in 1841, Disraeli in 1846, not to press the other occasion, publicly denied that he had done so; and he must pay the full penalty. Let the politician who is without sin in the matter of veracity cast the first stone.

Though the Corn Bill had now been carried through the House of Commons, the fate of the Government and all their measures still hung in the balance. A week after the great division they had a narrow escape. The Ten Hours Bill, which had proved so embarrassing to Peel and Graham a couple of years before, had been introduced again; and though the whole weight of their influence was again thrown into the scale against it, they only succeeded in defeating it by a majority of ten.[2] The bulk of the Whigs and protectionists voted for the Bill against the Peelites and Manchester Liberals; and this was so obviously the natural division of parties that the attempts were now renewed to give it permanent recognition.

A nobleman, whose services have been since prematurely lost to the country, and whose excellent sense, imperturbable

[1] Lord Rosebery (*Sir Robert Peel*, p. 9) has a story of Peel's searching among his papers for Disraeli's letter late into the night of the affair in the House of Commons. The correspondence was first published long after Disraeli's death, in the late Mr. Parker's *Life of Sir Robert Peel*.

[2] 203 to 193.

temper, and knowledge of mankind, had for many years exercised a leading influence in the councils of the Whigs, and always to their advantage, was extremely anxious that by a reconstruction in this spirit an end should be put to that balanced state of parties which, if permitted to continue, frustrated the practicability, and even the prospect, of a strong Government. What he wished particularly to accomplish was, to see Lord George Bentinck in the new Whig Cabinet. But though this eminent individual conducted his negotiations under the happiest auspices, for Lord George Bentinck entertained for him great personal regard, and was united to his son by ties of very warm and intimate friendship, his object was not attained.[1]

The nobleman was Lord Bessborough,[2] who was afterwards Russell's Lord Lieutenant, and who, in addition to the personal ties to which Disraeli alludes, was as an Irishman attracted by Bentinck's Irish policy. His kinsman, Lord Ponsonby, who, as we have seen, had conceived a high opinion of Disraeli's powers, had been labouring throughout the session for the formation of a strong Government on the basis of an understanding between Whigs and protectionists; and through him Disraeli had for some time been in communication with Bessborough and his friends. The intrigúe on the present occasion was hatched, according to Greville,[3] at Palmerston House, and the plan was to transform the Corn Bill in the Lords by the introduction of a fixed duty. It was not yet realised how insuperable was the obstacle presented to this plan by Russell's engagements; but Russell, when he heard of it, promptly summoned a meeting of the Whig peers at Lansdowne House, and told them that it was inconsistent with his personal and political honour. The result was reported to Hobhouse by Palmerston, who was present, as 'All unanimous against the Bill and all unanimous not to oppose it.' A few days later, on May 28, the Lords passed the second reading by the ample and unexpected majority of 47.

When the Houses adjourned for Whitsuntide, the

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 14. [2] The 4th Earl, 1781 to 1847.
[3] Under date June 1, 1846.

outlook, which at Easter had been so full of hope for the protectionists, had become very gloomy. Few now thought of defeating the Corn Bill, and it was even a question whether it would be possible to secure the defeat of the Government when the Corn Bill had become law. After their majority in the Lords, Ministers themselves began to be sanguine that they would escape for this session, and it was far from easy to see how they were to be caught. A direct vote of censure would probably not be supported by the Liberal wing of the Opposition; and, as it would appear to be conceived in the interest of the Whigs, it would have the effect of driving back many of the rebellious Conservatives to the Ministerial fold. Other courses suggested presented similar difficulties.

Thus it happened that, although for several weeks the persons most adroit in such affairs had been planning the overthrow of a Government which was only supported by one-sixth of the members of the House of Commons, the Whitsun recess had closed, and Parliament had again re-opened, without apparently any approximation to the means which were to accomplish their purpose. The Bill for the repeal of the Corn Laws could not be carried through the House of Lords until the end of June; and until that measure was secured the Whigs and their Liberal allies were not prepared to strike. What opportunity would they have of dealing the blow after June? There was no reason why the Government, having carried their measure, might not rapidly wind up the session and prorogue Parliament. Was it probable that at the end of another month, the Government having achieved their great object, those who were conspiring their overthrow would be richer in their resources or more felicitous in their expedients than at the present moment, when vengeance, ambition, the love of office, and the love of change, all combined to advance and assist their wishes?

At length Disraeli succeeded in persuading Bentinck that the only chance lay in the course he had urged from the first—opposition to the Coercion Bill. Both Russell and Bentinck, as we have seen, had supported the first reading—Russell, as Disraeli tells us, 'entrapped by the precipitate acts and indiscreet admissions of his colleagues in the House of Lords,' and Bentinck, 'though warned

against taking a course which was in itself foreign to his policy with respect to Ireland, seduced into the proceeding by the irresistible temptation of securing delay in the progress of the Corn Bill.' Russell had since prepared for a retreat, artificially enough, by quarrelling with some of the vital clauses, and hinting that it would be fairer to oppose the second reading than to mutilate the Bill; but Bentinck's position was much better. He had made it a condition of his support that the Government should show they were in earnest by pressing forward with the Bill, and nearly three months had now elapsed since it came down from the House of Lords, and it had only been advanced one stage. The second reading was to be taken on June 8, and the indications were that the Whigs would oppose. In this matter, of course, they would have the Irish and Radicals with them, and if a moderate number of protectionists could be induced to vote against the Bill, the defeat of the Government was certain. But at first the omens were unfavourable. Before the debate began, Bentinck, in a rapid council of his friends, suggested the plan of opposing the Bill, but Disraeli alone supported him. The others all thought the movement must fail, and bring discredit upon them. When the rejection was moved from the Whig benches, Bentinck, sitting with Disraeli by him, was still undecided. At the end of the first speech he left Disraeli in charge, and went out to confer with one of his whips. When he came back, he reported:

> There are no means of calculating at this moment how our men will go, but he agrees with us. It may be perilous, but if we lose this chance the traitor will escape. I will make the plunge, and as soon as I can There is a rumour that Lord John is hardly up to the mark. I suppose he has heard that our men will not vote against the Bill. Now, if I speak early and strongly, it will encourage him to be decided.

He made the plunge during the evening. In the course of a vehement speech, he reminded Peel that he was now

what he had once proudly declared he would never consent to be—a Minister on sufferance, 'supported by none but his forty paid janissaries and some seventy other renegades, one-half of whom, while supporting him, expressed their shame of doing so.' They were told now by the Minister that it would have been base and dishonest in him if he had concealed his opinions after he had changed them; but he remembered with sorrow when his illustrious relative Canning was 'chased and hunted to death' by the right hon. baronet, who refused to support his Ministry on the ground that it was favourable to Catholic emancipation. That was in 1827; yet in 1829 he told the House of Commons that he had changed his opinions on that subject in 1825, and had communicated the change of opinion to Lord Liverpool. Did he not therefore by his own verdict stand convicted of conduct that was base and dishonest?

This speech, of course, raised the temperature of the debate. Sidney Herbert at once followed in an acrimonious vein, and was foolish enough to offend both protectionists and Whigs by talk of secret negotiations, for which he had nothing better than vague rumour to offer as his warrant. By the end of the night the field of battle was fixed; the Government were pledged to stand by their measure; Russell and Bentinck were both pledged to oppose it; and a good many protectionists had been irritated into sympathy with a policy of which at first they were inclined to disapprove. For a moment it seemed even possible that the Government might fall before the Corn Bill was through the Lords; but this the Whigs were determined to avoid, and it became the problem to postpone the critical division till the Corn Bill was safe.

An episode that developed out of Bentinck's speech helped to fill up the time. When the Irish debate was resumed four days later, Peel spoke effectively, dwelling, in the tones of sorrowful indignation which he knew how to command, on the licence of Bentinck's language; denying unequivocally the charge that in 1829 he had

avowed a change of opinion in 1825, which he subsequently concealed in 1827; and concluding with the declaration to which allusion has already been made, that it was a foul calumny to suggest that he had wished to rob Russell of his right to settle the corn question. Bentinck seems to have made his reference to Peel's supposed avowal in 1829 on the spur of the moment, as to a fact that was verified by his own recollection and accepted by all who were familiar with the events of that time. He was not prepared for Peel's denial; but he now turned to the records, and found that though the words of the speech of 1829, on which his case rested, did not appear in the report in Hansard, which admittedly had been revised, they appeared in *The Times* and in another publication called the *Mirror of Parliament*. Other corroborative evidence was also obtained, and as by the rules of the House Bentinck could not speak again in the Irish debate, he handed this material for a reply to Disraeli.

Disraeli employed it in what Hobhouse calls a 'very powerful speech,' defending his friend and maintaining the charge against Peel in a manner 'exceedingly effective.'[1] On the subject of the Coercion Bill, he remarked that there had been no attempt to account for the fact that only now, in the month of June, were they asked to read it a second time. He insisted that even though Bentinck had changed his attitude on the Bill, there was a world of difference between his conduct and the conduct of the Minister who had drawn a parallel between the two. Bentinck had violated no confidence and betrayed no trust; he had not with practised duplicity supplanted a candidate on the hustings by promising to vote for the very measure he was coming to Parliament to oppose. As a matter of fact, he had given the Government the most exact notice of what he intended to do. Coming to Peel's declaration that it was a foul calumny to suggest that he had wished to anticipate Russell in the settlement of the corn question, the speaker proved that the original

[1] Broughton, VI., p. 178.

author of the so-called calumny was the First Minister himself. With regard to Bentinck's strong language, he had no difficulty in showing that similar language had been used 'by men of great light and leading, by the greatest statesmen, and orators that England ever produced,' one passage he cited from Fox containing the very word 'janissaries' applied exactly as Bentinck had applied it.

> The noble lord [he proceeded], the member for Lynn—I say it in his presence, for I know he is superior to any petty offence on the subject—the noble lord, if he has any characteristic more than another, it is his total absence of affectation and pretence. The noble lord never comes here but he always tells us that he does so most unwillingly, and that he has been pressed against his will into the position he now occupies. He always tells us: 'I am no ripe scholar, I am not a practised statesman, I am not an orator; cannot you get someone else than me? I was bred a soldier; I never aspired to more than the reputation of a high-spirited and honourable English gentleman.' That is the character of the noble lord, and I believe he has attained his utmost wishes. I must say it not in his praise; for I think, with his great abilities and his high station, it is a deficiency in such a man; but the fact is that he is not ambitious. Anyone who knows him intimately, knows that the idea—and it is a legitimate idea—of his rising in the State is foreign to his nature, and never entered his mind. (Loud cheers.) The noble lord may have expressed himself with unusual warmth and vigour. With no pretensions, as he tells us, as an orator, speaking from the heart, I am not sure but the very vigour of his brave honesty is worth all the modern eloquence with which we are so often favoured, when we have all those pompous plausibilities, all those solemn adroitnesses, all those 'damnable iterations,' all those stale sophisms and solemn commonplaces, which are held up by the name of modern eloquence.

He then produced the evidence in support of the Canning charge, and concluded:

> Sir, I think I have answered the elaborate attack of the right hon. gentleman on the noble lord—his attack on my noble friend's consistency, his attack on his Parliamentary language; his attack upon the imputation my noble friend made upon him as to the conduct of the right hon. gentleman

to Mr. Canning. But I trust I have done more than vindicate my noble friend. I trust I have put in its true and intelligible light that mysterious passage which has so long perplexed the politicians of Europe, and which the right hon. gentleman on Friday night so elaborately explained for the benefit of the rising generation. I am not surprised that, closely connected with Mr. Canning as he was, my noble friend should have expressed himself as he did. The feeling to which he gave utterance is shared by all who have had intercourse with Mr. Canning. I never saw Mr. Canning but once, when I had no expectation of being a member of this House, but I can recollect it but as yesterday, when I listened to the last accents—I may say the dying words—of that illustrious statesman. I can recollect the flash—the lightning flash—of that eye, and the power of that imperial brow. But, sir, when shall we see another Mr. Canning—a man who ruled this House as a man rules a high-bred steed, as Alexander ruled Bucephalus (a laugh), of whom it was said that horse and man were alike proud. I thank that hon. gentleman for his laugh. The pulse of the national heart does not beat as high as once it did. I know the temper of this House is not as spirited and brave as it was, nor am I surprised, when the vulture rules where once the eagle reigned. (Loud cheers.) The right hon. gentleman once said that Ireland was his great difficulty. I ask the right hon. gentleman why Ireland was his great difficulty, and whether, if he had acted with frankness to Mr. Canning in reference to his communication with Lord Liverpool in 1825, Ireland would have been his great difficulty. This the right hon. gentleman must feel at the present moment, when we are about again to divide on an Irish question—a division which may be fatal to the endurance of his power—he must feel that it is a nemesis that dictates this vote and regulates this decision, and that is about to stamp with its seal the catastrophe of a sinister career. (Loud and continued cheering.)

Peel, who, according to Hobhouse, was 'completely knocked down,' asked the House at the close to suspend judgment on the Canning charge; but a few days later he made his defence, and carried all before him. Never, says Disraeli, was there a more successful explanation. Its success, perhaps, was rather owing to the high character of the man, and to his adroitness in handling the case than to the solid merits of his argument or its completeness as an answer to the evidence on the other

side. He proved conclusively that the report in the *Mirror of Parliament* was founded on that in *The Times*, so that it could not be cited as independent testimony; but he left much unexplained. There is no doubt that a belief had been allowed to establish itself that Peel had used the words which Bentinck afterwards brought against him, that they had been referred to in the House of Commons, and that neither Peel nor his friends attempted to correct them; equally, no doubt, that the words were out of correspondence with the facts, and that, whether spoken or not, they did not represent the speaker's intention. Disraeli himself sums up the incident with 'the full admission that, though Lord George Bentinck was perfectly justified in making the particular charge which he advanced, it was without real foundation.' We may feel a little sceptical on the point of Bentinck's justification. Justification there certainly was in the sense of a good deal of evidence; but even if the charge had been proved, the taste and wisdom of raking up such a story in the middle of a great struggle on other issues twenty years later would have remained very doubtful.[1] 'In passing judgment on public men,' Disraeli himself had written with reference to this very question of the relations between Peel and Canning, 'it behoves us ever to take large and extended views of their conduct'; and one could wish that he and Bentinck had left the Canning charge alone.[2] Their best excuse is that they blundered into it without forethought, under guidance of the blazing passions of this 'sad, fierce session.'

[1] There is, however, no justification except pardonable bad temper for Peel's description of the affair, in a letter to the Queen (*Queen Victoria's Letters*, June 22, 1846), as 'a foul conspiracy concocted by Mr. Disraeli and Lord George Bentinck in the hope and belief that from the lapse of time or want of leisure in Sir Robert Peel to collect materials for his defence, or the destruction of documents and papers, the means of complete refutation might be wanting.' Bentinck, who was mainly responsible, certainly believed the charge; and whatever we may think of his judgment, he was, if possible, more incapable of an act of deliberate baseness than even Peel himself.

[2] Disraeli seems to have had some such feeling as this himself when he dissuaded Bentinck, six months later, from reopening the question on some fresh evidence that was forthcoming. See *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 15, where the story of the Canning episode is told at length.

A few days after the termination of the Canning episode, on June 25, the Corn and Customs Bills finally passed the House of Lords; and on the same night[1] the division on the Coercion Bill was taken in the Commons. The result seems to have been doubtful up to the last moment.

> The managers for the Government were certain of the support of a very large portion of the protectionist party. They were induced to believe that many of that party would avoid the division, but that very few indeed would bring themselves to vote against a Bill which they had already stoutly supported. . . . The protectionists were very discreet and their tactics extremely close; the party was never better managed than on this division.

A hundred protectionists voted with the Government, and about eighty abstained. Disraeli has given a famous epic catalogue of the others who defiled before the Minister to the hostile lobby—'the Manners, the Somersets, the Bentincks, the Lowthers, and the Lennoxes'; and those gentlemen of England of whom a few years before he had been so proud of being the leader—'Sir Charles Burrell, Sir William Jolliffe, Sir Charles Knightly, Sir John Trollope, Sir Edward Kerrison, Sir John Tyrrell, and Sir John Yarde Buller.'

> They trooped on: all the men of metal and large-acred squires, whose spirit he had so often quickened and whose counsel he had so often solicited in his fine Conservative speeches in Whitehall Gardens: Mr. Bankes, with a Parliamentary name of two centuries, and Mr. Christopher from that broad Lincolnshire which protection had created; and the Mileses and the Henleys were there; and the Duncombes, the Liddells, and the Yorkes; and Devon had sent there the stout heart of Mr. Buck—and Wiltshire, the pleasant presence of Walter Long. Mr. Newdegate was there, whom Sir Robert had himself recommended to the confidence of the electors of Warwickshire, as one of whom he had the highest hopes; and Mr. Alderman Thompson was there,

[1] This has often been described as an 'extraordinary coincidence,' but, as will be clear from the foregoing narrative, it was neither a coincidence nor extraordinary.

who, also through Sir Robert's selection, had seconded the assault upon the Whigs, led on by Sir John Buller. But the list is too long; or good names remain behind.

Over seventy protectionists followed Bentinck and Disraeli, and with the Whigs, the Radicals, and the Irishmen, they were more than sufficient.

When Prince Metternich was informed at Dresden, with great ostentation, that the Emperor had arrived, 'Yes; but without his army,' was the reply. Sir Robert Peel was still First Minister of England, as Napoleon remained Emperor for a while after Moscow. Each perhaps for a moment had indulged in hope. It is so difficult for those who are on the pinnacle of life to realise disaster. They sometimes contemplate it in their deep and far-seeing calculations, but it is only to imagine a contingency which their resources must surely baffle; they sometimes talk of it to their friends, and oftener of it to their enemies, but it is only as an insurance of their prosperity and as an offering to propitiate their nemesis. They never believe in it.

The news that the Government were not only beaten, but by a majority so large as 73, began to circulate. An incredulous murmur passed it along the Treasury bench.

'They say we are beaten by 73!' whispered the most important member of the Cabinet in a tone of surprise to Sir Robert Peel.

Sir Robert did not reply, or even turn his head. He looked very grave, and extended his chin, as was his habit when he was annoyed and cared not to speak. He began to comprehend his position, and that the Emperor was without his army.

Cobden tried to persuade Peel to dissolve rather than resign, hailing him as the personification of the 'idea of the age,' and assuring him of success if he placed himself at the head of a great middle-class party. 'There must,' he wrote, 'be an end of the juggle of parties, the mere representatives of traditions, and some man must of necessity rule the state through its governing class. The Reform Bill decreed it; the passing of the Corn Bill has realised it.' Peel was more alive to 'the serious risk of defeat' if he essayed such an enterprise, and, weary besides, preferred to resign. He announced his resigna-

tion on June 29 in a speech in the House of Commons which has often been quoted since with sympathy and approbation, but which was generally condemned at the time as an error of taste and judgment. He irritated the Whigs by a long commendation of the acts of his own Government, and he deeply offended his late followers by a glowing eulogy of Cobden, whom only six months before they had been asked to regard as such a danger to the State that he must be kept out of power even at the expense of a surrender of their convictions. There was, however, a certain dramatic fitness, in spite of the inconsistency, in his paying homage at such a moment to the real author of his policy. He concluded with the famous passage in which he talked of leaving a name that might be execrated by monopolists, but would sometimes, he hoped, be remembered with good-will in the abodes of those whose lot it was to labour, when they should recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it was no longer leavened by a sense of injustice.

Peel was overthrown, but his policy prevailed. In its origin it was not suggestive either of foresight or of circumspection, but the stars in their courses fought for it. The great development of steam and railways that was proceeding when it was adopted, and the gold discoveries in California and Australia that soon followed, led to a mighty growth of national prosperity with which the new system from the first became identified in the public mind; and the period of almost continuous war that presently began, and lasted till the seventies, long concealed its chief weakness by postponing the injury to English agriculture which Disraeli and his friends had predicted. Thus favoured by fortune, the new fiscal system became firmly established, and England has now been faithful to it for two generations. It was long almost a heresy to attempt even to criticise it, but that day is past. We can see now that a statesman of wider vision than Peel—such a statesman as Disraeli if he had

had the position and influence—might have done all that was needed in 1846 in the interest of English industry and the town population, while safeguarding our agriculture against the disasters that overtook it in the last quarter of the nineteenth century; that he might have settled the corn question, not, as Peel did, by 'a precipitate and violent scheme,' but while maintaining the continuity of national policy and preserving what was best in the traditions of the old commercial system. Cobden and his school were devoid of the historic sense, and when Peel fell under their influence he broke completely with the past. Breaking with the past, he lost control of the future. It was not he who committed us to the industrial line of growth, but it was he who committed us apparently past recall. The repeal of the Corn Laws was the first decisive step in that policy of sacrificing the rural life of England to a one-sided and exaggerated industrial development which has done so much to change the English character and the English outlook, and which it may not impossibly be the business of subsequent generations to endeavour to retrace.

Up to a certain point Peel's policy in the forties was a natural and legitimate development of what had gone before, and a development in the direction of real free trade. Up to that point he was supported by Disraeli; but when he abandoned Adam Smith and Pitt and Huskisson, and leagued himself with Cobden, Disraeli deserted him. Disraeli's views on trade were liberal from the first, and remained liberal to the end, but he never became, like Peel, the slave of a formula. He is the one conspicuous statesman of that generation, it might almost indeed be said, or of the two generations that followed, who, as I have tried to make clear, kept his mind free on the question of the tariff, realised its essentially concrete and practical character, and sought guidance in history and a comprehensive survey of the commerce of his day. He perceived and pointed out the huge miscalculations on which Cobden and Peel

were basing their system of free imports, and in spite of which it has prospered. He knew there would be a great development of oversea production to overwhelm our agriculture, and he knew that other nations would never voluntarily acquiesce in our insular ideal of being the workshop of the world, and throw open their ports in obedience to our example. Nor, when he refused to be blinded by the fanaticism of free imports, did he pay any tribute to the fanaticism of protection. Throughout the great controversy he saw the issue steadily and saw it whole, saw it above all in its political bearings, and never deviated to the right or to the left from the middle course which his judgment had prescribed. In all his speeches on the subject it would be hard to point to two sentences which are inconsistent with each other either in the letter or in the spirit. If Peel had taken Disraeli for his guide, or, indeed, if he had only continued on the lines on which he began and on which Disraeli would have supported him, he might have identified his name with a system of free trade of which, after the lapse of two generations, the United Kingdom would not have been the solitary adherent among the nations of the world.

It is said, indeed, that if Disraeli had been taken into the Government in 1841 he would never have turned against Peel. That may be true, for the whole course of events would then have been different; but that it is true in any sense discreditable to Disraeli is the merest affectation. If his character had stood higher, nothing would ever have been heard of the particular charge implied. I have set forth with some minuteness the sequence of events from the beginning of the Peel Parliament as it touches the question, and the reader can judge for himself. Disraeli supported the Peel Government for two years after his exclusion; he diverged from it first on a clear question of principle and under pressure from his constituents; and he only entered on a course of systematic opposition when it had become manifest that on the one hand Ministers were drifting away from the

principles on which they had come into power, and which he himself had upheld, and on the other that they had established an ostracism against him, and were determined to deprive him of a field for the exercise of his genius. He was conscious of great political gifts, of seeing deeper and farther than the mediocrities, 'sublime' or simple, by whom he was surrounded. Was he tamely to submit to the prejudices of men who had no remarkable pre-eminence of intellect or vision, and who were now passing under the influence of a school of political thought against which his whole career is a protest and a struggle? If he had so allowed himself to be effaced, he would only have been a weaker, hardly a better, man. He did nothing that has not been done with far less justification by statesmen of the highest character in every age and country. If his revolt against the Government differed from a thousand other political incidents of the same order which we accept as a matter of course, the difference was not in motive; it was in a certain absence of cant and virtuous pretence which was peculiar to himself, in the patience and self-restraint with which he waited for the appropriate moment, the discernment and daring with which he seized it when it came, the genius with which his warfare was conducted, and the overwhelming success by which it was attended.

The measure for the repeal of the Corn Laws has been canonised by English opinion, and the story of the events that led up to its passage has more often than not been told by men who can see only wisdom and virtue on the side of its advocates, wickedness, or at the best folly, on the side of its opponents. Coming up for trial with an indifferent reputation before such a court, Disraeli has been judged with censorious harshness, whereas Peel, with a friendly jury and a good reputation, has been let off too lightly. We have been asked to recognise in Peel an example of noble self-sacrifice postponing to the call of duty the luxury of a merely selfish consistency; in Disraeli an example of inconsistency equally or more flagrant, and

sinning against the light for the gratification of personal malice. This judgment may now be seen to stand in need of revision ; on the face of it, indeed, it is essentially shallow. Anyone can feel the implicit drama of the struggle between the two men, and there can be no great drama with the right all on one side. Here, at all events, the right was divided, and the struggle inevitable—inevitable, that is to say, if Peel was to be Peel and Disraeli Disraeli. On the question of consistency from the political point of view, enough perhaps has been said to show that the advantage is not on the side of Peel ; and even from the moral standpoint some may now feel that in these transactions at least he has no marked superiority over his antagonist. Disraeli certainly was no moral hero, but Peel's claims to be so regarded are not most wisely based on his dealings with the Corn Laws. Disraeli's falsehood in the House of Commons stands, of course, against him, and helps to give a colour to the worst interpretations his enemies can place on his character and motives. Morally Peel was incapable of an error such as that ; but with his furtive and unstable mind, his remarkable powers of self-deception, and his debater's instinct for the merely specious as an efficient substitute for the truth, he was very far from being a pattern of straightforwardness and candour. There is not only a moral but an intellectual integrity, and in the intellectual virtue Peel was as much the inferior of Disraeli as in the moral he was his superior.

When he had once decided to strike, Disraeli struck very hard, but, if the prejudice had not been against him and on the side of Peel, few would say unfairly. The weapons of ridicule and sarcasm which he mainly employed were those which were best fitted to penetrate the armour of oily evasion in which his antagonist had encased himself, and they were employed with deadly precision ; but except possibly in the Canning episode, where he was not the prime mover, the attacks did not transgress the bounds of taste and judgment. And though Disraeli could be

ruthless and rarely failed to exact a penalty for injuries that were done him, he was free from mean rancour and he knew how to spare the fallen. When his object was accomplished, the Government overthrown, the organised hypocrisy at length swept away, and a path cleared for his own ambition and the triumph of his own ideas, he held his hand and struck no more. From the moment that he had succeeded in driving Peel from office, he never uttered another offensive word against him.[1]

[1] [This statement, though in the main correct, is somewhat too broadly expressed. See pp. 1026, 1027.—G. E. B.]

APPENDIX.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE KING OF THE FRENCH, 1842.

PAGE 548.

VERY CONFIDENTIAL NOTE ON THE MEANS OF RESTORING THE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN FRANCE AND ENGLAND, ENTRUSTED TO GENERAL BAUDRAND.

The writer of this memorandum has observed with deep attention the characters and circumstances in France which exercise an influence on the relations between the two countries. He has that knowledge of the actors and motives of the political world of England which years of thought and action and intimate intercourse with the chiefs of parties can alone give; and he cannot resist the conviction that the system at present pursued for the purpose of maintaining the connexion between the two countries is one which must inevitably terminate in disaster and failure.

Unquestionably the genius of a great Prince, eminently fertile in resource and strengthened by an unprecedented experience of life, may for a long time baffle the catastrophe. But what is the consequence of this policy? The energies of the founder of the dynasty are wasted in acts hostile to the popularity of the dynasty. The English connexion, instead of consolidating the throne, which was its original intent and is its natural bias, menaces and enfeebles it. Stripped of a thousand circumstances which lay (*sic*) upon the surface and distract the superficial, this is the real point which should occupy the thought of every friend of the King, and I will add of every friend of France and England.

The present system, then, entails upon the two countries a general condition of frigid and professional connexion broken by episodes of suspicion, misconception, irritation, courtly phrases, adroit diversions, little acts of concerted courtesy, and war.

Before the writer details the measures which in his opinion might revive and permanently retain the feelings that existed

between the two countries ten years since, and establish between France and England a genuine and hearty alliance, he would make one observation on the feelings of the two nations in respect to this great result.

He perceives that in France the enlightened classes are generally in favor of the English connexion, but that the great body of the nation is hostile to England. In England, on the contrary, the great body of the people is friendly to France, while the superior classes look to France with no cordiality. Yet there is reason to believe that in neither instance is this hostility the result of the ancient prejudices of the two nations. In England it is habit; in France it is passion. The reason of the class in England must therefore be instructed, the vanity of the class in France must therefore be soothed.

In the opinion of the writer there are three measures which would materially tend to revive, and if assisted by a judicious policy on the part of France would absolutely and speedily restore, a genuine and hearty alliance between the two countries.

1st. On the very night that the English Parliament meets an influential member who has the ear of the House should give public notice of his intention of inviting the consideration of the House of Commons on the earliest occasion to the state of the relations between England and France.

It should be observed that in the whole course of the last twelve eventful years, during which England has witnessed her foreign system changed and reconstructed, the intimate alliance between herself and France announced one day as the only basis of her policy, and the English Minister who had avowedly entered into wars to baffle Russian intrigue, and promoted men to embassies for having written anti-Russian pamphlets, repudiating on another day that same French alliance and acting with Russia in violation of France,—during all these long years of confused and contradictory conduct, not a single debate has ever taken place on the principles on which the foreign policy of England should be established.[1] The Parliament of England, absorbed in domestic struggles, has been left with respect to its foreign affairs without a principle to guide and without knowledge to enlighten it. But these domestic struggles are over, and a new generation has entered the House of Commons to add its quota to the great aggregate of national [illegible].

[1] The memorandum is given from a very rough draft, and this Thucydidean sentence is the best that can be made of an excessively blotted passage.

A clear and comprehensive statement at this moment in the English Parliament of the great question of the English and French alliance would produce a marvellous effect. It would teach men to think. It would give principles to that vast majority who must be led. It would open new considerations of paramount interest. It would give a train to expressions which would touch the heart of the French people. It would afford an opportunity to a great section of the Opposition to repudiate the late policy of Lord Palmerston. It would be a signal to England that a new era was at hand. It would above all force from the English Minister, not merely complimentary phrases, but a declaration in detail which would echo in every Cabinet in Europe.

2ndly. Previous to the meeting of the English Parliament a party should be organised which in respect to the external policy of England should be systematically opposed to the Russian system. The Government of Sir Robert Peel is at this moment upheld by an apparent majority in the Commons of 90 members. It is known that among these 90 are between 40 and 50 agricultural malcontents who, though not prepared to commence an active opposition, will often be absent on questions which, though not of vital, may yet be of great importance to the Minister. It is obvious, therefore, that another section of Conservative members, full of youth and energy and constant in their seats, must exercise an irresistible control over the tone of the Minister. Sympathising in general with his domestic policy, they may dictate the character of his foreign, especially if they appeal to a conviction which at the bottom of Sir R. Peel's heart responds to their own. Such a party would strengthen him against the menacing applications of M. de Brunow: it would soon dispel Lord Aberdeen's mystical hallucinations of German nationality.

When the writer of this note states that such a party can be formed, he speaks with an absolute knowledge of his subject. A gentleman has already been solicited to place himself at the head of a Parliamentary party which there is every reason to believe would adopt the views on the Foreign Policy of England referred to, a party of the youth of England, influenced by the noblest views and partaking in nothing of the character of a Parliamentary intrigue; and if he has not at once accepted an offer which it is known he esteems the greatest honor that he ever received, it is only because next to the responsibility of forming a Government is in his opinion that of leading a party.

It is right to state that it is calculated that the leadership of a Parliamentary party in England involves an extra expenditure of a very great amount. This circumstance is

mentioned only to show that no one would heedlessly contemplate such a contingency. For no other purpose, for it would only express the common feeling of every English gentleman, were it stated, that if this expenditure were the sole qualification for the office there would be an universal rivalry to supply it.

The third measure which the writer recommends is a comprehensive organisation of the Press of England in favor of the French and English alliance. This power so vast, but the management of which is so frequently neglected and so generally misunderstood even by English Ministers, is of itself, if skilfully conducted, capable of effecting great things; but whenever it has chanced to be combined with a Parliamentary power its influence has invariably been irresistible. Great interests sensible of the power of the Press, and unable to analyse it, often appropriate to themselves the columns of a popular journal, and are surprised that the effect is not proportionate to their expectations. But a single journal, however ably conducted, is only an organ. Recognised to be an organ, it ceases to be an authority. Its moral influence merges in its official character. The monitor that counsels the people of England to view France with a glance of affection and confidence, to believe that the power and prosperity of France will secure the empire and increase the wealth of England, must speak in journals of every school of politics, and sound in every district. It is with a machinery of this description that the ideas of a single man, acting upon latent sympathies which only require development, soon become the voice of a nation. Independent of the extreme difficulty which most men must experience in effecting such an arrangement, many have been dissuaded from the attempt by the impression that the result could only be obtained by vast expenditure. This idea is completely erroneous. Thousands and tens of thousands, indeed, have sometimes been blunderingly thrown away on the mismanagement of a single organ, but the Press of England is not in a gross and general sense corrupt. The writer will, if desired, draw up a confidential note on the organisation of the Press, and furnish a plan which may be carried into practice. Indeed, if it cannot be put in practice without his aid, he will undertake its fulfilment. At all events he will consent, when the organisation has taken place, to exercise the same general supervision that Lord Palmerston now exercises over the anti-Gallic Press.

These are the measures which, if carried into effect simultaneously and with energy, would, in the opinion of the writer, materially tend to produce the great result desired by all those

who believe that in the international union of France and England depend, not merely their material prosperity, but ultimately their existence as Powers of the first class. These plans may perhaps seem vast, but they are not visionary. They are, on the contrary, essentially practical. They are even to the minutest element necessary to their success digested and matured, and it is believed that the influence and intellect of an individual can at this moment carry them into effect.

III

1846–1855

BY GEORGE EARLE BUCKLE

FROM A MURAL TABLET IN FARNHAM ROYAL CHURCH.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD

AND IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORY OF

WILLIAM FLAVELLE MONYPENNY,

OF THE STAFF OF 'THE TIMES,' BIOGRAPHER OF DISRAELI,

BORN 7 AUGUST 1866, DIED 23 NOVEMBER 1912,
AND BURIED IN THE ADJOINING CHURCHYARD,

THIS BRONZE IS PLACED HERE BY SOME OF HIS MANY FRIENDS, TO COMMEMORATE A LIFE CUT SHORT IN MID CAREER, RICH IN PERFORMANCE, RICHER YET IN PROMISE, SPENT IN SERVING HIS COUNTRY AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE, WITH PEN AND SWORD IN S. AFRICA, AND WITH THE PEN IN ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

'A man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.'—*Proverbs* i. 5.

PREFACE

When Mr. Monypenny was completing for the press the second volume of this biography his health was rapidly failing, and he died within ten days after its publication. Consequently, though he had arranged and classified most of the papers in the keeping of the Beaconsfield Trustees, and had collected a large mass of other material bearing on the remainder of Disraeli's life, he left no consecutive manuscript written for the printer, with the exception of an analysis of *Tancred*, which forms the basis of the second chapter of the present volume. For the rest, save for a very few detached paragraphs and sentences here and there, I am solely responsible. My aim has been, to the best of my ability, to continue the work on Mr. Monypenny's lines and in his spirit. I was a warm admirer of my friend's two volumes, and I realise to the full the extreme difficulty of reaching the standard which he set. I venture, in view of the delicate nature of my task, to plead for indulgence to my shortcomings.

I am very grateful to Lord Rothschild and the other Trustees of the Beaconsfield estate for extending to me the confidence which they reposed in Mr. Monypenny, and for lightening my labours by their constant encouragement and support. My other obligations for assistance in the preparation of this volume are too numerous for individual acknowledgment; but my thanks to those whom I do not specifically name are not on that account less sincere. To His Majesty the King I am particularly indebted for his gracious permission, not only to make use at my discretion of the invaluable series of historical documents contained in *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, but also

to print some unpublished Royal letters which have a special bearing on Disraeli's career. By far the most important correspondence reproduced or quoted in this volume is that between Disraeli and his chief, the fourteenth Earl of Derby; and I have to thank the present Earl very sincerely for the privilege which he accorded to Mr. Monypenny of searching the archives of Knowsley, and for the kindness with which he has allowed me to enter into my predecessor's labours and to lay before the public the material documents. I also owe special acknowledgment to Lord Londonderry, the Duke of Rutland, the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, Lord Sanderson, and Mr. Gladstone's Trustees; to Mr. Arthur Willyams, Mrs. Brydges Willyams's nephew; and to Mr. Coningsby Disraeli, from whose collection at Hughenden most of the illustrations are again derived. I have greatly benefited by the criticisms of Mr. Murray, my publisher, who has carefully read the proof-sheets; and I should be ungrateful indeed if I did not record my obligations to my wife, who has not only prepared the index but co-operated with me throughout.

I have not been able in this volume to carry the story down so far as I had originally hoped. But the same number of years is covered as in Volume II., and there is a larger proportion of original material available than there was for the earlier part of Disraeli's life.

G. E. B.

October, 1914.

CHAPTER I.

BENTINCK AND DISRAELI.

1846–1847.

On the day of Peel's resignation, Disraeli wrote from the Carlton Club to his wife: 'The Ministry have resigned. All *Coningsby* and "Young England" the general exclamation here.' All *Coningsby* and 'Young England'! In *Tancred*, which was being written during the year 1846, Disraeli seems to give the same reason for Peel's overthrow, when he makes Coningsby say, speaking of the earlier Sir Robert, Sir Robert Walpole, but obviously glancing at the Sir Robert of the hour: 'The "boys" beat him at last.' The suggestion is, of course, a whimsical exaggeration. *Coningsby* and 'Young England' had indeed begun the uprising against Peel's system, but could never have dislodged him had it not been for the revolt of the agricultural interest due to his abandonment of Protection. If, however, the words be taken as a claim on behalf of the author of *Coningsby* and leader of 'Young England' to the chief share in the movement which defeated the great Minister, they are, as has been shown in the last volume, fully justified; and the Country party, reluctant as many of them were to admit Disraeli's superiority, found themselves driven before long to accept, and even to acknowledge, his leadership in the House of Commons.

Meanwhile a purely Whig Cabinet was formed[1] under Lord John Russell, with Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary. A coalition with the Peelites, which had

[1] July 5, 1846.

been Lord John's 'original scheme,' was, Disraeli notes in a memorandum, 'frustrated by Peel himself.' At any rate, the offers of office which were made to Lord Dalhousie, Lord Lincoln, and Sidney Herbert, were declined, though subsequently Dalhousie accepted the Governor-Generalship of India. The new Ministry was in a minority, as Whigs, Radicals, and Irish together fell decidedly short of half the House of Commons; its strength consisted in the absence of opposition. Peel was determined to keep the Protectionists out of office, and was, as he said to the Queen, 'anxious not to undertake the Government again.'[1] The Protectionists, Disraeli tells us, far from contemplating opposition, 'retained their seats beneath the gangway on the Ministerial side. . . . As it was their intention to support the general policy of the new Government, it was unnecessary for them to cross the House with the late Cabinet, which they had themselves driven from power.'[2] Such being the state of mind of Peel and the Protectionists, it is no wonder that some well-meant but premature efforts of Lyndhurst, the retiring Lord Chancellor, to reunite the Conservative party, were fruitless. Lord George Bentinck was emphatic in his repudiation of the whole idea. 'My mind revolts and my heart sickens at the thought of any such easy reconciliation,' he wrote to Lord Stanley. Far from seeking reunion, the Protectionists, as Greville notes on July 18, were 'very busy in rallying and remodelling' their party. They celebrated their success in overthrowing Peel by a dinner at Greenwich, given by members of both Houses, including Disraeli, to their leaders Stanley and Bentinck. The proceedings were harmonious and enthusiastic. Stanley pointed to the strong controlling power which the Protectionist party manifestly possessed, placed as it was by the force of circumstances, as well as

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters*, July 6, 1846.

[2] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 20. This book is the principal first-hand authority for the political history of the years 1846-1848, as viewed by Disraeli; and it is from its pages, where not otherwise specified, that the bulk of the quotations in this and the three following chapters are taken.

by the talent and energy of its members, in a commanding position in the Legislature. Bentinck announced his consent to continue his temporary leadership in the Commons, but at the same time made it clear that he regarded Stanley as leader of the whole party.

Policy as well as principle urged the new Ministry to introduce measures to confirm and develop the Free Trade system. This would tend to widen the breach in the Conservative party, and insure a steady Government majority through the support of Cobden and Bright on the one side, and the Peelites on the other. The sugar duties were the first to be attacked. 'Within a month of his accession to power, at the end of an exhausting session, the new Minister announced a sweeping measure which was at once to admit sugar, the produce of slave labour, to the British market.'

Sugar was an article of colonial produce which had been embarrassing, if not fatal, to many Governments. Strange that a manufacture which charms infancy and soothes old age should so frequently occasion political disaster. The Minister therefore was resolved to rid himself of this perpetual difficulty by precipitating a settlement while the elements of opposition on this question, though powerful, were distracted.

Lord John Russell had no difficulty in showing 'the inconsistency of our receiving slave-grown cotton, and slave-grown coffee, and slave-grown tobacco, and rejecting slave-grown sugar'; but it was felt, and not merely by the Protectionists, that the new policy was a condemnation of all that England, under the guidance of the Whigs, had done for the abolition of slavery. 'Having deprived our colonies of those successful means of general competition, it would seem that the metropolis was at least bound to secure them a home market.' Bentinck accordingly moved an amendment condemning the proposed reduction as tending to check the advance of production by British free labour, and to give a great additional stimulus to the slave trade. It was the identical language of the famous Protectionist amendment which was moved,

and carried, under Peel's auspices, to the Whig project of sugar duty reduction in 1841, and which contributed so greatly to placing in power the Minister who had now fallen because he had abandoned Protection. 'With Sir Robert Peel sitting opposite Lord George Bentinck . . . this was rather a dainty device of the Protectionist leader.' We may well believe that the device originated with Disraeli, who chronicles it with so much complacency. The motion was rejected by a large majority; but the Government were only saved by 'violent sacrifices of Parliamentary consistency, and even of personal conviction, on the part of those who had no political connection with them.' Among these was Peel, who avowed that he supported Ministers solely in order to keep the Protectionists out of office. Disraeli, as 'a follower of Lord George Bentinck,' spoke in the debate, and,

lamenting the destruction of our colonial system and expressing the belief that we should ere long have to reconstruct it, observed that it was a characteristic of our history that this country generally retraced its steps. . . . We did not commit less blunders than other countries, but we were a people more sensible of our errors. The history of England, he said, is a history of reaction. We destroyed, for example, our church establishment and we replaced it. We destroyed our ancient monarchy and we restored it. We destroyed the House of Lords, and yet we were now obliged to take up our Bills to them for their sanction. We even abolished the House of Commons, and yet here we were at the end of the session debating a great question.

Russell ridiculed this view of English history; but, though paradoxically heightened after Disraeli's fashion, it would be admitted to have much truth in it to-day, when, though nobody proposes exactly to restore our old colonial system, some of the best minds are devoting themselves to the problem of how to 'reconstruct' it, and consolidate it into a coherent imperial edifice.[1]

The Protectionists did not confine their exertions to Parliament, but, even before the session was over, Ben-

[1] This passage was written before the war. The general acceptance since then of Imperial Preference is to some extent such a 'reconstruction' as Disraeli thought probable.

tinck and Disraeli, with several of their friends, started on a political tour which involved meetings at King's Lynn, Bentinck's constituency, and Waltham, in the neighbourhood of Belvoir Castle, where Lord Granby[1] and Lord John Manners, the sons of the house, were pillars of the cause. It was one of the very few excursions of the kind in the life of Disraeli, who was emphatically a Parliament man.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

KING'S LYNN, *Aug.* 4, 1846.—We carried the railroad, but lost the general train; the special train, however, was all ready for us (only G[eorge] B[entinck] and myself), and though we started an hour after them, we caught them up halfway at Cambridge. . . . At Cambridge we joined Lord Orford,[2] the Duke of Richmond[3] and Granby, Miles[4] not having appeared. . . .

This morning, as soon as I woke, I found a note from Neilson[5] of *The Times* requesting an interview. He is sent down with two other *Times* reporters, and all for my speech. . . . In the meantime, I have not a thought ready, and if we are to be reported in *The Times* it must be something for the nation, and not merely for the farmers of Lynn.

KING'S LYNN, *Aug.* 5, 1846.—Our dinner was very successful indeed, as far as speaking and enthusiasm remarkable. G. B. did very well, Granby particularly so, and your humble servant quite to his satisfaction. I hope the reporters managed also. Lord Orford a capital chairman. The only fault in my mind was the expense of the tickets, £1 a head; 5s. should have been the outside. This prevented that overflow which should always be at these meetings: however, we sat down more than 500 substantial squires and yeomen. G. B. on the right of Lord Orford, and Duke of Richmond on the left:

[1] Afterwards 6th Duke of Rutland.

[2] The 3rd Earl, High Steward of King's Lynn, father of Disraeli's friend, Lady Dorothy Nevill, who was so well known in the social and political world for more than half a century.

[3] The 5th Duke, whose sons, the 6th Duke and Lord Henry Lennox, were both subsequently colleagues of Disraeli.

[4] William Miles, of Leigh Court, Bristol, M.P. successively for Somerset, Chippenham, and Romney, created a Baronet in 1859.

[5] J. F. Neilson (1809-1881), a leading member of *The Times* staff of Parliamentary reporters. He took a prominent part in reporting most of the great speeches of the mid-Victorian period, both in and out of Parliament, and Disraeli's in particular. Disraeli respected him greatly, and often rehearsed his speeches, or the important parts of them, to him in private. As First Lord of the Treasury, he wished to confer a Civil List pension upon Neilson, but the proprietors of *The Times* objected, and themselves augmented Neilson's salary by an equivalent sum.

then Granby next to G. B., and Lord Sondes[1] next to Duke of Richmond, and myself next to Lord Sondes. . . .

Granby and I go to Leicester to-day, where he is chairman at some Church meeting. . . .

LEICESTER, *Aug.* 6, 1846.—. . . It took us the whole day to travel here,—40 miles coaching, and then changes to four different railroads before we reached this at 10 at night, where we found Lord John and Lord George [Manners]; and all four supped together. Our day's voyage, however, was very agreeable, as the weather was charming, my travelling companion most amiable, and the country new to both of us.

We stopped two hours at Peterboro', but our time was well employed in seeing the finest cathedral in England, very much like St. Ouen, recently renovated in admirable style, and where we were fortunate, during our visit, in listening to a most beautiful anthem. This, and a capital luncheon of cold lamb and London porter, set us up. G[ranby], with the Duke[2] (who arrived this morning) and the rest of the family, are now at the meeting which, as it leads to church subscriptions and would be otherwise very wearisome, I avoided. At half-past two we set off for Belvoir. . . .

BELVOIR CASTLE, *Aug.* 7, 1846.—I am very well. At this moment one of the most terrible storms conceivable is bursting over this magnificent castle; torrents of rain and hail, thunder as if on the roof and battlements, and awful flashes. . . .

Lord George did not arrive till two in the morning, and has just left my room. The Duke and Lord John returned from Leicester about eleven, Granby and myself and his sister having dined together very agreeably.

Nothing could be more delightful than our voyage to Belvoir, and nothing more amiable than G. The scene, the weather, the castle on its wooded crag flushed in the sun,—Coningsby[3] to the life. We arrived in one fly, and were received by six servants bowing in rows. . . .

BELVOIR CASTLE, *Aug.* 9, 1846.—The storm here was so terrible that three men were killed in the immediate neighbourhood of the castle. I take it for granted that the pavilion in which we dined had been drenched through, as, helping myself to salt, I found I was only spooning out some water; but two hours of sunshine had apparently set everything right, and everything went off well, though our numbers were

[1] The 4th Baron, father of the 5th Baron, who was advanced to the earldom on Beaconsfield's recommendation in 1880.

[2] The 5th Duke of Rutland.

[3] In a letter to his sister Disraeli identifies Belvoir with Beaumanoir, 'though it is not in the least like Beaumanoir,' the residence of the Duke, Lord Henry Sydney's father, in *Coningsby*.

certainly thinned by the unfavorable morning. I think we mustered about 500. Granby spoke particularly well; G. B. much too long, I well eno'. The Duke of Rutland seemed to enjoy himself, and made three very good speeches; the Duke of Richmond arrived just in time. He and I sat on each side of the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Hartopp,[1] a very great squire and a very agreeable man. Lady Adeliza,[2] G. B., Granby and myself went in an open carriage, but fortunately I got home with the Duke of Richmond in a close one. He went off the next morning early to meet the Duchess at a station and take her to Scotland, where he has given *us* a real invitation, of which more anon. I think he likes me very much. . . .

Lord G. B. remained here, and our party yesterday consisted of the family and us two. Nothing can be more amiable and attentive than Granby, whom I like exceedingly.

Both at Lynn and at Waltham the note of the speeches was one of wrathful indignation at the betrayal of the agriculturists by the Peel Ministry, and of a conviction that, if they stood together and were true to their principles, they could regain efficient protection for domestic industry, and quite possibly even the repeal of the Act of 1846. Disraeli, at Lynn, went so far as to prophesy that reaction would speedily lead to repeal. At Waltham he was more guarded and more general. If he could see the gentlemen of England place themselves at the head of the farmers, as in 1841, the triumph would soon be with them. Of their ultimate success he could not doubt. Bentinck at both meetings pointed to the local burdens on land, and said they were excessive; these must be reduced if Parliament would not retrace its steps. The following month, at a dinner at another agricultural centre, Chelmsford, he suggested that, failing repeal, agriculturists should strive for the fixed duty of 8s. on corn, or, at the worst, a continuance of the present temporary duties under the new law.

These demonstrations, in fact, served to bring out a

[1] E. Bouchier Hartopp, afterwards M.P. for North Leicestershire as Lord John Manners' colleague.

[2] Daughter of the 5th Duke of Rutland, afterwards wife of Canon Norman.

certain difference of tendency between leading Protectionists. Already the wiser heads among them, and assuredly Disraeli, in spite of his outburst to a sympathetic audience at Lynn, realised that it was hopeless, for the present at any rate, to try to reinstate the sliding scale. But there were two possible alternatives—either to concentrate upon the fixed duty, which had been the old Whig policy and had been advocated to the last by Palmerston, or to turn to the alleviation of local burdens as a compensation to the agriculturists for what they had lost by the abandonment of protection for corn. Bentinck, as we have seen, suggested both policies in turn. The latter was that which Disraeli was ultimately to adopt, but it almost inevitably led to the abandonment of the fight for any Protection at all. The former, the fixed duty, was pressed upon Disraeli by John Manners a few days after the Waltham meeting.

From Lord John Manners.

LONGSHAW LODGE, *Aug.* 15, 1846.—. . . It seems to me that the Protection Leaders are foolishly determined to fight the identical battle they have just lost over again in the new Parliament. Can't something be done to prevent such a shipwreck? . . . Can't G. B. be prevailed upon to 'go for' his second alternative in the first place? Corn might be reinstated in a Tariff, and cattle too, at moderate duties. To belong to a party with only one idea is unsatisfactory; and methinks 'tis far wiser and more statesmanlike to fight a second battle on a fresh field and with new dispositions, than on the old battleground strewed with the symbols of defeat. . . .

Stanley is here, full of fun and chaff; but he does not give me the idea of a statesman. . . .

Disraeli received this when he had returned to London for the closing weeks of an arduous session. He must have been much tried by the behaviour of his leader Bentinck, who discredited himself by a number of petty personal charges of jobs and blunders against members of Peel's late Government, particularly Lyndhurst, Ripon, and Gladstone. *Lord George Bentinck* observes a discreet silence on these episodes, and the charges were all

satisfactorily repelled. Disraeli himself, while endeavouring to justify Bentinck's attack on Ripon, strongly defended the honour of his old patron, Lyndhurst.

To Lady Londonderry.[1]

GROSVENOR GATE, *Sept.* 1, 1846.

DEAR LADY LONDONDERRY,—. . . Kielmansegge[2] is at Wiesbaden, and you will therefore probably meet him.[3] He is just fresh from Drayton, where Sir Robert said that no man's health would permit him to be Prime Minister of this country for more than five years, from which we infer he counts on the feeble frame of Johnny sinking very shortly under the burthen, though I don't see that will help him, as the Peelites do not in any way rally, and the Tory rancor flourishes in all its primal virulence and vigor.

By the time you return, you will see the Duke's statue[4] on the Hyde Park arch. In future, he is to be called the Arch-Duke. The secret history of this rally is rather curious. The D. of Rutland,[5] the eve of our departure, a Sunday eve, his Grace entering desperate, confided after dinner his wrongs and disappointments to Lord Geo. Bentinck and myself. I observed that he had made no fight, and that there were at that moment four men in the room (Granby and John Manners being there) who were all able not only to vote but to speak. Fired by the idea, flushed with claret and sympathising with our injured host, we all agreed to go down to the House, on our arrival in town on the morrow, and make a struggle. Whereupon G. Bentinck, the instant he arrived, gave a notice, by way of amendment to the iconoclastic motion of Craven Berkeley,[6] which so alarmed Morpeth[7] with its dark insinuations of royal pledges broken, that the Government surrendered without firing a shot, notwithstanding the whole House of Commons, all the newspapers, and what they call public opinion, were in their favour. Trench[8] looks as if the

[1] See p. 659.
[2] Hanoverian Minister.
[3] Lady Londonderry was at Homburg.
[4] The statue of the Duke of Wellington is now at Aldershot.
[5] The Duke of Rutland was chairman of the Committee which decided to place the statue on the arch at the top of Constitution Hill—a decision which found little favour either with public opinion or with the Government, but which was nevertheless carried out.
[6] M.P. for Cheltenham, son of 5th Earl of Berkeley.
[7] Afterwards 7th Earl of Carlisle, at that time Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests.
[8] General Sir Frederick Trench, M.P. for Scarborough, and principal promoter of the project for placing the Duke's statue on the arch.

victory were his, though he made no more resistance, in the first instance, than Genl. Burgoyne at Saratoga, in whose drawing-room school he seems to have formed himself. . . .

We are about to go to Buckinghamshire, and probably shall remain at my father's in rural solitude for a long time. I mean to finish my book [*Tancred*], and when it is published I shall send you the earliest and the only copy. I need not say how flattered and how gratified I shall be, if I may occasionally, I dare not say often, hear from you, being, as you well know, now, as I have ever been,—Your devoted servant, D.

Disraeli spent the autumn at Bradenham, mainly occupied with finishing *Tancred*, but watching the political situation carefully, and occasionally corresponding with his leader in the Commons and his friends. 'I rejoice,' writes Bentinck on November 9, 'to find you have not quite abjured politics, as you threatened for the next three months to do, devoting yourself to Poetry and Romance.'

To Lord John Manners.

BRADENHAM, HIGH WYCOMBE, *Sept.* 19, 1846.

MY DEAR LORD JOHN,—Don't suppose from my silence that I disagree with anything you said in your last:[1] on the contrary, you admirably expressed all that I feel, and on which, as far as I am concerned, mean to act, when things begin to fall into order a bit.

Then again about Ireland. One thing certainly Peel's administration proved, that to rule Ireland without respect to party deprives you of any followers. Now G. B. entertains the same views with respect to Ireland as ourselves: but the national party (not the National Club) there are pledged to the Whigs, and, especially after their recognised position in the present Government, must be faithful to them. All this seems to indicate that, ultimately, there must be a fusion between the real Whigs and us. I see no other mode of establishing a strong Government and arresting the vulgar middle-class Liberalism which pretends to be Democracy, and which is essentially hostile to the Roman Catholic population, though it may use them for its purpose.

I should have written to you before, but though I left London in great vigor, I experienced, within a few days of my arrival here, that periodical languor, and even prostration, which always attends, with me, a change of life, especially if that change be one to pure air and regular habits. After a quaran-

[1] Apparently the letter of Aug. 15 quoted on p. 824.

tine of a fortnight or so, I get seasoned, as I am now, and it seems impossible that I ever could live anywhere except among the woods and turfy wildernesses of this dear county, which, tho' it upset Charles I., so exhausted its progressive spirit in 1640, that it has now neither a town nor a railroad.

I have not yet added much to my abortive MSS. [*Tancred*] of the German Schloss of last year, but am beginning to warm up. . . .

The past is a dream and the future a mystery. I cannot read it, but feel persuaded that, if we only stand together, I shall yet see you Prime Minister. My wife sends her kindest regards.—Ever yours, my dear John, D.

To Lady Londonderry.

BRADENHAM, HIGH WYCOMBE, *Dec.* 26, 1846.—. . . What can a hermit, who has been immured for four months among those beechen groves of Bucks which even Julius Cæsar could not penetrate, and who has seen no one, have to offer worthy of your delicate ear, fed, I doubt not, by all the secret histories of the cabinets and saloons of Europe ?

About a fortnight ago, Lord George Bentinck came down here to see me for a few days, otherwise I should not even know who at the present moment was Prime Minister. The only chance we see for your favourite, Sir Robert, is your sympathy; but if you would only condescend to be our Duchess de Longueville, I really think we have a better chance of governing the country than the late Cabinet. But we sadly lack genuine inspiration. . . .

My hero, whose name is 'Tancred,' will make his appearance, I hope, in a month. He has turned out a much more troublesome and unmanageable personage than I anticipated.

Lord Lyndhurst, who is my neighbour, is in great force, and seems to think he is going up to town to be Chancellor again. Such are the gay illusions of perpetual youth. . . .

What are you going to do with Ireland ? They ought to make you Queen. It is the only chance left, now the Repeal of the Union has crumbled away.

How happy I shall be to see Lady Londonderry again !

The visit of Bentinck to Disraeli at Bradenham early in December, mentioned in this letter to Lady Londonderry, was for the purpose of concerting their programme for the coming session. The political intimacy between the two men had developed by this time, widely different though their characters were, into close personal friendship. Disraeli's letters to Bentinck have, unfortunately,

perished;[1] but Bentinck's letters, which have been preserved, contain frequent proofs of his admiration for, and confidence in, his colleague. In June Bentinck had discarded the formal 'My dear Sir' in addressing Disraeli, and always afterwards subscribed himself, 'Ever yours most sincerely.' Bentinck had, as his letters and Disraeli's narrative of his life show, been working hard at politics the whole autumn. In order to devote himself more completely to his political duties, he had finally, at the Goodwood meeting, severed his connection with the turf, of which he was 'the lord paramount,' parting with the whole of his racing stud 'at a moment when its prospects were never so brilliant.' He thereby lost 'the blue ribbon of the turf,' the Derby, which was won in 1848 by Surplice, a horse he had sold with the rest.

Before coming to Bradenham, Bentinck had visited Knowsley, where he had been 'hatching secret plans for the next session,' in concert, no doubt, with Stanley. The Protectionist leaders in Lords and Commons were old friends and fellow-sportsmen; but Stanley's prejudice against Disraeli seems to have been still active, and these two apparently had as yet no personal relations. The events of the autumn necessarily directed the attention of the Protectionists to other issues than the Corn Laws. Famine in Ireland—the apprehension of which had determined Peel's momentous action in 1845,—though it was averted that year, came in grim earnest in the next. Three-fourths of the potato crop failed, and the normal poverty of the people made what would have been a severe visitation to any country a crushing calamity to Ireland. Legislation for helping the Irish by employing their labour on public works had produced disastrous results. 'The number of persons employed under the Labour Rate Act, principally in useless and entirely in unproductive works, which in the month of September had amounted to thirty thousand, reached, when Parliament met, the awful sum

[1] Lady Ossington, Bentinck's sister, wrote in 1884 that 'all Lord George Bentinck's political correspondence was probably destroyed by the Duke of Portland, his father' (*Croker Papers*, Vol. III., p. 116).

of half a million, representing, it was said, as far as the means of subsistence were concerned, two millions and a half of her Majesty's subjects. A nation breaking stones upon the road!' It was determined by the Protectionists, in these circumstances, to press on Parliament the policy of substituting productive for unproductive labour by promoting in Ireland that construction of railways which was proving so beneficial to England.

The opening of the session on January 19, 1847, formed an epoch in Disraeli's parliamentary career. He took then for the first time his seat on the front bench in the House of Commons, a position he was to occupy continuously, in opposition or in office, for thirty years. He has explained in *Lord George Bentinck*[1] how it happened that the Protectionists, who had at first made a point of separating themselves from the Peelites in the House, and remaining on the same side as the Whig Ministry whom they had placed in office, now crossed the floor. Considerable inconvenience resulted from the original arrangement.

> The Protectionists were so numerous that the greater portion of the habitual supporters of the Whigs were obliged to range themselves on the benches opposite the men whom they had always supported and with whom they were still voting. This led to some conversation between the Treasury Bench and Lord George Bentinck, and it was finally agreed that on the whole it would be more convenient that, on the meeting of the House in '47, he should take the seat usually occupied by the leader of the Opposition, and that his friends should fill the benches generally allotted to an adverse party.

Disraeli, it will be noted, says nothing of his own position; but he and Bankes, member for Dorset, who had previously held office, and possibly others, took their seats by their leader, on the same bench with Peel, Lincoln, Sidney Herbert, and Goulburn. Gladstone had retired from Newark, and was out of Parliament, and Graham preferred the obscurity and independence of a back bench. '*Three off* Sir Robert Peel' is the way in

[1] Ch. 20.

which *The Times* describes the position of Disraeli and Bentinck, whom it mentions in that order. 'There is, however, we presume,' it adds, 'to be no connection with the adjoining shop.'[1] According to a descriptive writer in a provincial journal, Disraeli changed more than his seat. He modified the extravagance of his clothing. The 'motley-coloured garments' which he still wore at the close of the session of 1846 were exchanged for a suit of black, 'unapproachably perfect' in every stitch, 'and he appears to have doffed the vanity of the coxcomb with the plumage of the peacock.' He was also thought to have acquired a weightier manner of speaking, suited to his more responsible position, though in a day or two he crushed his old opponent, Roebuck, in quite a familiar vein. Indeed, we shall note from now onward, with the exception, perhaps, of the final fling of the publication of *Tancred*, an increase of gravity in his political actions and speeches, and a greater reluctance to let himself go as his natural genius would dictate. Nobody ever felt more strongly than Disraeli the responsibility of those who control a party. He had thoroughly grasped the principle, which neither Peel nor Gladstone ever fully apprehended, that a great party is an organ of government which cannot be broken and destroyed without confusion and danger. Now for the first time his action would affect a party. He was the first lieutenant, and largely the inspirer, of the party leader in the Commons, and he had before his eyes the wreck that Peel's disregard of party had produced. No wonder that his words were more measured, even at the risk of sometimes becoming dull to us who read them when the issues are no longer living.

At the moment it was uncertain exactly what the size of the party was for which Bentinck and Disraeli were responsible. Could they count upon the 240 who had voted against the Corn Bill, or only upon the 76 stalwarts who had voted with the Whigs and Irish for ejecting Peel from office, or upon some indeterminate number in

[1] *The Times*, Jan. 20, 1847.

between? In the division on the sugar duties in the autumn they had been supported by 135 members in a House which was two-thirds full; but on that occasion they were able to appeal to anti-slavery sentiment. This uncertainty caused Bentinck to write to Stanley shortly before the session, expressing his unwillingness to thrust himself forward 'as though he were the acknowledged leader of the Protectionists in the House of Commons.' But he yielded to the necessities of the position, and was ready, when Parliament met, to give an attentive consideration to the Ministerial proposals for dealing with Irish distress, in the hope that they might be sufficiently comprehensive to obviate any interference on his part. The first proposal, to suspend the temporary duties on corn established in 1846, met with his approval. Then there were to be loans for the improvement of private estates, extension of the drainage system, encouragement of fisheries, and a better Poor Law: 'Projects for ordinary times, hardly adequate to absorb the teeming millions of the public works, whose numbers increased with every telegraph, and alarmed the Cabinet like a fresh invasion of some barbaric host appalling the trembling senators of Rome.' The famine was getting worse; relief committees were formed, to be aided by public grants, half of the whole charge to fall upon the Treasury of the United Kingdom.

These proposals seemed to the Protectionist leaders to be peddling and inadequate. Early in February Bentinck brought forward the measure which he and Disraeli had prepared in the autumn 'to stimulate the prompt and profitable employment of the people by the encouragement of railways in Ireland': £16,000,000 was the amount which he proposed that the Government should lend, during four years, for this purpose. He disclaimed any motive of hostility to Ministers, and hoped all parties would consider his Bill on its merits. The Bill was received with general favour, especially in Ireland; but the state of the money market, and the dislike of Peelites and Radicals, dominated by the doctrines of

laisser-faire, for any policy of the kind, led the Government to oppose it on the second reading, and to announce that, if it were carried, they would resign. 'There was not a section or an individual in the House of Commons who wished to disturb the Government, least of all Lord George Bentinck . . . but he was not a man who would ever shrink from the consequences of his acts.' He was 'not appalled,' he said, by the difficulties in Ireland; and he formally notified Stanley, and explicitly stated in the House of Commons, that he would not shrink from any responsibility which, unsought, might be forced upon him. 'It must be confessed, however,' says Disraeli, 'that he was the only member of his party who was undaunted. A sort of panic pervaded the Protectionist ranks.' The division was naturally very unfavourable, only 118 following Bentinck into the lobby. Even the Irish, who had loudly acclaimed his policy, deserted him; a change which led Disraeli, a few weeks later, to comment somewhat severely on their instability. 'I hope it will never be said of the Irish that they are a light and frivolous people; but the rapidity with which they pass votes of confidence, and then of illimitable condemnation, is certainly not an encouragement to public men, and is not the best evidence of popular consistency.'

Disraeli supported Bentinck in the debate in a long and elaborate speech in which he repeated his conviction —a conviction he declared to be held by the great body of his countrymen—'that no hallucination . . . had been greater than to suppose that a political panacea could cure the ills of Ireland.' He quoted facts and figures in defence of the railway policy, and pointed out finally 'that the commercial principle came into contact with circumstances in Ireland with which it was not fitted to cope.'

Bentinck and Disraeli had not long to wait for an admission by the Government of the justice of their arguments. It was in February that, under urgent Ministerial pressure, Bentinck's Bill was defeated; before the end of April the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced

to an astonished House that he would recommend a vote to assist Irish railways of £620,000. Peelites and Radicals were indignant. Bentinck cordially welcomed the repentant sinners, and must have been especially gratified by Peel's remark that 'the measure of Lord George Bentinck was free from some of the objections that forcibly applied to the present measure.' When the Government Bill came on for second reading, Disraeli made the sarcastic comment that the overwhelming majority against Bentinck's Bill 'was, at least, one animated by a too precipitate spirit.' He maintained that Bentinck's policy, though hastened by the potato famine, was quite independent of it, and good for a backward country like Ireland in all circumstances. Ireland was the disgrace of England; her people were suffering, miserable, and unemployed. It was only by the creation of public works that the people could be employed; and Bentinck's scheme insured that employment without loss to England. The real question, Disraeli declared, was: Did the people of England care more for the good government of Ireland than for the principles of political economy? Was the House to be animated in its legislation by national sympathies, or 'to take refuge in mere dry pedantic political aphorisms'? The Protectionists had the satisfaction of helping the Government to carry their Bill by a large majority against the opposition of Peelites and Radicals. It is noteworthy that Bentinck and Disraeli were among the first to proclaim the principle, now[1] generally accepted, that, as England and Ireland, though a united kingdom, were in very different stages of economic development, it was right to use English wealth to forward the material prosperity of Ireland. The policy of the Land Purchase Acts is honourably associated with the names of Bright, Ashbourne, Balfour, and Wyndham; the underlying principle is to be traced to those politicians whom it has been the fashion to despise, the Protectionist leaders of the late forties.

[1] In 1913.

The session was so much occupied with the Irish distress, and the measures necessary for coping with it, that all other subjects were dwarfed. Disraeli spoke several times on external questions, but it will be more convenient to consider his attitude towards Palmerston's foreign policy in a subsequent chapter.[1] The Poor Law and its administration came up, as usual, for consideration. On 'the great Mott case'[2] Disraeli had another small fling at Peel. He referred to the condemnation of Ferrand in 1844 for his attacks on Graham. It had been the case of a solitary member against the whole House; he had against him both 'the most powerful Minister that England has seen for a century,' with a 'Macedonian phalanx' of supporters, and also an Opposition dominated by the manufacturing interest. In another Poor Law debate Disraeli protested against central control of Poor Law administration in London. He was all for local control—county control. But he uttered one characteristic caution: 'I have always believed that the power of the Crown has diminished, is diminishing, and ought to be increased; and therefore any increase in the patronage of the Crown is a proposition I would never oppose.' In general, Disraeli contented himself during the session with a steady and efficient backing of his leader Bentinck, whether it was in resisting inquiry into the Navigation Laws, in criticising the Bank Charter Act, in demanding justice for distillers, or in all the numerous phases of the Irish Railway question. One personal reference may be quoted. In a debate at the end of the session he described the transference of Stanley from the Commons to the Lords, in 1844, as a misfortune for the country.

Disraeli's friends noticed his steady advance. In a letter written about this time, Lady Londonderry passes on to him a charming compliment: 'I send you my best wishes and a pretty speech I heard about you. "Le talent regne en Angleterre et ne gouverne pas."' An admiring cousin goes to hear him speak in the House, and reports:

[1] See below, Ch. 7. [2] See p. 634.

B. E. Lindo to Sarah Disraeli.

March 25, 1847.—I was very charmed with Dizzy's display last Tuesday,[1] and astonished at the command and control of the House which he possesses—the buzz everywhere in the lobbies and the galleries when he rose, and the rush into the House, which filled in no time after he had begun. In every way I was astonished and pleased. . . . Dizzy's figure suits the floor of the House admirably, while his voice is so various, modulated musically at one moment and pouring out its thunder the next, and you hear plainly every whisper. He extracted cheers from a full House of opponents. What would they have been if they had gone with him! He certainly is the wonder of the day, and begins to be universally acknowledged so.

The General Election was approaching, and an opportunity offered for the attainment of one of Disraeli's most cherished ambitions—to sit in Parliament for the county of Buckingham. Since the time when, as a member of his father's household, he came there twenty years before, first for summer visits, and afterwards to reside at Bradenham, his attachment to his 'beloved and beechy Bucks' had been steadily growing. He had resolved to make his permanent home in it, and had been for some time on the lookout for a suitable house. We have seen that his extravagant fancy had once, when he was a bachelor and heavily in debt, hovered round the thought of Chequers Court;[2] and at the present time, as a married man, and, though still in debt, in a comparatively stable position, he had just agreed to purchase the more modest estate of Hughenden, a few miles from Bradenham. It was in Bucks that his earliest political efforts had been made. He had stood three times unsuccessfully for High Wycombe; and once, in 1832, had even issued an address to the electors of the county—'a juvenile indiscretion,' as he now felt, but 'prophetic' if 'presumptuous'—though, on that occasion, he withdrew almost immediately, so as not to embarrass his friend Lord Chandos, now the Duke of Buckingham. He had

[1] The speech about Cracow. See below, p. 987.

[2] Page 357.

been careful to accept opportunities to speak on political occasions in the county, recognising, he wrote in 1836, that 'in all probability I am addressing my future constituents.'[1]

He was not altogether happy in his relations with his present constituency, Shrewsbury. Though the general body of the electors seem to have appreciated their distinguished member, and to have recognised how completely he had carried out the pledges that he had given to them, there was trouble with the local wirepullers; and there did not appear any likelihood of that fixity of tenure which a leader of the Country party might well hope to obtain from the squires and farmers of Bucks. One of the three Tory members for the county announced his intention of retiring. There was some expectation that the Lord Chandos of the day, the son of Disraeli's friend, would come forward; but he absolutely refused, and the way was clear. On May 24 Disraeli issued his farewell address to the electors of Shrewsbury, dwelling on the seven eventful sessions during which he had been their member, and on his pride and satisfaction that, trying as the circumstances had been, he had never forfeited the confidence of his constituents. The next day appeared his address to the electors of the county of Buckingham, a characteristic and historic document, which excited much attention at the time, and has a permanent interest for all students of his ideas.

The paragraphs in it referring to the question of the hour were these:

> It is now many years ago, since, in your County Hall, I upheld the cause of the Territorial Constitution of England, as the best and surest foundation for popular rights and public liberty, imperial power and social happiness. The maintenance of the agricultural industry of the Country is the necessary condition of the enjoyment of that Constitution; and I have, therefore, independently of all other considerations, opposed, during the ten years in which I have had the honor of sitting in Parliament, every attempt which had a tendency

[1] Page 356.

to diminish the numbers and influence of those classes which are directly dependent on the land.

Influenced by this principle, I offered, during the recent assault on our protective system, a faithful, though fruitless, opposition to that project. What has since occurred has not, in any degree, changed the conclusions at which I then arrived as to the scheme of the late administration. The temporary high price, that is stimulated by famine, is not the agricultural prosperity which I wish to witness; while, in the full play of unrestricted importation, I already recognise a disturbing cause, which may shake our monetary system to its centre, and which nothing but the happy accident of our domestic enterprise has prevented, I believe, from exercising a very injurious effect on the condition of the Working Classes of Great Britain.

Notwithstanding this opinion, I am not, however, one of those who would counsel, or who would abet, any attempt factiously and forcibly to repeal the measures of 1846. The legislative sanction which they have obtained, requires that they should receive an ample experiment; and I am persuaded that this test alone can satisfy the nation either of their expediency, or their want of fitness. If, however, as I hold, the result of this great change must be a reconstruction of our financial system, it will behove the various classes connected with the cultivation of the soil to be vigilant, that their interests may be adequately represented and fitly enforced at a crisis, when their more compactly organised rivals will not be oblivious of their claims, or over-scrupulous in urging them.

Disraeli proceeded to explain that he was in favour of placing the education of the people in the hands of the clergy, their legitimate guides and instructors, and that he would heartily maintain the alliance of Church and State. He continued:

In the great struggle between popular principles and liberal opinions, which is the characteristic of our age, I hope ever to be found on the side of the people, and of the Institutions, of England. It is our Institutions that have made us free, and can alone keep us so; by the bulwark which they offer to the insidious encroachments of a convenient, yet enervating, system of centralisation, which, if left unchecked, will prove fatal to the national character. Therefore, I have ever endeavoured to cherish our happy habit of self-government, as sustained by a prudent distribution of local authority. For these reasons, I am of opinion that the right of supreme

control, necessary to the due administration of the Poor Law, should be exercised by the chief Depositary of power in every County, and that the supervision of our Parishes should not be entrusted to strangers.

It is unnecessary for me to state that I shall support all those measures, the object of which is to elevate the moral and social condition of the Working Classes, by lessening their hours of toil—by improving their means of health—and by cultivating their intelligence. These are objects which, it is not unpleasing for me to remember, I endeavoured, in common with some of my friends, to advance, before they engaged the attention of Governments, or were supported by triumphant Parliamentary majorities.

The leading journals of the day, though the great majority of them were supporters of the Free Trade policy, nevertheless treated the candidate and his address with a respect and consideration which show the position which Disraeli had now won in the opinion of his countrymen. The points on which they chiefly fastened were the admission that the measures of 1846 must not be factiously repealed, but should receive an ample experiment; and the contrast set up between 'popular principles' and 'liberal opinions.' These two phrases were naturally ridiculed, as meaning merely, on the one hand, the views with which Disraeli agreed, and, on the other, those from which he differed. Really they represent a distinction running through the whole of his political philosophy, which always contrasts principles which bring classes together in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution, with the Liberalism which sets class against class and exalts political economy at the expense of human nature and patriotism. The Tories, he held, must be the popular party as opposed to doctrinaire Liberalism. In his first speech at Newport Pagnell, he illustrated his meaning. It was a popular principle, he said, to interfere to protect the factory workers; but the advocates of Liberal opinions said that in no circumstances must labour be interfered with. It was a popular principle to make a difference between the industry of our fellow-subjects and that of

foreigners; Liberal opinion treated them alike. It was a popular principle that the National Church should be independent of the State, exercising a beneficial effect on public feeling and morals, and vindicating the cause of liberty; but Liberal opinion treated the Church as a mere stipendiary of the State. That the administration of justice should be conducted by an independent proprietary was a popular principle; that it should be conducted by a man paid by the State a Liberal opinion. 'In one word, it is a popular principle that England should be governed by England, while the Liberal opinion is that England should be governed by London.'

At Aylesbury, Disraeli insisted—and Bentinck took a similar line in his election address—that Free Trade must have a fair trial.

> I told you in my address that I would not attempt factiously and forcibly to repeal the measure which was passed in the course of last year. What is the use of discussion, what is the use of a Legislature, if it is not that a great public question is to be settled for a time, at least, by the decision of your representatives? I care not how that decision may have come; it is a resolution of Parliament, and we must see the experiment fairly tried. You are in the position of a man who has made an improvident marriage. You have become united to Free Trade, and nothing can divorce you except you can prove the charmer to be false. Wait, then, till that period has arrived; when you find that you have been betrayed, then will be the time to seek a divorce from that pernicious union. You have become united to the false Duessa,[1] and you must take the consequences; and the consequence, I venture to predict, will be that the House of Commons, after a fair, full, and ample trial of this great measure, will be driven to repeal it from absolute necessity, though at the termination of much national suffering; but that that suffering will be compensated for by the bitterness and the profundity of national penitence.

The trial has been fuller and more ample than Disraeli anticipated, but it is evident that the end is not yet. At Newport Pagnell he had made it clear that the Protection which he believed to be expedient for the country was of a moderate, but at the same time Imperial, character.

[1] See Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book I., cantos 2-8.

He did not advocate that they should go back to what was perhaps a too limited application of a principle, but that they should reconstruct a system on a broader basis and foundation. They had heard much of the Customs Union of Germany, but when they looked to the numerous colonies over which the Queen of this country ruled, they saw Great Britain possessing a greater area than any other European Power, except Russia, and they were tempted to ask why should not England have her Imperial Union, the produce of every clime coming in free which acknowledged her authority, and paying no tax to the public Exchequer?

These sentiments fell on deaf ears at the moment; but they contain the germ of the idea of Imperial consolidation which Disraeli elaborated in a more favourable atmosphere in 1872, in a famous speech at the Crystal Palace.

The candidates at this election were—on the Conservative side, Du Pré and Tower, who had both sat in the last Parliament, and Disraeli; on the Liberal side, a member of the Whig house of Cavendish, who was afterwards created Lord Chesham. During the contest Tower withdrew, and attempts were made to get Chandos, in spite of his unwillingness, to come forward, in the hope of securing for the county three members of the Country party. But these attempts were unavailing. It was thought by some that, if Chandos were nominated, Disraeli might very likely fail. However that might be, a contest was avoided, and Du Pré, Disraeli, and Cavendish were returned unopposed. Thus began a connection of which both Disraeli and his county of Bucks had reason to be proud; which lasted for nearly thirty years, until his elevation to the peerage; and of which he wrote in 1860, 'This is the event of my public life which has given me the greatest satisfaction.' In a speech at Amersham during the election he made his profession of faith, often repeated in similar terms, in the political greatness of the county.

The county of Buckingham has always taken a lead in the political fortunes of this country. The parliamentary constitution of England was born in the bosom of the Chiltern

Hills; as to this day our parliamentary career is terminated among its hundreds. The parliamentary constitution of England was established when Mr. Hampden rode up to Westminster surrounded by his neighbours. Buckinghamshire did that for England. It has done more. It gave us the British Constitution in the seventeenth century, and it created the British Empire in the eighteenth. All the great statesmen of that century were born, or bred, or lived in this county. Throw your eye over the list—it is a glorious one—from Shelburne to Grenville. Travel from Wycombe to Buckingham, from the first Lord Lansdowne, the most accomplished Minister this country ever produced, to the last of our classic statesmen. Even the sovereign genius of Chatham was nursed in the groves of Stowe, and amid the *templa quam dilecta* of Cobham; and it was beneath his oaks at Beaconsfield that Mr. Burke poured forth those divine effusions that vindicated the social system, and reconciled the authority of law with the liberty of man. And in our own time, faithful to its character and its mission, amid a great parliamentary revolution, Buckinghamshire called a new political class into existence, and enfranchised you and the farmers of England by the Chandos clause. Now let the men of the North, who thought that they were to govern England—let them bring a political pedigree equal to that of the county of Buckingham.

Throughout the contest Disraeli emphasised his independence, and spoke as a leader of men. In his address he had said: 'I am not the organ of any section, or the nominee of any individual.' He was justly indignant at being described as a nominee of the Duke of Buckingham, seeing that he came forward at the request of leading yeomen and proprietors in the county, and relied mainly upon the farmers for his support. He said at Buckingham:

Independence is the necessary, the essential element of my political position. . . . I cannot take a seat in the House of Commons if I am not the master of my political destiny. I have not gained the position which I am proud to remember I occupy there but by my own individual exertions. It has cost me days of thought and nights of toil—it has cost me unwearied industry, frequent discomfiture, and many unequal contests. I have gained that position by myself, and I must maintain it by myself.

For Lord Stanley he said he entertained great respect, and believed no difference could exist between them at present on great public questions, but 'he would not pin his faith and his political creed to the robe of any senator, however exalted.' In referring to the struggle against Peel, he spoke of himself as the protagonist, who appealed for their approval, but who would not pursue the quarrel on the hustings or 'desecrate the recollections of the combat by allowing it to degenerate into a squabble.' Bentinck appears little in these speeches, and as a colleague rather than a leader. After the election was over Disraeli expressed his strong conviction that 'the great question of Protection is not dead, but is only sleeping. . . . Protection to native industry is a fundamental principle.' Though he sometimes talked in another sense, this seems to have been his settled opinion. Lord Rowton, after the Tariff Reform movement had begun, though a Free Trader himself, told a friend that Lord Beaconsfield had always said that England would return to Protection.

As the Protectionists—or, at any rate, the Protectionist leaders—did not advocate the immediate overthrow of the new commercial system, there was at the General Election of 1847 no clear-cut issue before the country; and consequently very little alteration was effected in the relative strength of parties. The Whigs gained slightly, mainly at the expense of the Radicals and the Peelites; there were roughly 325 Ministerialists of all shades, and 330 Conservatives, of whom not more than 100 were followers of Peel. Russell's Ministry were still in a minority without Peel's support, but could fairly claim that they had been encouraged by the constituencies to confirm and develop the Free Trade policy. Disraeli has put on record his explanation of the general result. 'The high prices of agricultural produce which then prevailed naturally rendered the agricultural interest apathetic, and although the rural constituencies from a feeling of esteem again returned those members who had been

faithful to the protective principle, the farmers did not exert themselves to increase the number of their supporters.' Indeed, as we have seen, in Disraeli's own county of Bucks a seat was given up, and two Protectionists and a Whig sat where three Protectionists had sat before. Of the personal changes owing to the election, four had a special bearing on Disraeli's fortunes. His great opponent of the future, Gladstone, returned to Parliament, after an absence of a year and a half, as member for Oxford University; his Protectionist ally, the veteran Herries, who had failed to obtain a seat in 1841, was elected, along with Granby, for Stamford; his intimate friend, John Manners, who retired from Newark, attempted in vain to capture a seat at Liverpool, and was out of Parliament till 1850; and the election of another friend, Baron Lionel de Rothschild, the head of the great financial house, as a colleague of the Prime Minister, for the City of London, forced to the front the question of Jewish disabilities, on which Bentinck and Disraeli held views very repugnant to the main body of their supporters.

'Had the General Election been postponed until the autumn, the results might have been very different,' writes Disraeli. No sooner was it over than the condition of general content which prevailed during its progress was suddenly changed for one of widespread commercial disaster. Bentinck, supported by the great financial authority of Thomas Baring, had called attention in the spring more than once to the signs of an approaching monetary crisis, mainly due, no doubt—though it was not generally recognised at the time—to excessive railway speculation. They had recommended the suspension of Peel's Bank Charter Act, which separated the currency from the banking department of the Bank of England, and limited the issue of banknotes, not permitting it to go beyond £14,000,000 in excess of bullion. The Government, supported by Peel, refused to interfere. But in September 'that storm, which had been long gathering in the commercial atmosphere, burst like a

typhoon.' In that month fifteen houses in the City of London failed for between five and six millions, the Governor and three directors of the Bank of England being involved. Large firms went at Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Charles Wood, hurried to London on October 1, he found the interest on money was 60 per cent. But Government refused to act for three weeks more, during which extensive disasters occurred in London and the country.

> Perish the world, sooner than violate a principle, was the philosophical exclamation of Her Majesty's Ministers, sustained by the sympathy and the sanction of Sir Robert Peel. At last the Governor and the Deputy-Governor of the Bank of England waited on Downing Street and said it could go on no more. . . . In four-and-twenty hours the machinery of credit would be entirely stopped. The position was frightful, and the Government gave way. They did that on the 25th of October, after houses had fallen to the amount of fifteen millions sterling, which they had been counselled to do by Lord George Bentinck on the 25th of April. . . . No sooner had the Government freed the Bank of England from that stringency than the panic ceased. The very morning the letter of licence from the Government to the Bank of England appeared, thousands and tens of thousands of pounds sterling were taken from the hoards, some from boxes deposited with bankers, although the depositors would not leave the notes in their bankers' hands. Large parcels of notes were returned to the Bank of England cut in halves, as they had been sent down into the country; and so small was the real demand for an additional quantity of currency, that the whole amount taken from the bank, when the unlimited power of issue was given, was under £400,000, and the bank consequently never availed itself of the privilege which the Government had accorded it.[1]

In consequence of the Government having authorised an infringement of the law, Parliament met on November 8, the Queen's speech being delivered on the 23rd. Manners, 'compelled, like one of the unwilling Homeric gods, to witness the strife, a passive spectator,' wrote from Belvoir to counsel vigorous action. He thought his friends might look for strong support

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 23.

on all leading questions from various and conflicting quarters. What he dreaded was 'this horrid question of Lionel Rothschild's election. . . . If you can put that matter into a right train you will perform a greater feat than when in five minutes you induced three Dukes, one after the other, to say you had convinced them about Cracow. I see no daylight through that Cimmerian darkness.'

To Lord John Manners.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Nov.* 16, 1847.

MY DEAR JOHN,—Your letter was forwarded to me from Bradenham. I had come up to have a couple of days' counsel and conference with G. B., before he went to Welbeck, which he did on Thursday—and I have stayed here since, and shall, I suppose, for the next eight months, with very slight intervals.

What I thought of your letter will be best shown by my immediately sending it off to G. B., who returned it yesterday. He writes: 'I send you back John Manners' sensible and spirited letter. I am low-spirited for want of such comrades in arms as this very John Manners.' I need not say how completely I echo this sentiment. What would I not give to find you again at my right hand; with the talent ever ready, the courage that never faltered, the indefatigable industry, and, above all, the honor and fidelity in which one could place implicit trust.

It will always be the first object of my life, and I am sure also of G. B.'s, to restore you to that place, where you are destined to occupy the most conspicuous post, and where in your presence we shall find the comrade and colleague for whom both of us feel devoted friendship. As for G. B. himself, he is a little taken by surprise by the early meeting, but full of courage, and I think much more matured; very earnest, and conscious of a great office, 'to save if possible,' he says in his last letter, 'the greatest commercial empire of the world engaged in a life and death struggle for existence. . . .'

G. B. has been terribly annoyed by the Rothschild affair, which he looked upon as a sad *début*, whatever he did. I had the pleasure yesterday of informing him, as I do now yourself, that the peril is not so imminent. It is even on the cards that the Bill will be introduced in the Lords; and whatever the result there, it will be a great relief to us. But, if introduced into the Commons, Lord John will only give notice before Christmas, and the battle is not to be fought until next year. Lionel, as at present counselled, will not even take his seat

to choose the Speaker. Are you aware that, if Rothschild were to go to the table and ask for the Roman Catholic oath, which they could not refuse him, he could take his seat? The words 'faith of a Christian' only being in the oath of abjuration, from which the Romans were relieved. . . .

As for our domestic affairs, I will to-day say nothing. It is out of my power to give you the faintest idea of the feeling of terror, panic, despair, which seems to pervade all classes and people in this town. Every moment brings a fresh rumor; Cabinet Councils every other day, and frequent differences therein, as I am assured. . . .—Yours ever, D.

Lady Dorothy Walpole went down to Wolterton to-day to be married, which makes me very glad: an excellent match—Reginald Nevill with a *good* £8,000 *per ann.* and a real good fellow.'

The special business which had occasioned the early summoning of Parliament was taken in hand at once. The Chancellor of the Exchequer moved to appoint a Committee to inquire into the causes of the commercial distress, and in the course of the debate Disraeli extracted an admission of some consequence from Russell. That statesman was arguing that the Bank Charter Act could not of itself prevent panics. There was a tendency to give credit to Acts of Parliament for doing more than they could perform. That was so in the case of Catholic Emancipation and various other measures. 'Free Trade, for example,' interposed Disraeli; and Russell, though apparently somewhat taken aback, agreed. Other urgent business which the Government brought forward at once was a Crimes Bill for Ireland, famine in that country having produced an outbreak of crime. Disraeli supported the Bill, and had no difficulty in reconciling his support with his action against Peel's Coercion Bill of 1846. That measure, though declared to be urgent, was not really proceeded with for six months; and one of its most important clauses, the Curfew clause, was unnecessary and arbitrary. The Protectionists, he held, had a 'legitimate opportunity' in 1846 to overthrow a Ministry in which they had lost confidence.

Disraeli attended a council of the leading Protectionists

at Stanley's house in London, and from there sent his wife a gloomy account of the health of his colleagues:

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Nov. 29, 1847.—Our Cabinet is just over, having lasted three hours. . . . Lord G. B. is so ill with the influenza, that he is obliged to go home to bed. Herries has only just got out of bed after three days, and is still very ill.

Lord Chandos has been in bed for four days, the Duke has just told me.

If the physical health of the Protectionist leaders was bad, the political prospect immediately before them was worse. Rothschild had 'found a difficulty in taking one of the oaths appointed by the House to be sworn preliminarily to any member exercising his right of voting. The difficulty arose from this member being not only of the Jewish race, but unfortunately believing only in the first part of the Jewish religion.' The oath contained the words 'on the true faith of a Christian.' Russell moved, on December 16, that the House should resolve itself into a Committee 'on the removal of the civil and political disabilities affecting Her Majesty's Jewish subjects'; and the peril, which Bentinck and Manners had foreseen and dreaded, and Disraeli had been sanguine enough to think he could conjure away, was immediately upon the Protectionist party. The bulk of the rank and file considered it to be a religious duty to exclude from the supreme council of the nation, which regulated the Church as well as legislating for the State, those who denied the Divinity of Christ. Both Bentinck and Disraeli, for different reasons, supported the Jewish claims. To obtain a proper comprehension of Disraeli's point of view on this and other religious questions, we must turn to *Tancred.*

CHAPTER II.

TANCRED.

1847.

When Disraeli began a 'Young England' novel, he had intended, as we saw,[1] to deal with three principal topics: the origin and character of political parties, the condition of the people, and the duties of the Church as a main remedial agency in our present state. The two former had been treated in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, published in 1844 and 1845; and the third novel, *Tancred; or, The New Crusade*, treating of the Church, was intended to follow in 1846. It appears to have been begun at once after the publication of *Sybil*, and was no doubt the subject of Disraeli's labours during that quiet autumn holiday in 1845 at Cassel, in French Flanders; but, owing to the great political struggle of 1846, it was not finally completed till the end of that year, and was only published in March, 1847. Its purpose was to develop the views respecting 'the great House of Israel' which he had first intimated in *Coningsby*.

In considering the Tory scheme, the author recognised in the CHURCH the most powerful agent in the previous development of England, and the most efficient means of that renovation of the national spirit at which he aimed. The Church is a sacred corporation for the promulgation and maintenance in Europe of certain Asian principles, which, although local in their birth, are of Divine origin, and of universal and eternal application.

In asserting the paramount character of the ecclesiastical polity and the majesty of the theocratic principle, it became

[1] Page 648.

necessary to ascend to the origin of the Christian Church, and to meet, in a spirit worthy of a critical and comparatively enlightened age, the position of the descendants of that race who were the founders of Christianity. The modern Jews had long laboured under the odium and stigma of mediæval malevolence. In the dark ages when history was unknown, the passions of societies, undisturbed by traditionary experience, were strong, and their convictions, unmitigated by criticism, were necessarily fanatical. The Jews were looked upon in the middle ages as an accursed race,—the enemies of God and man,—the especial foes of Christianity. No one in those days paused to reflect that Christianity was founded by the Jews; that its Divine Author, in his human capacity, was a descendant of King David; that his doctrines avowedly were the completion, not the change, of Judaism; that the Apostles and the Evangelists, whose names men daily invoked, and whose volumes they embraced with reverence, were all Jews; that the infallible throne of Rome itself was established by a Jew; and that a Jew was the founder of the Christian Churches of Asia.

The European nations, relatively speaking, were then only recently converted to a belief in Moses and in Christ, and, as it were, still ashamed of the wild deities whom they had deserted, they thought they atoned for their past idolatry by wreaking their vengeance on a race to whom, and to whom alone, they were indebted for the Gospel they adored.

In vindicating the sovereign right of the Church of Christ to be the perpetual regenerator of man, the writer thought the time had arrived when some attempt should be made to do justice to the race which had founded Christianity.[1]

Looking back in 1870, Disraeli further expounded his views and aims:

Some of the great truths of ethnology were necessarily involved in such discussions. Familiar as we all now are with such themes, the house of Israel being now freed from the barbarism of mediæval misconception, and judged, like all other races, by their contributions to the existing sum of human welfare, and the general influence of race on human action being universally recognised as the key of history, the difficulty and hazard of touching for the first time on such topics cannot now be easily appreciated. But public opinion recognised both the truth and the sincerity of these views.[2]

[1] Preface to the fifth edition of *Coningsby*, 1849.
[2] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

By Disraeli himself and most of his critics, *Tancred* has been regarded as merely the third novel in a trilogy. In a certain external sense, it is that, of course. The theme with which it deals had been touched on in *Coningsby*, and the principal characters of *Coningsby* reappear. But a good many things had happened before *Tancred* was issued; and the reader is soon conscious of a breach of continuity with the previous novels, of being in a different atmosphere and a different world of ideas. 'Young England' had disappeared, and the political purpose, in the narrower sense, underlying *Coningsby* had disappeared with it In the sphere of actual politics Disraeli had shown great and striking genius, and had become one of the foremost men in the House of Commons; but he had, on the other hand, become sensible of the weight of prejudice against him, and of the difficulties to be overcome if he was to continue his ascent. And *Tancred* strikes the reader less as the accomplishment of a political purpose, than as a sudden revolt of the author against the routine and hollowness of politics, against its prejudice and narrowness; and as an assertion of his detachment and superiority to it all by the glorification of his race and by the proclamation of the mystic ideas, inherited from the Jews, which marked him out from the commonplace mediocrities around him.

Tancred falls at once into two main portions: in the first, which occupies about a third of the book, the scene is laid in England; in the second in Palestine and the adjacent regions. Tancred, Lord Montacute, is the only child of the Duke and Duchess of Bellamont; his father a man of gentle but serious nature; his mother a woman of fixed opinions and of firm and compact prejudices, Puritan in religion and precisian in morals; both living entirely aloof from the world of fashion. The child of such parents, Tancred's upbringing has been serious; and his mother is able to say that he has never given her a moment's pain. His grave and reserved but enthusiastic nature has been brooding over the eternal mysteries;

he is discontented with his age, mourns over the decay of faith, and has entered a world of ideas into which his father and mother cannot follow him. He is, in fact, a type of religious discontent, as Coningsby was of political. When pressed by his father to enter Parliament after his coming of age, he astonished his parents by announcing his desire to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre.

'When I remember' [he says to the Duke] 'that the Creator, since light sprang out of darkness, has deigned to reveal Himself to His creature only in one land; that in that land He assumed a manly form, and met a human death; I feel persuaded that the country sanctified by such intercourse and such events must be endowed with marvellous and peculiar qualities. . . . Our castle has before this sent forth a De Montacute to Palestine. For three days and three nights he knelt at the tomb of his Redeemer. Six centuries and more have elapsed since that great enterprise. It is time to restore and renovate our communications with the Most High. I, too, would kneel at that tomb; I, too, surrounded by the holy hills and sacred groves of Jerusalem, would relieve my spirit from the bale that bows it down; would lift up my voice to heaven, and ask, What is DUTY, and what is FAITH? What ought I to DO, and what ought I to BELIEVE?'

His mother at once calls in her favourite Bishop, whose character is so drawn that it was immediately recognised as an unfriendly portrait of Blomfield, Bishop of London.

He combined a great talent for action with very limited powers of thought. Bustling, energetic, versatile, gifted with an indomitable perseverance, and stimulated by an ambition that knew no repose, with a capacity for mastering details and an inordinate passion for affairs, he could permit nothing to be done without his interference, and consequently was perpetually involved in transactions which were either failures or blunders. He was one of those leaders who are not guides. . . . Placed in a high post in an age of political analysis, the bustling intermeddler was unable to supply society with a single solution. Enunciating second-hand, with characteristic precipitation, some big principle in vogue, as if he were a discoverer, he invariably shrank from its subsequent application, the moment that he found it might be unpopular and inconvenient. All his quandaries terminated in the same catastrophe—a compromise.

In a long interview with Tancred he makes no impression. He was as little able as the Duke to solve Tancred's difficulties. As a proof of the vitality of the Church he solemnly announced that they would soon see a Bishop at Manchester. 'But I want to see an angel at Manchester,' replied Tancred.

The Bishop having failed, the Duke decides that the best man to deal with a visionary is a man of the world, and the man of the world is now called in, in the person of an old friend, Lord Eskdale.[1] He receives the announcement of Tancred's resolve to go to Jerusalem with the light-hearted remark that it is 'better than going to the Jews, which most men do at his time of life'; and he recommends a policy, not of opposition, but of delay, sets Tancred searching for a yacht, and meanwhile introduces him to the allurements of London society. There Tancred meets a certain Lady Constance Rawleigh, 'a distinguished beauty of two seasons; fresh but adroit.' 'It had got about that she admired intellect, and, though she claimed the highest social position, that a booby would not content her, even if his ears were covered with strawberry leaves.'

She fascinates Tancred, and becomes a serious rival in his thoughts to Jerusalem; but the spell is broken when she recommends him to read *The Revelations of Chaos*,[2] a new book which 'explains everything.'

'It explains everything!' said Tancred; 'it must, indeed, be a very remarkable book!'

'I think it will just suit you,' said Lady Constance. 'Do you know, I thought so several times while I was reading it.'

'To judge from the title, the subject is rather obscure,' said Tancred.

'No longer so,' said Lady Constance. 'It is treated

[1] See p. 601.

[2] Mrs. Disraeli writes to Sarah Disraeli, in January, 1845: 'We have just got *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*.' Dizzy is enchanted with it. It does and will cause the greatest possible sensation and confusion.' The book, by Robert Chambers, the Edinburgh publisher, issued anonymously, in 1844, set forth a theory of development, and was praised by Darwin as preparing the ground for his own 'analogous views.'

scientifically; everything is explained by geology and astronomy, and in that way. It shows you exactly how a star is formed; nothing can be so pretty! A cluster of vapour, the cream of the milky way, a sort of celestial cheese, churned into light. You must read it, 'tis charming.'

'Nobody ever saw a star formed,' said Tancred.

'Perhaps not. You must read the *Revelations*; it is all explained. But what is most interesting, is the way in which man has been developed. You know, all is development. The principle is perpetually going on. First there was nothing, then there was something; then, I forget the next, I think there were shells, then fishes; then we came: let me see, did we come next? Never mind that; we came at last. And the next change there will be something very superior to us, something with wings. Ah! that's it: we were fishes, and I believe we shall be crows. But you must read it.''

'I do not believe I ever was a fish,' said Tancred.

'Oh! but it is all proved.' . . .

'I was a fish, and I shall be a crow,' said Tancred to himself, when the hall door closed on him. 'What a spiritual mistress!'

He resumes his preparations for departure, and at the instigation of Lord Eskdale calls on Sidonia[1] with a recommendation, as the great banker is of the Hebrew race, not to 'go on too much about the Holy Sepulchre.' Sidonia, whose place of business in the City, Sequin Court, is clearly drawn from New Court, St. Swithin's Lane, the famous Rothschild establishment, listens to his talk with sympathy. 'When Tancred had finished speaking, there was a pause of a few seconds, during which Sidonia seemed lost in thought; then, looking up, he said: "It appears to me, Lord Montacute, that what you want is to penetrate the great Asian mystery."' 'The great Asian mystery!' 'How often,' writes Disraeli, 'when all seems dark, and hopeless, and spiritless, and tame, when slight obstacles figure in the cloudy landscape as Alps, and the rushing cataracts of our invention have faded into drizzle, a single phrase of a great man instantaneously flings sunshine on the intellectual landscape!' Reanimated by Sidonia, Tancred resumes his purpose; but he has more

[1] See II., ch. 7, especially pp. 604, 607-610, and 620.

adventures first. At a dinner at Sidonia's he meets several of our old friends of *Coningsby* and *Sybil*. The critics tell us that in *Julius Cæsar* Shakespeare has deliberately made the figure of the great dictator, for whom he shows elsewhere so warm an admiration, a little ridiculous in order to insure that the real hero, Brutus, should stand out more distinctly; and so it seems here as if Disraeli, possessed of his high religious theme, took an iconoclastic delight in shattering his lesser idols. Sybil and Egremont are spared; so is Henry Sydney, now spelt Sidney; but Coningsby has become a somewhat commonplace young man, at once pompous and saucy, engaged in a prosperous career; and Edith is represented so that she draws a protest from Sarah Disraeli: 'I am so sorry that the beautiful and pure Edith should have turned out what she is. . . . We were very much in love with her; but I cannot forgive her for saying her child has a "debauched look."' A new character, Vavasour, who is famous for his breakfasts, and to whom we shall return, is now added to the 'Young England' group. Tancred pours scorn on the Parliamentary career in which they are all striving. Parliament seems to him the very place which a man of action should avoid.

'In this age it is not Parliament that does the real work. It does not govern Ireland, for example. If the manufacturers want to change a tariff, they form a commercial league, and they effect their purpose. It is the same with the abolition of slavery, and all our great revolutions. Parliament ha become as really insignificant as for two centuries it has kept the monarch. O'Connell has taken a good share of its power Cobden has taken another; and I am inclined to believe,' said Tancred, 'though I care little about it, that, if our order had any spirit or prescience, they would put themselves at the head of the people, and take the rest.' . . .

'I go to a land,' said Tancred, 'that has never been blessed by that fatal drollery called a representative government, though Omniscience once deigned to trace out the polity which should rule it.'

In the same symposium Sidonia expounds some of Disraeli's favourite ideas:

'If development be progressive, how do you account for the state of Italy? . . . Has the development of Western Asia been progressive? It is a land of tombs and ruins. Is China progressive, the most ancient and numerous of existing societies? Is Europe itself progressive? Is Spain a tithe as great as she was? Is Germany as great as when she invented printing; as she was under the rule of Charles the Fifth? France herself laments her relative inferiority to the past. But England flourishes. Is it what you call civilisation that makes England flourish? Is it the universal development of the faculties of man that has rendered an island, almost unknown to the ancients, the arbiter of the world? Clearly not. It is her inhabitants that have done this; it is an affair of race. A Saxon race, protected by an insular position, has stamped its diligent and methodic character on the century. And when a superior race, with a superior idea to Work and Order, advances, its state will be progressive, and we shall, perhaps, follow the example of the desolate countries. *All is race;* there is no other truth.'

'Because it includes all others?' said Lord Henry.

'You have said it.'

'As for Vavasour's definition of civilisation,' said Coningsby, 'civilisation was more advanced in ancient than modern times; then what becomes of the progressive principle? Look at the great centuries of the Roman Empire! . . .'

'What an empire!' said Sidonia. 'All the superior races in all the superior climes.'

Tancred has yet another adventure before he sets forth for Palestine. A married beauty, Lady Bertie and Bellair, wins him by her sympathy with his high aspirations, till he learns by chance that she is the most inveterate female gambler in Europe.

This first part of *Tancred* contains perhaps the best comedy that Disraeli ever wrote. Besides the principal characters and the main intrigue, there are some delightful vignettes. There is the low comedy of the cooks, with which the book opens; and the amusing scene in which Lord Eskdale soothes an unappreciated *chef* by the delicate compliment, 'Why I wished you to come down here, Leander, was not to receive the applause of my cousin and his guests, but to form their taste.' Then there is Lady Hampshire, a character always familiar in society. She

'was an invalid; but her ailment was one of those mysteries which still remained insoluble, although, in the most liberal manner, she delighted to afford her friends all the information in her power.' The further social progress of the Guy Flounceys, and especially of Mrs. Guy Flouncey[1] is admirably depicted. They had 'a good fortune, with good management, no country house, and no children'—it was 'Aladdin's lamp.' They had already attracted the best men; but Mrs. Guy meant also to conquer the great ladies. This is how she proceeded:

> A great nobleman met Mrs. Guy Flouncey at a country house, and was fairly captivated by her. Her pretty looks, her coquettish manner, her vivacity, her charming costume, above all, perhaps, her imperturbable good temper, pierced him to the heart. The great nobleman's wife had the weakness to be annoyed. Mrs. Guy Flouncey saw her opportunity. She threw over the earl, and became the friend of the countess, who could never sufficiently evince her gratitude to the woman who would not make love to her husband. This friendship was the incident for which Mrs. Guy Flouncey had been cruising for years.

She determined to test her position by giving a ball. Her great friend, the countess, asked the guests; a royal duchess was prevailed upon to come; so was the 'Dictator,' the Duke of Wellington. 'All the great ladies, all the ambassadors, all the beauties, a full chapter of the Garter, a chorus among the "best men" that it was without doubt the "best ball" of the year—happy Mrs. Guy Flouncey!'

The social satire in *Tancred*, it will be seen, is bitter; more bitter than in *Coningsby* or *Sybil*. In fact, it is to be noted that, if we regard the three novels as a trilogy, as the theme grows higher, passing from party in *Coningsby* to the people in *Sybil* and religion in *Tancred*, the detachment from the world and the readiness to flout and trample upon it grow more marked.

We now leave London society and pass to the Holy Land and Tancred's attempts to penetrate 'the great

[1] See p. 621.

Asian mystery';[1] and the tone at once changes to Disraeli's highest vein of seriousness. A rhapsody in Jerusalem sounds the note of all that is to follow in an allusion to 'the most illustrious of the human, as well as of the Hebrew, race, the descendant of King David, and the divine son of the most favoured of women.' Disraeli's great conception of Christianity as completed Judaism pervades the whole. After a visit to Gethsemane, Tancred falls asleep in a garden near Bethany, and on awaking beholds a beautiful young woman the description of whose dress illustrates a side of Disraeli's mind and taste. She wore an amber vest of gold-embroidered silk fastened with buttons of precious stones, and white Cashmere trousers fastened with clasps of rubies. Over the vest was a violet silk pelisse; and over this an outer pelisse of amber Cashmere lined with white fox fur. There were costly jewels on her arms; her cap was thickly incrusted with pearls; her hair was fastened up with bunches of precious stones.

In the long dialogue that follows, the lady displays an intellect as marvellous as her jewels:

'Pray, are you of those Franks who worship a Jewess; or of those other who revile her, break her images, and blaspheme her pictures?'

'I venerate, though I do not adore, the mother of God,' said Tancred, with emotion.

'Ah! the mother of Jesus!' said his companion. 'He is your God. He lived much in this village. He was a great man, but he was a Jew; and you worship him.'

'And you do not worship him?' said Tancred, looking up to her with an inquiring glance, and with a reddening cheek.

'It sometimes seems to me that I ought,' said the lady, 'for I am of his race, and you should sympathise with your race.'

[1] During Disraeli's last period of office as Prime Minister, a clergyman wrote to ask him the meaning of 'the great Asian mystery' mentioned in *Tancred*. Disraeli endorsed the letter for his private secretary: 'Write to this gentleman that, as I have written three volumes to answer the question he asks, and, so far as he is concerned, have failed, it would be presumption to suppose I could be more fortunate in a letter. Recommend repeated, and frequent, study of the work as the most efficient means for his purpose.—D.'

'You are, then, a Hebrew?'

'I am of the same blood as Mary whom you venerate, but do not adore.'

She is, as a matter of fact, Eva, known as the Rose of Sharon, the daughter of the banker Besso, to whom Tancred has a letter of credit, and she stands in the book for the genius of Judaism. The other principal character in the second part is Fakredeen, an Emir of the Lebanon, Eva's foster-brother, a scheming and ambitious Syrian, clever, subtle, volatile, and utterly unscrupulous. 'I am of that religion,' he says, 'which gives me a sceptre.' 'What is the use,' he asks Eva, 'of belonging to an old family, unless to have the authority of an ancestor ready for any prejudice, religious or political, which your combinations may require?' 'Ah! Fakredeen,' replies the lady, 'you have no self-respect.' He has 'the two greatest stimulants in the world to action, youth and debt.' He wants Europe to talk of him. His ambition hovers between being Prince of the Lebanon, on the one hand, and, on the other, conquering the East in order to establish the independence of the Oriental races. For him all life and conduct was a matter of force or fraud, and he preferred the latter, on æsthetic grounds.

Though it was his profession and his pride to simulate and to dissemble, he had a native ingenuousness which was extremely awkward and very surprising, for, the moment he was intimate with you, he told you everything. Though he intended to make a person his tool, and often succeeded, such was his susceptibility, and so strong were his sympathetic qualities, that he was perpetually, without being aware of it, showing his cards.

After a week's solitude and fasting, Tancred has kneeled at the 'empty sepulchre of the divine Prince of the house of David,' but no voice from heaven has yet sounded for him. However, as Sinai led to Calvary, he resolves to go from Calvary to Sinai. On his way across the desert, through the machinations of Fakredeen he is captured and held to ransom by a tribe of Rechabites, children of

Jethro, whose chief is Eva's grandfather. But Fakredeen, meeting Tancred, comes under the spell of his heroic and enthusiastic nature; and the simple-minded Tancred pours out his ideas to the fickle Syrian. Nothing great, he tells him, was ever effected by management. Fakredeen's system of intrigue might suit the wretched eighteenth century, when there was no faith in God or man. In the nineteenth century you must appeal to popular sympathies.

'If you wish to free your country, and make the Syrians a nation, it is not to be done by sending secret envoys to Paris or London, cities themselves which are perhaps both doomed to fall; you must act like Moses and Mahomet. . . . The world was never conquered by intrigue, it was conquered by faith. Now, I do not see that you have faith in anything.'

'Faith,' said Fakredeen, musingly, as if his ear had caught the word for the first time, 'faith! that is a grand idea. If one could only have faith in something and conquer the world!'

'See now,' said Tancred, with unusual animation, 'I find no charm in conquering the world to establish a dynasty: a dynasty, like everything else, wears out; indeed, it does not last as long as most things; it has a precipitate tendency to decay. . . . One should conquer the world not to enthrone a man, but an idea, for ideas exist for ever. But what idea? There is the touchstone of all philosophy! Amid the wreck of creeds, the crash of empires, French revolutions, English reforms, Catholicism in agony, and Protestantism in convulsions, discordant Europe demands the keynote, which none can sound. If Asia be in decay, Europe is in confusion. Your repose may be death, but our life is anarchy.'

Fakredeen, revolving the strange idea of faith in his mind, thinks something might be done by heading the Desert, and making the tribes pour out like an irresistible simoom. 'The Arabs are always young; it is the only race that never withers.' He was an Arab by race himself, whereas Tancred could only claim to be an Arab by religion.

At the end of the conversation the Emir, suddenly inspired, bursts out: 'The game is in our hands, if we have energy. There is a combination which would entirely

change the whole face of the world, and bring back empire to the East.' One thing was clear: 'it is finished with England.' But all might be saved by a *coup d'état.*

'You must . . . quit a petty and exhausted position for a vast and prolific empire. Let the Queen of the English collect a great fleet, let her stow away all her treasure, bullion, gold plate, and precious arms; be accompanied by all her court and chief people, and transfer the seat of her empire from London to Delhi. There she will find an immense empire ready made, a firstrate army, and a large revenue. In the meantime I will arrange with Mehemet Ali. He shall have Bagdad and Mesopotamia, and pour the Bedoueen cavalry into Persia. I will take care of Syria and Asia Minor. The only way to manage the Affghans is by Persia and by the Arabs. We will acknowledge the Empress of India as our suzerain, and secure for her the Levantine coast. If she like, she shall have Alexandria as she now has Malta: it could be arranged. Your Queen is young: she has an *avenir.* Aberdeen and Sir Peel will never give her this advice; their habits are formed. They are too old, too *rusés.* But, you see! the greatest empire that ever existed; besides which she gets rid of the embarrassment of her Chambers! And quite practicable; for the only difficult part, the conquest of India, which baffled Alexander, is all done!'

Fakredeen's confident assertion that 'it is finished with England' is not yet true; but the British Crown does hold Alexandria,[1] though not in quite the same way as it holds Malta; and the seat of Eastern empire is now at Delhi, where a British King has held his court as Emperor of India. Moreover, these developments are due, directly or indirectly, to Disraeli's policy.

Tancred at length finds himself on Sinai, and there, during a night spent in prayer on the sacred soil, a vision is vouchsafed to him; a form appears which announces itself as the Angel of Arabia. In this ambitious scene Disraeli, it must be said, completely overreached himself. What is meant to be solemn and impressive is grotesque. The Angel talks a couple of pages of fluent journalese, and gives him this message:

'The equality of man can only be accomplished by the sovereignty of God. The longing for fraternity can never be

[1] Written in 1913.

satisfied but under the sway of a common father. The relations between Jehovah and his creatures can be neither too numerous nor too near. In the increased distance between God and man have grown up all those developments that have made life mournful. Cease, then, to seek in a vain philosophy the solution of the social problem that perplexes you. Announce the sublime and solacing doctrine of theocratic equality.'

Tancred, on his return to the Rechabite encampment, nearly dies of a brain fever, but is nursed back to life by Eva, who has come to her grandfather from Jerusalem. He is now 'all for action,' ready to place himself at the head of the Asian movement. 'A man might climb Mount Carmel,' he says, 'and utter three words which would bring the Arabs again to Grenada, and perhaps further.' He proceeds:

'The most favoured part of the globe at this moment is entirely defenceless; there is not a soldier worth firing at in Asia except the Sepoys. The Persian, Assyrian, and Babylonian monarchies might be gained in a morning with faith and the flourish of a sabre.'

'You would have the Great Powers interfering,' said Baroni.

'What should I care for the Great Powers, if the Lord of Hosts were on my side!'

'Why, to be sure they could not do much at Bagdad or Ispahan.'

'Work out a great religious truth on the Persian and Mesopotamian plains, the most exuberant soils in the world with the scantiest population, it would revivify Asia. It must spread. The peninsula of Arabia, when in action, must always command the peninsula of the Lesser Asia. Asia revivified would act upon Europe. The European comfort, which they call civilisation, is, after all, confined to a very small space: the island of Great Britain, France, and the course of a single river, the Rhine. The greater part of Europe is as dead as Asia, without the consolation of climate and the influence of immortal traditions.'

And again:

'Unhappy Asia! Do you call it unhappy Asia? This land of Divine deeds and Divine thoughts! Its slumber is more vital than the waking life of the rest of the globe, as the dream of genius is more precious than the vigils of ordinary

men. Unhappy Asia, do you call it? It is the unhappiness of Europe over which I mourn.'

'Europe that has conquered Hindostan, protects Persia and Asia Minor, affects to have saved Syria,' said Eva, with some bitterness. 'Oh! what can we do against Europe?'

'Save it,' said Tancred.

'We cannot save ourselves; what means have we to save others?'

'The same you have ever exercised, Divine Truth. Send forth a great thought, as you have done before, from Mount Sinai, from the villages of Galilee, from the deserts of Arabia, and you may again remodel all their institutions, change their principles of action, and breathe a new spirit into the whole scope of their existence.'

Disraeli by this time was clearly beginning to find the impossibility of bringing his hero to any satisfactory bourne, and his story to any satisfactory conclusion. As in *Vivian Grey* and *Contarini Fleming*, he had let his thoughts run; and the true completion of *Tancred*, as of them, is to be found in his own career. In the deepest sense, it stands with those two as the most autobiographical of his novels. From the point of view of art, the true scheme would have been to bring Tancred to the threshold of his vision on Sinai, and then let all end in tragedy. Sarah Disraeli foresaw the difficulty. When she had only read the first volume, she wrote to her brother: 'We are as eager as Tancred to reach the Holy Sepulchre, but, as Sidonia says, when we arrive there, what is to happen? How are these great questions to be answered? When are these mighty truths to be discovered?' Disraeli, however, persevered, but, though much of the detail in the remainder of the book is good—especially the comedy scenes—it is really incoherent. As he wrote to Lady Londonderry, Tancred had turned out a much more troublesome and unmanageable personage than he had anticipated.

Fakredeen carries Tancred off to Canobia, his mountain castle in the Lebanon. There he collects round him and reconciles the Druses and the Maronites; but the allies feel that their purposes require further support. They

accordingly endeavour to enlist in their cause a mysterious and isolated tribe, the Ansarey, settled in the north of Syria, and ruled over by a Queen Astarte. With difficulty they manage to pay these Ansarey a visit, and find them to be Hellenes still worshipping the old Greek gods. This gives Disraeli an opportunity of bringing out in another aspect his theory of race.

The Queen of the Ansarey has a pompous and absurd Prime Minister, Keferinis, who affords some comic relief in the latter part of the book. But the best comedy scenes in Syria are those in which the gossips of Jerusalem discuss the high politics of the world.

'Palmerston' [said Barizy of the Tower] 'will never rest till he gets Jerusalem.'

'The English must have markets,' said the Consu Pasqualigo.

'Very just,' said Barizy of the Tower. 'There will be a great opening here. I think of doing a little myself in cottons; but the house of Besso will monopolise everything.'

'I don't think the English can do much here,' said the Consul, shaking his head. 'What have we to give them in exchange? The people here had better look to Austria, if they wish to thrive. The Austrians also have cottons, and they are Christians. They will give you their cottons, and take your crucifixes.'

'I don't think I can deal in crucifixes,' said Barizy of the Tower.

'I tell you what, if you won't, your cousin Barizy of the Gate will. I know he has given a great order to Bethlehem.'

'The traitor!' exclamied Barizy of the Tower. 'Well, if people will purchase crucifixes and nothing else, they must be supplied. Commerce civilizes man.'

At the end of many adventures and many complicated intrigues on the part of Fakredeen, who turns round and betrays Tancred, we are admitted to a dialogue between Eva and Tancred in that garden at Bethany where their acquaintance began. She is despondent, and says:

'Your feelings cannot be what they were before all this happened; when you thought only of a Divine cause, of stars, of angels, and of our peculiar and gifted land. No, no; now it is all mixed up with intrigue, and politics, and management,

and baffled schemes, and cunning arts of men. You may be, you are, free from all this, but your faith is not the same. You no longer believe in Arabia.'

'Why, thou to me art Arabia,' said Tancred, advancing and kneeling at her side. 'The Angel of Arabia, and of my life and spirit! Talk not to me of faltering faith: mine is intense. Talk not to me of leaving a Divine cause: why, thou art my cause, and thou art most divine! O Eva! deign to accept the tribute of my long agitated heart! Yes, I too, like thee, am sometimes full of despair; but it is only when I remember that I love, and love, perhaps, in vain.'

But even this solution of the problem has its difficulties. The lovers are interrupted by the approach of a crowd, shouting Tancred's name. 'The Duke and Duchess of Bellamont had arrived at Jerusalem.' And with these words the novel ends.

Thirty years later Disraeli told Jowett that he still liked *Tancred* the best of his novels. That is easy to understand. It embodied those deeper dreams which had not yet faded, and which he was still trying to realise. In 1877 he was far closer to the spirit of *Tancred* than to that of *Lothair*, which had been published a few years before. He once told someone else that, when he wanted to refresh his knowledge of the East, he read *Tancred*. As a picture of the East it is a wonderful *tour de force*. Lady Blessington, on reading it, wrote to Disraeli: 'You have made me comprehend the East better than all the books I have ever read on it.'

The book was an astonishing publication for a man who had just forced himself into the front rank of a great political party. Nothing in Disraeli's whole career is more illustrative of his range than the production—at a critical moment of his life, when it appeared to be his business to conciliate the prejudices of the respectable, the decorous, and the commonplace—of this remarkable work, with all its daring and its dreams, its firm handling of sacred subjects and its visionary spirit, its fierce protest against Western material civilisation and Philistinism. The reviewers, with some reproofs for the

audacity that at times seemed to border on irreverence, were friendly on the whole in their reception of the novel; but *Tancred* had not the success of *Coningsby* with the public at large. It was above their heads. Isaac D'Israeli, whose own admiration was expressed in superlatives—'a work for its originality and execution without a rival; faultless in composition, profound in philosophy, and magical in the loveliness of its descriptions'—anticipated a dubious reception. 'I am waiting with more curiosity than anxiety to learn its effect on the unenlightened public. We may have to listen to the squeak or the bray of the obscure animals in their forests whenever a new light breaks into their dark recesses.' Colburn, who published *Tancred*, as well as its two predecessors, wrote to Mrs. Disraeli shortly after its appearance, 'The sale of *Tancred* is progressing, tho' not quite so quickly as I could wish. . . . I have, however, got through the first edition of 1,500 copies (including the *gratis* books), and have disposed of about 50 of the second edition.' Disraeli's share of the profit, on 2,250 copies, was £775.

The bewilderment of the public over *Tancred* has been shared by eminent critics. Sir Leslie Stephen can only explain the book 'by accepting the theory of a double consciousness, and resolving to pray with the mystic, and sneer with the politician, as the fit takes us.' He writes of 'the strange phantasmagoria of *Tancred*,' and the 'strange antics' of its characters; but suggests that the judgment of the harsh realist must be that, 'after all, it is a mere mystification.' 'A mere mystification' was what the ordinary man and the rank and file politician considered it; and hence the legend sprang up which treated Disraeli as a mystery-man, a conjurer, who performed by verbal dexterity the same kind of tricks that the juggler effects by sleight of hand. This was the view that *Punch* adopted for years; and few things did more in Victorian days to fix the character of public men in the public mind than Leech's and Tenniel's cartoons. Even Carlyle, whose teaching was in many respects so

similar to Disraeli's, treated him as 'a superlative Hebrew conjurer.' The book therefore, on the whole, did its author a disservice. It increased the distrust already existing in many minds; it hindered and delayed public recognition of the real seriousness of his political ideas and of the lofty nature of his patriotism. And yet those who penetrated deep into the spirit of the novel found there more of Disraeli's message to his age than in any other of his writings.

Before we consider this message in detail, it may be as well to recur to one of the *dramatis personæ* in *Tancred*, where we have the advantage of being able to compare Disraeli's recorded estimate of an eminent man with his portrait as depicted in the novel. In the first part, perhaps the most elaborately sketched character is that of Vavasour.

> Mr. Vavasour was a social favourite; a poet and a real poet, and a troubadour, as well as a member of Parliament; travelled, sweet-tempered, and good-hearted; amusing and clever. With catholic sympathies and an eclectic turn of mind, Mr. Vavasour saw something good in everybody and everything. . . . Mr. Vavasour's breakfasts were renowned. Whatever your creed, class, or country, one might almost add your character, you were a welcome guest at his matutinal meal, provided you were celebrated. That qualification, however, was rigidly enforced.
>
> It not rarely happened that never were men more incongruously grouped. Individuals met at his hospitable house who had never met before, but who for years had been cherishing in solitude mutual detestation, with all the irritable exaggeration of the literary character. Vavasour liked to be the Amphitryon of a cluster of personal enemies. . . .
>
> A real philosopher, alike from his genial disposition and from the influence of his rich and various information, Vavasour moved amid the strife, sympathising with everyone; and perhaps, after all, the philanthropy which was his boast was not untinged by a dash of humour, of which rare and charming quality he possessed no inconsiderable portion. Vavasour liked to know everybody who was known, and to see everything which ought to be seen. He also was of opinion that everybody who was known ought to know him; and that the spectacle, however splendid or exciting, was not quite perfect without his presence.

His life was a gyration of energetic curiosity; an insatiable whirl of social celebrity. . . . He was everywhere, and at everything; he had gone down in a diving-bell and gone up in a balloon. As for his acquaintances, he was welcomed in every land; his universal sympathies seemed omnipotent. Emperor and king, jacobin and carbonaro, alike cherished him He was the steward of Polish balls and the vindicator of Russian humanity; he dined with Louis Philippe, and gave dinners to Louis Blanc.

There was no difficulty in recognising in this careful portrait one of the best-known men of the day—Richard Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton. How he came to figure in *Tancred* is explained in a memorandum written by Disraeli in the sixties:

Monckton Milnes was a good-natured fellow, and not naturally bad-hearted; he was highly instructed and very clever. But he was always ridiculous,—from an insane vanity. This excess of a sentiment, which, when limited, is only amusing, was accompanied by a degree of envy which made him unamiable.

When I published *Coningsby*, he complained to me that I had not introduced his character among the Young England group, to which he was attached in feeling, and with whom he wished to act—and had sometimes. He spoke to me on this matter with great earnestness—tears in his eyes—I had never appreciated him, and all that sort of thing. As his father was a friend of mine, and I always wished to be on good terms with Milnes, . . . I at length promised that, if the opportunity offered, I would remember his wish. Accordingly, when I wrote *Tancred*, in which the Young England Group reappeared, I sketched the character of Vavasour, and I made it as attractive as I could consistent with that verisimilitude necessary. I don't know whether he was over-satisfied: but between 1844 and 1847 when *Tancred* was published (*Sybil* in 1845, and *Tancred* was intended for 1846, but the publication postponed in consequence of the great Corn Law Repeal) much had happened in my position: the Young England myth had evaporated, and I had become, if not the recognised leader, at least the most influential organ, of a powerful parliamentary party. Milnes was full of envy.

'It is impossible that I and Sidney Herbert,' he went about saying, 'can be led by Disraeli.'

No one expected that Sidney Herbert would be led by me. He was a member of Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet, which had

been mainly, if not entirely, destroyed by my efforts. Milnes was one of the most insignificant members of the House of Commons: but he gratified his vanity by classing in his own talk himself with S. Herbert.

In Easter, 1846, when the success of Peel was doubtful, Milnes, who had not a rural taste or accomplishment, came up from Yorkshire after the recess in a squire's cutaway green coat, with basket buttons. As he entered the House, G. Smythe exclaimed: 'See Dicky,—Protection looking up.'

When he found that Peel was flung in a ditch, he changed his politics, and took to Palmerston, whom, as well as Lady Palmerston, he toadied with a flagrant perseverance that made everyone smile. His passion was office. He wanted to sit on the Treasury Bench, with folded arms, and to be a man of business. Palmerston was ready to do anything for him except give him office, and refused him everything on every occasion. He always went to relieve his feelings and plead his cause to Lady Palmerston, who smoothed him down, asked him to perpetual dinners, and said he was a 'social favourite.' . . .

It is well known that Palmerston offered a peerage to Milnes's father, Pemberton Milnes, who greatly annoyed his son by declining it. Disraeli's memorandum proceeds:

In this quandary, Dicky, who was himself not incapable of generous feelings and conduct, gave me credit for a similar constitution, and determined to appeal to me. His father, in order probably to vex him, always declared that he was a follower of mine, and could not as a man of honor accept a dignity from my opponents. Dicky threw himself upon my good feelings, and I saw his father and said and urged everything which should induce him to reconsider his course: but in vain. I even ventured to represent to him, that, even if the Tories returned to power, and Lord Derby were to consult me as to the commoners who should be promoted, the number must necessarily be limited, and would be confined to those members of the House of Commons who had served the party long, made great sacrifices, and left behind them great influences; that private friendship merely could not be a ground of promotion. I thought that this representation of affairs at one moment a little shook him: but he was ultimately firm, and he died a commoner.

Eventually, in 1863, after Pemberton Milnes's death, Monckton Milnes became, on Palmerston's recommendation, Lord Houghton.

Milnes, the father, was a tall, handsome man, with a distinguished presence. Lord Houghton was unfortunately short, with a face like a Herculaneum masque, or a countenance cut out of an orange. . . . He never caught the House of Commons tone. Too easy and familiar in Society, the moment he was on his legs in St. Stephen's he was nervous, took refuge in pomposity, and had no flow; a most elaborate style and always recalling his words. His irresistibly comic face, becoming every moment more serious, produced the effect of some celebrated droll, Liston or Keeley, and before he had proceeded five minutes, though he might be descanting on the wrongs of Poland or the rights of Italy, there was sure to be a laugh.

Disraeli's judgment of Milnes seems to be unduly harsh, and betrays, perhaps, the contempt of a literary man who has gone into politics and there succeeded, for a literary man who has gone into politics and there failed.

'Mr. Vavasour's breakfasts were renowned.' Disraeli has left on record a description of an actual breakfast-party given by Monckton Milnes in the forties:

Mem. of breakfast at Monckton Milnes', the only one I ever attended—and why? Because he came to me and said Ibrahim Pacha, who was then in England, was going to breakfast with him, and he had requested his Highness to make a list of those he wished to meet him; and he had put down my name among those who had visited Egypt, etc., etc. I believe a fudge; but having refused M. M. a 1000 times, hating breakfasting out, and he very urgent, I agreed. Went late (half-past 11 perhaps), as his breakfasts were 10 o'clock-ers, but kept up at the House. All the breakfast eaten: that nothing, as I never eat in public at that time. Some coffee on a disordered table; M. M. murmured something about a cutlet, not visible, which I did not notice.

Strange scene. Ibrahim not there, but Suleiman Pacha, the renegade Frenchman (Col. ——, I think), and some Egyptian Grandees. They were fighting the battle of Konieh (I think) like Corporal Trim. 'Voilà la cavalerie,' said Suleiman, and he placed a spoon. 'L'infanterie est là,' and he moved a coffee-cup, etc., etc.; D'Orsay standing behind him and affecting immense interest in order to make the breakfast go off well. A round table: at the fireplace, Milnes' father; a Shandean squire, full of humor and affectation, and astonished at the scene, not accustomed to in Yorkshire. Cobden there: a white-faced man whom I did not know, who turned out to be Kinglake,

then the author of *Eothen*, which I had not read and never have; and other celebrities.

I declined to sit down, but watched the battle, and was regretting I had come, when someone touched me on the back. I looked round: it was Prince Louis Napoleon. 'Are you very much interested in this?' he said. 'Not at all; for I am neither the Conqueror nor the Conquered.'

'Come here then,' and he invited me to the recess of a window.

'Have you any news from Paris?' he asked me with earnest inquiry—excited.

'None, sir.'

'Then I tell you the most important. Two thousand Sous-Lieutenants have signed a document that they will not rest until the family of Buonaparte are restored to the throne.'

'That indeed, sir, is most important,' and I thought I was talking to a madman. I believe it now to have been quite true. (This was after Ham.)

CHAPTER III.

Religion and the Jews.

1847–1858.

The ruling sentiment of *Tancred*, as the reader will have seen, is intense pride of race; its underlying philosophy is Disraeli's philosophy of race. Race even lies at the root of all his conceptions of religion. 'All is race—there is no other truth,' he makes Sidonia say. A few years later, in *Lord George Bentinck*,[1] he suddenly proclaims, in the midst of a prosaic description of the fortunes of a Sugar Bill, 'Progress and reaction are but words to mystify the millions. They mean nothing, they are nothing, they are phrases and not facts. All is race. In the structure, the decay, and the development of the various families of man, the vicissitudes of history find their main solution.' This doctrine of race is akin to the belief in aristocracy. It is 'entirely opposed,' Disraeli tells us, 'to the equality of man and similar abstract dogmas, which have destroyed ancient society without creating a satisfactory substitute.'[2] This doctrine he enforced to the end of his life. The principle of race is 'the key of history,' he repeats in the novel of his old age, *Endymion*. Baron Sergius, the Ambassador, descants to Endymion on the distinctive qualities of Teutons, Slavs, Celts, and Semites, and proceeds:

> The Semites now exercise a vast influence over affairs by their smallest though most peculiar family, the Jews. There is no race gifted with so much tenacity, and such skill in organisation. These qualities have given them an unprece-

[1] Ch. 18.

[2] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

dented hold over property and illimitable credit. As you advance in life, and get experience in affairs, the Jews will cross you everywhere. They have long been stealing into our secret diplomacy, which they have almost appropriated; in another quarter of a century they will claim their share of open government. Well, these are races. . . . But what do they mean by the Latin race? Language and religion do not make a race—there is only one thing which makes a race, and that is blood.[1]

While Tancred meditates, by the pools of Solomon, over the 'superb relics' of the 'inimitable magnificence' of the great Hebrew Kings, his creator bursts out:

> And yet some flat-nosed Frank, full of bustle and puffed up with self-conceit (a race spawned, perhaps, in the morasses of some Northern forest hardly yet cleared), talks of Progress! Progress to what, and from whence? Amid empires shrivelled into deserts, amid the wrecks of great cities, a single column or obelisk of which nations import for the prime ornament of their mud-built capitals, amid arts forgotten, and populations destroyed, the European talks of progress, because, by an ingenious application of some scientific acquirements, he has established a society which has mistaken comfort for civilisation.

One cannot but admire this pride of race, in presence of which all the triumphs and interests of the West are mere vanity. The note may be too much forced; there may be something rhetorical, declamatory, violent, and self-assertive about it, that makes it fall short of the truest art and the truest wisdom. Still, it is certainly refreshing to turn from the self-satisfied laudations of material progress and the confident prophecies of corresponding moral enlightenment, which were the commonplaces of the politicians and publicists of the day, to a criticism of life from so different and so much more spiritual a standpoint. The material progress of the mid-Victorian age was largely bound up with the progress of science. Here, again, Disraeli refused to swim with the tide. The note of hostility, not to science, but to its extravagant claims, is sounded clearly in that passage

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 56.

of *Tancred* where Lady Constance Rawleigh disgusts the hero by her cheap evolutionary theories. The note was struck again, still more insistently, in the famous Ape or Angel speech at Oxford in 1864. This attitude of hostility was inevitable in a man of Disraeli's temperament and race in the days when science was far more arrogant than it is to-day, and attempted to dethrone the spiritual, the religious, and the imaginative from the proud position which he assigned to them. It was hardly possible then to accept what were confidently claimed to be the results of science, and yet relegate her to her proper place; to find the spiritual shining through and rising above the scientific. But in the main he and those who sympathised with him were nearer the truth than the enthusiasts who, in the first eagerness of enlightenment, mistook a part for the whole.

The feeling of race is so strong in *Tancred* that it almost swallows up that which it was designed to illustrate. The topic that was to be treated in the novel was 'the duties of the Church as a main remedial agency in our present state.' The Church was, we were told, a powerful agent of development in the past, and a most efficient means of renovation of the national spirit in the future. No society could be durable 'unless it was built upon the principles of loyalty and religious reverence. The writer and those who acted with him looked, then, upon the Anglican Church as a main machinery by which these results might be realised. There were few great things left in England, and the Church was one.'[1] Yet the Church plays but a small part in the novel. It fails entirely to satisfy the religious longings of Tancred, as the Constitution had failed to satisfy the political aspirations of Coningsby. And no wonder, for it is represented far from sympathetically. We find, indeed, no longer that sentiment of regret for pre-Reformation Christianity which is visible in some of Disraeli's earlier works, and is especially conspicuous in *Sybil*. Yet even in *Sybil* there

[1] General Preface to the Novels, 1870.

is a worthy parish priest; in *Tancred* the only clergy introduced are a time-serving Bishop, a mild 'high and dry' tutor, and an 'honourable and reverend,' who is an epicure and nothing else. The sole recorded action of the Church is the promotion of a great fund for converting Roman Catholic Ireland to Protestantism; and its condition and the nature of its rulers are caustically described:

> The Church of England, mainly from its deficiency of oriental knowledge, and from a misconception of the priestly character which has been the consequence of that want, has fallen of late years into great straits; nor has there ever been a season when it has more needed for its guides men possessing the higher qualities both of intellect and disposition. About five-and-twenty years ago, it began to be discerned that the time had gone by, at least in England, for bishoprics to serve as appanages for the younger sons of great families. The Arch-Mediocrity who then governed this country . . . was impressed with the necessity of reconstructing the episcopal bench on principles of personal distinction and ability. But his notion of clerical capacity did not soar higher than a private tutor who had suckled a young noble into university honours; and his test of priestly celebrity was the decent editorship of a Greek play. He sought for the successors of the apostles, for the stewards of the mysteries of Sinai and of Calvary, among third-rate hunters after syllables. These men, notwithstanding their elevation, with one exception,[1] subsided into their native insignificance; and during our agitated age, when the principles of all institutions, sacred and secular, have been called in question . . . not a voice has been raised by these mitred nullities, either to warn or to vindicate; not a phrase has escaped their lips or their pens that ever influenced public opinion, touched the heart of nations, or guided the conscience of a perplexed people.

The first indication is here given—'misconception of the priestly character'—of opposition to the later phases of the Oxford Movement. Disraeli obviously blamed the Church for seeking its inspiration at that time rather in mediæval traditions than in its Jewish origin; and for joining, in consequence, in the oppression of the Jews instead of upholding their cause. Hence his readiness

[1] Bishop Blomfield. See above, p. 851.

to make his hero find Anglicanism profoundly unsatisfying, and determine to seek faith and inspiration in the country which was the cradle of the Christian religion. Though the great Asian mystery is never thoroughly revealed, certain large ideas about God and man and the world pervade the book—that the world was made and is governed by God, and not by blind natural forces; that before, and in relation to, God their Father men are equal, but that all other equality of man is absurd; and that faith is essential, and the spiritual order, not the material, the thing that counts. Disraeli's teaching is, in fact, a protest against materialism; he preaches that the soul and the mind are more than the body; faith and ideas above material progress. 'Power is neither the sword nor the shield, for these pass away, but ideas, which are divine.' Like other great truths, these are elementary, but none the less needing proclamation and emphasis in an age of gold and iron and cotton. What he adds to these high religious themes is the corollary that the Jews, as the original depositaries of these and all other revelations of true religion, are a highly privileged, and should be a highly regarded, race.

This is the lesson that he is especially anxious to drive home. In *Tancred* he expresses it in the guise of fiction; four or five years later he interpolates a famous chapter on the same subject in a political and historical treatise.[1] Religion and race, he tells us in both, are intimately bound up together. God has only spoken to one race, the Jewish; his full revelation was made by a Divine Jew, Jesus; the Apostles, the preachers of the true religion to the world, were all Jews. 'The greatest of legislators [Moses], the greatest of administrators [Solomon], and the greatest of reformers [Christ]: what race, extinct or living, can produce three such men as these?' The religion of the great Western races, Saxon, Slav, and Celt, is derivative, and comes entirely from the Jew. In proportion to their adherence to, or rejection of, the Semitic principle

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 24.

are those races prosperous or decadent. Disraeli exults over the failure of the attempt, during the French Revolution, to substitute the worship of the Goddess of Reason for the worship of Christ:

> Half a century ago, Europe made a violent and apparently successful effort to disembarrass itself of its Asian faith. The most powerful and the most civilised of its kingdoms, about to conquer the rest, shut up its churches, desecrated its altars, massacred and persecuted their sacred servants, and announced that the Hebrew creeds which Simon Peter brought from Palestine, and which his successors revealed to Clovis, were a mockery and a fiction. What has been the result? In every city, town, village, and hamlet of that great kingdom, the divine image of the most illustrious of Hebrews has been again raised amid the homage of kneeling millions; while, in the heart of its bright and witty capital, the nation has erected the most gorgeous of modern temples, and consecrated its marble and golden walls to the name, and memory, and celestial efficacy of a Hebrew woman.

In another passage he writes: 'Since the great revolt of the Celts against the first and second testament . . . France has been alternately in a state of collapse or convulsion.' England, however, 'despite her deficient and meagre theology, has always remembered Sion.' America is prosperous, and Russia has been consolidated, by this sacred principle. Even at Rome, 'an old man on a Semitic throne baffles the modern Attilas and the recent invasion of the barbarians, under the form of red republicans, socialists, communists, all different phases which describe the relapse of the once converted races into their primitive condition of savagery.' Austria is held together by the Semitic principle; Germany's failure to achieve an imperial position is due to the imperfect conversion of the north of her country. The decline of Spain, in spite of her adherence to the principle, is due to her expulsion of the Semitic population. It all appears very fantastic; but if we interpret the Semitic principle as a phrase summing up all those spiritual and moral ideas which we derive from the sacred books of the Hebrew race, this view of modern history becomes comprehensible.

'Righteousness exalteth a nation,' and faith has always gone far to win victory. Modern civilisation derives from various sources. Disraeli's teaching is that those elements of it which have their origin in a wider spread and a better comprehension of the great truths of the Old and New Testament are more vital to the greatness of a nation than those which spring from the literature of Greece, the Empire of Rome, the advance of science, and the development of invention. This, after all, is very much the teaching of Matthew Arnold, that the Hebrew sense of conduct is far the most important thing for man, as conduct embraces three parts of life.

In order to heighten the obligation of the Western races to the Jews, Disraeli reduces to a minimum the differences between the Old and New Testament. He insists that the morality of the Gospel is 'not a thing apart and of novel revelation.'

> There cannot be two moralities; and to hold that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity could teach a different morality from that which had already been revealed by the First Person of the Holy Trinity is a dogma so full of terror that it may perhaps be looked upon as the ineffable sin against the Holy Spirit. When the lawyer tempted our Lord, and inquired how he was to inherit eternal life, the great master of Galilee referred him to the writings of Moses. There he would find recorded 'the whole duty of man'; to love God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and his neighbour as himself. These two principles are embalmed in the writings of Moses, and are the essence of Christian morals.

So Tancred, Christian from the Saxon north-west though he was, felt that he was no stranger in the wilderness of Sinai.

> Had he not from his infancy repeated, in the congregation of his people, the laws which, from the awful summit of these surroundings mountains the Father of all had himself delivered for the government of mankind? These Arabian laws regulated his life. . . . The life and property of England are protected by the laws of Sinai. The hard-working people of England are secured in every seven days a day of rest by the laws of Sinai. . . .
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> Who is the most popular poet in this country? Is he to

be found among the Mr. Wordsworths and the Lord Byrons, amid sauntering reveries or monologues of sublime satiety? Shall we seek him among the wits of Queen Anne? Even to the myriad-minded Shakspeare can we award the palm? No; the most popular poet in England is the sweet singer of Israel. Since the days of the heritage, when every man dwelt safely under his vine and under his fig-tree, there never was a race who sang so often the odes of David as the people of Great Britain.

Vast as the obligations of the whole human family are to the Hebrew race, there is no portion of the modern populations so much indebted to them as the British people. It was 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon' that won the boasted liberties of England; chanting the same canticles that cheered the heart of Judah amid their glens, the Scotch, upon their hillsides, achieved their religious freedom.

That being so, why persecute the Jews? It is because they are supposed to be expiating by dispersion among the nations the crime of betraying and crucifying Christ. Disraeli maintains that this is neither historically true nor dogmatically sound. It is not historically true, because the dispersion of the Jews began, in the wanderings of the ten tribes, long before Christ; moreover, if some rejected and betrayed him, many preached, wrote, and shed their blood as witnesses for him. Nor is it dogmatically sound.

The imprecation of the mob at the crucifixion is sometimes strangely quoted as a divine decree. It is not a principle of jurisprudence, human or inspired, to permit the criminals to ordain their own punishment. Why, too, should they transfer any portion of the infliction to their posterity? What evidence have we that the wild suggestion was sanctioned by Omnipotence? On the contrary, amid the expiating agony, a divine voice at the same time solicited and secured forgiveness. And if unforgiven, could the cry of a rabble at such a scene bind a nation?

In arguing the point of dogma, Disraeli shocked many of his contemporaries by his free handling of the doctrine of the Atonement. He makes Eva, who stands for the spirit of Judaism, say:

'A sacrificial Mediator with Jehovah, that expiatory intercessor born from the chosen house of the chosen people, yet blending in his inexplicable nature the divine essence with the

human elements, appointed before all time, and purifying, by his atoning blood, the myriads that preceded and the myriads that will follow us, without distinction of creed or clime, this is what you believe. . . . The human race is saved; and, without the apparent agency of a Hebrew prince, it could not have been saved. Now tell me: suppose the Jews had not prevailed upon the Romans to crucify Jesus, what would have become of the Atonement ?'

'I cannot permit myself to contemplate such contingencies,' said Tancred. '. . . I must not even consider an event that had been pre-ordained by the Creator of the world for countless ages.'

'Ah !' said the lady; 'pre-ordained by the Creator of the world for countless ages ! Where then was the inexpiable crime of those who fulfilled the beneficent intention ? The holy race supplied the victim and the immolators. What other race could have been entrusted with such a consummation ? . . . Persecute us ! Why, if you believed what you profess, you should kneel to us ! You raise statues to the hero who saves a country. We have saved the human race, and you persecute us for doing it.'

'Could that be a crime,' exclaims Disraeli in *Lord George Bentinck*, 'which secured for all mankind eternal joy ?' A reviewer in *The Times* has suggested the obvious Scriptural answer to this pleading: that it must needs be that offences come, but woe unto that man by whom they come. On the whole, perhaps Disraeli would have been well advised to confine himself to his historical argument, and avoid the dangerous ground of dogma.

Persecution had, no doubt, degraded the Jews. It was the law of all persecuted races: 'The infamous is the business of the dishonoured. . . . This peculiarity, however, attends the Jews under the most unfavourable circumstances; the other degraded races wear out and disappear; the Jew remains, as determined, as expert, as persevering, as full of resource and resolution as ever.' The Jew is 'sustained by a sublime religion.' However degraded he may be, 'the patriarchal feeling still lingers about his hearth.' 'The trumpet of Sinai still sounds in the Hebrew ear, and a Jew is never seen upon the scaffold, unless it be at an *auto-da-fé*.' Moreover, though there is a partial degradation of the race, still

as actors, dancers, singers, musicians, and composers,[1] they deserve honour and favour from Europe, so much have they done to 'charm the public taste and elevate the public feeling.'

Statesmen should consider how injurious were the consequences to society of persecuting the Jews.

> The Jews represent the Semitic principle; all that is spiritual in our nature. They are the trustees of tradition, and the conservators of the religious element. They are a living and the most striking evidence of the falsity of that pernicious doctrine of modern times, the natural equality of man. The political equality of a particular race is a matter of municipal arrangement, and depends entirely on political considerations and circumstances; but the natural equality of man now in vogue, and taking the form of cosmopolitan fraternity, is a principle which, were it possible to act on it, would deteriorate the great races and destroy all the genius of the world. What would be the consequence on the great Anglo-Saxon republic, for example, were its citizens to secede from their sound principle of reserve, and mingle with their negro and coloured populations? . . . The native tendency of the Jewish race, who are justly proud of their blood, is against the doctrine of the equality of man. They have also another characteristic, the faculty of acquisition. . . . Thus it will be seen that all the tendencies of the Jewish race are conservative. Their bias is to religion, property, and natural aristocracy; and it should be the interest of statesmen that this bias of a great race should be encouraged, and their energies and creative powers enlisted in the cause of existing society.

Persecution, however, had driven this conservative element into the ranks of the secret societies, who were at war with the Semitic principle—'the people of God co-operate with atheists!'—and the provisional governments of 1848 were largely officered by Jews. Take the case of Manini at Venice—'Manini, who by-the-bye is a Jew who professes the whole of the Jewish religion, and believes in Calvary as well as Sinai, "a converted Jew!" as the Lombards styled him, quite forgetting, in the confusion of their ideas, that it is the Lombards who are the converts, not Manini.'

[1] See p. 610.

'It is no doubt to be deplored that several millions of the Jewish race should persist in believing in only a part of their religion ;' but it must be remembered that Christianity cannot have been presented to the Jews who sprang from the pre-Christian dispersion till centuries after Christ, when 'it came from a very suspicious quarter and was offered in a very questionable shape. . . . It appeared to be a Gentile religion, accompanied by idolatrous practices, from which severe monotheists, like the Arabians, always recoil, and holding the Jewish race up to public scorn and hatred. This is not the way to make converts.'

In *Tancred* Disraeli had contented himself with a passionate appeal to Christians to recognise their indebtedness to the Jews, and to honour instead of persecuting them. At the end of the famous twenty-fourth chapter of *Lord George Bentinck*, he turns to the Jews, and endeavours to persuade them of the reasonableness of believing in 'the most important portion of the Jewish religion.' It should not, he maintains, be very repugnant to the feelings of a Jew to learn 'that the redemption of the human race has been effected by the mediatorial agency of a child of Israel'; or 'that a Jewess is the queen of heaven, or that the flower of the Jewish race are even now sitting on the right hand of the Lord God of Sabaoth.' Might not 'the pupil of Moses' ask himself 'whether all the princes of the house of David have done so much for the Jews as that prince who was crucified on Calvary ?'

> Has not He made their history the most famous in the world ? Has not He hung up their laws in every temple ? Has not He vindicated all their wrongs ? Has not He avenged the victory of Titus and conquered the Cæsars ? What successes did they anticipate from their Messiah ? The wildest dreams of their rabbis have been far exceeded. Has not Jesus conquered Europe and changed its name into Christendom ? All countries that refuse the cross wither, while the whole of the new world is devoted to the Semitic principle and its most glorious offspring, the Jewish faith. . . . Christians may continue to persecute Jews, and Jews may

persist in disbelieving Christians, but who can deny that Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Son of the Most High God, is the eternal glory of the Jewish race ?

Fantastic as Disraeli's view of the true relations of Judaism and Christianity appeared when it was published, and, indeed, to some extent appears still, much of it is perfectly sound. That Christianity is the completion of Judaism, and that Judaism—at any rate the Judaism of the Old Testament—is undeveloped Christianity, is the teaching of the Bible throughout. But Disraeli is very unconvincing when he attempts to show that there is no distinction between the morality of the Old Testament and that of the New. The development brought about by Christ was marked in the sphere of morals. Against the story of the lawyer which Disraeli quotes, instances at once rise to the recollection in which the teaching of Christ was after this fashion: 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, gave you this commandment; but I say unto you,' or, 'Ye have heard it said by them of old time; but I say unto you.' And, of course, Disraeli's theory has the great weakness of minimising the importance of the fundamental distinction involved in accepting or repudiating the Divinity of Christ. His language sometimes almost suggests that his religion was pure Judaic monotheism, only prolonged and perhaps softened by the teaching of a great Jewish reformer; and the fact that Christ was the son of Israel seems, now and again, more important than the fact that he is the Son of God. But, when all deductions are made, Disraeli rendered a great service to his somewhat intolerant generation by insisting on the intimate relationship between the two religions.

It was under the influence of the views which we have set forth at length, and with a strong sense of the claims of the race from which he sprang to the most honourable treatment from the professors of the faith which he had embraced, that Disraeli took part in the debate on Russell's motion, in December, 1847, for the removal of

the remaining civil and political disabilities of the Jews. The debate was a remarkable one, and the most remarkable speech in it was Disraeli's. Russell proposed his motion on the general ground 'that every Englishman born in the country is entitled to all the honours and advantages of the British Constitution,' and that religious opinions should be no disqualification. Most of the Jewish disabilities, he pointed out, had been already removed Popular prejudice against them had clearly weakened, otherwise Rothschild would never have been returned by nearly seven thousand votes for the City of London. The opposition was led by Sir Robert Inglis, senior member for the University of Oxford, on the ground of the vital importance of preserving the Christian character of every person holding any share in the government of the country. But the speaker who carried most weight in opposing the motion was Lord Ashley, the evangelical philanthropist, who based himself largely on Dr. Arnold's view that there could be no plea of justice for the Jews; 'they are voluntary strangers here, and have no claim to become citizens but by conforming to our moral law, which is the Gospel.' Though he regarded the Jewish people with 'reverence,' Ashley could not consent to abolish the oath 'on the true faith of a Christian,' because he thought that in so doing he should be making a public declaration of the utter uselessness of Christianity for the government and superintendence of public affairs. Gladstone, who had just been elected for Oxford University, spoke and voted against what he knew to be the wishes of his constituents, and what had till recently been his own views. But he very reasonably held that 'we may consistently affirm that Christianity is in the highest degree needful for our legislation, and yet decline to follow out that proposition to a conclusion so rigid as this, that every individual who is not a Christian should be excluded from the possibility of becoming a legislator.' Other leading speakers were—against the motion, Goulburn, Bankes, Sir Thomas Acland, and Newdegate; and, for it, W. J. Fox, Lord Morpeth,

Sir Harry Verney, Bentinck (whose standpoint was much the same as Russell's), and Disraeli.

Parliament was well accustomed to hearing this and similar questions discussed, as on the present occasion, upon religious grounds; and it was as a religious question that Disraeli proposed to treat it. But while most speakers were wont to dwell upon the one great distinction between the Jewish and the Christian faith, Disraeli insisted on the intimate relation between the two as constituting the special claim of the Jew to favourable treatment. 'Who are these persons professing the Jewish religion? They are persons who acknowledge the same God as the Christian people of this realm. They acknowledge the same divine revelation as yourselves. They are, humanly speaking, the authors of your religion.' It was on the ground of religious truth rather than on that of religious liberty that he should vote for the motion.

> If religion is a security for righteous conduct, you have that security in the instance of the Jews, who profess a true religion. It may not be in your more comprehensive form. I do not say it is *the* true religion; but although they do not profess all that we profess, all that they do profess is true. You must admit, then, that in men who are subject to the Divine revelations that you acknowledge, whose morals are founded on the sacred oracles to which we all bow, that, as far as religion can be a security for their conduct—for their public morality and justice—you have in the religion of the Jews the best sanction in the world except that of our own Christianity. . . . The very reason for admitting the Jews is because they can show so near an affinity to you. Where is your Christianity if you do not believe in their Judaism? Do not mix up, then, the consideration of a question which is so intimately allied to your own faith, with the different considerations that would apply to the Pagan and the Mahommedan. I am prepared to lay down the broadest principles as to the importance of maintaining a Christian character in this House and in this country; and yet it is on this very ground you will found and find the best argument for the admission of the Jews.

The Jew was necessarily a religious being, but not a proselytising one, and so would support and not undermine the Christian Church.

In Europe—that Europe which you have baptised Christendom—how stands the Jew in relation to the Church of Christ? What possible object can the Jew have to oppose the Christian Church? Is it not the first business of the Christian Church to make the population whose minds she attempts to form, and whose morals she seeks to guide, acquainted with the history of the Jews? Has not the Church of Christ—the Christian Church, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant—made the history of the Jews the most celebrated history in the world? On every sacred day you read to the people the exploits of Jewish heroes, the proofs of Jewish devotion, the brilliant annals of past Jewish magnificence. The Christian Church has covered every kingdom with sacred buildings, and over every altar . . . we find the tables of the Jewish law. Every Sunday—every Lord's day—if you wish to express feelings of praise and thanksgiving to the Most High, or if you wish to find expression of solace in grief, you find both in the words of the Jewish poets. . . . All the early Christians were Jews. The Christian religion was first preached by men who had been Jews until they were converted; every man in the early ages of the Church by whose power, or zeal, or genius, the Christian faith was propagated, was a Jew.

Disraeli's argument was very distasteful to the House. There were cries of 'Oh! oh!' at intervals, and many other signs of general impatience. He was stung by these interruptions into some heat:

In exact proportion to your faith ought to be your wish to do this great act of national justice. If you had not forgotten what you owe to this people, if you were grateful for that literature which for thousands of years has brought so much instruction and so much consolation to the sons of men, you as Christians would be only too ready to seize the first opportunity of meeting the claims of those who profess this religion. But you are influenced by the darkest superstitions of the darkest ages that ever existed in this country. It is this feeling that has been kept out of this debate; indeed, that has been kept secret in yourselves—enlightened as you are—and that is unknowingly influencing you as it is influencing others abroad. . . .

I cannot sit in this House with any misconception of my opinion on the subject. Whatever may be the consequences on the seat I hold—and I should not have referred to such a consideration unless other gentlemen had done so—I cannot, for one, give a vote which is not in deference to what I believe to be the true principles of religion. Yes, it is as a

Christian that I will not take upon me the awful responsibility of excluding from the legislature those who are of the religion in the bosom of which my Lord and Saviour was born.

Disraeli sat down without a cheer, and amid cries of 'Divide.' Though he spoke on the first of the two nights of debate, no subsequent speaker showed any appreciation of his point of view; indeed, very few referred to it at all. It was too strange, and to most of his political friends it was repulsive. The only appreciation came from his own family. His sister wrote: 'Papa thinks Dis' speech the most important ever delivered in the House of Commons: stamped with all the characteristic novelty and boldness of the orator.' The motion was carried by sixty-seven votes, and Bentinck and Disraeli went into the lobby in its favour, while their followers in a body voted against it.

Substantial as this majority in the Commons was, the struggle was only beginning, as there was in the Lords a constant and convinced majority on the other side. During the ten years and more that the controversy lasted, Baron Lionel de Rothschild was again and again elected for the City of London, without being permitted to sit; and he favourably impressed the House of Commons by the quiet dignity with which he bore himself in this ambiguous situation. Throughout Disraeli maintained unchanged the attitude which he took up on Russell's motion. He voted for the second and third readings of the Jewish Disabilities Bill of 1848 which Russell founded upon his motion, and he voted steadily for similar Bills which were brought forward, mostly by the same indefatigable champion of civil and religious liberty, in the years 1849, 1851, 1853, 1856, 1857, and 1858. All the Bills were carried safely through the House of Commons, only to perish in the House of Lords. In 1850 the procedure was varied. Rothschild came to the table, and endeavoured unsuccessfully to get the Clerk and the House to allow him to take the oath in his own form, omitting

the words 'on the true faith of a Christian' as not binding on his conscience. Changes of Government and other disturbing causes accounted for no Bill being pushed forward in either 1852 or 1855; and in 1854 a general Oaths Bill, which would indeed have relieved the Jews, but proposed at the same time to make a number of other changes, deemed to be of a Romanising character, was opposed by Disraeli by speech and vote, and defeated on second reading by four votes. To this occasion we will return later. Finally, in 1858, when Derby and Disraeli were in office—after the Lords had wrecked the Commons' Oaths Bill of that year by striking out the really operative clause, and the Commons had retorted by placing Rothschild, though still unsworn, on the Committee for drawing up reasons for restoring it—the wiser heads among the Peers began to realise that a compromise was desirable. There was some dispute as to the form which the compromise should take, but eventually the Peers, under the guidance of one who was a soldier rather than a politician—Lord Lucan, initiated a measure, which was quickly passed into law, giving each House power to alter, by resolution, its own form of oath. A strong Committee of the Commons had only failed by a bare majority to lay it down that that House inherently possessed such a right; and this view had been supported by Disraeli. Now it was not necessary to assert it. As Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House, Disraeli had the satisfaction of finding the necessary time for Lucan's Bill, and of helping to carry it by his vote; and also of voting with the majority for Russell's consequential resolutions, which enabled Rothschild and all subsequent Jewish members to omit the declaration 'on the true faith of a Christian,' and nevertheless to take their seats in the House.

The compromise was not arranged without some friction inside the Government, where the Jews had few friends except Disraeli and the Prime Minister's son, Stanley.

Disraeli's efforts to settle the question exposed him to a temporary misunderstanding both with Derby and with others of his colleagues.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Sunday*, [? *Spring of* 1858].—I am sorry to find that you have given any hint to John Russell of the suggestion which I made to you confidentially as to a *possible* solution of the difficulty respecting the Jew Bill. If ever it can be brought to bear, of which I am not confident, time is absolutely necessary; and to urge it on now would, I am convinced, ensure its failure. I must beg of you, if you have in any way introduced my name in speaking to Lord John, to let him know that I cannot be a party to any such arrangement; and should the suggestion be now made, which I hope it will not, I must hold myself quite free to act as I may think advisable respecting it.

To Lord Stanley.

Sunday, June 20, 1858.—Pursuant to your father's instructions to ascertain whether the Ho. of C. would respond to the arrangement which he contemplated for the settlement of the Jewish question,—I placed myself in confidential communication with Bethell,[1] who entirely acceded to the plan, and offered, himself, to prepare the proposed amendment, previously submitting it to me for the approval of my friends. I thought, therefore, all was right: but, yesterday, I met Sir Jas. Graham at dinner, who gave it as his opinion that the Ho. of C. would not, and could not, take the course intimated in the Ho. of Lords a few nights since,—and that Ld. John Russell disapproved of it. . . .

I have heard nothing from Bethell since Friday night, and he is so strange a man that his whereabouts is not definable, and I don't know how to get at him. To-morrow night, I shall be unable to leave the Bench; for, independently of the general conduct of affairs, the whole business of the night is in my department. Would you, therefore, see Bethell,[2] and take steps that all goes right? If he sees his way, and there is no foundation for what we heard respecting John Russell, Bethell ought to place himself in instant communication with Ld. Lyndhurst, for his (L's.) bill comes on next Friday.

[1] Sir Richard Bethell, afterwards Lord Chancellor Westbury.

[2] Bethell, Stanley reported, said to him: 'If Lucan does it, there will be a blunder; if Lord Lyndhurst does it, there will be a blunder; but, if it is done in the Commons, I shall do it, and then there will be no blunder.'

The matter generally requires great energy and vigilance, for I hear the Lord Chancellor and Redesdale are manœuvring deeply; and the unfortunate illness of the Premier, no doubt, facilitates their intrigues. . . .

Steadily as Disraeli had voted for all Bills directly brought forward to remove Jewish disabilities, he spoke on them but seldom; and Russell lamented his silence during the second reading of the Bill of 1849. It was possibly in response to this that he said, in Committee on that Bill, that he was very anxious to see no obstruction offered to its passing, as he supported it warmly for reasons which were not merely political. In the following year, in the discussions that arose out of Rothschild's attempt to take the oath in his own form, Disraeli defended his silent vote in language that showed how entirely he adhered to the principles he had expounded in December, 1847:

Sir, if I thought that anything which I could say would have tended to accomplish an object dear to my heart as to my convictions, my vote would not have been a silent one. But, inasmuch as I believe that my opinions upon the subject are not shared by one single member on either side of the House, I thought that it was consistent, both with good sense and good taste, that, after having once unequivocally expressed the grounds on which my vote was given, I should have taken refuge in a silence which at least could not offend the prejudices of any hon. member on either side. . . . Although I have no wish at any time to dilate upon feelings or views which may not be prevalent or popular in this House, I never will relinquish them; and even now, shrinking as I do from offending the feelings of anyone, I will still express my hopes that full and complete justice will speedily be done to the descendants of a race which you acknowledge to be sacred, and the professors of a religion which you admit to be divine.

Disraeli's plea for his silence carries conviction. It was not as if the Bills required special assistance in the Commons. There they were regularly carried. It was in the Lords, where his leader procured their rejection, that the Jewish cause needed all the help it could get. Disraeli renewed his profession of faith in 1854 and in 1856. In 1854 he said: 'When I remember for how much

we are indebted to that people, of what ineffable blessings they have been the human agents—when I remember that by their history, their poetry, their laws, our lives are instructed, solaced, and regulated—when I recall other considerations and memories more solemn and reverential, I confess that I cannot as a Christian oppose the claims of those to whom Christianity is under so great obligations.' In 1856: 'With all becoming respect, I may be allowed to say that this would not be a Christian State or a Christian community, had it not been, under Divine inspiration, for the efforts and exertions of a Jew.' It may not be possible to accept in its entirety Disraeli's point of view, but it is difficult to read these repeated and fervent declarations to the House of Commons without being impressed with the depth and sincerity of the religious conviction underlying them.

Nevertheless, in spite of these persistent votes and unhesitating speeches, Disraeli's consistency and sincerity in his support of the Jewish cause have been called in question. To substantiate the calumny, reliance has been placed on his conduct in 1850, when Rothschild's attempt to take the oath in his own way led to some complicated proceedings, and on his speech and vote on the Bill of 1854. Rothschild's action in 1850 was taken quite near the end of the session, on July 26, and the House and the Whig Government had very little time in which to decide upon their course. After some hesitation the Attorney-General moved two resolutions—the first declaring that Rothschild was not entitled to sit and vote till he should take the oath in form prescribed by law; the second, that the House would take the subject into serious consideration at the earliest opportunity next session. Disraeli voted against both resolutions, and his reasons are perfectly straightforward and satisfactory. A resolution declaratory of the law, such as the first, was not a very constitutional proceeding, and a resolution pledging the future policy of the House, such as the second, was not a very politic one; recourse should not be had to either,

he thought, save in extreme necessity. Where was such necessity in this case? What excuse, he asked, had the Government for not having introduced a Bill at the beginning of the session, as in 1848 and 1849, instead of resorting to resolutions of this kind at its close? In short, the whole question was one of procedure; and only malice could strain and twist a vote given against pledging the House to take up the subject the first thing in the next session into a vote against the Jewish cause.

The question on the Bill of 1854 was really one of procedure also. Here was a Bill doing one thing which Disraeli desired, and other things to which he was opposed: relieving the Jews on the one hand, but also altering the oaths in other ways to please, in his view, Romanising Protestants and Roman Catholics. There were three courses, any one of which with perfect honour and consistency he might take. He might either oppose the second reading, notwithstanding his approval of part of the Bill, in order to prevent the changes he disliked; or he might accept the second reading, in the hope of making in Committee the modifications he desired; or he might, in so uncertain a situation, leave the House without voting. In 1854 he adopted the first course; in 1856, when on the Bill of that year a somewhat similar question arose, he adopted the second; it was foreign to his intrepid nature to adopt the third. The debate in 1854 turned much more on the alterations calculated to arouse Protestant feeling than on the relief proposed for the Jews. Disraeli, in a speech from which we have already quoted[1] his eloquent reaffirmation of his support of the Jewish claims, clearly explained the reason of his hostile vote.

> Here is a bill in which the word 'Jew' never appears, in which a person not versed in our political tactics could not for a moment divine that the object of the noble lord [Russell] lay concealed in it. From the debate that has arisen to-night, we find that the noble lord has made propositions which have excited great controversy and very acrimonious

[1] Page 889.

feeling. Why has the noble lord prejudiced the Jewish claims, which, though objected to, were only objected to by a minority, and which were objected to on single and simple grounds which we might meet by argument and master by time—why has the noble lord, I say, prejudiced those claims by mixing them up with subjects that to the people of this country must appear of infinitely greater importance?

No doubt Disraeli was not sorry to be able honourably to oppose this Bill of 1854. For it was a Government measure, brought in by Russell as a member of that Coalition which drifted into the Crimean War; and the loss of it by four votes, in a session which had already proved unfortunate for Ministers, was a mortifying rebuff. This may explain some petulant words in which Russell, smarting under the defeat, taunted Disraeli with inconsistency and insincerity: 'Notwithstanding his great anxiety to see the Jews in possession of those privileges, the right hon. gentleman sometimes stays away, and sometimes votes against them: the political convenience of the hour always seems to overcome his attachment to the cause.' Disraeli's reply was clear and simple:

> I give the noble lord's statement an unequivocal and unqualified denial. . . . Suppose I had got up, and said that the noble lord made Parliamentary reform a mere political convenience—that when it suited him, he made it convenient to quit the House, and did not vote at all on the subject: and then again, when it suited him, he also knew how to give his vote against that principle. I might, and without much ingenuity, make a very admirable case against him on that head; but I should scorn to do it. I am convinced that the noble lord is sincere in the views which he professes on the subject of Parliamentary reform, and that whenever he has voted against any measure of Parliamentary reform, he has done so from a sense of duty, convinced that by so doing he was benefiting the cause to which he wished success. But the noble lord can make no colourable case against me. I never on any occasion have quitted the House—I never absented myself from any division in which the claims of the Jews were concerned;[1] and, if I voted against his bill the other night, I tell the noble lord that I do not consider that I voted

[1] Microscopic scrutiny of Hansard enabled an opponent to discover one division of the kind in which Disraeli's name did not appear; but it was at a time when he was absent for some weeks from Parliament owing to illness.

against a bill which could have benefited the Jews, but, on the contrary, that I voted against a bill which I believe would have been of greater injury to the Jews than any measure ever brought forward.

The last sentence was a rhetorical exaggeration, but it was surely no service to the Jews to associate their cause with other changes certain to rouse the Protestant feeling of the country, at that time very suspicious, owing to the re-establishment of the Roman hierarchy in England on the one hand, and the spread of Ritualism and the wholesale conversions to Romanism on the other. Disraeli's colleague, Walpole, although a stanch opponent of the Jews, vindicated him at once: 'If there is one thing more than another for which my right hon. friend is entitled to the respect of both sides of the House, it is for the manly and honourable way in which he has come forward in support of the Jewish race.' Russell himself must have felt that he had been unjust to Disraeli, for, in a rejoinder on the same night, he apologised if he had done him an unintentional wrong, and added: 'I am quite persuaded that the right honourable gentleman has intended to serve the cause of the Jews in the course which he has taken'; and he was careful, two years later, on the third reading of the next Bill of the kind, to describe Disraeli explicitly as 'one who, on the peculiar ground of the merit of the Jews, always advocates their cause, and always votes in their favour.' That testimony of the statesman to whose perseverance the final success was mainly due may be taken as conclusive.

The verdict of history must surely be that Disraeli's course throughout this Jewish controversy was highly honourable to him. When it first assumed an acute form owing to the election of a Jew to Parliament, he had forced his way, over great obstacles and not without rousing strong animosities, to the front of the Parliamentary stage, had become the Chief of the Staff to a party leader, had gathered round him a band of stanch political friends, and was in a fair way to overcome the ingrained prejudices

of the country gentlemen. It was a critical time; a false move might imperil all he had won. He had everything to gain by leaving the question alone, speaking not at all, and absenting himself on one pretext or another from the vote. There was pretty certainly a majority in the Commons for the measure without his aid; the House had passed Jew Bills before, and would pass them again, whatever his action. He knew well that there was no subject on which the men whom he aspired to lead felt more strongly than the proposal to admit to a share in the Government of a Christian State anyone who denied the Divinity of Christ. The fact that the position has now been entirely abandoned must not blind us to the religious fervour with which it was then upheld by some of the best men in the country. Yet, in spite of his ambitions and his critical position, Disraeli did not hesitate to put in action the principles which he had outlined in *Coningsby* and developed in *Tancred*, and, on the first possible occasion, to deliver a speech in which his esoteric philosophy of religion was set forth. And it should not be forgotten that he stood practically alone in his party. After Bentinck's death, there was for many years no leading Conservative of the main body, except Thomas Baring, who gave Disraeli any countenance in his action;[1] there were certainly some leading Peelites, such as Peel himself and Gladstone, but their concurrence would rather do him harm with his own followers. On the other hand, those who were foremost in the fight against the Jews were prominent personages among his colleagues, whose good-will so ambitious a man would be anxious to conciliate. They were, the principal lawyer of the party, Sir Frederic Thesiger, who was Attorney-General in 1845 and 1852, and Lord Chancellor in 1858 and 1866; Sir Robert Inglis, the stout old Tory who sat for Oxford University; Bankes, the unofficial chairman of the party;

[1] Towards the close of the struggle Pakington changed his view and supported Disraeli, who also received the reinforcement of the younger Stanley.

Walpole, whose name and abilities both commanded respect; Newdegate, one of the Whips; and, last but by no means least, Stanley, soon to become Lord Derby, the party Chief, and the Prime Minister under whom Disraeli served. During the ten years of controversy he was dependent on these men for securing and consolidating his leadership in the Commons; and yet he was courageous enough to remind them year by year, regularly by his vote, and sometimes by his speech, that he was himself of the Jewish extraction which they despised, and that his religious convictions were very different from theirs, but quite as strongly held.

There is a story that, on one of the occasions when Disraeli was elaborating his favourite thesis that Christianity is completed Judaism, and that therefore the Jews should be respected rather than subjected to disability, Russell could not resist turning to a colleague[1] and expressing his admiration for a Parliamentary leader who could so intrepidly stand forward and enunciate doctrines which he knew the men behind him abhorred. There was, it should be remembered, in spite of that inbred conservatism which Disraeli claimed as characteristic of the Hebrew race, no party interest to serve. Success could only add another vote to the opposite side; for Rothschild, though a personal friend of Disraeli's, was, like most of the Jews of the day, a Liberal in politics and a follower of Russell. When all the circumstances are considered, it cannot be gainsaid that in his unfaltering support of the Jewish claims Disraeli manifested in a very high degree adherence to principle, disregard of self-seeking, and courage. He proved in the most convincing manner that he was ready to act, even when strongly against his own interest, on the doctrine proclaimed throughout his writings, that 'All is race.'

[1] The colleague was Gladstone; and I am indebted to Lord Morley for the story.

CHAPTER IV.

The Question of Leadership—I.

1847–1848.

Lord George Bentinck's speech and vote in favour of the removal of Jewish disabilities brought to an end his leadership of the Country party in the House of Commons. From that time onwards there was no acknowledged leader till Disraeli's undisputed pre-eminence compelled his recognition. The Parliamentary history of the next few years, on its personal side, is largely the story of the steps by which he became indispensable and inevitable, in spite of much active, and more secret, disparagement and ill-will.

Great efforts were made to persuade Bentinck to stay away from the Jewish debate and division, so as not to separate himself from his followers. His opinions in the matter were not based, like Disraeli's—it would have been strange if they had been—on the intimate relationship of the Christian and the Jewish religions. They were the honourable remnant of his old Whiggism, and sprang from 'his devoted attachment' to what Disraeli, in *Lord George Bentinck*,[1] characteristically calls 'the equivocal principle of religious liberty, the unqualified application of which principle seems hardly consistent with that recognition of religious truth by the state to which we adhere, and without which it is highly probable that the northern and western races, after a disturbing and rapidly degrading period of atheistic anarchy, may fatally recur to their old national idolatries, modified and mythically dressed up according to

[1] Ch. 25.

the spirit of the age.' As it was a matter of principle, Bentinck could not be moved. 'After long and deep and painful pondering, when the hour arrived he rose from his bed of sickness, walked into the House of Commons, and not merely voted, but spoke, in favour of his convictions.' On an intimation from the Chief Whip of the dissatisfaction felt with his conduct by many sections of the party, he retired from the leadership at once, rejoicing, as he told Stanley when he gave him notice of his intention, 'like a caged wild bird escaped from his wired prison.' He had accepted the post of leader with the utmost reluctance, after repeated refusals; he had often tried to relinquish it and find some colleague, now Thomas Baring, now Sir Robert Inglis, now Lord Ashley (who was not even a Protectionist), to take his place; he was frequently dissatisfied, and occasionally indignant, with his old friend and Chief, Stanley, whom he suspected of lukewarmness in the cause, because Stanley was incapable of such exclusive devotion to politics as himself; and, in addition, he felt that his health was failing.

To Lord John Manners.

BRADENHAM, *Dec.* 26, 1847.—. . . By this time, you have heard of the Hebrew explosion. The truth is, but I say this in the greatest confidence, I doubt whether this would have taken place, but for the previous irritating causes, which could no longer be endured by G. B. Every day something occurred, which disgusted him. And at no time were censure and criticism less justifiably exercised on his career, for he was speaking rarely, and always with great improvement, and had given up his own opinion every time in council, which, in my belief, was the cause of the very ineffective way in which our affairs progressed; as he really is the only head of decision and real native sagacity, that we possess: but he was depressed by the influenza, and desirous of conciliating, for which he has received his reward. . . .

As for finding a new leader, these *frondeurs* little know the qualities that are required for such an office. It is something more than asking a question at 4 o'clock or making a speech at 11. Independent of the knowledge and management of mankind, the great spirit and social position, the even profuse generosity, which are required, and were so eminently prac-

tised and possessed by G. B.; the mere conduct of correspondence, and reading of blue books and making calculations, demand physical powers of herculean range. He said to me: 'It is not merely what I have done or spent for them: but during these two years, I have shaken my constitution and shortened my days.' . . .

[BRADENHAM, *Jan.*, 1848.]—. . . Your letter is capital. You have sketched, with the hand of a master, the two characters:[1] especially the first. As for the second, I have always shrunk from him: he appeared to me coarse and commonplace, not a man of much *moyens*: more rapacious than ambitious, and rather cunning than shrewd: but he has vigor, tho' deficient in tact.

I hope you have seen G. B. if he were in London at the same time as yourself. I believe in his career as I do in yours: but, at all events, I would sooner be his companion in adversity than share the sunnier hours of those who do not possess my confidence and heart. At present, I would write to you as Lord Bolingbroke did to the immortal Dean, when Queen Anne died, 'Love me, for tho' all is over, I am in the very best spirits in the world.' At least I should be so, were you well, and in Parliament: but Nature will cure you, and your friends must contrive the second remedy. Then all would go right, and our friend would be at the head of a party, that would ultimately carry all before it. I hope Granby will stand by him, in spite of the Jews, as your brother, not only from his position, but his grand *character*, and strength of purpose, is a tower. . . .

Your sort of kinsman, Carington,[2] or rather his wife, has christened their new daughter Eva![3] So the Jews go down here better than was expected.

Bentinck had no intention of sulking, and immediately endeavoured to obtain for the Protectionists a competent successor. He was ready to support anyone on whom the party would unite; but 'his efforts, though indefatigable, were not successful,' says his biographer, 'for those who were competent to the office cared not to serve under anyone except himself.' Was there anyone, after Bentinck's withdrawal, competent to the office, except Disraeli? 'Nobody can think of a successor to Bentinck,'

[1] Of the Whips, Newdegate and Beresford, to whose mismanagement *Manners* attributed the dissensions in the Protectionist party.

[2] The 2nd Baron, father of the late Marquis of Lincolnshire.

[3] The name of the Jewish heroine of *Tancred*.

writes Greville on January 7, 1848; 'and, bad as he is, he seems the best man they have. It seems they detest Disraeli, the only man of talent, and in fact they have nobody.'

Let us pass in review the more prominent personalities of the party, and see how poor was the field, how limited the choice. The whole of the leading Conservatives in the House of Commons—that able administrator Graham, the experienced Goulburn, the accomplished Sidney Herbert, the high-minded Lincoln, and the once 'rising,' now risen, hope of the party, Gladstone—had followed Peel. The only men available with any official experience were Herries and Bankes. John Charles Herries had great knowledge of finance, and had proved an excellent and hard-working administrator. He had been Financial Secretary to the Treasury in 1823, when he first entered the House of Commons, Chancellor of the Exchequer under Goderich, Master of the Mint after that Minister had fallen, President of the Board of Trade in 1830, and Secretary at War in Peel's first Ministry. Disraeli, who admired his tact—tact which was 'so supreme that it amounts to genius'—wrote of him as an 'invaluable coadjutor' of Bentinck, and 'a gentleman whose official as well as Parliamentary experience, fine judgment and fertile resource have been of inestimable benefit to the Protectionist party.' But he was sixty-seven years old, had been out of Parliament during the eventful five years of Peel's Great Administration, and had thus no sufficient touch with the party which had come together in opposition to Peel's policy; and was, moreover, of a retiring disposition and a poor speaker. George Bankes was a substantial Dorset squire, who had sat for the family borough of Corfe Castle till it was disfranchised by the Reform Bill, and had re-entered Parliament as member for the county in 1841. He was the last Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer, and had been Chief Secretary to the Board of Control in 1829, and a Lord of the Treasury in 1830. He was 'popular and much esteemed,' Disraeli

tells us, and carried weight in the inner councils of the party, of which he acted as a kind of unofficial chairman, but he took no leading part in Parliament.

A man of much higher calibre was Thomas Baring, a Conservative member of a Whig family, younger brother of Melbourne's Chancellor of the Exchequer. At this time he carried on his shoulders the chief burden of the operations of the Baring firm, and was one of the leading financial authorities both in the City of London and in the House of Commons. *Lord George Bentinck* bears repeated testimony to the considerable impression he produced in Parliament. We are told of his 'animated manner, which, while it never passed that line of restraint which good taste requires, was remarkable for a freshness of handling which is rare, and a sort of winning naturalness that often broke spontaneously into very telling points.' He had in the spring of 1847 endeavoured vainly, though 'the first merchant of Great Britain,' to make the Government realise the seriousness of the impending monetary crisis; and on another occasion he delivered what Disraeli describes as one of the best speeches ever made in the House of Commons.

> Few more combine mastery of the case with parliamentary point than this gentleman. . . . A man who at the same time understands a question and can handle it before a popular assembly in a popular style, who teaches without being pedantic, can convey an argument in an epigram, and instruct as the Mexicans did by picture, possesses a talent for the exercise of which he is responsible to his sovereign and his country.

But Baring preferred business to high politics, and, in spite of this eulogium—published in the winter of 1851-52, when a Conservative Ministry was clearly imminent, and written doubtless to stir his ambition—declined, it is believed, more than once to be Lord Derby's Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Besides these three there were Sir Robert Inglis, a genial and popular man of high character but mediocre ability, who had ousted Peel from the representation

of Oxford University over the Roman Catholic question; Joseph Warner Henley, the shrewd and businesslike, if somewhat narrow, Chairman of Quarter Sessions who sat for Oxfordshire; and the three brothers Manners, 'a family phalanx,' as Bentinck called them. Of these brothers, the most distinguished, Lord John Manners, Disraeli's close political and personal friend throughout, had failed in his attempt to represent Liverpool, and, having no seat in Parliament, was impossible as a leader. Lord George Manners, the member for Cambridgeshire, was considered by Bentinck the ablest man of the three, but he never took a prominent position. There remained Lord Granby, the eldest brother, who had been member for Stamford since 1837, who was a convinced and ardent Protectionist, and had, indeed, resigned a high post in the Prince Consort's household because of his opposition to Peel's Corn Law, who was popular in the country and in the House, and whose position as heir to the dukedom of Rutland commanded respect among a party of country gentlemen. 'The earnestness of his disposition and the firmness of his character' won him the confidence of Bentinck and the praise of Disraeli. Beyond those we have mentioned there was no one else possible. Spencer Horatio Walpole, great-grandson of Sir Robert's brother and nephew of Spencer Perceval, had only just entered Parliament; and Sir John Pakington was still reckoned a Peelite.

It was a beggarly array, when all is said that can be said in their favour. Who among these mediocrities, except, perhaps, Baring, who had no ambition of the kind, could stand up night after night and cross swords without discredit with Peel and Palmerston and Russell and Cobden? But the party had a man who had challenged all these giants, and at least held his own with them, and who was now acknowledged to be, as a Parliamentarian, in the very first flight. Yet for the moment he was tacitly ruled out. No wonder that Malmesbury, a rising Tory peer, should write under date February 10, 1848:[1]

[1] *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister.*

It seems strange that in these proceedings Disraeli's name was not put forward, but whoever may in future take the lead in the House of Commons by election he must virtually and practically hold that office. There can be no doubt that there is a very strong feeling among Conservatives in the House of Commons against him. They are puzzled and alarmed by his mysterious manner, which has much of the foreigner about it, and are incapable of understanding and appreciating the great abilities which certainly underlie, and, as it were, are concealed by this mask.

It must be admitted, however, that, apart from the strong feeling in the House of Commons against Disraeli, he was ineligible at this moment for a vacancy caused by the resentment of the party against Bentinck's support of the Jewish claims. His course had been the same; and his reasons for taking it even more distasteful.

Bentinck was fully conscious of the enormous superiority of Disraeli to all the rest of his colleagues in the House of Commons, and he was the less likely to restrain the expression of his feelings as both of them were under the ban of the extreme Protestant wing of the party, represented in the House by Beresford the Whip, and in the press by the *Morning Herald*, of which the editor, or principal writer, was then Samuel Phillips. On the eve of the party meeting to choose a new leader, he wrote to Stanley an indignant protest on his friend's behalf.

Lord George Bentinck to Lord Stanley.

HARCOURT HOUSE, *Feb.* 9, 1848.—Disraeli is very much disgusted, as well he may be; but, judging from what I hear from the best men of the Party, there will be an indignation, which you don't seem to feel, expressed at the meeting to-morrow at the conduct of Mr. Phillips, the *Morning Herald*, and their co-partners and accomplices, which I doubt not will go a long way to heal his wounded feelings.

Disraeli, who was earning by his writings £6,000 or £7,000 every two years or so, was dragged out from his retirement and literary occupation by special invitation from the Protectionist Party in the hour of their greatest need, before I was even thought of as their Leader; and the reward he has met with (were it not that as I believe a manly, a generous, and an honest English indignation promises to be expressed

to-morrow) would leave a blot upon the fair name of the Country Gentlemen of England.

I tell you none of all this could have happened, had you played a generous part: you have suffered and parleyed too long with Mr. Phillips, and if you care to be free from the stain which cannot but attach to those who touch such filth, we must have something more than a half-and-half, mincing, milkwarm disavowal of Mr. Phillips, the *Morning Herald*, and their 'Conservative' Alliance.

And a month later Bentinck told Croker, who probably made a wry face on reading the prophecy, that Disraeli's leadership was certain and not distant.

Lord George Bentinck to J. W. Croker.

HARCOURT HOUSE, *March* 2, 1848.—. . . You ask me of Disraeli's manner of speaking and effectiveness in debate. . . . His speeches this session have been first-rate. His last speech[1] . . . was admirable. He cuts Cobden to ribbons; and Cobden writhes and quails under him just as Peel did in 1846. And mark my words, spite of Lord Stanley, Major Beresford, and Mr. Phillips and the *Herald*, it will end before two sessions are out in Disraeli being the chosen leader of the party; but I think it will not be under Lord Stanley's banner, whether he turns his coat on the Jew bill or not. . . .[2]

Such being Bentinck's views, in looking for an immediate successor he was careful to select a man with whom Disraeli could cordially co-operate. So his choice fell upon Granby, 'as the only man of the party,' he wrote to Disraeli, 'whom you might be disposed to unite with me in upholding.' 'His high station, noble bearing, mild and conciliatory manners would combine and rally the whole party under his banner, and then you and I, sitting one on each side of him, would easily—when he required help, which I do not think would be often—carry him through.' Disraeli had at first joined others in recommending Bentinck to take his own course, lead his own friends, and wait for the party to return to him. This Bentinck would not do, so anxious was he to keep the party together. If this arrangement was impossible, Disraeli, who probably

[1] On the revised Budget on Feb. 28. See below, p. 911.
[2] *The Croker Papers*, Vol. III., p. 165.

believed that Bentinck, if he remained in Parliament, would be compelled by circumstances to resume the leadership, was quite ready to second the nomination of Granby, who was one of his own intimate political circle, and whom he might hope to guide as he wished. Accordingly he joined Stanley and Bentinck in pressing the reluctant Granby to come forward.

Nothing, however, was settled when Parliament reassembled on February 3, and many members of the party still hoped that Bentinck would reconsider his resignation. But he made his position quite clear; he would not even continue to sit on the front Opposition bench, but 'walked up to the head of the second bench below the gangway on the Opposition side, and thus significantly announced that he was no longer the responsible leader of the Protectionist party.' Disraeli has been blamed for not following him, and very gratuitous doubt has been thrown on the truth of his explanation. 'It was the wish of the writer of these pages, who had resolved to stand or fall by him [Bentinck], to have followed his example, and to have abdicated the prominent seat in which the writer had been unwillingly and fortuitously placed; but by the advice, or rather at the earnest request of Lord George Bentinck, this course was relinquished as indicative of schism, which he wished to discourage.' The correspondence of the day confirms this statement. It is quite clear that Bentinck felt that, though at the moment Disraeli could not be the leader, it was essential that the greatest Parliamentarian in the Protectionist ranks should be at the right hand of whomsoever the party might choose. No cloud ever came between these close allies since they joined forces in the spring of 1846; and all the evidence shows that they were acting in concert now.

In a party meeting in the following week Granby was chosen leader without opposition. But his modesty, stimulated, perhaps, by the distracted and factious spirit in the ranks, proved to be insuperable; and in a few days it

was announced that he had refused, expressing his willingness to co-operate but not to assume the foremost place. 'He recommended his friends to consult Ld. G. B. and Mr. D.,' wrote Disraeli to Philip Rose. 'The whole Protectionist party is in confusion,' was Malmesbury's entry in his journal. Hence the session began 'without a leader, without any recognised organ of communication between parties, or any responsible representation of opinion in debate. All again was chaos.'[1] As the session began, so it ended. Some attempt seems to have been made in May to procure a leader in Herries, but nothing came of it. Such a condition of affairs was eminently favourable to Disraeli's ambition. He puts it rather quaintly, that in this session he 'was subject in the House to a greater pressure of debate than his experience warranted.' His experience may not have warranted it, but his genius was fully equal to the demands. He himself writes as if the session was peculiarly a triumph for Bentinck:

> Notwithstanding the formal renunciation of the leadership of the Protectionist party by Lord George Bentinck, it was soon evident to the House and the country that that renunciation was merely formal. In these days of labour the leader of a party must be the man who does the work, and that work cannot now be accomplished without the devotion of a life. Whenever a great question arose, the people out of doors went to Lord George Bentinck, and when the discussion commenced he was always found to be the man armed with the authority of knowledge. There was, however, no organised debate and no party discipline. No one was requested to take a part, and no attendance was ever summoned. The vast majority sitting on the Protectionist benches always followed Bentinck, who, whatever might be his numbers in the lobby, always made a redoubtable stand in the House. The situation, however, it cannot be denied, was a dangerous one for a great party to persevere in, but no permanent damage accrued, because almost everyone hoped that, before the session was over, the difficulty would find a natural solution in the virtual chief resuming his formal and responsible post.[2]

Undoubtedly Bentinck showed to great advantage, especially over the West India Committee, of which he was

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 25. [2] *Ibid.*, ch. 27.

the indefatigable and successful chairman; but the most striking interventions in debate were those of Disraeli, who made it clear, in a number of masterly speeches on all sorts of subjects, that, if Bentinck could not be persuaded to resume the position, there was a leader to the party's hand who would be equal to any emergency.

In a letter written to Manners before the party meeting Disraeli describes the opening debate, which resulted in the unopposed appointment of the Committee on the West India sugar question for which Bentinck moved.

To Lord John Manners.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Feb.* 5, 1848.—The W. India debate terminated last night at two o'clock in the morning, and was without exception the best supported debate by our friends that has occurred since we were a party. Indeed it was one of unbroken interest, and scarcely flagged on either side for a moment, except of course when old Bernal[1] discoursed, upon whom both parties dined.

G. B. made his exposition in a speech of three hours and ½, which never for an instant flagged. His voice capital, strong and clear without effort, which he ascribes to quinine which has entirely cured him: no pumping, and action in consequence greatly modified and subdued. By far his most successful effort. After him the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Then next night Wilson,[2] who is a great accession to the House, and delivered one of his best essays. He was followed by Tom Baring from our red box, sitting between G. B. and myself, with a vigor, an earnestness, and a freshness, which were quite captivating, and which wonderfully took. Later in the evening your humble servant spoke not to the dissatisfaction of the House; and after Lab[ouchere] and Goulburn, G. B., at ½ past one, made an effective reply.

I have not seen Granby, if he be in town, but I had a conversation with Miles on the *coup d'apoplexie* of the party, and spoke without reserve of my own views and feelings thereon. It is a curious thing that the three men who supported this sugar debate for the Country party, G. B., Tom Baring and myself, all vote for the Jews!

There is a new note by Beresford; a lithograph circular, in

[1] Father of Bernal Osborne. See below, p. 1206.

[2] James Wilson, the political economist, M.P. for Westbury, afterwards financial member of Council in India.

which the name of Protectionist party disappears and is succeeded, not by the 'Country' but by the 'Conservative' party. Miles is indignant, having declared at our first meeting in 1846 that the epithet 'Conservative' had become a byword of reproach.

G. B. has written to Stanley acknowledging the receipt of this invitation to his house, but informing Lord S. that he, G. B., does not belong to the 'Conservative' party, adding that he wonders anyone has the audacity to do so, after it had been 'justly denounced by Disraeli as an "organised hypocrisy."' . . .

Disraeli might have pointed out that his famous phrase was that a Conservative *Government*—not party—was an organised hypocrisy; but, of course, he had written and spoken very severely about that party as manipulated by Peel. It will be noticed that, while reporting the views of Miles and Bentinck to Manners, Disraeli expresses no judgment of his own. It may well be that, while retaining his opinion as to the abuse of the term in the past, he was becoming alive to its profitable use in the future. In *Lord George Bentinck* we see signs of change. In reference to the past he writes of 'the great Conservative party that destroyed everything';[1] but in reference to the present and future he declares, in a more friendly and hopeful tone, that there is 'something so vital in the Conservative party that it seems always to rally under every disadvantage.'[2]

There is no doubt that in the matter of the name the Whips, of whom Disraeli and Manners had so low an opinion, were right, and Bentinck and his friends wrong In spite of the ridicule which Disraeli had poured on the name Conservative, it had been accepted by the country as the recognised designation of the party of order, and the name Tory had dropped out of general use. Of the Conservatives of both wings returned at the General Election, decidedly more than two-thirds followed Stanley rather than Peel; and, as Malmesbury shrewdly remarked, Peel's declaration that he did not mean to take office again would be likely to send some of the rank and file of

[1] Ch. 16. [2] Ch. 25.

his followers into the Protectionist camp. That movement would be greatly aided by the assumption, on the part of the majority, of the party title, to which they had every right, not only by their numbers, but by the consistency of their opinions. After all, the backbone of the Tory or Conservative party were the country gentlemen, and they, speaking broadly, were with Stanley and against Peel. They might not produce at the moment competent Parliamentary leaders; leaders are not improvised in a session, and the whole of their General Staff had deserted them; but they had themselves much practical capacity, and were the men to whom their fellows looked up in their various counties. Peel, with his business origin and financial leanings, had superinduced on the old, aristocratic Country party a surface of *bourgeoisie*, and his overthrow marked the reassertion of essential tendencies. The men who overthrew him rightly claimed to be the traditional representatives of the party, and the claim was tacitly conceded after a while by public opinion, and by their old comrades, who were content to be called Peelites after their great chief, or Liberal-Conservatives, to mark their hybrid position.

Though the Opposition were disorganised and without a leader, they made a very good fight for their principles during the session of 1848. The Monetary Crisis, the Famine in Ireland, the distress in the West Indies, and the general depression of trade, showed that Free Trade was, at least, no panacea. Bentinck's committee brought into relief the serious facts about the sugar industry and the West Indian colonies, to which the Free Traders wished to close their eyes. Though his own resolutions were negatived by the Committee, Bentinck had the satisfaction of carrying, by his casting vote as chairman, a report recommending a differential duty of ten shillings in favour of colonial sugar for six years, so as to secure time for bringing measures of relief into operation. He had the further satisfaction of compelling the Government to introduce and pass a measure adopting this principle, by

establishing a gradually diminishing difference in favour of the Colonies till 1854. Disraeli delivered a series of powerful speeches criticising the new commercial system, and showing the falsity of the hopes held out by its supporters. In the first sugar debate[1] he declared that this system had been applied to only one branch of our Imperial industry, and had been found wanting. Their legislation had brought ruin in India, Mauritius, and the West Indies.

> Tell a Government of the present day that a million of H.M.'s subjects, previously enjoying great prosperity, are suddenly involved in almost inextricable difficulty; tell them that the sugar colonies of the Empire are in a perilous position, and all classes connected with them—proprietors, merchants, shipowners, labourers—agree in attributing their danger and suffering to our inconsistent and vacillating legislation; and the Government have always one peculiar class of remedies at hand. These remedies appear to consist of a certain number of abstract qualities and cardinal virtues. Competition is always at the head of the list; then follow, you may be sure, energy and enterprise. These remedies are not facts—they are only phrases. What is this competition, of whose divine influence we hear so much? Define it, tell us its sex and character. Is it a demigod or a nymph? It inspires all their solutions of economical difficulties. Is the shipping interest in decay? Competition will renovate it. Are the Colonies in despair? Energy will save them. Is the agricultural interest in danger? Enterprise is the panacea.

It was hopeless, he thought, to attempt to influence the House with any consideration which had not its growth in the prosperity of their ledgers. 'The commercial principle now rules this country. We had an Imperial principle in the time of those who preceded us; but you may rest assured that, if you convert the senate into a counting-house, it will not be long before the nation degenerates into a factory.' There was 'something in the catastrophe of nations *sævior armis*. These are the *longæ pacis mala*.'

On the Budget, which renewed and—as at first proposed—doubled the income tax, Disraeli observed[2] that

[1] Feb. 4. [2] Feb. 18.

the new principle of commercial legislation had not brought to the Treasury 'all those advantages which, like the picture of some Arabian tale, we were brought to believe was to be the happy appanage of the people of England'; and now the income tax, which was originally proposed as a temporary sacrifice for great national purposes, was to be permanent. Cobden's policy, it was claimed, was to give us the blessings of perpetual peace. That was no new idea. At Utrecht the Abbé St. Pierre proposed that the nations should agree to perpetual peace; but he was prepared to use force to compel them. In fact, his system 'assumed war as a necessary element of itself.' It was easy to entertain the dogma of perpetual peace, looking only at the material interests of such nations as America, France, and England. But war was produced, 'not by the Powers which are contented and satisfied,' but 'by the race or the prince who agitates for a position.'

Take a remarkable case. At this moment Liberal gentlemen refer to it with great delight; and certainly, omitting our own country, of whose position we are hardly impartial judges, there is probably no nation in Europe, whether we look to general civilisation, diffused knowledge, public intelligence, or fame in arms and science, that can be placed superior to Prussia. But only a few years before St. Pierre laid down his principles Prussia did not exist. But Margraves of Brandenburg, conscious of great talents and power, determined, instead of being Margraves, to become Kings of Prussia, and that produced many struggles, and among them a Seven Years' War. If you reason in favour of universal peace from existing circumstances, you reason from circumstances that are essentially superficial.

Trade between England and France, Disraeli pointed out, had not prevented war in the end of the eighteenth century. The commercial tendency was not stronger than the religious tendency; all Europe was Christian, but that had not brought fighting and armaments to an end. The principles of the Radicals were totally opposed to the permanent maintenance of the Empire.[1]

[1] With regard to this speech, Baroness Lionel de Rothschild wrote to Mrs. Disraeli, of 'Friday night's glorious success. Lord Palmerston told me he had never heard a more magnificent speech.'

Cobden, in reply, urged Disraeli to give up the idea of forming a party on Protection. 'You have no principle, it is a sham and a fudge'; 'the thing is dead and gone and disposed of'; Disraeli and his friends had better join the Radicals in diminishing expenditure. Between this debate of February 18 and its resumption ten days later, Louis Philippe had fallen and France had set up a revolutionary government. So Disraeli, on February 28, rejoined with some force that the country would have to test Cobden's opinions, not merely as to the policy which would fill the Treasury, but also as to the policy that would secure the happiness and independence of the country. 'The hon. gentleman stands before us with all his talents as the supporter of a bankrupt exchequer, and as having, only within these last few days, appealed to a revolutionary nation as the model of political perfection.'

To Lord John Manners.

March 8, 1848.—. . . Where is the pilot to weather the storm? The Whigs are dished, dead, in spite of all our forbearance, and I mean, D.V., to give the last blow to 'Progress' on Friday, if the Muse inspire and aid me. What then?

As for G. B., he rises to the occasion. If you had seen him at ¼ past 11 on Monday, when Peel sate down, spring from a back bench, and making his most effective speech without a paper, or notes, you would have been astonished.

We were all, like so many gibbed cats, going to vote the Income Tax by an overwhelming majority when he declared his intention of supporting Hume's proposition,[1] and at least 100 men changed in a moment.

Had it not been for Peel's speech, G. B. would have said nothing. It was a great effort, and has effected a revolution in our parliamentary position here.

The Paris crash has no parallel; since Aladdin's palace vanished when his fool of a wife sold his old lamp!

As for general affairs, Madeira chaplains, Rio Plata jobs, Irish do, are all swamped and merged in the mighty theme of how the devil Europe, or perhaps England, is to be governed. 6 men shot at Glasgow: here, cockney riots of little boys, egged on by Charles Cochrane, and breaking the windows of club houses: then to wit Dicky Milnes asking questions at five o'clock of Secretaries of State about the collision between

[1] For limiting the Income Tax to one year.

'the people' and the police in Trafalgar Square amid groans and ironic cheers. Dicky dying of envy of Lamartine, and ready to put himself at the head of the 'gamins' and break the windows of Buckingham Palace. . . .

Granby, of whom I perpetually inquire of you, delighted me by telling me that you were really better. I am in force, tho' not equal to G. B. Nothing but a revolution will satisfy him: or at least the repeal of the Regency Act. Smythe has gone off to Paris to see his friend Louis Blanc, and some other successful blackguards. I remain at my post, and should enjoy it all amazingly, if you were at my right hand.

Disraeli's 'last blow to Progress' was delivered on March 10. He began by drawing a distinction between the commercial principles of 1842, which he supported, and those of 1845 and 1846, which he opposed. When the income tax was introduced in 1842, Peel's policy was 'to terminate prohibitions, to reduce protective duties to a moderate and practical amount, to raise a revenue by moderate duties on raw materials, and to admit the manufactures of other countries at duties varying from 12 to 20 per cent.' Reciprocal treaties were also to be concluded with other nations, following the traditional policy of Bolingbroke, Shelburne, and Pitt. This policy Disraeli supported: he was a 'Free Trader' in this sense, not a 'freebooter,' like the Anti-Corn Law Leaguers. The Leaguers never pretended that they accepted 'the principles of regulated competition and reciprocal intercourse'; their principle was buying in the cheapest, and selling in the dearest, market—a principle really only applicable to retail trade. When the commercial treaties failed, Peel adopted League principles, renewed the income tax, and cut off a revenue of £4,500,000, following this up by the repeal of the corn duties. The correct test of commercial legislation was commercial prosperity; but we had as a result of the new policy commercial distress and financial disorder. There were no signs whatever that the other great trading nations, Prussia, the United States, and France, were abandoning Protection. Where was the £100,000,000 extra revenue this policy was to give us? Cobden and Bright claimed to be the representatives of

two great principles, Peace and Plenty. 'Yes. Peace and Plenty amid a starving people and with a world in arms!'

'The session of 1848, one of the longest on record,' wrote Disraeli, 'may be said to have commenced with sugar and to have concluded with sugar'; and at the end of June the Government narrowly escaped defeat on their Sugar Bill.

> Singular article of produce! What is the reason of this influence? It is that all considerations mingle in it; not merely commercial, but imperial, philanthropic, religious; confounding and crossing each other, and confusing the legislature and the nation lost in a maze of conflicting interests and contending emotions.[1]

Accordingly, Russell's measure, which Disraeli in retrospect described as a 'temperate and statesmanlike one,' pleased no one when it was produced, but was denounced by Free Traders and Protectionists alike—by the former as violating the principles laid down in 1846, and by the latter as affording the West Indian Colonies very inadequate relief. It led to protracted debates, which were envenomed by the personal charges brought, after his too frequent fashion, by Bentinck against Ministers, of withholding important information from the cognisance of his Committee. The charges in this case had some foundation, but Bentinck showed more vigour than discretion in his way of pressing them, and had to be rescued more than once by his friend's adroitness and skill. One famous scene in these debates, when Bentinck had reiterated his accusation against the Colonial Office, is depicted in the biography:

> Nettled at these observations, and partly perhaps executing a design contemplated, the first Minister took advantage of the motion for the adjournment of the debate to make a severe personal attack on Lord George Bentinck. The Minister said that these mean frauds, these extremely dishonourable tricks, which Lord George Bentinck imputed, were not the faults and characteristics of men who are high in public office in this country; they were characteristics of men who were engaged in pursuits which Lord George Bentinck long followed. Upon

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 26.

this there was a burst of disapprobation from all sides, in the midst of which the Minister, feeling perhaps that the drift of his retort had been somewhat misapprehended, went on to say that Lord George Bentinck some years ago had greatly distinguished himself in detecting a fraud of that nature with respect to the name or the age of a horse, in which he showed very great quickness of apprehension. But the House would not be diverted from its first impression, and the Minister, though he pursued his observations for some minutes, was continually interrupted. It was clear that the taste and feeling of the House were both offended. This unusual indiscretion from so eminent a personage, and one who both by temper and discipline is acknowledged to be superior to passion, called forth a rejoinder from a friend of Lord George Bentinck [Disraeli], who reminded the Minister that his brother, the Duke of Bedford, had taken the lead in honouring Lord George Bentinck for his great services to public morality in this instance. A scene of great and prolonged excitement occurred.[1]

To the Government scheme Sir John Pakington moved a hostile amendment, which the majority of the Peelites were disposed to support. But, after many days of anxiety, Peel was able to collect sufficient of his followers in the Government lobby to save Ministers from defeat by fifteen votes. The fact that Goulburn, Gladstone, Cardwell, and other eminent Peelites, voted with the Protectionists stimulated the exertions of those who desired a reconciliation between the two wings of the Conservative party; and Lord Londonderry, the soldier and diplomatist, Castlereagh's half-brother, made, in a letter to his friend Disraeli, the first of several overtures to this effect. He suggested Goulburn as a man round whom all might rally—neither a happy nor a successful idea, though it was one which Disraeli suspected Stanley himself of entertaining two years later.[2]

Disraeli made several important speeches this session on foreign affairs; also one defending the 'ancient and national system' of the navigation laws; and one warmly supporting the Government in their measure for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland, in view of the impending insurrection there, which he regarded as a Jacobin

[1] Ch. 26. [2] See below, p. 1076.

movement. One speech deserves particular attention. It was delivered on June 20, on Hume's motion for Parliamentary reform. It is the first of Disraeli's considered utterances on a subject with which his fame is intimately bound up, and contains, besides, much of his political philosophy. People talked, he said, about the right to a vote. The suffrage was not a right;[1] it was not even a trust—'that very vague and somewhat canting phrase'; it was a privilege. The Commons were a privileged order, and the Reform Act of 1832 was a reconstruction of that order. That settlement was most unsatisfactory to him and his friends, but it was fully supported and sanctioned by the people, and should not be disturbed now unless they could be sure of arriving at a new reconstruction, which would give satisfaction to the people and security to the State. Not that he was an advocate of finality. 'I conceive there may be circumstances, there may be a period, when we shall do that which we have done for five hundred years in this country—reconstruct the estate of the Commons.' The most striking mistake in the settlement of 1832 was that it took property as the only qualification for the exercise of political rights. Hume's project was open to the same objection; there was no educational suffrage, no industrial suffrage, no attempt to increase or vary the elements of suffrage, but property alone was its basis.

Besides household suffrage, Hume's motion also advocated the ballot, triennial Parliaments, and more equal electoral districts. As for the ballot, Disraeli preferred rather to trust to the influence of opinion organised by a free Press, as the best safeguard against corruption and

[1] Here Disraeli interposed an interesting passage about female suffrage: 'In a country governed by a woman, where you allow women to form part of the other estate of the realm—peeresses in their own right, for example—where you allow a woman not only to hold land, but to be a lady of the manor and hold legal courts, where a woman by law may be a churchwarden—I do not see, when she has so much to do with State and Church, on what reasons, if you come to right, she has not a right to vote. All this proves that right has nothing to do with the matter.'

intimidation. As for triennial Parliaments, they were part of the old Tory creed advocated by Sir William Wyndham[1] against a corrupt Minister, and the only objection to them was that they were an unnecessary change, and as such to be deprecated. Of equal electoral districts he spoke with great scorn in language that sounds strange to-day. Such a system presented itself to him as a proposal to take members from his historic county of Bucks and give them to Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and London. Was it to be tolerated that the county of Hampden and the Grenvilles, the elder Pitt and Burke, should be deprived of its hereditary weight in a free Parliament because its population might not be equal to the number of some great town 'born in a day, and destined, perhaps, to vanish in a day'? 'The realised experience of a nation' was one of the most important elements in reconstructing the franchise.

This was a middle-class movement, to aggrandise the power of that class at the expense, not merely of the aristocracy, but of the working classes. What was the history of its legislative enterprises? The middle classes emancipated the negroes, but never proposed a Ten Hours Bill for English workmen. In their reform Bill they destroyed, under the pretence of its corrupt exercise, the old industrial franchise, and they never constructed a new one. Again, in their commercial legislation, while the interests of capital were unblushingly advocated, the displaced labour of the country was offered neither consolation nor compensation, but was told that it must submit to be absorbed in the mass. There was no evidence in any of these reforms of any sympathy with the working classes. Disraeli then discussed the origin of the movement, and in a vivacious passage depicted the working of professional agitation, at that time comparatively in its infancy, now grown to herculean proportions, but in its methods always the same.

[1] See pp. 222, 223.

It is a profession which requires many votaries—chairmen, deputy-chairmen, secretaries, committeemen, missionaries, pamphleteers, lecturers, hired orators—

> 'Rhetor, grammaticus, geometres, pictor, aliptes,
> Augur, schenobates, medicus, magus.'

The business of this profession is to discover or invent great questions. When a great question is settled, it is the ruin of the profession. There is no need of a chairman, for there is no chair to fill; no want of a deputy-chairman to represent his hon. friend; there are no committees to be attended; no pamphlets to be written; the lecturer is idle and the orator is dumb. The rule, however, is, when a great question has been settled, immediately to look out for a new one.

After Free Trade was settled, the Anti-Corn-Law Leaguers first tried perpetual peace as the next great question, but the unhappy affair at Paris stopped that movement. So they had turned to electoral districts, which was a new cry, and would serve to flavour the somewhat stale pretexts of triennial Parliaments and vote by ballot.

Disraeli proceeded to draw a favourite moral of his from 'this playing and paltering with popular passions for the aggrandisement of one too ambitious class':

Why are the people of England forced to find leaders among these persons? The proper leaders of the people are the gentlemen of England. If they are not the leaders of the people, I do not see why there should be gentlemen. Yes, it is because the gentlemen of England have been negligent of their duties and unmindful of their station that the system of professional agitation, so ruinous to the best interests of the country, has arisen in England. It was not always so. My honourable friends around me call themselves the country party. Why, that was the name once in England of a party who were the foremost to vindicate popular rights—who were the natural leaders of the people and the champions of everything national and popular; and you must blame yourselves alone if you have allowed the power that has been entrusted to you by the Constitution to slip from your hands, to be exercised for other interests than the general good of your country. When Sir William Wyndham was the leader of the country party, do you think he would have allowed any chairman or deputy-chairman, any lecturer or pamphleteer, to deprive him of his hold on the heart of the people of this country? No, never! Do you think that, when the question

of suffrage was brought before the House, he would have allowed any class who had boldly avowed their determination to obtain predominance to take up and settle that question? Read what Sir J. Hynde Cotton,[1] in the days of Walpole, said on the question of the suffrage. He was one of the greatest gentlemen in the country; he did not run away every night from the House and pair till half-past eleven, and let the country go to the dogs. If it be true that we are on the eve of troublous times, if it indeed be necessary that changes should take place in this country, let them be effected by those who ought to be the leaders in all political and social changes. Then we shall not find changes carried into effect for the unblushing purpose of securing a middle-class Government, but an English and a national Government, the pride of the people, and in which confidence can be placed.

There is much that is interesting and informing as to Disraeli's views in this speech. He disclaims finality in reform, and he claims for the Country party the right and, at the proper time, the duty itself to take up and settle the question—a task which he attempted in 1859, and carried through successfully in 1867. He desires also to base the franchise, not merely upon property, but upon educational and other qualifications; here we have the germ of the fancy franchises of 1859 and 1867. On the other hand, household suffrage, which was the basis of the Act of 1867, and was then recognised to be the transference of power from the middle class to the working men, was opposed by Disraeli in 1848, rather oddly, as a measure to secure a middle-class Government. He was perfectly justified in his suspicion of its origin. The Manchester School, as we have seen, were in their Free Trade movement at least as much concerned with the profits of the manufacturers as with the improvement of the industrial class; and it was not unreasonable that their opponents should suspect that, in desiring to extend the suffrage to the artisans, they were really aiming at increasing the political power of the class most likely to influence the new voters. Disraeli's aim throughout was to curb the excessive power which, in his view, the middle-class had

[1] See p. 225.

obtained under the Reform Act of 1832, and to counterbalance it by strengthening the landed interest on the one hand, and on the other by admitting, in such proportions as political cross-currents would permit, a real representation of the industrial class.

The session did not close without a further long stride being made by Disraeli towards the leadership. Parliament had been sitting ten months, from November to September, with but slight intermission; and yet Ministers had accomplished little of their programme, and had met with repeated rebuffs and humiliations.[1] They had naturally laid the blame on the forms of the House and on the loquacity of their opponents; but Disraeli, in a long and detailed speech on August 30, put the story of the session in a juster perspective. 'The speech that made me leader,' he said to Lord Rowton, on being shown a reprint more than thirty years later. How he came to speak at all, he has told us in *Lord George Bentinck:*

> Lord George Bentinck was very anxious that there should be a parliamentary summary of this enormous and eventful session of '48, that the conduct of business by the Ministry should be traced and criticised and the character of the House of Commons vindicated, and he appealed to the writer of these observations to undertake the task. But the writer was unwilling to accede to this suggestion, not only because at the end of August he shrank from a laborious effort, but principally because he did not hold that his position in the House of Commons warranted on his part such an interference, since, after all, he was only the comrade in arms of one who chose to be only an independent member of the House. He therefore unaffectedly stated that he thought the office was somewhat above his measure. But Lord George Bentinck would not listen to these representations. 'I don't pretend to know much,' he said, 'but I can judge of men and horses.' It is difficult to refuse those who are themselves setting a constant example of self-sacrifice, and therefore, as far as the

[1] Meeting Hobhouse at one of Lady Palmerston's parties in July, Disraeli told him the Government 'might last as long as it liked. It was a weak Government, and therefore durable. Strong Governments always fell to pieces—*e.g.*, Lord Grey's and Peel's' (*Broughton's Recollections*, under date July 22). The prediction was verified, as the Government lasted three years and a half more.

labour was concerned, the writer would not have shrunk from the exertion even on the last day of the month of August; and when the particular wish of Lord George was found to be more general than the writer presumed to suppose, he accordingly endeavoured to accomplish the intention.[1]

It appears from Disraeli's private correspondence that this is not a complete account of the origin of the speech. Not only Bentinck, who was always anxious to further his comrade's ambitions, but Stanley himself, urged him to deliver it. During this summer there seems to have been the first approximation to friendly personal relations between these two eminent men, Stanley and Disraeli, destined to be allied so long and intimately in public duty. It is possible that the differences and misunderstandings which frequently occurred in these years, 1846-1848, between the somewhat *nonchalant* Stanley and the strenuous and irascible Bentinck, may have inclined Stanley to view Disraeli with less disfavour. In the spring[2] Manners could still write to Disraeli: 'Do you see more of Stanley than you gave me to understand you were seeing of him when I was last in London? I hope so, though I agree with you there is something queer in his whole behaviour.' But in July we find Stanley cordially accepting an invitation to dine at Grosvenor Gate, in the first of his letters to Disraeli which has been preserved; and on August 7 Disraeli writes to Lady Londonderry: 'I was with Lord Stanley this morning, who wants me (this quite between ourselves) to sum up the session in the House of Commons; but I am wearied, and occupied with that arrear of private business which always awaits me in August, which distracts without exciting.' A day or two later he tells the same correspondent that, late as it is, he must remain in town two or three weeks more, 'as I have promised Lord Stanley to sum up the session for the edification of Her Majesty's lieges, and must not precipitate the performance, which should be a final ceremony, the dropping of the curtain—the last flavour, which is to give a tone to

[1] Ch. 27. [2] March 12.

public opinion and an impulse to public discontent for some months.'

The speech takes the form of a vindication of the House of Commons from the charges of vacillation and incompetence, and fastens the responsibility for the unsatisfactory state of affairs on the misgovernment of Ministers. Parliament, Disraeli reminded his hearers, was called together unusually early owing to the monetary crisis and the licence given to the directors of the Bank of England to infringe the Bank Charter Act, and he commented on the delay and inconsistency of Ministerial proceedings:

> I scarcely know to what to compare their conduct, except something that occurs in a delightful city of the South, with which hon. gentlemen are familiar, and which is now, I believe, blockaded or bullied by the English fleet. There an annual ceremony takes place, when the whole population are found in a state of the greatest alarm and sorrow. A procession moves through the streets, in which the blood of a saint is carried in a consecrated vase. The people throng around the vase, and there is a great pressure—as there was in London at the time to which I am alluding. This pressure in time becomes a panic—just as it did in London. It is curious that in both cases the cause is the same: it is a cause of congealed circulation. Just at the moment when unutterable gloom overspreads the population, when nothing but despair and consternation prevail, the Chancellor of the Exchequer—I beg pardon, the Archbishop of Tarento—announces the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the issue of a Government letter; in both instances, a wholesome state of currency returns; the people resume their gaiety and cheerfulness, the panic and the pressure disappear, everybody returns to music and macaroni—as in London everybody returned to business; and in both cases the remedy is equally efficient and equally a hoax.

Much time had been wasted by the financial mismanagement of the unlucky Sir Charles Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Disraeli poured scorn and ridicule on the four Budgets which had been presented to the House: one in February, when the Prime Minister emphasised the importance of the occasion by taking on himself the task

of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and on the score of the imperative necessities of defence announced that the income tax would be doubled; the second, ten days later, when—owing to the 'unearthly yell' as of 'a menagerie before feeding-time' which went up at the prospect from those friends of Free Trade, the middle classes—the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that 'by filching on the one hand and screwing on the other' Ministers, in spite of the needs of defence, could do without the £3,500,000 which a doubled income tax would bring in; the third Budget in June, interposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the midst of a debate on Colonial sugar; and the fourth in August, the introduction of which Disraeli thus describes:

> I shall never forget the scene. It irresistibly reminded me of a celebrated character who, like the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had four trials in his time, and whose last was the most unsuccessful—I mean the great hero of Cervantes when he returned from his fourth and final expedition. The great spirit of Quixote had subsided; all that sally of financial chivalry which cut us down at the beginning of the session, and which trampled and cantered over us in the middle, was gone. Hon. gentlemen will remember the chapter to which I refer, which describes the period when the knight's illusions on the subject of chivalry were fast dispelling, and, losing his faith in chivalry—or finance—he returned home crestfallen and weary. The villagers, like the Opposition, were drawn out to receive him; and Cervantes tells us that, although they were aware of his weakness, they treated him with respect. His immediate friends—the barber, the curate, the bachelor Samson Carrasco—whose places might be supplied in this House by the First Lord of the Treasury, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, perhaps, the President of the Board of Trade [Labouchere], were assembled, and with demure reverence and feigned sympathy they greeted him, broken in spirit, and about for ever to renounce those delightful illusions under which he had sallied forth so triumphantly; but just at the moment when everything, though melancholy, was becoming—though sad, was in the best taste—Sancho's wife rushes forward and exclaims, 'Never mind your kicks and cuffs, so you've brought home some money.' But this is just what the Chancellor of the Exchequer has not brought. Such was the end of the fourth and final expedition, and such

is the result of the fourth and final budget. The Chancellor of the Exchequer during the whole session has been bringing home barbers' basins instead of knightly helms; and at the last moment, true to his nature, to his vocation, and to his career, he finds instead of a surplus a deficiency, and, instead of reducing taxation, he commemorates his second year of finance by a second loan.

Time had been muddled away over the Public Health Bill, the Jewish Disabilities Bill, the various Sugar Bills, and the Bills dealing with delinquent boroughs. No wonder that time had not been found to pass the repeal of the Navigation Laws, and that there were forty-seven other Bills, two-thirds of them Government measures, abandoned, withdrawn, or postponed. During this long session there had been 'sedition in England, insurrection in Ireland, and revolution in Europe,' but the Opposition had taken no advantage of these opportunities. Palmerston had admitted the consideration shown in foreign affairs; there had been no discussion of the condition-of-England question, and, when stringent measures were proposed for Ireland, the Government were neither attacked nor even hampered, in spite of the fact that the Opposition were without a leader, split into sections, with everything left to the discretion of individual members. No, it was not the Opposition, it was not the House of Commons, that was in fault: it was the Treasury Bench, to which Disraeli pointed amidst the cheers of his party. Though the Whigs were justified by the exigency of the case in assuming office without a Parliamentary majority, they ought not to have retained it in such circumstances. What was the result?

In the first place, we have a Cabinet who, in preparing their measures, have no conviction those measures will be carried. The success of their measures in this House depends on a variety of small parties, who, in their aggregate, exceed in number and influence the party of the Ministers. The temper of one leader has to be watched—the indication of the opinion of another has to be observed—the disposition of a third has to be suited; so that a measure is so altered, remoulded, remodelled, patched, cobbled, painted, veneered, and var-

nished, that, at last, no trace is left of the original scope and scheme; or it is withdrawn in disgust by its originators, after having been subjected to prolonged and elaborate discussions in this House. . . .

There is another inconvenience resulting from the present position of the Government—in my opinion more serious, if not so flagrant—and that is, it is impossible to expect from Ministers thus situated those matured, finished, and complete measures which, under other circumstances, we should have a right to demand from them. Men in their situation will naturally say: 'What is the use of taking all these pains, of bestowing all this care, study, and foresight, on the preparation of a measure, when the moment it is out of our hands it ceases to be the measure of the Cabinet, and becomes essentially the measure of the House of Commons?' . . . The House of Commons, as now conducted, is a Great Committee sitting on public affairs, in which every man speaks with the same right and most of us with the same weight. No more the disciplined array of traditionary influences and hereditary opinions—the realised experience of an ancient society and of a race that for generations has lived and flourished in the high practice of a noble system of self-government. That is all past. For these the future is to provide us with a compensatory alternative in the conceits of the illiterate, the crotchets of the whimsical, the violent courses of a vulgar ambition that acknowledges no gratitude to antiquity—to posterity no duty. . . .

Sir, I trace all this evil to the disorganisation of party. I know that there are gentlemen in this house who affect to deprecate party government. . . . I say, you can have no parliamentary government if you have no party government; and, therefore, when gentlemen denounce party government, they strike at that scheme of government which, in my opinion, has made this country great, and which I hope will keep it great. I can foresee, though I dare not contemplate, the consequences of the system that now prevails. They are weak words that would describe them as prejudicial to the realm, perilous to Parliament, fatal to that high tone of public life that is the best security for national grandeur and public liberty. It is more than this: it is the *finis fatorum* of the great Dardanian house. . . . I know no institution in the country that can long withstand its sapping and deleterious influence. As for the class of public men that have hitherto so gloriously administered the affairs of this country, I believe they will be swept off the face of our political world. For my part, I protest against the system: I denounce it. Even at the eleventh hour, I call upon the country to brand it with its indignant reprobation.

It was a brilliant peroration, and the concluding portion, which emphasised the crucial importance, for Parliamentary government, of maintaining party association, embodied one of Disraeli's profoundest convictions. It was for the break-up of his party that he reproached Peel; it was to the reorganisation of that party that he himself devoted successfully the best years of his life. His remarks on the evils of government through a Parliamentary minority are equally true; but it is a strange irony that he should have been destined to illustrate three times in his own person the disadvantages that he depicted so clearly.

The speech produced a marked effect, and Russell, in replying, though he professed not to understand why it should have been delivered, complimented the orator on his abilities and eloquence. Disraeli, in his account to his wife, is even more infectiously enthusiastic than usual, and is also naturally anxious that *The Times* report of his great effort should be correct:

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Aug. 30, 1848.—The success has exceeded our most sanguine expectations and hopes!

I spoke exactly three hours, and omitted scarcely one point of great importance, and very few of secondary.

The attendance on our side was admirable. G. B. had scoured the country—Hudson[1] and all sorts of fellows by express trains. The cheering capital and genuine: not factitious. We had, in fact, a considerable majority over the Government, and could have turned them out, had there been a division.

The Peers' gallery crowded, and all the Foreign Ministers; among them, De Beaumont, the new French one.

All my friends delighted: universally admitted my greatest speech. Smythe beyond expression. He tells me that in the Peers' galleries—*especially his father—all the 18th century,* say there never was anything like it.

I am now going to Delane—God knows how long and how often I shall be there, as the speech must be eight columns at least.

[1] The Railway King.

On the previous day Disraeli had written to Lady Londonderry: 'To-morrow is my Waterloo, but whether for triumph or discomfiture, I dare not now foresee. . . . This is the first day of the campaign that I have felt utterly exhausted and dispirited—a sad mood on the eve of a general engagement'; he now reports exultingly that he has 'won the battle completely.' But we have other evidence than his own. Newspapers of all parties recognised the brilliance and general accuracy of his exposure of Ministerial inefficiency; Brougham wrote to him, 'You have closed the session most magnificently'; and Greville, though he calls the speech 'nothing but a theatrical display,' admits that it was 'very sparkling and clever.' Moreover, letters of both the Whips of the Protectionist party—Beresford and Newdegate—neither of whom was specially well affected to Disraeli, have come down to us. Newdegate sent an 'impartial' but flattering account to Mrs. Disraeli. Beresford reported to Stanley that the speech was 'very able and powerful,' and shrewdly added: 'One feature of Disraeli's speech that demands some attention is the character, which he attempts to assume in more than one instance, of being the organ of the Opposition, and thereby bidding for the station of their Parliamentary leader. No doubt but his ability is sufficient for that station, but he must not claim it merely on that score until it is conceded to him by the party.'

In the prostration which, as usual, fell upon Disraeli when the labours of the session were over, he was cheered and consoled by the delicate appreciation of his oratory shown in a letter from Prince Metternich,[1] whom the troubles of this year of Continental revolution had driven to take refuge in England.

From Prince Metternich.

EATON SQUARE, *le* 9 *Sept.*, 1848.—. . . Vous avez une constitution, qui doit vous engager à ménager la partie matérielle de votre être, qui tend à user l'élément moral, dont le créateur vous a si richement doté. Ce qui se

[1] See below, ch. 7

présente en vous comme de la prostration, n'est que la suite d'une lésion de l'équilibre entre l'esprit et la matière. Le travail parlementaire est un travail très lourd; il équivaut parfois à celui d'Hercule et je suis convaincu que, malgré sa demie divinité, ce héros a un besoin de se reposer après ses exploits! Vous êtes doué d'un fort rare talent oratoire, et on n'est orateur que quand on sait remuer les questions fortes et qui par celà même sont pesantes. La différence entre un orateur et un causeur *de rien* est immense; cette différence se présente dans toutes les directions et il ne suffira de m'arrêter à une seule; *l'orateur* use ses propres forces et éveille celles de son auditoire; le *parleur* use les facultés des écouteurs et ne court pas le risque de compromettre les forces qu'il ne possède pas en lui-même. L'un marche dans le plein, et l'autre établit autour de lui le vide. Le premier fait, ou du bien, ou du mal; l'autre ne fait rien; et le mouvement qui ne produit pas, détruit! Usez des dons dont vous êtes favorisé et ménagez-vous pour faire vie qui dure. Après vous-même, je vous en saurai le plus grand gré. . . .

Donnez-moi de vos nouvelles pour que je sache ce que vous faites. Vous n'avez pas besoin de m'apprendre ce que vous pensez; je ne le mets pas en doute.

CHAPTER V.

The Question of Leadership—II.

1848–1849.

Before the echoes of Disraeli's triumphant speech had subsided, the political outlook was changed, in a moment, by Bentinck's sudden death at the age of forty-six. On the afternoon of September 21 he started to walk, from his father's house at Welbeck, some five or six miles across the woodland to Thoresby. As he walked he had a heart attack, and his body was found, some hours afterwards, lying by the path. It seems strange that the event should have taken the world entirely by surprise. He had been prostrated by influenza in December, and the condition of his health had weighed heavily in his resignation of the leadership. Nevertheless, in the protracted session of 1847-48 he worked, largely in consequence of his chairmanship of the West India Committee, harder than ever. The news caused everywhere an immense sensation; 'all men seemed to mourn over this untimely end, and there was that pang in the public heart which accompanies the disappearance of a strong character.' Like the rest of the world, Disraeli seems to have assumed that his friend had regained all his vigour, and he was accordingly quite unprepared and overwhelmed. He and Mrs. Disraeli were staying at Wynyard with the Londonderrys at the time, and after a melancholy parting he went to London for the funeral.

To Lord Henry Bentinck.

Grosvenor Gate, *Sept.* 25, 1848.

Dear Lord Henry,—The desolating news reached us at Wynyard yesterday morning. I do not write this to intrude on your affliction. My own is too vast. It is the greatest

sorrow I have ever experienced. A peculiar and unparalleled spirit has departed: at all times a loss; in an age of degeneracy, an irreparable one. It seems to me, that the pulse of the nation beats lower after this.

I can neither offer, nor receive, consolation. All is unutterable woe! And I only write this because, when the occasion is fitting, there are reasons which make it necessary I should see you.—Ever, dear Lord Henry, yours, B. DISRAELI.

Writing to Manners, Disraeli used much the same phrases of profound grief, and added: 'Arriving in town I found on my table a letter[1] of six sheets, written an hour before the fatal walk, and full of his accustomed vigor and keen interest in existence.' To another friend he wrote that he was 'shaken to the core'; and to a third, that he was 'overwhelmed by a great calamity' in 'the death of one to whom I was bound by personal ties, far stronger even than those political connections which knit us together.' Of the loss to the party he spoke in Parliament at the beginning of the next session:

At a time when everything that is occurring vindicates his prescience and demands his energy, we have no longer his sagacity to guide or his courage to sustain us. In the midst of the Parliamentary strife his plume can soar no more for us to rally round. But he has left us the legacy of heroes: the memory of his great name, and the inspiration of his great example.

Disraeli did not rest content with this Parliamentary tribute. With the assistance of the Bentinck family he erected a lasting monument to his friend's memory in *Lord George Bentinck, a Political Biography*, published in December, 1851. Here is the full-length portrait which he draws:

His eager and energetic disposition; his quick perception, clear judgment, and prompt decision; the tenacity with which he clung to his opinions; his frankness and love of truth; his daring and speculative spirit; his lofty bearing, blended as it was with a simplicity of manner very remarkable; the ardour of his friendships, even the fierceness of his hates and prejudices: all combined to form one of those strong characters who, whatever may be their pursuit, must always direct and lead.

[1] The text of this letter is given in Appendix A, p. 1389.

Nature had clothed this vehement spirit with a material form which was in perfect harmony with its noble and commanding character. He was tall, and remarkable for his presence; his countenance almost a model of manly beauty; the face oval, the complexion clear and mantling; the forehead lofty and white; the nose aquiline and delicately moulded; the upper lip short. But it was in the dark brown eyes that flashed with piercing scrutiny that all the character of the man came forth; a brilliant glance, not soft, but ardent, acute, imperious, incapable of deception or of being deceived. . . .

In politics he was a Whig of 1688, which became him, modified, however, by all the experience of the present age. He wished to see our society founded on a broad basis of civil and religious liberty. He retained much of the old jealousy of the Court, but had none of popular franchises. He was for the Established Church, but for nothing more, and very repugnant to priestly domination. As for the industrial question, he was sincerely opposed to the Manchester scheme, because he thought that its full development would impair and might subvert our territorial constitution, which he held to be the real security of our freedom, and because he believed that it would greatly inspire Ireland, and certainly dissolve our colonial empire.

He had a great respect for merchants, though he looked with some degree of jealousy on the development of our merely foreign trade. His knowledge of character qualified him in a great degree to govern men, and if some drawbacks from this influence might be experienced in his too rigid tenacity of opinion, and in some quickness of temper, which, however, always sprang from a too sensitive heart, great compensation might be found in the fact that there probably never was a human being so entirely devoid of conceit and so completely exempt from selfishness. Nothing delighted him more than to assist and advance others. All the fruits of his laborious investigations were always at the service of his friends without reserve or self-consideration. He encouraged them by making occasions for their exertions, and would relinquish his own opportunity without a moment's hesitation, if he thought the abandonment might aid a better man.[1]

In describing his last talk with Bentinck in Harcourt House, about a fortnight before the end, Disraeli added some further reflections over this 'singular and sudden career':

[1] Ch. 2.

> Never was a reputation so substantial built up in so brief a space. All the questions with which he had dealt were colossal questions: the laws that should regulate competition between native and foreign labour; the interference of the state in the development of the resources of Ireland; the social and commercial condition of our tropical colonies; the principles upon which our revenue should be raised; the laws that should regulate and protect our navigation. But it was not that he merely expressed opinions upon these subjects; he came forward with details in support of his principles and policy which it had been before believed none but a minister could command. Instead of experiencing the usual and almost inevitable doom of private members of parliament, and having his statements shattered by official information, Lord George Bentinck, on the contrary, was the assailant, and the successful assailant, of an administration on these very heads. . . .
>
> Though his manner, which was daily improving, was not felicitous in the House, the authority of his intellect, his knowledge, and his character made him one of the great personages of debate.[1]

It is a fine tribute by a friend to the character and work of his colleague and leader, and much fairer than the estimates current in histories mostly written from the Free Trade standpoint. Bentinck has suffered, like Disraeli, from his sturdy opposition to a policy which was for many decades treated by the ordinary Englishman almost as a religion; and he has frequently been denied both ability and character. That his Parliamentary capacity was greatly improved through his association with Disraeli is unquestionable; but without his co-operation Disraeli would hardly have overthrown Peel. It may be that Bentinck, when he died, had done his best work. In Disraeli's opinion, given to Greville, he would have failed as Minister and Leader of the House, owing to the deficiencies of his education and the want of flexibility in his character. 'In his speaking there were physical defects he never could have got over, and as it had been proved that he could not lead an Opposition, still less would he have been able to lead a Government.'[2] Stanley

[1] Ch. 27.

[2] Greville, under date Nov. 24, 1851.

shared this view. He told the Queen in November, 1852, that Bentinck, if alive, 'would have made confusion worse confounded' from his excessive violence.[1] Such speculations, however, as to what might have been are always unsatisfactory. It is impossible to fix a limit to the development which responsibility may produce in a strong and resolute character. What is certain is that by Bentinck's death one of the two forceful personalities in the Protectionist ranks in the Commons was removed; and the path was cleared for Disraeli's advance.

'No one but Disraeli can fill his place. Although of perfectly different natures, they pulled together without any difficulty. It will leave Disraeli without a rival, and enable him to show the great genius he undoubtedly possesses without any comparisons.' So wrote Malmesbury in his diary on hearing of Bentinck's death. There is no doubt he was right. No new man had arisen in the ranks of the Country party. Bentinck's successor in the representation of Lynn, Edward Henry Stanley, Lord Stanley's eldest son, afterwards 15th Earl of Derby, was indeed a notable accession; but he was only twenty-two, and did not make his maiden speech till May, 1850. The only choice, outside Disraeli, lay among the mediocrities whom we have already passed in review. His claims were greater than ever, owing to his successes during the past session. He was, moreover, as the Duke of Newcastle wrote to him on October 22, Bentinck's 'Prime Minister, fellow-labourer, and most confidential friend.' Almost immediately a movement was begun in his favour. The Bentinck family, who knew the wishes of Lord George, and were grateful to Disraeli for his constant attachment and unfailing support, very naturally took the lead, Lord Henry, who sat for Nottinghamshire, being specially active. The Duke of Newcastle, to whom Lord George was the beau-ideal of a true patriot, and who resented his son Lord Lincoln's following Peel, went with the Bentincks. Christopher and Trollope,

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters*, under date Nov. 28, 1852.

members for Lincolnshire, and Miles, member for Somerset, were also forward in promoting the movement. Disraeli seems himself to have done a little discreet wire-pulling at an early stage. He was in London, off and on, a good deal in the weeks after Bentinck's death.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Half-past six [Oct. 12, 1848].

MY DEAREST WIFE,—I am going to dine with Lord Hardwicke[1] alone, before he goes off by the train. . . .

Pollington[2] is in town—alone.

I met Mrs. Dawson,[3] who was painfully condoling; Jemmy Macdonald,[4] who turned and would walk with me, full of G. B.; Exmouth,[5] who cried, so I suppose it is the fashion to weep. All the newspapers go on praising him up to the seventh heaven, and discovering all the great qualities which they never before would acknowledge. . . .

[*Nov.* 4, 1848.]

MY DARLING,—I am going to dine with Herries—alone. Lord Hardwicke is in the room; I think I shall tell him that his letter is in the box.

The Duke of Bucks just returned from Scotland; very well, quite renovated by the grouse shooting. Thinks of going abroad; 'anything better than kicking one's heels in London,' where, however, I have no doubt he will remain. . . .

Disraeli took care, when he was in town, to propitiate the Protectionist party organ, the *Morning Herald*, whose guiding spirit, Phillips, had shown himself so hostile in the previous winter. He gained also an influential adherent in Lord Mandeville,[6] who wrote on October 16 that Phillips had told him 'the line you proposed to take in politics, and I did not hesitate to state to him, as I now repeat to you, the readiness with which I should tender any support or assistance I can afford to one who

[1] The 4th Earl, Postmaster-General 1852, Privy Seal 1858. See p. 418.

[2] Viscount Pollington, M.P. for Pontefract 1835–1837 and 1841-1847, afterwards 4th Earl of Mexborough.

[3] Sir Robert Peel's sister. See pp. 426, 523, and 628.

[4] See p. 593.

[5] See p. 423.

[6] M.P. for Bewdley. Afterwards 7th Duke of Manchester. His Duchess, after his death, married the 8th Duke of Devonshire, the Liberal Unionist statesman (1833-1908).

has been of such eminent service to the party as you have.' What attracted Mandeville especially were Disraeli's economic principles and his resistance to the advance of Popery. In his reply, which does not seem to have been kept, Disraeli showed apparently considerable reserve, expressing doubts of his own competence and of the character of the party to be led. Other clear-sighted observers had a poor opinion of that party in its then condition. Both the rank and file, and the mediocrities at the head, were trenchantly castigated in a letter from Henry Drummond, the banker, member for Surrey, who urged Disraeli to assert himself and disregard them. 'I think,' he wrote, 'that there is great danger to your future prospects if you link yourself to a lazaretto of incurables. . . . The men around you are at your mercy; they have not an idea touching any course of policy; all their ideas of parties are like those of rival attorneys, rival public-houses, pastrycooks, etc., in a county town. . . . I have no doubt that your party will try to get some titled nonentity to be its nominal head in the House of Commons, although every individual knows he cannot stir without you; but if you stand your ground and civilly say to all (*i.e.*, covertly, though not openly) that you will be *nulli secundus*, they will be as meek as mice.'

Disraeli spent most of the autumn in Bucks. He flattered himself that he had been able to secure an important ecclesiastical ally in his own diocesan, Samuel Wilberforce, who had become Bishop of Oxford in the last few years. But the Bishop proved in the long run to have greater affinities with Disraeli's future rival; and, as the years went by, it became more and more difficult for a man to retain the close friendship of both Gladstone and Disraeli.

To Lord John Manners.

BRADENHAM, *Nov.* 19, 1848.—It was most vexatious our missing each other. I had gone down to Cuddesdon to assist Samuel Oxon in the foundation of a diocesan training school

for masters, in which we have succeeded. I made his acquaintance at Wimpole, and we have made, not only a cordial understanding, but a compact alliance between Church and State; and are henceforth to work together. He is young and vigorous, and repents of his backslidings: for the future, I expect to find him a pillar of the Church in our sense. . . . I am in the agonies of transition from Bradenham to Hughenden, and never was more annoyed. . . .

Disraeli's host at Wynyard, which he had quitted hurriedly after Bentinck's death, was anxious for news of him. 'Of politics,' Lord Londonderry wrote from Mount Stewart on November 18, 'I hear and know nothing. Some say it's a toss up for a leader for the Pro's between you and Bankes—not very flattering, I think, to superiority.' Disraeli represents himself as adopting a passive attitude.

To Lord Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, HIGH WYCOMBE, *Nov.* 22, 1848.—It is very kind of you to remember me, and I feel sensibly flattered by it. I should, long ere this, have reminded you of my existence, if I could have told you anything interesting or important. But after leaving Wynyard, I remained a whole month, in this place, in that apathy, which often arises after excitement and startling events, and found myself incapable of touching a pen, even to write to you; tho' I should have been happy to have expressed some sense of an agreeable visit to your splendid halls, and of the kindness which will always make us remember your roof with regard. But I felt I ought also to write about other things, and I was nervously incapable of it. This is my frank reason for my brutal silence, which I admit to have been a gross outrage, but which, I trust, you have pardoned. . . .

I have seen very few people, and those only by chance. I have avoided, as much as I could, all sorts of political communication. Letters I have received by shoals. There have been all kinds of rumors—most of them unfounded, all untrue: and many little efforts, as there naturally would be, resulting, as was to have been foreseen, in nullity. From my knowledge of the things and persons in question, I feel as aware of all that is said, done, or thought, as if I were present at all their confabulations, and were the dæmon of their innermost mind. It is not little commonplace intrigues that can reconstruct parties in this country. The quandary is too complex. What is wanted, and what alone will do it, are great events, and men equal to them. The former are sure to arrive. . . .

As the year drew to a close, the movement in favour of Disraeli increased. The newspapers began to discuss the situation; and on December 16, in an article which attracted much notice, the *Morning Chronicle*, the organ of the Peelites, treated his leadership as a practical certainty. It compared him to the first Napoleon at the time when he assumed the Imperial crown. 'We cannot help regarding the election of Mr. Disraeli to the Leadership of the Protectionists in the House of Commons as an analogical example of what conscious merit and inborn superiority, backed by strong volition and utter insensibility to the ordinary weaknesses of a sensitive or shrinking nature, may effect.' Disraeli was as indispensable, it held, to the Protectionists as Napoleon to the French. He was their only man of genius. But though public opinion pointed to Disraeli as inevitable, and there was a growing feeling in his favour in the party, Stanley was still unconvinced. He recognised Disraeli's genius, but did not believe that he would be able to unite the Protectionists, and was probably still disinclined to enter into those close personal relations with him which are eminently desirable, if not always attained, between the leaders of the same party in the two Houses. His first idea was to recur to Granby; but Granby was as reluctant now to put himself forward as he had been in the winter before. He agreed with Stanley about Disraeli, but added: 'Remembering how great his talents are, the intimate friendship that existed between him and George Bentinck, the immense service he has rendered to our party and cause, do you not think it would be a proper and deserving compliment to pay him if you were to write to him explaining the difficulties of our position, placing confidence in the rectitude of his judgment, good sense, and patriotism, and asking him to unite with you in inducing and inviting Herries to accept the office?' Newdegate confirmed Stanley's view that Disraeli was not trusted by the party. 'I have been warned repeatedly not to trust Disraeli, while I

see nothing in his public conduct to justify the want of confidence so many seem to feel. This I conclude is attributable to some circumstances of his earlier life, with which I am not familiar, but have little doubt you are. I can scarcely help believing there must be some foundation for so general an opinion as I have alluded to, and it makes me very uneasy.' Supported by this opinion from the Whip, Stanley took Granby's advice, and immediately opened his long political correspondence with Disraeli by the following letter:

From Lord Stanley.

Confidential. KNOWSLEY NEAR PRESCOT, *Dec.* 21, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am sure that no apology will be necessary either for troubling you with a letter, within little more than a month of the reassembling of Parliament, on the state and prospects of the party with which we are both connected, or for the entire frankness with which I intend to write.

For I conceive that our position as a party is a critical one, and that upon our continued cohesion much of the future welfare of the country depends. Now all the reflection I have given to the subject, and the experience of the last Session, convince me that that cohesion is not to be hoped for, unless there be in the House of Commons a recognised Leader, whose decision as to the course to be taken on any sudden emergency will be taken as final by the body of the party, who should enjoy their confidence, and through whom, by means of continual private intercourse, I may have the opportunity of letting my opinions be known. Such a Leader, and in many respects admirably qualified, we had for a considerable time in poor George Bentinck. With talents of the highest order, dauntless resolution, and indefatigable perseverance, he commanded the entire confidence of a large portion, and the respect of the whole of our friends; and though I did not agree with him in all his views, his frank and generous spirit, and our long personal friendship, enabled me in general to carry on business with him to our mutual satisfaction.

I need not now advert to the circumstances under which he felt it to be his duty to withdraw from the Leadership in the House of Commons. Even after that unfortunate division among us, his co-operation was as readily given on all questions connected with the great principle of our union, as if he had still retained his ostensible post; and his loss, as an ally, I consider as quite irreparable. You are aware that on his retirement

it was wished by many that Lord Granby should allow himself to be put forward; but that his invincible diffidence in his own powers prevented him from accepting a post which it was the general desire that he should occupy. I cannot doubt but that the same feeling still actuates him; and indeed his difficulties would now be much greater than they would have been last year, because he could then have always relied on George Bentinck's aid, which would have been given *to him* with peculiar cordiality. The result of his refusal was to leave the Leadership in abeyance; but the inconvenience of that state of things was felt to be so great that I am bound to make an effort to put an end to it if possible. In making this effort, I must write to you with an absence of reserve which nothing short of the critical state of our affairs would justify: and must appeal to your public feeling to afford me assistance which is all but indispensable to success.

I am doing you bare justice when I say that as a debater there is no one of our party who can pretend to compete with you; and the powers of your mind, your large general information, and the ability you possess to make yourself both heard and felt, must at all times give you a commanding position in the House of Commons, and a preponderating influence in the party to which you are attached. But, believing also, as I do, that, from whatever cause, your formal establishment in the post of Leader would not meet with a general and cheerful approval on the part of those with whom you are acting, I pay you the much higher compliment of thinking that you have both the clearness of perception to be aware of the truth of what I have just said, and the manliness of character so far to acquiesce in the feeling of the party, as to be willing to waive a claim which your talents might authorise you to put forward, and, satisfied with the real eminence of your position, to give a generous support to a Leader of abilities inferior to your own, who might command a more general feeling in his favour.

The difficulty of finding such a Leader is hardly less obvious than the necessity of doing so, if possible; and after the most anxious consideration on my part, I can think of no one open to so little objection, provided he agrees with the bulk of the party on one question to which I will advert by-and-bye, as Herries. His age, his long experience, especially in financial and commercial matters, his knowledge of the House of Commons, and his habits of business, though without any great powers of debate, give him, on the whole, a claim which may be admitted without jealousy by some who would not willingly consent to act under a younger and less experienced man. I propose therefore to communicate confidentially

with Herries without loss of time; but I have thought it due to you to lay open to you both what I am doing, and my motives, even before I name the subject to himself; and should you receive my communication (which I need hardly say is made in the strictest confidence) in the spirit in which alone I make it, of anxiety for the promotion of great public interests, I think you have an opportunity of greatly serving the party, and also of establishing a strong personal claim on them for the future, if, consistently with what you feel due to yourself, you can set to others the example of promising him, should he become the Leader, a support of which he will stand greatly in need, and the assurance of which may materially affect his decision. Should you write to him on the subject, the secrecy which I would beg you to observe to all others on the subject of this letter need not apply to him, unless you prefer writing as from yourself, without reference to anything you may have heard from me. And now let me once more ask your indulgence for the freedom with which I have written; a freedom which I would not have used had I not given you credit for being able to appreciate my motives; and to postpone all personal feelings to the consideration of the public advantage.

I have been suffering much lately, and am hardly recovered from a very severe and lengthened attack of gout; but I hope to be fit for my work at the opening of the Session, and to be in Town a few days previous. I apprehend that the main subject of contest on principle will be the Navigation Laws, on which I know we are cordially agreed, and on which I hope that you will take an active part in a vigorous resistance to the proposed change.

Ireland will also, of course, occupy a large portion of time and talk; but after the indication of feeling in the country, I doubt much whether Government will venture to propose a measure for the endowment of the R.C. clergy. On this, the subject to which I before alluded, I think it right to say, that I do not share in the objections of principle entertained by a large body of our friends, who see *moral guilt* in the endowment; but as a measure of policy I am prepared to oppose it, as revolting the feelings of a great majority of the English and Scotch people, and the best friends of English connection in Ireland, and as incurring a very heavy expense, with a very faint prospect of effecting the *real* object, that of diminishing the community of feeling between the R.C. Priest and his flock, and of bribing him to allegiance, and to exercise in favour of the constituted authorities the influence which may remain to him. I hope, though I do not feel quite assured, that your opinions coincide with mine on this point; but I have thought it my duty, in such a communication as

this, to be quite explicit on a subject which *may* be brought forward, and which, if it is, will supersede every other in the public mind.

I will not add to the unreasonable length of this letter by saying anything on foreign politics; on which, however, I shall be glad to have some conversation with you when we meet, and where I think the policy of the Government, and their management, are open to very serious animadversion, especially on the Italian and Sicilian questions.—Believe me, my dear Sir, sincerely yours, STANLEY.

Greville calls this, not unfairly, a 'flummery' letter.[1] All that Stanley wrote about the disorganisation of the party in the Commons, and the necessity of having a recognised leader, was indisputable; but he could hardly expect his correspondent to see why in those circumstances one whom he described as an incomparable debater, with a commanding position in the House and a preponderating influence in the party, should be ruled out. The doubt expressed as to the 'general and cheerful approval' of such an appointment must have appeared but a poor reason to one who knew that he had at any rate a strong body of friends at his back. The 'Prime Minister' of Bentinck was not disposed to be the 'Prime Minister' of Herries, or of any other mediocrity on whom Stanley might wish to bestow a strictly limited and constitutional sovereignty over the Country party. If the party for which he had done so much was not disposed to give him the post to which he alone in the ranks was equal, he would prefer to take up an independent position.

To Lord Stanley.

ERLESTOKE,[2] WESTBURY, *Dec.* 26, 1848.

MY DEAR LORD,—Your letter of the 21st reached me only this morning—having been sent into Bucks, and, then, forwarded here, where we are passing Christmas.

[1] The text of the letter has never before been published, but Disraeli may have shown it to Greville, or to Greville's friend, Delane, the editor of *The Times*.

[2] The Disraelis were spending Christmas with the Hobhouses; and Disraeli there told Hobhouse that 'the summit of Heaven's bliss was to be possessed of £300 a year, and live a retired life amongst books.'

I am gratified by the frank manner in which you have communicated with me, and I will reply to you with as little reserve.

The office of leader of the Conservative party in the H. of C., at the present day, is to uphold the aristocratic settlement of this country. That is the only question at stake, however manifold may be the forms which it assumes in public discussion, and however various the knowledge and the labor which it requires. It is an office which, in my opinion, would require the devotion, perhaps the sacrifice, of a life; and, however great his qualities for its fulfilment, would not be wisely undertaken by any man, who did not possess, not only the confidence, but even the warm personal regard of those with whom he acted in political connection. If you had been in the House of Commons you could have fulfilled this office, and dark and difficult as I deem our future, I would have acted cordially under your banner, because I am sure it would have led always to honor, if not to triumph. But unhappily you have quitted us. Honor, and personal feelings, stronger than any public consideration, attached me to George Bentinck in his able, tho' hopeless, career, and as long as his course had continued, I would never have quitted him. But I am now free from all personal ties; and I am no longer disposed to sacrifice interesting pursuits, health, and a happy hearth, for a political career, which can bring one little fame, and, even if successful in a vulgar sense, would bear me a reward which I now little appreciate.

These are personal considerations. There are, as you well remind me, others, and far superior ones, which should influence all men in a responsible position. I am not insensible, especially in this age, to the principle of duty—but in the present distracted state of parties, it is my opinion, however erroneous, that I could do more to uphold the cause to which I am attached, that I should have better opportunities of reviving the spirit, and raising the general tone of feeling among our friends throughout the country, by acting alone and unshackled, than if I fell into the party discipline, which you intimate.

I heard, with great regret, from Lord Hardwicke, of your sufferings, and trust that, when I have the pleasure of seeing you in town, I shall find you quite yourself. I feel persuaded that yours is an instance in which the water cure would prove completely effective. I have just seen a case, in the person of the Rector of my own parish, a man about your Lordship's time of life, and a still greater sufferer, which prevents me having any further scepticism on this subject. In advanced

years I believe the remedy is perilous, as it proved to poor Sir Francis Burdett.

It gave me great pleasure to observe your son's return,[1] as I have great confidence in his abilities.—Pray believe me, dear Lord Stanley, yours sincerely, B. DISRAELI.

In the mood of temporary disgust and despondency produced by Stanley's letter, Disraeli wrote to a correspondent in Glasgow, on December 29, that he 'would not take the trouble of riding up to Town to be installed leader of any party whatever,' and that 'the time for such factitious supremacies has gone past.'

Stanley does not seem in the least to have been able to realise Disraeli's feelings and legitimate aspirations, or to have recognised the impossibility of a Granby, a Herries, or a Bankes, pretending to lead the party, with Disraeli as a candid friend on the leader's flank. Before he had received an answer from either Disraeli or Herries, he wrote to his Whip, Newdegate, with some confidence about Herries's leadership: 'I hope to arrange this before Parliament meets, and that Disraeli will have the good sense to acquiesce in, and aid, the arrangement. I have never seen, of late years, any reason to distrust him, and I think he will run straight; but he would not be acceptable as Leader.' This letter was written on Christmas Day. The next morning Stanley must have received Herries's reply, dated December 24, declining the leadership primarily on the ground of insufficient health—he was now sixty-eight; and a day or two later came that 'cold but civil answer,' in Greville's words, of Disraeli's which we have already given. Herries suggested the appointment of a confidential Committee as a possible way out of the difficulty. Stanley's next letter to Disraeli shows a considerable advance from his original position:

From Lord Stanley.

Confidential. KNOWSLEY, *Jan.* 6, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—I need hardly tell you that I received your letter of the 26th ult. with deep regret, though with gratitude

[1] To Parliament for King's Lynn.

for the feelings which you express towards me personally. I cannot be surprised at any man, in these days, being desirous of escaping from the thankless labours of political life; and least of all can I wonder at it in one who, like yourself, possesses in literary pursuits ample means of enjoyment for himself and of usefulness for others. Without so good an excuse to myself, I should desire nothing more than to be able to withdraw altogether from a mode of life which requires a constant sacrifice of comfort, independence, and health, and holds out no personal inducements to compensate for the sacrifices it entails.

But I feel that I—and excuse me if I add that you—cannot so withdraw. He who has once put his hand to the Parliamentary plough cannot draw back. I do not speak, of course, of the great majority of members of both Houses, who act as Parliamentary units, giving numerical strength, and nothing else, to the party to which they attach themselves, but of those whom talent, or station, or accident has placed in the foreground and enabled them to exercise, whether they will or no, an influence over numbers of their brother members. For them there is no retreat—none at least so long as they retain their seats; and in times like the present, their abandonment of them would be justly regarded as a dereliction of public duty.

This, supposing him to be sincere in his professions, is the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of Peel's position at the present moment. He *must* be *a* Leader in spite of himself; and the course which he took in 1845 alone prevents him from being *the* Leader. Hence the disruption, which we have all seen and regretted, of the great Conservative party; and what I now anticipate with anxiety, and am desirous, if possible, to avoid, is a similar disruption, into minute sections, of that portion of the party who, as Protectionists, adhered to their original principles. The adoption, by you, of the line which you lay down, would, in my judgment, go far to produce this disastrous result. You cannot divest yourself of the influence which your abilities and your debating powers give you: and you cannot place yourself in a position of complete independence, or rather isolation. Some will follow you, others will attach themselves more particularly to other Leaders: and thus the Opposition will be broken into a number of small guerrilla parties, without the means of organising or conducting any combined operations.

Nothing, as it seems to me, can prevent this state of things, but the selection, by the party at large, of some one Leader, and a cordial support given to him by the other 'notables' of the party. I have, on this subject, no personal objects,

and no personal predilections to gratify. I have nothing at heart but the support of the views which I entertain on public affairs and, as a means to that end, the maintenance of union and *Party*. What I should most anxiously urge would be the selection of *a* Leader of the House of Commons; and whether that Leader be Lord Granby, Mr. Herries, or yourself, I should be ready to act with him with the same cordiality in concerting the means of furthering our common objects: but what I most of all deprecate is that which I fear that I foresee, the 'restoration of the Heptarchy' which is sure to follow any repeal of our union.

Pray reconsider the decision you seem inclined to take, or rather to have taken; and at all events let me have the pleasure of seeing you before Parliament meets on this all-important subject. I shall be in Town on Monday the 29th.—Believe me, my dear Sir, yours sincerely, STANLEY.

Meanwhile Disraeli's friends within the party redoubled their activity, with the object of creating so strong a current of feeling in his favour as to overbear Stanley's hesitation. Henry Bentinck was the prime mover in what the party Whips denounced as an intrigue.

From Lord Henry Bentinck.

LINCOLN, *Tuesday* [Jan. 2, 1849].—Trollope needed no instigating; he was keen enough. But Christopher is the man. Heart and soul in the cause—without a crotchet or a wrong feeling, and will work like a navvy. Two warm letters from Bankes and Billy Miles. The way it is proposed to play the game is this: to collect in Town a small conclave of 14 or 15 of the most influential *fighting* men—no mutes—on Saturday next. That a paper should be drawn up, signed by them all, and sent to Lord Stanley, pointing out the course they think well should be followed, and urging him to be himself the means of bringing over to their views all those of the party that might be likely to throw difficulties in the way.

We fancy Stanley will be the most effective tool to make use of for the awkward crotchety fellows, and when he sees a strong body in earnest our way, he will feel the necessity of coming over and exerting himself heartily. Christopher will be in Town on Friday, and he is anxious that you should be within call on Saturday next. Turn the following matter over in your mind: we think it would be a good move that in answer to a letter which C. should write to you that he should have one from you in some such form as this—That

you would not accept the post unless you were assured of the cordial support, etc., and a clear understanding come to on the following points: first, that on the questions concerning the Endowment of the Catholic Clergy and the Education Questions you should have the assistance of Mr. Henley and Mr. [name illegible] to guide you in the course that would best accord with the feelings of the entire party; and on the Jew Question, that while you would not conceive it to be proper in any way to make use of the power the party would put into your hands, to further a measure obnoxious to them, you must claim for yourself the right of individually following the same course you had followed before, and to have an unfettered discretion to take the line that you would deem fair to your own Church[1] and just to the party.

We fancy that something of the sort that could be shown about would bring over great numbers—also old Henley, whom we can't do without, and we fear might be crotchety. . . .

Disraeli himself, however much he might affect on occasion a detached and indifferent attitude, was as resolved as any of his friends that he should be established in a post which there was none other competent to fill. Once again, as in the spring of 1845, when he had begun the open attack on Peel,[2] the opportunity had come; and he determined to spare no effort to turn it to account. 'Never lose an occasion,' he had just written in *Tancred*. 'Opportunity is more powerful even than conquerors and prophets.' His wife remained at Hughenden during that critical month of January, 1849, but he was in town most of the time, and wrote to her constantly about the progress of the movement. His letters reveal the extraordinary union there was in his character of emotion and resolution. Along with the firm determination to carry his point there is an almost boyish eagerness and delight in the details of the political game.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Jan. 5, 1849.—I long to read to you Lord H. B.'s letter, of which I have made out almost every word. It is a most remarkable one. The Duke of Portland has been dangerously

[1] Lord Henry Bentinck writes as if he thought that Disraeli was a Jew in religion.

[2] See pp. 702, 703.

ill, and though out of immediate danger, it is evident that his son thinks he is dying. Lord H. will not hear of Stanley's project. He is going to get the Duke of Newcastle to write to Stanley, and Trollope is to ride over to Granby for the same object. He impresses on me the importance of getting Mandeville to do the same. M. will be in town on Sunday, and therefore I wish you could send me by post Stanley's letter and copy of my answer, that I may show them, and the others, to Mandeville before he writes.

Saturday [*Jan.* 6, 1849].—Granby came up to town last night from Belvoir about the leadership—Stanley in confidence having sent him our two letters, and entreating him to interfere, etc., etc.

He came into the Coventry about ½ of an hour after me, and saw the very man he wanted. We dined together. Fortunately I had Henry Bentinck's letter, etc., etc., in my pocket. All was read and digested. Details when we meet. Nothing could be more happy than this meeting. Providence sent me up to London and prevented my going to B[righton] yesterday.

The Leader question excites much interest. Except the Gold Mines nothing else is talked of, and every day, every hour, it of course becomes more interesting: like the election of the President.[1]

Disraeli ran down to Brighton for a few hours to pay a visit to Metternich.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Sunday night [*Jan.* 7, 1849].—I got to Brighton at ½ past two and caught M[etternich] before he went out. He said directly he hoped I had come to stay a few days, but when I replied only a few hours, that business demanded my presence in London, and that it was only to see him that I had come down, he replied: 'Well, then, I know by your letter[2] what you want. I am no longer a Minister; I am Professor Metternich'; and he broke into a gallop immediately. I never heard such divine talk: he gave me the most masterly exposition of the present state of European affairs, and said a greater number of wise and witty things than I ever recollected hearing from him on the same day. He was indeed quite brilliant, and his eyes sometimes laughed with sunny sympathy with his shining thoughts. He was looking very well indeed. I saw the Princess, who, whether from my

[1] Louis Napoleon was elected President of the French Republic on Dec. 10, 1848.

[2] See below, ch. 7.

not congratulating them before on the important events that had occurred in their favor, or at my knocking up her morning excursion, or mere caprice, was rather short, I thought: but that did not signify, as I was most anxious to get away and shrunk from hospitalities.

After the state of Europe, strange to say, the subject which most interests M. at this moment is the 'Leadership.' He mentioned to me the famous article in the *Morning Chronicle*[1] on it, and then asked many questions, and gave his view of what should be my course, if I undertook it. I endeavoured to make him understand the complicated question. But he requested me to state the case precisely in a confidential despatch, with copies of all the correspondence, and he would draw up his views on the whole case. It was impossible to refuse such a man such a request; to say nothing of the interest and importance of having such a document as his decision in our archives: but the consequence is, that I have almost the whole of this morning been employed in copying the letters of Lord S[tanley] and Lord H. B.: a tolerably arduous task: besides an interview with Granby of two hours. Mandeville has not arrived, though hourly expected from Scotland. It is of the utmost importance that a certain letter to Lord S. should be written by him. However he may be here to-night.

I have not drawn up the statement for M[etternich], which I hope to do to-morrow morning, but I really have not had a moment of relaxation since we parted. . . .

Monday [*Jan.* 8, 1849].—. . . Phillips has just gone, having set immense machinery to work. . . . Affairs get more complicated and exciting every moment. This morning brings *another letter from Stanley!*[2] He seems at my feet, but the difficulties are immense. Yet they may be surmounted An idea has just crossed me on which I shall act. It is to make Delane my confidant and ask his advice. I think some articles in *The Times*, done with discreet thunder, might do the business.

Tuesday [*Jan.* 9, 1849].—I am harassed to death. Herries has just come up! Just arrived. There is to be a Congress at Burleigh next week, where Granby is going, and where I suppose they must settle something. I have been with Delane all this morning.[3] Nothing can be more difficult than my position, and it requires the greatest tact and discretion to manage it. I hope to get back to-morrow, though it will be late, as I have promised to see Herries at ½ past two. I shall decide on nothing: merely main-

[1] See above, p. 936.

[2] See above, pp. 942-4.

[3] Delane must have discountenanced the idea of articles in *The Times*, as none appeared in this month.

taining the position which I took in my reply to Sir John Trollope, and which I have *impressed* on Granby, and which I trust he now fully understands. *Deciding* on nothing, I shall have the benefit of your advice, which I have several times wanted; but which will be much more important during the next three weeks than at this moment. . . . I am too tired, too hurried, and too anxious to be able to write anything worth reading, or to anyone but you. I have not been able to compose my despatch to Prince M.

Half-past six.—Lord Henry Bentinck is going to give up hunting, and give himself up to politics in order to support me!

[*Jan.* 10, 1849.]—. . . Nothing, as it has turned out, could be more opportune than my visit, and, I hope, more discreet than my departure. For having set every wheel at work, it is just as well that I should be off the scene when everyone is on it.

Disraeli could not keep off the scene for long. He had time to draw up and send off his promised memorandum for Metternich, but after little more than a week's absence we find him back in town.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Saturday [*Jan.* 20, 1849].—A hurried line. Christopher has been here these two hours. I think there is no doubt about the result, though there are delicacies and difficulties. I must keep in the background, but always ready to counsel and aid Christopher, who is one of the most generous and hearty of men. Lord Henry is in town, but I have not yet seen him.

Sir John Yarde Buller has come up about it, and is for me. This is a great adhesion.

I can give you no idea of Bankes' letter. I have been very much mistaken about him. It is the highest praise and the most unqualified adhesion you can imagine.

I am a little too excited at this moment, from travel and talk, to write more.

They say that Peel will never get over my appointment.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 22, 1849.

DEAR LADY OF HUGHENDEN,—What would I not give to be with you in these almost spring mornings, surrounded by birds, flowers, and running waters! 1000 thanks for your letter, the violets, and the enclosures. It was, however, lucky that I came, as I don't think H. B. would have ever pardoned my want of interest and energy, had I been quiet.

What do you think he did? Yesterday he went to Goodwood and returned the same day, and made the Duke write a strong letter to S[tanley]!

I must write in initials, and even that is dangerous. H[erries] has entirely declined. Lord Exeter wants Lord G[ranby]—who of course has declined. Christopher goes down to-night to Burleigh. The personage[1] respecting whom the letter was *about* calls at G[rosvenor] G[ate] to-morrow at two o'clock. This is most important.

Jan. 23, 1849.—The interview with the gentleman[1] to-day was *most cordial and satisfactory.* In short, as he himself exclaimed, where are the opponents? He thinks, however, that the false position of Lord S., in consequence of his first letter, is so great and unmanageable, that he counselled my setting up for myself, *without Lord S.* Time will settle all this.

Jan. 24, 1849.—I think there cannot be a shadow of doubt of all happening as we desire; and with greater éclat from Lord S.'s letter, and my continuing to hold back.

Jan. 25, 1849.—You remember the Prince of Lucca? He is now Prince of Parma. He called at Gros. Gate a few days back, and yesterday came a royal invitation from an aide-de-camp to *prier* me to dine with him and her Royal Highness, sister of the Duke of Bordeaux, but I have refused, as I can't work and stand the excitement of Society too, and certainly shall not be tempted anywhere without you.

Baroness Brunnow is at home on the 30th, and has sent us an invitation. I don't particularly want to go, but very much wish you should, and maintain your position in Society, and feel the public sentiment on many affairs.

A most interesting and *affectionate* despatch from Prince M. this morning, returning the documents.

Metternich's despatch was wordy and involved, and he declined to give Disraeli any definite advice on the personal question. He was anxious not to mix himself up too much in English party politics; Princess Mélanie, his wife, in her Journal, complains that he had to defend himself against 'les obsessions du parti conservateur' in England.[2] But he very shrewdly pointed out the desirability of merging the name Protectionist in the wider title Conservative—a change of nomenclature which was indeed, as we have seen, already in progress. The views of the greatest Conservative statesman in Europe on this

[1] It is not clear who this was—possibly Lyndhurst.
[2] *Metternich Mémoires*, Part III.

crisis in the Conservative party in England have a permanent interest for the student of politics, and the letter will be found in full in Appendix B. There is a peculiar irony in contemplating the mind of the most determined enemy of Parliamentary government applying itself to solve a difficulty in the working of Parliamentary institutions.

To Lord John Manners.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 29, 1849.

MY DEAREST J. M.,—1000 thanks for your welcome letter![1] I have been silent, lest, at this moment, you might misconceive my purpose in writing. I have therefore studiously avoided to communicate with everyone, save in reply to their letters. I had the good fortune of seeing Granby in town casually, as I was passing thro' to Brighton, to pay a little visit to Metternich. I make no doubt that Granby made you acquainted with all that passed between us, as in our most confidential communications there is always a reservation in your favor—on both sides.

With respect to the great question, nothing will induce me to attempt the task unless it is with the general wish and consent of the whole party: for nothing but that unanimous feeling could sustain me in the terrible struggle which, as you well know, I have long seen looming in the distance between the aristocratic and democratic principles. Sincerely I say, I wish the duty had fallen to the lot of another: but if it falls to me, I will attempt to fulfil it to the death.

I have heard nothing from Stanley since the 6th inst., when he expressed an anxious wish to see me the moment he arrived in town. I replied—in order to throw the fixing the appointment on him. I believe he has arrived. I have kept in the country as quiet as possible, and since I have been in town, have avoided the Carlton: but I have received a great many letters and communications. I have received the adhesion, unqualified and complete, of every shade of Church Party. Inglis did me the honor of paying me a visit a few days back: nothing could be more cordial and satisfactory. Yesterday I was informed that on Saturday there was a meeting at the National Club, Colquhoun, whom I have never seen, at the head, and that it was unanimously resolved, in that mysterious conclave, that I was the man, and that if I accepted the office, I had a right to expect an unreserved confidence, which after due explanations, respecting which

[1] Expressing earnest hope for Disraeli's unanimous election as leader.

they anticipated no difficulty, they were prepared to give me! I am told Inglis was present and Walpole. Will you believe it, that Plumptre[1] is going to support me?

In the meantime, I have literally not entered into the intrigue, which was not only justifiable, but which was almost my duty to myself and the party generally; so convinced am I, that the result you wish will be disappointing, unless it be almost unanimous. I have not written to Stafford, for the same reason I have written to no one. I am not a candidate for the Leadership, tho' I am prepared to undertake the task at the unequivocal desire of the party. . . .

Ah! my dear John, if that happens which you wish, how I shall miss you—my best and earliest political friend. You would be invaluable to me.—Ever yours, D.

The Whips were much perturbed by the activity of Disraeli's friends.

William Beresford to Lord Stanley.

2 EATON SQUARE, *Friday night* [*? Jan.* 5 *or* 12, 1849].—. . . Yesterday and to-day for the first time for above a month I have seen a few persons, and I have discovered that there has been a deep intrigue carrying on in the Party to force Disraeli on us as our Leader. . . . I have never flinched from admitting since last summer that Disraeli has shown an amount of talent that places him above *all* in the House, and if the Party choose to be led by him and agree to that generally, I do not say unanimously, I shall not be found as one creating disunion. But I must say that I am not prepared to yield to an intrigue and to assist in an arrangement which I verily believe will bring great obloquy upon a Party, which I have joined from principle, and which has its weight from character. . . .

Jan. 22.—. . . I have discovered that the plan that they at present intend to adopt is not to propose D. as Leader in a general meeting of the Party, but being themselves organised to go down to the House, and for him thus backed to virtually undertake to be Leader, not by election but *de facto*. . . .

The other Whip, Newdegate—according to some notes written by Montagu Corry in 1876, after conversation with Disraeli—told Stanley during this winter that, if Disraeli became leader, he should whip to empty

[1] M.P. for East Kent.

benches; 'and, as things turned out, resigned his post and, as we now see, his prospects, the victim of jealousy and self-conceit, though rich, capable, and a gentleman. Beresford, not very friendly before, bowed to the rising star.'

There is no reason to impute any discreditable motives to the Whips, any more than to their Chief, Stanley, for their hesitation about Disraeli and their reluctance to see him appointed leader. Whips, though frequently very bad judges of policy owing to the shortness of their views, are usually good judges of men. In this case they spoke undoubtedly for a considerable body of feeling in their party, rather perhaps in the country, where Disraeli was less known, than in the House, where his powers extorted admiration. It was admitted that his public conduct gave him great claims to confidence, that he had been a most zealous and faithful lieutenant to Bentinck, and that without him Peel's betrayal of his party could not have been adequately punished. But the bad character, derived from earlier exploits, and especially from malignant distortions and misrepresentations of them, still clung to him in many minds. Stanley wrote significantly that he had 'never seen, *of late years*, any reason to distrust him'; but he was evidently of opinion that confidence is a plant of slow growth. Greville could write of him so recently as February 6, 1847, as having 'a character so disreputable that he cannot be trusted.' Disraeli was a Jew by birth, had been much of a dandy and something of a Bohemian, had been flighty and incomprehensible in his early political efforts, was a literary man, and had hardly yet been converted into a country gentleman by the very recent purchase of Hughenden; his look and manner were mysterious and foreign. These facts gave some colour, it was felt, to the constant calumnies of certain newspapers, which represented him as an unprincipled adventurer, animated by a merely selfish ambition; especially as there was no adequate journalistic reply. Even the *Morning Herald*, the Pro-

tectionist organ, had until recently joined in depreciating him; and the *Standard*, another Conservative newspaper, did not find its prejudices against him removed until his speech on the Address in 1849. *The Times*, indeed, though a supporter of Free Trade, was wont to treat Disraeli and his opinions with respect; but what was at that date the most authoritative political and literary oracle of Conservatism, the *Quarterly Review*, absolutely ignored his existence. Neither Murray nor Croker had forgotten; but the respectabilities of the party could hardly be expected to understand that this ominous silence was due largely to personal reasons, or to place themselves readily under the command of one whom their famous *Review* could not bring itself even to mention.

Then the less progressive and more prejudiced of the party, who formed a very considerable contingent, were well aware that Disraeli did not share their prejudices, and had in every respect an open mind. *Coningsby* and *Sybil* had shown them that, while he maintained that the government of the country should rest with the gentlemen of England, he had no sympathy with an Eldonian policy of exclusion and restriction. His attitude about Protection had always been that it was a matter of expediency and not of principle, though he held strongly to the view that moderate Protection was expedient for England and the Empire. He was a steady supporter, but also a candid critic, of the Church; and his religious views, as set forth in *Tancred*, his persistent support of the removal of Jewish disabilities, and his readiness to accord generous treatment to the Roman Catholics, were not calculated to recommend him to the high-fliers. They felt dimly about his elevation to the leadership what the exiled Guizot said to him: 'I think your being the leader of the Tory party is the greatest triumph that Liberalism has ever achieved.' Disraeli made no secret of his conviction—a conviction shared by Peel, at least after 1832, and in a lesser degree by Stanley.

who had served his political apprenticeship among the Whigs—that a mere policy of negation was impossible for a Conservative party in the nineteenth century; that, to secure that predominance of aristocracy which he desired in the government, an alliance in some form with democracy was indispensable. It would be too much to affirm that he had thought out a definite programme of Tory Democracy; but the phrase accurately describes the spirit in which he conceived that the administration of the country should be carried on.

We must therefore recognise that those who hesitated to assist in Disraeli's elevation had plausible grounds for their distrust. Their difficulty was that there was no alternative; and two-thirds of the party, it was claimed by Disraeli, gave in their formal adhesion to him. All that could be done to propitiate the reluctant was to gloze over what was really taking place; to provide an arrangement which should give Disraeli's genius full play and the party the benefit of his initiative, while apparently still keeping the actual leadership an open question. Accordingly, in a personal interview on the day before the session began, Stanley laid before Disraeli the proposal which Herries had suggested, that a confidential Committee, of which Disraeli would be the leading spirit, should be appointed to manage the party affairs in the Commons.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Most confidential. Jan. 31, 1849.—A proposition that the party should be led by myself, Granby, and Herries *with equal power;* that I should, or rather must, be the real leader; that this would remove all jealousies for the moment; and that when Granby was called to the Upper House, soon to be anticipated, I should, of course, become the only leader, and every jealousy and distrust would, by that time, have been removed.

Very friendly and cordial.

Says it is all over with the party if I retire.

Refused: but at his request left it open, as he has not yet even consulted Granby.

Very hurried. All details when we meet.

From Lord Stanley.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Feb.* 1, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—I very much wish you could do me the favour of calling here, as you cannot attend the meeting, about one o'clock, or ½ past. Lord Brougham is to be with me at 2, and I do not know how long he may stay. There was a strong feeling among the Peers who dined with me yesterday that an amendment should be moved on the Speech, which is most *audacious;* but if anything of the kind is to be done in the Commons, we should come to an understanding about it before you speak.—I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully, STANLEY.

P.S.—If it would suit you better, I would call on you, if I have a moment to spare after Lord B. leaves me—but I have to consider what course I am to take in moving an amendment, if moved, and shall be much hurried for time.

The meeting at Stanley's house approved the suggested Committee of Herries, Granby, and Disraeli; but Disraeli, who was not present, seems never to have definitely withdrawn his refusal. Phillips, writing to him on the following day, says: 'I am pleased to find that you resist the arrangement'; and the same correspondent, more than three years later, recalls the proposal 'to place the leader of the Conservative party like a sandwich between two pieces of bread (very *stale* bread—Herries and Granby), in order that he might be made fit for squeamish throats to swallow. Sympathising with genius,' Phillips proceeds, 'I honestly recommended you to reject the proposed connection, and to vindicate your own true position. You acted upon the suggestion.' But, though Disraeli may not have formally accepted, he apparently tolerated the Committee, only setting himself to make his own pre-eminence clear. George Smythe took the news of the appointment of this Committee of Three to his old chief, Aberdeen, 'who said with one of his grim smiles, "Sieyès, Roger Ducos, and Napoleon Bonaparte."' There might be a doubt who was cast for the part of Sieyès, and who for that of Ducos; but it was certain that Disraeli would reduce the other members of the Committee to practical insignificance, just as Napoleon treated his two consular colleagues after the 18th Brumaire.

From Lord John Manners.

BELVOIR CASTLE, *Feb.* 2, 1849.—. . . On you presses the intellectual and even physical burden of this 'terrible struggle,' as you most justly characterise it. I can compare your position to nothing save that of the Duke's in Spain, with a few good, hardy English troops to rely upon, an energetic and powerful enemy to oppose, and a confused mass of friendly partisans who, from pride, jealousy, superstition, or stupidity, were eternally thwarting his combinations or deserting him in the hour of need. Well—I wished and worked that the leadership might have been a Monarchy, but, as a Triumvirate has been established, I must salute the new power, and wish it well; possibly your power will be greater, for being nominally less; let us hope so. . . .

The inevitable happened. Disraeli, at Stanley's request, became the mouthpiece of the Opposition on the Address, moving the official amendment; and Malmesbury noted at once that the 'triumvirate' was an evident failure, Granby and Herries being in their colleague's way. It was feared that a deficiency in general civility to mediocrities and bores might keep him back; and a strong well-wisher, the Duke of Richmond, urged, through a friend, on February 11, the adoption of more conciliatory manners. He thought that Disraeli, with his commanding talents, must be declared leader shortly if he removed the personal prejudice entertained by some against him. But this drawback—after all so common in political leaders—proved no obstacle, and on February 22 Disraeli wrote triumphantly to his sister: 'After much struggling, I am fairly the leader.' Three weeks later the Prime Minister, in his official letter to the Queen, treated this leadership as an accomplished fact: 'Mr. Disraeli shows himself a much abler and less passionate leader than Lord George Bentinck.'[1] In March or April, Beresford, who had hitherto taken his orders directly from Stanley, recognised Disraeli as the responsible Chief in the Commons; and before the end of the session definite acknowledgment of the position was made by the Government and their supporters in the debate,[2] in July, on the vote of

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters*, March 16, 1849. [2] See below, pp. 1024-1028.

want of confidence. The Chancellor of the Exchequer then spoke of him as 'the avowed leader of a powerful party'; Russell referred to the Protectionists as Disraeli's 'supporters'; Peel protested his anxiety to show 'no disrespect to the hon. member's ability or station'; and Roebuck offered him congratulations 'upon this his first appearance as the acknowledged Chief of the party.' Thus, without any regular nomination or election, but by a natural evolutionary process, the lead of the Opposition passed to the fittest.[1]

[1] This account of Disraeli's accession to the leadership, based mainly on contemporary correspondence, is borne out by a statement made by him to his secretary in 1876, that the session of 1849 was opened with the leadership, as it were, in commission; but that, as Granby and Herries were unequal to the task, a few weeks placed it in his own hands. Two somewhat different stories, however, in which the Committee of Three was entirely ignored, were told by him, with characteristic carelessness about detail, in 1860, when the events referred to were more recent. Writing to Miles in that year, he said: 'When . . . we lost Lord George, Lord Derby, with whom I had very slight relations, wrote to me, and asked me to undertake, under certain conditions, the management of our party. I declined to do so, though duly honoring the offer. I saw personal difficulties ahead, and the engagement on my part would have involved the sacrifice of several thousands a year, which I would willingly, having no children, have relinquished, if I possessed the confidence of the gentlemen of England, but which, without that great reward, I was not willing to give up. After long and earnest representations, principally urged by Lord Derby, the present Duke of Rutland, yourself, and Lord Henry Bentinck, I undertook the office.' The other version was given in the same year to a biographer who asked Disraeli for the principal details of his career. To him he wrote: 'After the death of Lord George Bentinck, I was chosen leader of the Tory party in the House of Commons, at the commencement of the Session 1849. Sir John Buller and Mr. Miles were deputed formally to announce to me the choice; and I had the satisfaction, in due season, of recognising their undeviating fidelity to myself, by making one a baronet, and elevating the other to the peerage.' Undoubtedly Sir John Buller was created Lord Churston in 1858, and Mr. Miles Sir William in 1859, both on the recommendation of the Derby-Disraeli Government. But we happen to have a letter of January, 1852 (see below, p. 1131), from Buller to Miles, definitely stating that Disraeli was *not* appointed in 1849 the one acknowledged leader of the party in the Commons. No doubt the Committee was practically superseded by Disraeli within a few weeks; but it maintained a shadowy existence till the winter of 1851-52, when Granby resigned his membership of it. See below, pp. 1127-1129.

CHAPTER VI.

Family Affairs and Hughenden.

1847–1863.

In Disraeli's private life, no less than in his public career, the years during which he overthrew Peel and established his own leadership were critical and decisive. In those years his mother and his father, having happily lived long enough to witness his success, both died, within a few months of each other; and he acquired, and took possession of, the country home where it was his pride and delight to dwell for the rest of his days.

Mrs. D'Israeli's death took place rather suddenly at Bradenham on April 21, 1847, in her seventy-second year. She had been ill, but not sufficiently to call for her eldest son's presence, and he was in London attending to his Parliamentary duties when the end came. She had, as we have seen,[1] counted for little in his life. Indeed, one of her few recorded marks of interest in his career is chronicled by Sarah Disraeli in a letter to her sister-in-law in March of this same year: 'This wonderful speech,[2] too, that everyone praises. Mama at last confesses that she never before thought Dis was equal to Mr. Pitt. So you see it pleases all varieties of hearers or readers.'

'Sa bears up under all this sudden calamity,' wrote James Disraeli on the day of their mother's death, 'but we must break it to our father.' Isaac D'Israeli was now eighty-one, and for more than seven years had been blind.[3] When the blow fell, in 1839, he was, in spite of his

[1] Pages 15, 16. [2] The speech on Cracow. See below, p. 987.
[3] See p. 471.



Isaac D'Israeli
1834
from the drawing by S. P. Denning
at Hughenden

seventy-three years, confidently prosecuting his ambitious design of a comprehensive History of English Literature.[1]

Considering the bitterness of such a calamity to one whose powers were otherwise not in the least impaired (writes the son in his Memoir of his father), he bore on the whole his fate with magnanimity, even with cheerfulness. Unhappily, his previous habits of study and composition rendered the habit of dictation intolerable, even impossible, to him. But with the assistance of his daughter, whose intelligent solicitude he has commemorated in more than one grateful passage, he selected from his manuscripts three volumes, which he wished to have published under the becoming title of 'A Fragment of a History of English Literature,' but which were eventually given to the public under that of 'Amenities of Literature.'

He was also enabled during these last years of physical, though not of moral, gloom, to prepare a new edition of his work on the Life and Times of Charles the First, which had been for some time out of print. He contrived, though slowly, and with great labour, very carefully to revise, and improve, and enrich these volumes.

Such were the literary labours of Isaac D'Israeli's last years; outside of them, his principal delight was in watching the growing renown of his favourite son in literature and Parliament. In his very last year of all he busied himself to secure for him that permanent home in the country on which both father and son had set their hearts. Before, however, the purchase of Hughenden was completed and possession taken, Isaac D'Israeli had passed away. His illness was short, and ended on January 19, 1848, nine months after the death of his wife. 'For an author,' wrote his son, 'his end was an euthanasia, for on the day before he was seized by that fatal epidemic, of the danger of which to the last moment he was unconscious, he was apprised by his publishers that all his works were out of print, and that their republication could no longer be delayed.'

To Lord John Manners.

CARLTON LIBRARY, *Jan.* 29, 1848.—I can't let a line, which I have written to Lord Granby, reach Belvoir, without also a word to you. Your letter poured balm into the bruised

[1] See p. 17.

spirits of our circle. My only consolation for the death of my father is his life. . . .

Lord G.[1] is at Wimpole. That kind Lord Hardwicke sent me the life of his great ancestor, and my father was in the second vol. revelling in the extraordinary interview or Cabinet scene, between Lord Hardwicke and George II., when the King would not speak—when my father was seized with his attack. It was his last book!

'He leaves you proud memories to cherish,' wrote Manners to Disraeli, 'and a great name to guard and augment in praise. Rarely does such an heir succeed to such an heritage: and I feel confident the future will add other crowns to those already bestowed on your house.' The son did cherish to the end of his life[2] the memory and reputation of a father for whom he entertained the highest respect and the warmest affection, whose literary work he keenly appreciated, and of whose influence upon his own character and intellect he was profoundly conscious.[3] Isaac D'Israeli was wont to say that 'the best monument to an author was a good edition of his works.' His son, in spite of the political anxieties and labours of 1848, and the worries necessarily involved in winding up his father's estate and in his own installation at Hughenden, set about providing this memorial with such promptitude that he was able to publish a new edition of the *Curiosities of Literature*, in the last days of the year, with the Memoir, dated Christmas, 1848, from which we have quoted; and to follow it up in subsequent years with the *Charles I.* and the collected works. He could not have done this without the devoted aid of his sister, as he acknowledged in conversation a quarter of a century later.

Note by Montagu Corry.

I read to-day,[4] by Mr. D.'s advice, his father's chapter on Shakespeare in the *Amenities of Literature*, which he told me

[1] Bentinck.

[2] In May, 1866 (Lord Rowton records), Disraeli and the younger Stanley, who were at that time intimate friends, dined together at Bellamy's on the hundredth anniversary of Isaac D'Israeli's birthday, and drank to his memory in a bottle of champagne.

[3] See I., ch. 2.

[4] Easter Sunday, 1873.

he had read last week, for the first time (he was ashamed to confess), and considered to be the finest piece of literary criticism in the language. To my remark that he had himself edited the *Amenities*, he replied that in reality the work was done by Miss Disraeli, in whose talent and discretion he was able thoroughly to trust.

Of all his possessions, what Isaac D'Israeli naturally valued the most were his books. He often said to his son, 'The Octavos are my Infantry, my Cavalry are the Quartos, and the Folios are my Artillery.' There were 25,000 volumes in all, of which Disraeli transferred the best to Hughenden, but the larger part were sold. A note by his secretary in 1873 is interesting, when we remember the friendship of the father and the admiration of the son for Byron:

> D. much laments the loss of a much prized copy of the first edition of his father's first work, *Curiosities*, which had belonged to Byron. It was much marked and noted. On the title-page was written 'Byron Athenis relegit.' It had been sent to Mr. I. D. by Murray who secured it, it having been seized in the Albany under a writ of execution. Mr. I. D. valued it beyond measure. It was abstracted from the Library, after 1850, and Mr. D. has told me who he conceives appropriated the volume.

Disraeli was his father's executor and heir. The will directed that the personal property should be realised and divided into twelve parts, four to go to Sarah, two to Ralph, and two to James, the rest to be sunk in the residue, which was, with the real estate, to pass to Benjamin, the eldest son. To his 'beloved daughter-in-law, Mary Anne Disraeli,' Isaac D'Israeli left his collection of prints; to Sarah his portrait by Denning, 'as a mark of my sense of her devotion and my entire affection.' The value of property converted into money was returned as £7,553, and of property not so converted as £3,500. The net residue was declared by Disraeli as £10,803. The home at Bradenham was broken up. His sister went to live first at Hastings, and then at Twickenham. His brother Ralph he had already been able to start in life,

having procured for him in 1841, through Lyndhurst, then Lord Chancellor, a clerkship in Chancery of £400 a year, which was eventually to lead to the post of Deputy Clerk of the Parliaments. His brother James, for whom his applications had so far been unsuccessful, settled down in a small house at Bradenham, until Lord Derby gave him a minor post under the Treasury in 1852, promoting him to a Commissionership of Inland Revenue in 1858.

Benjamin Disraeli and his wife moved in the autumn to Hughenden Manor. It was a place he had long known and admired—'the prettiest place in the county,' Lord Mahon, the historian, who took him there in 1829, called it. It lay only a few miles over a spur of the Chilterns from Bradenham, and was even nearer to High Wycombe. The Norrises, its recent owners, were friends, as well as neighbours, of the Disraelis; and the Disraeli boys, in their early Bradenham days, used frequently to go over there, to visit and flirt with the Norris girls. So Disraeli was very familiar with his future home. Hughenden, or Hitchenden, has had its modest relation to English history. The manor formed part of the possessions of Edith, Queen of Edward the Confessor, was granted by William the Conqueror to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and duly appears in Domesday Book. In the thirteenth century Richard de Montfort, youngest son of the creator of Parliament, settled in Hughenden parish, but not at the manor; and there is a De Montfort Chapel in the church, with family monuments. More than a century earlier the manor had become part of the endowment of the Black Canons of Kenilworth Priory. At the Reformation it was granted by Henry VIII. to one of the Dormers of West Wycombe, from whom it passed to the famous Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, statesman and letter-writer. The Norris family acquired it later in the eighteenth century; and on the death of John Norris in October, 1845, it was offered for sale. Negotiations on Disraeli's

behalf were carried on for some months, and on March 3, 1847, he agreed to purchase the estate for £27,700, excluding timber but including the advowson. The timber was ultimately valued at £7,250, and so the total purchase-money amounted to £34,950. How was Disraeli to find this sum?

We have already seen[1] that marriage, though it had provided him with a house in London and an income, had by no means extricated him from debt. At the time of his election for Shrewsbury in 1841 his liabilities were more than £20,000, and he was still in the clutch of usurers. A year later, in a document which testifies at once to his love for his wife, his confidence in his father, and his serious financial embarrassments, he stated that his wife had already satisfied claims upon him for £13,000, and that there was as much more which she was prepared to liquidate. This paper is endorsed in his handwriting: 'To be given to my father after my decease. Δ. August 13, 1842.'

To Isaac D'Israeli.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Aug.* 13, 1842.—The uncertainty of life impels me to draw up this note, which in the event of my death before that of my father, I request should be immediately given to him. At this date, after a life of constant struggle, I find myself commencing an era of worldly prosperity and mental satisfaction. I am entirely indebted for this position and this state of mind, doubly appreciated by one whose lot has hitherto been so much the reverse, to the unexampled devotion of my beloved wife, to whom I am indebted not only for all these worldly accidents which make life desirable, but for that peace of mind and consequent physical health which render it even delicious. Since our marriage, it should be distinctly known, which indeed in conversation I have already mentioned to my father, that she has defrayed either for those parliamentary contests so indispensable to my career, or for debts incurred before our union, no less a sum than thirteen thousand pounds sterling, and is prepared to grapple with claims and incumbrances to an amount not inferior. I place these facts on record, that in the event before referred to, her moral claim to my patrimony,

[1] Page 513.

as described in my father's will recently executed, may be clearly comprehended. But I have such confidence in the justice of my father, and in the affection and gratitude which every member of my family must feel towards her to whose ceaseless vigilance and unbroken devotion I am indebted for even existence, that I feel that, in expressing these wishes, I am only sanctioning their own affectionate anticipations.

I solemnly commend her to their unbroken love.—B. DISRAELI.

It is clear from this touching document that no further pecuniary aid could be looked for from Mrs. Disraeli's property. All that could be spared was already mortgaged, so to speak, to meet old debts, which there is too much reason to fear were still mounting up owing to Disraeli's extraordinary financial methods. One sensible step he had taken. In the spring of 1846, when the struggle against Peel was entirely engrossing his energies and attention, he placed his affairs in the hands of an old acquaintance and Buckinghamshire neighbour, a business man of the highest reputation for ability and integrity, the late Mr. (afterwards Sir) Philip Rose, of the firm of Baxter, Rose, and Norton, solicitors. For the rest of Disraeli's life Rose was by his side as his confidential agent in regard to his complicated private affairs, and also for many years as the political agent of the Conservative party; and was constituted by his will his executor and trustee along with Lord Rothschild. We may perhaps doubt, in view of the subsequent story, whether, at any rate in the first instance, Disraeli revealed to Rose the full extent of his indebtedness, any more than he had revealed it to his father or his wife. He probably had great difficulty in ascertaining it himself.

To Philip Rose

GROSVENOR GATE, *April* 28, 1846.

MY DEAR SIR,—I want a confidential man of business in whose talents, zeal, and fidelity, I can repose a complete trust. The pressure of public life has become so extreme of late on me, that I can no longer attend to my private affairs, which require great consideration. I have, more than once, from

my early knowledge of you, and my occasional observation of your career, thought, that I might find in you the adviser and agent I contemplated; but I fear, that the engrossment of your parliamentary business may perhaps render it difficult, or even impossible, for you, to undertake the transaction of my affairs. If, however, I be mistaken on this head, oblige me by sending me a line directed to me at the *Carlton Club;* and believe me, very faithfully yours, B. DISRAELI.

BRADENHAM, WYCOMBE, *Oct.* 25, 1846.

MY DEAR ROSE,—I learnt with great pleasure, from your brother on Friday, that you had returned to England, much benefited by your travels.

Your services to me, performed with a zeal, that I never can forget, and the circumstance that, many years ago, I suffered much, and for a long time, from a disorder which I believe to be similar to your own, makes me much interested in your welfare.

My present condition of health and career may convince you, that there is more of distress, than danger, in these exhaustions of the nervous system. But if not duly checked, the trial they inflict is severe. Repose is the best medicine, and we should guard against the belief, that there is any cure for them but a gradual one. Repose, however, is a rare medicine, and impatient suffering is too apt to take refuge in quacks.—Yours very sincerely, B. DISRAELI.

CARLTON, *Dec.* 8, 1846.—. . . It would give me the greatest pleasure to find my title deeds[1] under your roof, but I should not like to take a decisive step without a line from you, that you saw your way.

Could you command £25,000 to complete the purchase, I supplying the balance, say £10,000; the Estate your security?

CARLTON CLUB, *March* 24, 1847.—A thousand thanks for your indefatigable kindness! It is quite true that I have purchased Hughenden, or rather that my father has purchased it, but for me; and the conveyance is to be made to me.

Isaac D'Israeli thus stepped into the breach for the moment, but it was many months before his son found the money to complete the agreement. The period originally fixed for completion was June, 1847; it was put off till the following Christmas for a revaluation of the timber; and, after a somewhat heated correspondence regarding the delay, the purchase was actually

[1] Of Hughenden.

completed in September, 1848. In the end it was to the Bentinck family that Disraeli was mainly indebted for his country house, as it was with them that the movement originated to make him leader of the Conservative party. They were loyal friends to him, as he had ever been to Lord George. Lord Henry Bentinck told a friend in later years that his brother George used to complain that he had found for the Tory party a marvellous man as leader, whom they would not accept just because he was not a country gentleman. So the three brothers, Lord Titchfield, Lord George, and Lord Henry, determined to make him one; and the Bentinck family found the money to buy Hughenden. The correspondence suggests that Lord George, as might be expected, was the original mover in the scheme; his brothers carried out his wishes after his death.

From Lord George Bentinck.

Private. HARCOURT HOUSE, *Feb.* 6, 1847.—I have just got a note from C. Lloyd to tell me he has placed £5,000 to my account at Drummonds', so when you want it it is all ready; if you require the other £2,000, it will only be necessary for me to know a day or two at most in advance, and it will be forthcoming; Drummonds will let me have a couple of thousand for six months without a bond, and by that time I shall have my other £5,000. . . .

To Philip Rose.

BRADENHAM, *Oct.* 27, 1847.—. . . I am very sensible of your most friendly offer about Hughenden. Ld. George Bentinck wrote to me, a few days back, offering to be my security for £10,000, if that would help me to tide over. At any other time, he would have lent me the money, and indeed offered it to me last year, but I waived it until affairs were more mature with respect to the purchase.

He is a man now of ample independence, and will on the death of his father, nearly as old as mine, accede to some 20 or 30 thousand *per ann.*, to say nothing of his chance of being Duke of Portland, his brother, Titchfield, not being married, and very ailing.

If, by any chance, you knew any person, who might not be disinclined to serve Ld. George and myself in this matter,

it might be prudent to avail oneself of the opening: the rest I could arrange without any ruinous sales of stock or any expensive arrangements.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Wednesday evening*, [? 30 *Aug.*, 1848].—I can't help thinking, on reflection, that the inconvenience of obtaining the temporary loan from your banker is so much less, than that of connecting Lord George's name with mine in a public office with respect to a pecuniary transaction, that it would be better at once to decide on your bankers, and get the business done on your return.

The public or the private nature of the act on the part of Ld. G. B. makes all the difference, and tho' I am sure that he would not hesitate in doing anything, even of a very serious and important nature, for my advantage, I think he is a man who would wish anything of that kind to be confined to your roof and personal clients. . . .

The actual payment in September, 1848, seems to have been temporarily met by borrowing £5,000 from the solicitors, obtaining an overdraft from the bankers of £14,000, and utilising, it may be presumed, the inheritance from Isaac D'Israeli. The final arrangements with the Bentincks were made subsequently, after Lord George's death, which followed hard upon the completion of the purchase. Lord Henry was the intermediary. 'What an admirable man,' wrote Disraeli to Manners, 'worthy of being our dear friend's brother!' 'With some eccentricities, one of the ablest men and finest characters I have ever met,' was his verdict in later life.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

[GROSVENOR GATE] *Oct.* 18, 1848.—Lord Henry has only just left me after four hours. Neither he, nor his brother, have yet spoken to the Duke,[1] of whom they appear in great awe; and I think the object of his interview was to beg me, on the part of himself and T[itchfield], not to demur to any arrangement the Duke might propose. They would be content, that the Duke should pay off the £25,000, and take to the whole estate, receiving the rents—in short, realising, without raising money, the original scheme of Lord George. Then, on his death, they could act as they liked.

I would not be drawn into any suggestion, saying, that, if the Duke asked me for a proposition, I could only propose to

[1] The 4th Duke of Portland.

pay my debt to the family by the sale of the estate, which their funds had purchased, and then, of course, resign the County. This he declared to be utterly impossible, and that the Duke would not listen to it. Then I went on [to] the state of my affairs, observing that it would be no object to them and no pleasure to me, unless I played the high game in public life; and that I could not do that without being on a rock. And then I went into certain details, showing that I could not undertake to play the great game, unless your income was clear. That was all I required, and ample.

Finally, he entreated me not to mention this to the Duke, or to anyone but himself: that the moment affairs were settled, he would himself see what he could do about my private affairs; that he was resolved I should play the great game; and that I must trust to him. He remained with me four hours, and appears more devoted than even Lord G.

I write this, as you may suppose, very wearied.

What were the exact arrangements made we do not know, but the two brothers took over the complete responsibility, and Disraeli was enabled to play the great game at the cost of owing them £25,000. The whole business must be pronounced, from a financial point of view, to have been very imprudent. Disraeli was still seriously in debt when he entered into the negotiations for Hughenden. But if he incurred no fresh liabilities, his prospects were good. On his father's death, which could not be long deferred, he would come into property sufficient, by careful management, to put his affairs straight, and his marriage secured him a permanent income. Economy, however, was repugnant to his large ideas. To play the great game he needed a position beyond what his marriage had given him. So he light-heartedly assumed the expense of a country house in addition to a town house, and probably increased his indebtedness to a total of £40,000. Worse was to come. In 1857 Titchfield, now become Duke of Portland, suddenly for some obscure reason—possibly a family quarrel, or perhaps merely owing to that eccentricity which became so strong a feature of his character in his later life—called in his money; and Disraeli had once more to resort to the

usurers whom he had already found so expensive. Thus the load of debt, which at the time of his father's death might with a very little care have been lifted entirely from his back, went on accumulating. Still, however imprudent the acquisition of Hughenden may have been financially, undoubtedly it both consolidated his political position in the county and in the party, and, by immensely increasing the amenities of his life, conduced to his happiness, his health, and his powers of work. Fortunately his temperament was such that, save at occasional periods of depression, he was able, so long as he was not absolutely liable to arrest, to ignore his debts altogether, and to pursue his literary and political career entirely undisturbed by their shadow.

It must have been a proud moment for Disraeli when the purchase was completed, and he was the lord of Hughenden. Hebrew as he was by origin, and with a deep feeling of race, he was also in a very real sense a patriotic Englishman. Indeed, it is one of the most pleasing characteristics of the Jews that, without in any way losing their distinctive nationality, the best of them are able to associate themselves intimately with the peoples who treat them well. This is so even in the case of some international Jewish families, where the strong Jewish family feeling might be expected to override national obligations. Take the conspicuous instance of the Rothschilds, where the family tie has been very close from the first. Few are more markedly Austrian, French, or English respectively in sympathy and political bias than the Rothschilds of Austria, France, and England. If that is a feature of those who remain Jews in religion, national attachment comes still more readily to those who are Jews only in race. Disraeli had never had a specially Jewish bringing up, and was baptised before he was thirteen. In 1853 he wrote: 'I was not bred among my race, and was nurtured in great prejudice against them.' His father's circle and surroundings were far more Christian than Jewish; and the

society which he himself had frequented had been English society, fashionable, artistic, literary, and political. From his father he had derived a strong interest in English history and tradition; both his father and himself were ornaments of English literature. From his years of adolescence he had been familiar with, and had become attached to, the typically English county of Bucks, and gloried in this association. To be an English country gentleman was as natural an object of ambition to him as it has ever been to true-born Englishmen who have distinguished themselves in the service of their country abroad or made a fortune in commerce at home. There was, besides, in his case a very special political satisfaction in the position. He had long regarded the country gentlemen as the backbone of the State, the natural leaders of the people. The great Whig nobles were, in his opinion, an official oligarchy, who had grown wealthy on robbery of the Church, had reduced their King's power to a shadow, and had arranged the policy of the State to suit in the first place their own interests, and afterwards the convenience of manufacturers and Dissenters. The country gentlemen were a natural aristocracy, firmly rooted in the soil of England, the proper counsellors of the King, the supporters of the Church, and the friends of the poor, who yielded them a voluntary respect and confidence. From their intimate acquaintance with all sorts and conditions of men in their various localities, they were familiar with the wants and necessities of working people, of whom they were much more really representative than the middle classes could possibly be. By the purchase of Hughenden, he who was already a political leader of the squirearchy became a squire himself.

Surprise has often been expressed at Disraeli's ready identification in sympathy with the country gentlemen, and it has been suggested that the sympathy was spurious and interested. What could there be in common between a Jew adventurer and the English territorial aristocracy? It is apparently forgotten that, in Disraeli's eyes, to be a Jew was not to be a despised outcast, but to belong to

an aristocracy among peoples, a race as old as history, and the only one to whom God had vouchsafed to reveal Himself. Not only was he of an aristocratic race, but he believed, though it may be without certain warrant, that he was descended from some of the most illustrious families of that race. Moreover, he had that genius to which aristocracies, to their credit, have seldom been entirely blind. No wonder that he felt that in English aristocratic society he could mix as an equal, and that the country gentlemen, though they might be, and were, slow to recognise the fact, had in him a leader who, however apparently exotic, was yet essentially sympathetic and congenial.

Hughenden Manor stands on a projecting tongue of the Chilterns which falls south towards High Wycombe. The history of the house does not seem to be exactly known, but it has obviously been built at very various dates. Though Disraeli chose to think that some alterations which Mrs. Disraeli made in 1862-63 'restored the house to what it was before the Civil Wars,'[1] there appears to be no remaining work in the present building which is certainly earlier than the eighteenth century. When Disraeli bought it, it was an oblong house of three storeys, built of brick but white-washed, with very little external ornament. While the entrance is on the north side, the house faces due south; and the south front is broken by two bays, running the whole height of the building, with a garden door between them. A pergola extends over the ground-floor windows across the whole length, and immediately below is a terrace which enjoys the sun the greater part of the day. The interior is irregular, the ceilings of the rooms being at very different levels. The oldest part, the centre of the house and the east wing, is of a Gothic character, with groined ceilings, though the ornamentation may only date from Mrs. Disraeli's reconstruction. This part comprises the entrance-hall and passages and the library, which are low, and the dining-room and saloon,[2]

[1] See below, p. 1288.

[2] The word habitually employed by Disraeli in place of the usual 'drawing-room.'

which are lofty. The library, where Disraeli kept the larger part of his books, is a picturesque room occupying the east end of the south front, including the east bay. The other two reception-rooms are behind. The principal bedrooms are on the floor above, looking south; and there, too, is the small study in which Disraeli worked. The halls and staircase, as well as the principal rooms, were mainly decorated by portraits of his family, friends, and colleagues. Queen Victoria, by Von Angeli, held an honoured place, and most of the portraits in these volumes are copied from originals at Hughenden. Dignified without pretension, comfortable but not luxurious, the house was a thoroughly suitable home for a statesman and man of letters of moderate fortune.

In front of the terrace the garden extends towards the south, flanked by fine trees on either hand, with an opening at the end, affording a pleasant view over part of Wycombe, including the church tower, and the woods of Wycombe Abbey on the hill beyond the town. On the west side the ground falls very steeply from the house and garden, and is thickly covered with a beech wood, which is prolonged southwards beyond the garden, and shelters a green walk with a gentle gradient, known as the Beech Walk—a favourite resort of the statesman. There is a charming irregularity about this south front and garden and lawns; nothing is quite at right angles or in the centre, owing to the haphazard way in which the house was built.

Behind the house, up the hill-slope to the north, come the stables and kitchen-garden. Beyond and to the west of these stretch the woods up to and over the crest of the chalk down. They are mainly of beech; but after a short walk you pass into what Disraeli called the German Forest, where Mrs. Disraeli planted pines and yew-trees and laurels in the more open parts among the beeches, and cut numerous paths like those in the pine-woods surrounding German watering-places. These paths sweep round to the west, and catch the southern sun.

The park is on the east and south of the house, and

stretches to the Wycombe and Missenden road. It slopes gently past the church and churchyard, which stand in an enclosure almost hidden by trees, down to a trout stream which flows along the valley from the north and spreads out at one place into a small lake. The church, much of which dates from the thirteenth or fourteenth century, was in its unrestored state when Disraeli came to Hughenden, and the square block of its tower was a feature in the landscape. The park is well timbered, and the private grounds are shut off on practically every side by dense masses of foliage, so that you can seldom catch a glimpse of the house, 'bosom'd high in tufted trees.'[1] The estate, which lies close round the grounds and park, comprised about 750 acres when it was bought, but by enclosures on the adjoining common and subsequent purchases was increased in Disraeli's time to 1,400 acres.

Hughenden was exactly the country retreat for which, after the strife of politics, Disraeli's nature craved. When the session was over, he hurried down, autumn after autumn, entirely exhausted with the constant strain, and there found the peace and the books and the woods in which he rejoiced. Every year, in August and September, as his letters show, there was the same nervous depression, the same need for a period of absolute retirement, to be alone with his wife in that corner of his beloved county which he had chosen for his home. He might well have appropriated to himself the lines of Catullus:

> O! quid solutis est beatius curis?
> Cum mens onus reponit, ac peregrino
> Labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum . . .
> Hoc est, quod unum est pro laboribus tantis.

Disraeli has left a note showing the kind of *dolce far niente* life which he preferred to lead when he came away from town:

> I have a passion for books and trees. I like to look at them. When I come down to Hughenden I pass the first week

[1] Quoted by Bulwer Lytton in writing of Hughenden to Disraeli.

in sauntering about my park and examining all the trees, and then I saunter in the library and survey the books. My collection is limited to Theology, the Classics, and History. Anything miscellaneous in it is the remains of the Bradenham Collection, but the great bulk of the Belles Lettres I parted with after my father's death.

As he came down August after August, and September after September, he would see the picture he so lovingly described in *Endymion*:

> The woods were beginning to assume the first fair livery of autumn, when it is beautiful without decay. The lime and the larch had not yet dropped a golden leaf, and the burnished beeches flamed in the sun. Every now and then an occasional oak or elm rose, still as full of deep green foliage as if it were midsummer; while the dark verdure of the pines sprang up with effective contrast amid the gleaming and resplendent chestnuts.

From the terrace in front of the house, where—as formerly on the terrace at Bradenham[1]—he was wont to pace up and down and muse over politics or letters, Disraeli looked out on trees to right and left, with the woods of Wycombe Abbey in the distance. There he would watch his peacocks—'My dear lady, you cannot have terraces without peacocks,' he told a guest—and then stroll down the beech walk at the end of the garden. Or he would walk up the hill behind to the German Forest, along the paths his wife had cut, basking occasionally in the sun on one of the numerous rustic seats at view-points where the trees had been opened out. She would often accompany him, generally in a pony carriage.

Everything to do with the woodland country appealed to him, those who worked there as well as the trees themselves, the woodman as well as the wood. Here is a memorandum of 1860:

> I find great amusement in talking to the people at work in the woods and grounds at Hughenden. Their conversation is racy, and the repose of their natural manners agreeable. An old, but very hale, man told me to-day, that he was going to be married, and that his bride would not be much younger than himself, but he had lodged in her cottage now for more than a year, and he thought she would do for him. He said he

[1] See p. 148, note.

was a widower, and he added, speaking of his first wife, 'And I can truly say, from the bottom of my heart, that for fifty years I never knew what it was to have a happy hour.' I told my wife of this, and they are to have a wedding dinner.

I like very much the society of woodmen. Their conversation is most interesting. Quick and constant observation and perfect knowledge. I don't know any men, who are so completely masters of their business, and of the secluded, but delicious, world in which they live. They are healthy, their language is picturesque; they live in the air, and Nature whispers to them many of her secrets. A Forest is like the Ocean, monotonous only to the ignorant. It is a life of ceaseless variety.

To see Lovett, my head-woodman, fell a tree is a work of art. No bustle, no exertion, apparently not the slightest exercise of strength. He tickles it with his axe, and then it falls exactly where he desires it. He can climb a tree like a squirrel, an animal which, both in form and color and expression, he seems to me to resemble.

If Disraeli did not find his enjoyment, like his great rival, in felling trees himself, he at least took an artistic pleasure in seeing them fall under an expert woodman's axe. But he was sparing of that pleasure. It was much more congenial to him to plant than to cut down. He planted innumerable trees, especially ornamental ones—cedars and firs of various kinds—in the private grounds; and he seldom allowed an eminent friend or colleague who paid him a visit to depart without adding one more. The result was that the lawns, both before and behind the house, became choked with foliage; and Disraeli's nephew and heir had regretfully to clear away most of these memorial trees to let into the rooms sufficient light and air. The pine, however, which Queen Victoria planted when she visited Hughenden was carefully preserved, and still decorates the south lawn.

It was Disraeli's regular habit when in the country to attend Quarter Sessions. He had been a justice of the peace since 1836, and a Deputy-Lieutenant since 1845. With his county neighbours he became on excellent terms. The Carington family at Wycombe had long been his friends; and he was warmly welcomed as a resident

landowner by Sir Harry Verney, the leading Whig in the county. 'Few things,' Sir Harry wrote, 'have occurred in Bucks lately so gratifying to me as your purchase of Hughenden.' With his tenants Disraeli always kept in good relations. They were largely new men, whom he had accepted himself. He found the estate greatly under-rented, and as, being a poor man, he was unable to allow the easy terms which contented his wealthy predecessor, the old tenants mostly went. He made the well-being of everyone on the estate his care; and delighted in a friendly chat with farmer or cottager. The annual flower-shows and harvest-homes in the park were great occasions of local festivity; and the lord of the manor always attended when he could, and spoke on agricultural topics suitable to his audience—sometimes, it was thought, going into more detail than his technical knowledge warranted, though at other times showing a surprising amount of practical rural wisdom. For instance, in 1864 he pressed upon the farmers the expediency of crossing Cotswold rams with Southdown ewes—then a new system; and subsequently he had the satisfaction of receiving from Sir George Jenkinson, a well-known agriculturist and breeder, an emphatic endorsement of his advice: 'My own actual experience entirely accorded with your recommendations.' The duties of a country gentleman, in fact, Disraeli performed punctiliously; of the ordinary sports of a country gentleman he was innocent. Though, with his feeling for dress, he wore in the country the clothes of a sportsman, at first in a somewhat accentuated form, he did not shoot, and he did not preserve game; nor did he ride to hounds, though he had certainly once made the experiment, in Essex in 1834, and, according to his own story, with 'great *kudos*.'[1] Consequently he would gladly have spent the closing months of the year in London, and returned to the country for May

[1] See p. 250. The hero in the *Young Duke* says: 'I have hunted; it was not very disagreeable. I sometimes shoot; it is not very stupid.' These may very well have been Disraeli's own sentiments when he was a young man.

and June. 'If we could only so contrive our lives,' he writes in *Lothair*,[1] 'as to go into the country for the first note of the nightingale, and return to town for the first note of the muffin-bell, existence, it is humbly presumed, might be more enjoyable.'

It was on September 6, 1848, that Disraeli was able to report to his wife: 'It is all done, and you are the Lady of Hughenden.' The autumn and winter were occupied with moving from Bradenham and settling in. Most of the arrangements had to be made by Mrs. Disraeli, as the question of the leadership took her husband often to London.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

[GROSVENOR GATE] *Jan.* 25, 1849.— . . . My darling, you have, I am sure, done at Hughenden what no other woman, or man either, could do. You have gained a year in our enjoyment of that place, where I trust every year we shall be happier and happier. It was for this great result of which I was sensible, and also for the importance of getting well acquainted with your new staff, to whom we must leave so much for the next months, that I did not like to press you to come on to me on Tuesday, tho' I have much wanted you. . . . Pussy now comes into my room every morning at breakfast, and jumps on my head, and rubs my nose. He seems colossal after our little favourite—and very dirty—I don't think he will ever be clean again. . . .

'You have done wonders,' he writes in another letter; and his brothers and sister, when they saw what improvements had been made in a house and grounds which they knew well, were enthusiastic over Mrs. Disraeli's 'magical touches' and clever arrangements. But considerable as were the changes made by her directly she came to Hughenden, in the interior of the house, in laying out the garden, and in cutting walks through the forest, her greatest period of activity was some fourteen years later. In the winter of 1862-63 she both entirely rearranged her garden, and also gave what Disraeli called, in a letter to Lady Dorothy Nevill, 'a new form and character' to the house. This she did by remodelling it inside, and outside by adding an ornamental parapet and varying

[1] Ch. 9.

the hitherto smooth surface of the walls with florid Gothic decoration.[1] Earlier in 1862 she showed her grateful affection for her father-in-law, 'the most lovable, perfect old gentleman I ever met with,'[2] by erecting, on a conspicuous hill within the estate, a monument to Isaac D'Israeli. The work was carried out without the knowledge of her husband, who was busy at the time in London, and upon whom it burst as a welcome surprise on his return. Hughenden bears many signs of its mistress's careful management. Disraeli might be reckless in money matters; his wife was a most excellent housewife. All her account-books for household expenses, with the entries in her own hand throughout, are preserved at Hughenden, and testify to her proficiency in domestic economy.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HUGHENDEN, *Aug.* 25, 1849.—. . . The alterations here seem very successful. It is quite another place, and of far more pretension and effect. It is really a park now. The library also is arranged; it took me several days, and I think you will like it. It has quite lost the circulating-library look which you noticed. Did I tell you Sir W. Molesworth had presented me with a copy of his *Hobbes*, eighteen vols.? This is an accession, and I got it through that impudent friend of mine, Bernal Osborne, which makes it more amusing. . . .[3]

The parish church at Hughenden is, as we have seen, within the park, and the vicarage lies between the church and the manor-house, quite close to the private grounds. Good relations with his Vicar were, therefore, even more than usually desirable for the lord of the manor. When Disraeli acquired Hughenden, the Vicar was the Rev. John R. Pigott, who welcomed him cordially, but with whom he had a curious little misunderstanding in the first few months. Disraeli was a regular churchgoer and communicant. He has described in *Lothair* his satisfaction in passing Sunday in the country,

[1] The work was carried out under the superintendence of E. B. Lamb, a distinguished Gothic architect of the day.

[2] See p. 383.

[3] *Letters*, p. 223.

and has given us, without a doubt, a picture of his practice at Hughenden. 'There is something in the essential stillness of country life which blends harmoniously with the most divine of our divine laws. It is pleasant, too, when the congregation breaks up, to greet one's neighbours; to say kind words to kind faces; to hear some rural news profitable to learn, which sometimes enables you to do some good, and sometimes prevents others from doing some harm. A quiet domestic walk, too, in the afternoon has its pleasures.' But it so happened that on one of the early Sundays of his residence at Hughenden Disraeli travelled to London after morning service. The Vicar, more earnest than wise, without making any inquiry, dealt very faithfully with the truant. Disraeli's action, he wrote on the Sunday evening, was 'a breach of that commandment which, though not so rigidly enforced as on that people from whom with a natural pride you record your descent, is still not less binding on a Christian.' He was bound to act towards Disraeli as towards his 'poorer and less intellectual neighbours,' and to admonish him to set a better example.

To the Rev. John R. Pigott.

GROSVENOR GATE, *April* 16 [*or* 17], 1849.

DEAR SIR,—It is quite true that, in consequence of public circumstances of urgency and importance, I was obliged suddenly to leave Hughenden on Sunday to my great personal annoyance and inconvenience. I departed without even a servant.

Had you made any temperate inquiry, you might perhaps have ascertained that it is not my habit to travel on Sunday, and I would venture also to observe that my object in attending Divine service is not merely or principally to set an example to others. The duties of a spiritual pasture[1] should be fulfilled without regard of persons, but these duties are often of a delicate nature, and it is therefore desirable that they should fall to the lot of those who act with reflection, and not in a hasty and precipitate spirit.—My dear Sir, yours faithfully, B. DISRAELI.

[1] The word perhaps should be 'pastor.' The letter is printed from a copy made by Mrs. Disraeli; but her spelling is not impeccable, and the copy was probably written down from dictation.

The Vicar took the snub on the whole well. 'I freely receive your somewhat severe rebuke. It is the *first* of the kind bestowed on me during the twenty-six years in which I have been in holy orders—it may not, however, be the less deserved.' He trusted that Squire and Vicar might learn to know each other better; but they did not long remain in parochial relations. Pigott left in 1851; and with the new Vicar, of his own nomination, the Rev. Charles Whishaw Clubbe, Disraeli got on admirably.

'Unusually drained this year,' Disraeli wrote to his solicitors in 1849. It is not to be wondered at that during the preceding winter he was very glad of any sums that his pen could produce. His negotiations with Colburn in regard to the popular edition of his own novels, and with Moxon in regard to the republication of his father's *Curiosities*, crop up in the letters to his wife from London.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

[*Dec.* 12, 1848.]

My dearest Wife,—I have just come from Colburn—a most satisfactory interview. He is eager for the *Commentaries*, and wants to get on with the printing immediately, but I don't think it prudent to make an engagement until the *Curiosities* are published, as I think, from all I observe, the book is likely to make some stir. I have succeeded in securing the publication of the *Curiosities before* Xmas. This is an immense *coup*.

The arrangement for the publication of the popular edition of the novels is all on hand: estimates, engravings, prospectuses, etc., etc. The usual excuses made by the little man; but he is really at work. He also particularly asked about the Library, as his contribution is getting ready, and he hopes to send them to Hughenden as a Xmas present.

I got the £300 from Moxon, very *apropos* for our Xmas balance; and expect another £300 from the same quarter, before the year is out. . . .

Though I have been successful with my business, I have not at all enjoyed myself; very dispirited and lonely last night, so that had it not been for Ld. George's solicitor at Lincoln's Inn I should have attempted to have got back to-day. A very bad night—the weather very close and muggy, and wifie much missed. . . .

When the new edition of the *Curiosities*, including the Memoir of Isaac D'Israeli, was published, Disraeli be-

thought him of a friend of his early manhood, and sent the volumes to Lady Blessington, with a letter in which he referred to her kindness to his father, and his father's sincere regard for her. Her reply opened with a flattering blend of affection and deference. 'My dear Dis,' she wrote, 'I am tempted to smile at my own presumption in addressing so unceremoniously the most remarkable man of our time. But I believe that you are so unspoilt by fame that you will prefer the familiarity of a friendship so old as ours to the coldness of the more deferential "Mr. Disraeli," which I can never use to one I so truly like.'

Disraeli was about to lose his old friends, Lady Blessington and Count D'Orsay. In April, 1849, there came the financial crash which had long been impending over the pair; and D'Orsay first, and Lady Blessington a fortnight later, retreated to Paris, where they had a powerful friend in Louis Napoleon, just elected President. Disraeli was not in the secret of their intentions, and called at Gore House to find Lady Blessington gone. 'It was a pang,' he wrote to her; 'for though absorbing duties of my life have prevented me of late from passing as much time under that roof as it was once my happiness and good fortune through your kindness to do, you are well assured that my heart never changed for an instant to its inmates, and that I invariably entertained for them the same interest and affection.' He would now, he told her, have an object in coming to Paris.[1] He never saw her again. A few weeks later, on June 5, he sent the news of her sudden death to his wife: 'Alas! poor Lady Blessington! Died of apoplexy! The day before she was to enter her new house!'

To Count D'Orsay.

HUGHENDEN, HIGH WYCOMBE, *Jan.* 1, 1850.—We are very anxious to hear from you, and we ardently wish that this year may bring you happiness, and solace for the sorrows of the last.

I need not tell you how entirely we have sympathised with your affliction, who knew so well, and valued so completely,

[1] Madden's *Lady Blessington*, Vol. III., ch. 4.

the faithful friend that has departed. For myself my knowledge of her is a considerable volume in my life. It spread over many years, during which I received at her hands nothing but acts of sympathy, grace, and affection.

I have exposed myself to [so] many griefs, and am worn by so many cares, that the present always demands my energies, and I seldom venture to indulge in memory, for the past has too many pangs. But I find sometimes a melancholy pleasure in recalling her cordial and accomplished existence, and the past is linked with the present, when I recollect that you are left, between whom and myself the relations will never expire.

What are you going to do, and can anything be done in your unfortunate country? England is only sinking. France is finished. What a mournful fate to be born in the decline and fall of great countries! Europe, at least the Europe of our fathers and our youth, approaches its end. We ought to have found our careers across the great waters.

D'Orsay survived Lady Blessington three years. He resumed the practice of the arts of painting and sculpture in Paris, though he never carried out that project of making a large portrait of the Disraeli of this period to which Sarah Disraeli alludes in a letter of October 10, 1848: 'It rejoices my heart to hear that Count D'Orsay will endeavour to make a large picture of Dis; there is every chance of it being a great success.' Disraeli's own tribute to his friend's powers at this time may be added to his sister's:

To Count D'Orsay.

Oct. 7, 1848.—I came in a spirit of severe and even savage criticism, despairing of seeing that countenance of blended energy and beauty reproduced to my eye and heart by the pencil of even so felicitous an artist as yourself.

I beheld again my beloved friend, and after gazing on the bust with an eye which would glance at nothing else in your studio, I left your room with the consolation that the magic finger of art had afforded the only solace which his bereaved and devoted friend can now welcome—the living resemblance of George Bentinck.[1]

D'Orsay died in Paris in August, 1852, having lived long enough to see his friend of twenty years arrive, if not at power, at any rate at office, and to forward congratulations in his last letter:

[1] Brit. Mus. Addit. MSS.

From Count D'Orsay.

49, Rue Villel 'Evêque, Paris, 7 *Avril*, 1852.

My dearest D'Is,—I wanted to write to you all this time, but I have been ill, I may say for the first time of my life. Fancy me on a sofa with an atrocious lumbago for the last six weeks, and obliged to write with a pencil! I cannot resist longer to congratulate you, and myself, on your present position. I say myself because for many many years I said that there was no power which could prevent you to arrive at the Ministry, and at the head of the House of Commons. Therefore I let you judge how pleased I was when I saw you in your right place. My sister was also delighted, as she knows that I always liked you as a brother. Your dear kind wife must be very happy, and I am sure that she has been thinking of me on this occasion, as she always sympathised with me about all your triumphs. She felt that I was of the Trio *sacré*.

When you have time write to me one line; it will give me pleasure on my sofa to see again your handwriting. Most affectionate regards to your good wife.—Your best friend, D'Orsay.

CHAPTER VII.

Foreign Policy and Metternich.

1846–1849.

The years that followed the fall of Peel were fertile in Continental troubles and complications. The old European system, which had been restored after a fashion by the Treaty of Vienna, showed unmistakable signs of breaking down, and in 1848 there came an upheaval which seemed for the moment to threaten as serious a disturbance of the existing order as the Revolution of 1789. Disraeli did not allow the absorbing interest of the political struggle at home to prevent him from following keenly the course of events in Europe and the trend of British foreign policy. The Foreign Office was once more under the direction of the masterful personality of Lord Palmerston, whom Disraeli had satirised in the *Runnymede Letters* as the 'Lord Fanny of diplomacy,' but whom he subsequently depicted in *Endymion*, under the name of Lord Roehampton, in a decidedly favourable light.

> The Earl of Roehampton was the strongest member of the Government, except of course the Premier himself. He was the man from whose combined force and flexibility of character the country had confidence that in all their councils there would be no lack of courage, yet tempered with adroit discretion.[1]
>
> That distinguished man . . . had been Minister for a long time, and had left a great name. Foreigners rarely know more than one English Minister at a time, but they compensate for their ignorance of the aggregate body by even exaggerating the qualities of the individual with whom they are acquainted. Lord Roehampton had conducted the affairs of his country

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 42.

always in a courteous, but still in a somewhat haughty spirit. He was easy and obliging, and conciliatory in little matters; but when the credit, or honour, or large interests of England were concerned, he acted with conscious authority. On the Continent of Europe, though he sometimes incurred the depreciation of the smaller minds, whose self-love he may not have sufficiently spared, by the higher spirits he was feared and admired, and they knew, when he gave his whole soul to an affair, that they were dealing with a master.[1]

Lord Roehampton, like Palmerston, was 'absorbed, and naturally absorbed, in his department, the most important in the State, and of which he is master.' 'His despatches to Ministers . . . were unrivalled.' 'The composition of these despatches was a source to Lord Roehampton of much gratification and excitement. They were of European fame, and their terse argument, their clear determination, and often their happy irony, were acknowledged in all the Cabinets, and duly apprehended.'[2] He 'was a man who really cared for nothing but office and affairs'; but he was 'always playful, and even taking refuge in a bantering spirit.' Lady Montfort says of him: 'Look to Lord Roehampton; he is the man. He does not care a rush whether the revenue increases or declines. He is thinking of real politics; foreign affairs; maintaining our power in Europe.'

All this is true of Palmerston, and is generously said. But there was another side to his foreign policy, which made it the constant subject of criticism in these years from Stanley and Disraeli, and, indeed, from Aberdeen and Gladstone and Cobden too, and which was largely responsible for the Continental distrust of England that has so often in subsequent times hampered the action of our statesmen. For fifty years after the Battle of Waterloo, Great Britain was recognised as the first Power in Europe. Palmerston conceived that the position which she had acquired justified her in meddling in all the affairs of other European countries, their internal

[1] *Endymion*, ch. 72.

[2] But see below, p. 1009, for a disparaging estimate of some of Palmerston's despatches.

difficulties as well as their external relations. He was popular at home for his constant upholding of British interests; he by no means confined himself, however, to this his proper sphere, but was forward with his advice on all occasions and to all countries, whether British interests were concerned or not. In particular, he was wont to lecture despotic Governments on the advantages they would derive from adopting constitutions after the British pattern, and to make no secret of the support and countenance he was prepared to afford to revolutionary movements. While he thus acquired for his country valuable sympathies in some quarters, notably in Italy and Hungary, he roused strong suspicion in most of the Governments of Europe, and courted unnecessary rebuffs in matters over which he was not prepared to resort to arms.

Disraeli, in a thoroughly patriotic spirit, had done his best, when in Paris in the winter of 1845-46,[1] to smooth the way for Palmerston's return to the Foreign Office, by endeavouring to remove the prejudices against him of Louis Philippe and Guizot; and Palmerston himself visited Paris at the following Easter, and confirmed in person Disraeli's assurances that he would make a good understanding between France and England the foundation of his policy. But his accession to office unfortunately coincided with a critical period in the discussion of the proposed marriages of the Spanish Queen and her sister—an arrangement by which Louis Philippe and Guizot hoped that a grandson of the French King might eventually sit on the throne of Spain. To Queen Victoria and Aberdeen Louis Philippe had expressly disavowed this policy; but an unfortunately-worded despatch to the British Minister at Madrid roused all the old French distrust of Palmerston, and was the reason, or the excuse, for a breach of his word by Louis Philippe. The marriages were hurried on. Strong resentment was felt in England, and Palmerston fanned the flame. It argued

[1] See pp. 736-741.

a want of sense of proportion to see in Louis Philippe, that worthy bourgeois monarch, with his clumsy intrigues, a Louis XIV. or Napoleon Bonaparte, plotting to combine the nations of Europe under the hegemony of France. The solemn parade of British remonstrances in the Queen's Speech of 1847 afforded some justification for the flippant comment of Disraeli, who lamented the relaxation of the *entente cordiale* between France and England, and said that he should have thought that the correspondence on the occasion of the marriages would have been of a congratulatory character. The breach between England and France encouraged Austria, with the consent of Russia and Prussia, to annex the little republic of Cracow, the last remnant of Polish independence, where a revolutionary movement in the spring had had to be suppressed by the three partitioning Powers. Cracow enjoyed its freedom under the Treaty of Vienna, but the Western Powers could no longer act together in defence of the treaty, and England registered a forcible but futile protest. On this policy of the Government Disraeli made a very elaborate attack, which, however, though Bentinck[1] admired his knowledge, and his family[2] and friends his eloquence, rather missed fire. His main point was that there was no violation of the Treaty of Vienna, as Cracow was the subject of a separate arrangement between Austria, Russia, and Prussia, which was indeed recognised by the Treaty, but was not, strictly speaking, incorporated in it. Palmerston convinced the House that there was no substance in the objection. But, though the Minister was successful on this technicality, it could not be denied that his foreign policy, largely owing to the mistrust which his name inspired, had placed the country, as Disraeli pointed out, in bad relations with all the Great Powers within six months after his return to office.

[1] Bentinck wrote to Stanley, in reference to the question of Cracow, on Dec. 6, 1846: 'D., as you probably know, has the foreign policy of Europe quite at his fingers' ends.'

[2] Sarah Disraeli wrote: 'That admirable speech; how commanding is the tone, and how true and wise the politics!'

Throughout 1847 Europe was in a very restless condition, but the year closed without serious disturbance in the larger States. The Revolution came in 1848, and, strangely enough, it began in no despotically-governed country, but in France,[1] which enjoyed constitutional Monarchy and Parliamentary institutions. A memorandum by Disraeli illustrates public feeling just before the storm burst:

> [At the] Meeting of Parliament, 1848, George Smythe brought the last news from Paris. He had been Under-Secretary of State with Lord Aberdeen, and had had a conversation with Guizot at his reception. G. S. considered affairs at Paris critical: but described Guizot as 'transcendentally bumptious.'
>
> Comte de Jarnac at the Coventry Club on the critical day—a little nervous but most sanguine.
>
> 'What do you think?' he said to me.
>
> 'I cannot doubt but with such notice and such men all must be prepared.'
>
> He nodded entire assent, and said, 'It must be right.'
>
> I did not know then, that he had at that time, though I should think not more than thirty years of age, his appointment as Ambassador of France to our Court, I may say, in his pocket. But he bore his bitter disappointment well. Seldom a greater fall. He had to retire to Ireland, having married, and live on a meagre paternal allowance, and occupied himself with writing a novel, instead of living in a palace, with a large revenue, and writing despatches on the fate of the world.
>
> This was at the Coventry Club, where only a season before the same Comte [de] Jarnac exerted all his influence to secure the black-balling of Louis Napoleon.

It was on February 24, about a fortnight after the meeting of Parliament, that the Monarchy of July suddenly collapsed. Louis Philippe and his Queen fled to England, followed by Guizot, his unpopular Minister. France was declared a Republic, and a provisional Government was set up, of which Lamartine, the poet, was the leading spirit and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[1] There was, indeed, an outbreak in Sicily two or three weeks before the Revolution in France, but it was the latter that set Europe ablaze.

National workshops were established under the inspiration of Louis Blanc. Louis Philippe's fall was the signal for a 'general convulsion, with four pitched battles fought in Europe in eight weeks, and the Adriatic and Baltic both blockaded.' The Revolution spread to Austria and Hungary, where the Emperor had to abdicate and Metternich to go into exile; to Prussia and Germany, where representative institutions were vehemently demanded; and to Italy, where there were premature revolts against Austrian dominion in the north and against Bomba's tyranny in the Two Sicilies.

Disraeli had a theory of his own about the subversion of the Orleans dynasty and the subsequent revolutionary movements all over the Continent. They were, he was convinced, the work of secret societies:

> The two characteristics of these confederations, which now cover Europe like net-work, are war against property and hatred of the Semitic revelation. . . . Alone, the secret societies can disturb, but they cannot control, Europe. Acting in unison with a great popular movement, they may destroy society, as they did at the end of the last century. The French disturbance of '48 was not a great popular movement. It was a discontent which required nothing more for its solution than a change of ministry; but the sovereign and his subjects were in sudden confusion; the secret associations are always vigilant and always prepared; they took society by surprise, but having nothing really to rely upon except their own resources, the movement, however disastrous, has been an abortion.
>
> It is the manœuvres of these men, who are striking at property and Christ, which the good people of this country, who are so accumulative and so religious, recognise and applaud as the progress of the Liberal cause.[1]

Inadequate as this theory may be to cover the whole ground, it cannot be neglected in judging European history in the nineteenth century. Besides the obvious instances of Russia and Ireland, the history of the unification of Italy cannot be understood without giving full weight to the action of secret societies, to one of which, the Carbonari, Napoleon III. had himself belonged.

[1] *Lord George Bentinck*, ch. 27.

To Sarah Disraeli.

March 8, 1848.—What will happen in these times of unprecedented horrors! I know not whether I am standing on my head or my heels. . . .

March 20.—The mob are in possession of Vienna, and Metternich, they say, almost as badly off as Louis Philippe.

Guizot called on me on Saturday, and I was fortunately at home. He is unchanged, and has taken a house in Pelham Terrace, Brompton, at £20 per annum. The last time I saw him he was starred, ribboned, and golden-fleeced, and surrounded by Ambassadors and grand personages.[1]

Affairs are very bad, but in my opinion will be much worse. All one can hope for now is to put one's house in order during the temporary lull—if there be one. . . .[2]

Disraeli had a great regard for Louis Philippe, who had shown him many marks of friendship in his days of power in Paris; and he manifested his sympathy and respect for him, both in public and private, now that he was fallen and in exile. Four days after the abdication he said in the House of Commons:

I have no hesitation in saying that I lament that the late Ruler of France has fallen. Whatever his errors to his people may have been, he was a great prince, a great gentleman (a laugh), a great man. There may be those who are ready to laugh over fallen royalty. I, for one, would shrink from such a course; and least of all does it become us to do so; for, whatever were his errors, to us in England and to Englishmen at least he always extended an appreciating sympathy; and I cannot forget that for eighteen years he did secure, he did maintain for Europe, the blessings of peace.

And towards the end of the session Disraeli eulogised Louis Philippe as a Sovereign who succeeded 'in bridling, for a period of seventeen years, the Jacobin tiger'; as a man, without question, of great sagacity, and of unrivalled experience. He has left a memorandum of his first visit to the exile:

I shall never forget my first visit to Claremont after the catastrophe of 1848. I shrank from it, but it was impossible

[1] Guizot resumed his decorations in exile next year. The Disraelis met him at dinner '*très decoré*. His wearing the Golden Fleece I think more than insensibility, I call it impudence,' Disraeli wrote to Lady Londonderry.

[2] *Letters*, pp. 210, 211.

to be avoided. If there were an occasion, in which one should show respectful sympathy, this was one. . . . I was ushered into a drawing-room, where there were groups of gentlemen. The King, who was standing, and speaking to General Fox, who was taking his leave, then advanced, bowed to me with some dignity, and asked some ordinary questions in a friendly tone. A strange question he asked was, whether I was thinking of paying a visit to Paris,—quite in an ordinary tone. Then H.M. approached me quite closely, and said in a clear but hushed voice, 'If you will follow me, Mr. Disraeli, we shall be able to converse together undisturbed.'

So we quitted the room, and then the King led the way down a passage, which at the end was rather gloomy, and there was a door open, and all I saw was a common mahogany glass on a painted table; and it was a bedroom, a very ordinary one, looking on the walls of back premises, very gloomy: but apparently the King's bedroom, and then he sat down in a small painted rush-bottomed bedroom chair, and at the same time placed one for me exactly opposite and close to him, and without any further preface said in French, which he spoke the whole time, 'I am desirous of telling you how all this happened.' And then he began a narrative, which commenced with the beginning, and never ceased until he had quitted the Tuileries, an abdicated monarch. I am sure I am understating when I say, that the narrative considerably exceeded an hour. During this time, the King never paused, never hesitated. He spoke with volubility: not apparently with much feeling. He rarely looked at me as he spoke. He seemed to me to be making a clean breast of it, and speaking as it were to the reporters.

I concluded from his narrative, that the whole thing was a surprise; an accident. And that Lagrange and the secret societies, finding everything in disorder, and no master, rose suddenly at the eleventh hour when they found the ball was at their feet.

At last it ended; the impetus was arrested; the excitement which had carried on the King was over, and he went into hysterics. I have seldom felt more distressed. It was a position in which one could not even speak. Feeling deeply for this kind-hearted and clever man, who in his great prosperity, and when I was young and little known, had showered many kindnesses upon me, I with respectful tenderness took His Majesty's hand and pressed it to my lips: he took my hand and held it in both of his own. Then he rose, and in his usual voice said, 'Now I will take you to the Queen.'

So he led me into a drawing-room, where I found the Queen working at embroidery with some ladies. General Dumas

and some other attendants were standing in the background. The King presented me as if it were the Tuileries,—quite cheerful. Her Majesty received me without the slightest embarrassment, with cordiality and sweet serenity, and asked me after my wife. After a short conversation, I preparing to go, the King came up and made some inquiry after Lord George Bentinck, who had spoken with sympathy and respect of the King in the House of Commons recently, and began talking of his uncle, Lord William, whom he had known in Sicily. Then he went on in a rather rambling way about some papers which he had which he thought might be interesting to Lord George. Of course, I assented. Whereupon the King, just as if he were at the Tuileries, called for General Dumas, and gave orders, that copies should be prepared of certain documents, and sent to Lord George Bentinck, without loss of time. I was told afterwards that the papers, like all other public papers, were not at Claremont, and that the King was in the habit of giving his orders on all subjects to his aide-de-camps just as if he were at Paris or St. Cloud.

This account of the visit was written, apparently, several years afterwards, in the sixties, and does not tally in all its details with a letter which he wrote to a friend at the time:

To Lady Londonderry.

Grosvenor Gate, *May Day*, 1848.—. . . Have you yet recovered the great catastrophe? Its cause is inexplicable, its consequences an alarming mystery. No judgment and no imagination can fathom its probable results. The King of France in a Surrey Villa, Metternich in a Hanover Square Hotel, and the Prince of Prussia[1] at Lady Palmerston's! The toil of public life and private affairs have so absorbed me, that I did not pay my respects at Claremont until a fortnight ago. The King received me in his bedroom, in order that we might not be disturbed. I found him little changed. I sat with him two hours; the first occupied with an almost uninterrupted narrative of the three fatal days, but varying little from the received accounts, except his warm vindication of the Duc de Nemours, whom he greatly praised: his approbation of Montpensier's too eager counsel of abdication much more reserved. This last seems to have been in a great fright. The whole affair a series of blunders, and it was only at the last moment that Lagrange and the secret societies, seeing

[1] Afterwards the Emperor William I. of Germany.

everything in confusion and that everybody had lost their head, resolved to make an impromptu dash, and clutch the prize.

The King's description of the abdication, his room crowded with councillors of all parties, and all talking at the same time, most distressing! Poor old man—75 years of age, scarcely recovered from a severe influenza, and with Mme. Adelaide[1] hardly buried! No wonder his nerves gave way! His narrative was affecting, and he was much softened, but not feeble. Afterwards, when he had relieved his mind, and talked of political affairs in general, I found him quite himself, perfectly alive to all the questions of the hour, even keenly interested about them, and prompt and vivacious.

The state of Belgium[2] seemed his great consolation. He more than once recurred to it. I fancy his hope, perhaps conviction, is, that if a general war be prevented, all may yet end well, so far as his grandson's destiny, but he did not directly touch on this. The interview ended by his saying he would take me to the Queen, with whom he left me alone. The moment he had shut the door, she exclaimed, 'Ah! Monsieur Disraeli, quelle catastrophe!' She, however, here ceased to weep, and harped much upon Belgium.

The King did not mention to me, that he had seen M. Guizot, but he spoke of him several times without any bitterness. They say that Guizot has less reserve, but during the only interview which I have had with him, when he called at Grosvenor Gate, he imputed no blame to His Majesty, but said that if the King had gone to St. Cloud on the second day, and summoned the chambers there, all would have been saved. Guizot I found quite unchanged. You heard, perhaps, that he called on Lord Palmerston in Carlton Gardens, and asked for Lady Palmerston, when he was told his lordship was not at home. Ushered up, he said when he met her, 'I used to think that in England nothing ever changed, but I find I was in error, for I called at your old home, and found that I had knocked at the wrong door!' Cool!

Guizot said to me that Palmerston had done it all, by his patronage of Thiers, and the encouragement that Normanby, etc., gave to the Reform Banquets.

F. Mills, who returned from a railroad (I mean about some railroad company) visit to Paris, on Sunday week dined with Lamartine, who used, in old days, quite to affect splendor and *luxe*. There were several present, all in boots and black cravats, and smoking after dinner—only two dishes, a scanty one of broiled soles, and, unmentionable horror! an immense

[1] Louis Philippe's sister.

[2] King Leopold I. of Belgium had married, as his second wife, Louis Philippe's daughter.

portion of *foie de veau!* How puerile this affectation of republican simplicity! and what confidence can we have in anything durable being effected by such men! The King, by the bye, said to me several times, 'One thing alone has been proved by what has taken place—that in France nothing can endure.'

Affairs, however, *on dit*, are worse in Germany than in France. Kings and Princes are turned off as we turn away servants, and worse, without a character, and nobody resists. Fifty mad professors at Frankfort, calling themselves a Diet, self-appointed, have absolutely invaded Denmark, and will not conclude their labours till they have established a federal republic like the U.S.

Did you hear of Lord Hardinge's interview with Metternich on the 9th March? Lord Ponsonby and P. Esterhazy both present and listening, as if to an oracle, while Metternich announced that Austria never was so sound, while he moralised over the miserable fate of the French. Esterhazy kissing his (P. M.'s) hand, like the Emperor's, when he quitted the room! Lord Hardinge told me this. . . .

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Tuesday* [? *Aug.* 15, 1848].—. . . The accounts from Paris are very émeutish: the question being whether Louis Blanc is to be arrested or not. What a noise for so little a man, not so tall as Tommy Moore at his best, and twelve months agone calling in vain at a café for a waiter. But such is the magnetic power of brains. Who could ever have supposed that Louis Blanc would have beaten Louis Philippe?

General Dumas came to me from Claremont on Friday last to thank me in the name of the King for my mention of His Majesty in my speech.[1] I was glad to receive his grateful congratulations, for I was by no means certain that the King would have altogether approved of what I said. But the fact is one must manage an audience like the House of Commons, with a strong party hating all Kings. . . .

[*Aug.* 17, 1848.]—I send you a line in the midst of a brawling debate about the Pope of Rome. Sir Robert Inglis horrified at the idea of red stockings being seen in England. I have less fear of them, than of blue.

What I wanted to tell you at the end of my last letter, was the feeling at Claremont about Palmerston, but I have not time to do it justice. He persecutes them according to their story, prevents people calling, notices every little attention of the Court. The Queen and Prince Albert are obliged to show their sympathy under the rose, and they do it frequently. Claremont speaks most gratefully of their disposi-

[1] See above, p. 990.

tions, but of Palmerston as of an ogre. One trait, L. Philippe paying them a visit, and the talk being of Jenny Lind, he said, 'Alas! I shall never see her, for I don't think it will do for the Comte de Neuilly[1] to go to the Opera.' The Queen did not dare to ask the C. and Comtesse de Neuilly to the Palace, but a few days after, at Her Majesty's instigation, the Q. Dowager asked the illustrious exiles to a little concert. They came, and they heard Jenny! . . .

Sept. 2.—. . . To-morrow we go to Claremont, having received a notification to that effect. In such weather the drive alone will be charming. . . .

Dick,[2] who has just come in, tells me that Louis Blanc is positively staying over the way (Pall Mall) with Monckton Milnes! I really think that the frequent guest of Louis Philippe might have grudged his hospitality in this respect.

Sept. 5.—. . . I spoke to the Queen,[3] very naturally, on the subject you hinted at.[4] I found Her Majesty had already written to you, what she also stated to me. I ventured to observe, that there was a great difference between being the guests of a country house and mixing in the miscellaneous crowds of London saloons, and that there were occasions when the Princes might create sympathies and make friends, whose good feeling and influence might hereafter be useful. This view of the case was not without effect, but the answer had been written and sent. The Queen more than once desired that I would personally express to you her sense of your kindness and consideration, which she said much touched her.

The poor Princes do nothing but fish, and have not much sport. They have no horses, of which they complain. The King and Queen have now a carriage and a pair of horses. There is also one riding-horse for one of the generals, who is too fat to walk, and a pony. All this she said herself.

Coming home in the park, we met a most graceful child, about three years, with a singularly sweet face, and the bluest eyes I ever saw. His nurse called him Monseigneur, and the unhappy little exile was the Prince de Condé. There are six grandchildren at Claremont! On Sundays all six dine with their grandparents, on other days three only. . . .

There was, as we have seen,[5] an even more notable exile in England in this year than the French King or

[1] The King and Queen of the French passed, in exile, as the Comte and Comtesse de Neuilly.

[2] Quintin Dick, M.P. (C.), for Maldon 1832-47, and for Aylesbury, 1848-52.

[3] The Queen of the French.

[4] An invitation to the Joinvilles and Aumales to go to Wynyard.

[5] Page 926.

his Minister. On May 17, Londonderry, who had formerly been Ambassador in Vienna, took Disraeli to Eaton Square to introduce him to Prince Metternich. That eminent man had borne the main responsibility for the policy of Austria for nearly forty years. Throughout that period he had been the leading representative of Conservatism in Europe, the man to whose influence was principally due the preservation of the *status quo* both in the relations of the European Powers to one another and in their internal affairs. He was the chief bugbear of Continental Liberalism, and in foreign politics was at the opposite pole to Canning first, and to Palmerston afterwards. But, if he was insensitive to abuses and sceptical about popular rights and parliamentary institutions, he could fairly claim that he had resuscitated the power of Austria after her defeat by Napoleon, and had succeeded in keeping her motley States together, including the large territories in Italy which were wrenched from her a few years after his fall. This was no small achievement. He was now seventy-five years old, and could entertain little hope of restoration to high office; but his mental powers were quite unimpaired. Disraeli had long admired 'the serene intelligence of the profound Metternich.' It was indeed natural that one who aspired to lead the Conservative party in England should be attracted to the living embodiment of the cause on the Continent of Europe. The attraction seems to have been mutual. Metternich was living as a hermit, in Londonderry's phrase; but, though he saw few others, he saw and corresponded with Disraeli frequently. 'I have seen Metternich twice at great length,' Disraeli writes to his sister on May 30. 'He talks very much, and is very kind.' Metternich's wife, Princess Mélanie, notes in her diary for May of this year that a complete understanding was at once established between the two men. Both were prone to philosophise about politics; Metternich prided himself upon being 'un diplomate philosophe,' as Disraeli was eminently a statesman of ideas. They agreed in

deploring the socialistic doctrines which were promulgated from Paris, in wishing to stem the revolutionary tide throughout Europe, and in reprobating Palmerston's policy of constant interference, in the interests of Liberalism, between Continental Governments and their peoples. The following passage in *Lord George Bentinck*[1] would have been adopted by Metternich, even if it did not owe something to his inspiration:

> It is very desirable that the people of England should arrive at some conclusions as to the conditions on which the government of Europe can be carried on. They will, perhaps, after due reflection discover that ancient communities like the European must be governed either by traditionary influences or by military force. Those who in their ardour of renovation imagine that there is a third mode, and that our societies can be reconstructed on the great Transatlantic model, will find that when they have destroyed traditionary influences there will be peculiar features in their body politic which do not obtain in the social standard which they imitate, and these may be described as elements of disturbance. A dynasty may be subverted, but it leaves as its successor a family of princely pretenders; a confiscated aristocracy takes the shape of factions; a plundered Church acts on the tender consciences of toiling millions; corporate bodies displaced from their ancient authority no longer contribute their necessary and customary quota to the means of government; outraged tradition in multiplied forms enfeebles or excruciates the reformed commonwealth. In this state of affairs, after a due course of paroxysms, for the sake of maintaining order and securing the rights of industry, the state quits the senate and takes refuge in the camp.
>
> Let us not be deluded by forms of government. The word may be republic in France, constitutional monarchy in Prussia, absolute monarchy in Austria, but the thing is the same. Wherever there is a vast standing army, the government is the government of the sword. . . . [An] irresistible law . . . dooms Europe to the alternate sway of disciplined armies or secret societies; the camp or the convention.

Two speeches of Disraeli on foreign affairs, in June and August of 1848, were clearly made under Metternich's influence; and Princess Mélanie's diary shows the importance which Metternich attached to both of them

[1] Ch. 27.

The first, on June 5, arose out of an awkward complication with Spain. Palmerston had carried a policy of meddling with the internal affairs of that country so far as to instruct the British Minister, Sir Henry Bulwer, to recommend earnestly to the Queen of Spain the adoption of a legal and constitutional course of government. In view of Louis Philippe's downfall, she would do wisely to call to her councils 'some of those men who possess the confidence of the Liberal party.' The advice may have been good, but it was certainly impertinent, and it led to the immediate expulsion of Sir Henry Bulwer, who had previously rendered himself obnoxious to the Spanish Government by his political intrigues. In the debate, Disraeli, while defending Bulwer, who was his friend, took the opportunity to criticise the whole system of Liberal foreign policy. He said his objection to Liberalism was that it endeavoured to carry on the very practical business of the foreign affairs of the country by means of philosophical ideas and abstract theories.

> You could not find a country governed by an absolute form without telling it that the only way to be happy and prosperous was to have a House of Lords and a House of Commons, and an English treaty of commerce. All this ended in confusion. All that was practical you never obtained. You never obtained the treaty of commerce, but you fostered confusion and convulsion. By lending all the aid of a great country like England to some miserable faction, you created parties in domestic policy in every country, from Athens to Madrid, deteriorated the prosperity and condition of the people, and laid the seeds of infinite confusion. The noble lord opposite proceeded in this course—the great prophet of Liberalism in foreign affairs.

The Liberals had introduced a sentimental instead of a political principle into the conduct of foreign affairs:

> You looked on the English Constitution as a model farm. You forced this Constitution in every country. You laid it down as a great principle that you were not to consider the interests of England, or the interests of the country you were in connection with, but that you were to consider the great system of Liberalism, which had nothing to do with the

interests of England, and was generally antagonistic with the interests of the country with which you were in connection.

The second speech was delivered on the Foreign Office vote in supply on August 16, and dealt mainly with British relations with Rome, Naples, Sardinia, and Austria. 'Last August,' said Disraeli, 'the Lord Privy Seal [Lord Minto] went on a very peculiar and roving mission . . . to teach politics in the country in which Machiavelli was born.' Disraeli had an easy task in demonstrating the failure of the mission by pointing to the chaotic state of Italy. Palmerston had sympathised with the abortive revolutions in the peninsula founded on nationalist ideas; but Disraeli was scornful of 'this modern, new-fangled, sentimental principle of nationality.' Yet this was the basis on which Palmerston proposed to mediate. Palmerston was suspected of encouraging France to invade Italy and drive out the Austrians, who, under Radetzky, had just put down the insurrection in Lombardy. Of good relations with France Disraeli was a strong supporter. 'If you mean, by an alliance with France, by a cordial understanding with France, or whatever other phrase you may use, that those important affairs and those great events which periodically and surely occur in the world should be regulated and managed in concert by these two leading nations, after previous council, animated by a wise spirit of concession and compromise, and leading to a cordial co-operation, that is a system of which I shall ever be a feeble but a warm supporter.' Queen Elizabeth worked thus with Henri IV., and Cromwell with Mazarin; Bolingbroke and Walpole, who differed so widely in many things, agreed in supporting an Anglo-French *entente* of this kind. 'But an understanding which is only founded on forced occasions and forced opportunities—the incidents invented to justify and occasion the co-operation, instead of the co-operation arising from the natural order of the events—that is an understanding and that is an alliance which, before this time, has occasioned the greatest evil, and which, in the present case, might lead

to the greatest possible disasters.' France had no right to invade Italy. He protested against the attempt to regulate the world by a contrived concert with the Jacobin party, then in power in Paris. 'It is the system that commences with "fraternity" and ends with assassination; it is the system that begins by preaching universal charity, and concludes by practising general spoliation.' Happily, no such French invasion of Italy as Disraeli deprecated took place.

In this speech, which Disraeli himself thought would make a noise, and which Greville calls 'very brilliant' and Hobhouse 'amusing and striking,' there were, according to Princess Metternich, certain expressions which Palmerston maintained could only have been furnished to Disraeli by her husband; and Metternich certainly called the particular attention of the Austrian Foreign Office to it, and pointed out that 'ce grand orateur' had borrowed from him the idea of the difference between political and sentimental mediation, the first based on treaties, the second on nationality.[1]

Even before making Metternich's acquaintance, Disraeli had scoffed in the House of Commons[2] at the principle of nationality as a ground for international action. This was on the dispute between Germany and Denmark over Schleswig-Holstein. Here Palmerston and he were in general agreement. Indeed, few public men in England, with the conspicuous and creditable exception of the Prince Consort, appreciated or sympathised with the movement for German unity. Disraeli treated the 'dreamy and dangerous nonsense' of German nationality as merely a thin pretext for Prussian invasion; but, on the other hand, long before his countrymen in general awoke to the meaning of what was passing before them, he realised the vitally important fact that Germany had embarked on a policy which would make her eventually a great maritime Power, the rival of England in the North Sea. It was actually laid down as a principle, he

[1] Metternich, *Mémoires*, Vol. VIII. [2] April 19, 1848

said, by men occupying seats in the Cabinets of Europe, that wheresoever the German language is spoken, there the German flag ought to wave. But if so, why did not the Prussians invade Alsace, and meet at once the high spirit of France? Or why did they not occupy Livonia, and thus encounter the colossal power of Russia? That would be consistent and national; but the principle only held good towards the north.

And why? Because it is in the north, when surrendered, that the pretext vanishes and the cause appears. Germany is the centre of Europe, and has no reason, one would think, to complain of the territorial advantages which have been allotted to it. Its broad and rich lands are watered by the three most considerable rivers of Europe—the Rhine, the Elbe, and the Danube. But Germany, which possesses almost every other advantage, is not a great naval Power, and Germany wants a coast. This is the real reason why Denmark, supposed to be weak, is to be invaded in this age of liberty on the plea of nationality. It is to gain the harbours of the Baltic, and to secure the mouths of the Elbe, that the plea of German nationality is put forth. Hitherto in the Baltic Russia and the Scandinavian Peninsula have prevented this project of Germany; while Holland and Great Britain have intercepted in the North Sea its maritime development. But now, under shelter of the plea of nationality, taking advantage of the fact that the King of Denmark possesses in Schleswig perhaps 150,000 subjects of German race, his dominions are to be invaded, and may be conquered, notwithstanding the valour of his few but determined subjects, in order that Prussia may suddenly appear as a great maritime Power.

I do not wish to argue this case with respect to the interests of England. I do not wish to say anything about whether it is or is not for the interest of England that a new naval Power should spring up among the nations of the Baltic or the Northern Seas. But this I wish to lay down as a principle that it is for the interest of England, and not of England alone, but of all Europe, that peace should be maintained. And peace cannot be maintained if the policy of Prussia be permitted to pass unnoticed and uncensured.

'I never can believe,' Disraeli added in memorable words, 'that the peace of Europe is to be maintained by hiding our heads in the sand, and comforting ourselves

with the conviction that nobody will find us out.' We had guaranteed Schleswig to Denmark, and must not shirk our obligations. The speech was naturally welcomed warmly in Denmark, which for the time was saved from dismemberment, and Disraeli's portrait was in all the library windows as Denmark's spokesman. The speech, moreover, initiated or confirmed a friendship, which Disraeli greatly valued, with Count Reventlow, the Danish Minister; who formally conveyed to the orator the thanks of his Sovereign and of the whole Danish nation. The relations between Reventlow and Disraeli became so close that, when Reventlow died, Disraeli wrote (October 4, 1851) to his sister: 'I am much shocked at the death of Reventlow. He was one of the best-hearted and most genial beings I ever knew, and clever, too; and, independent of all this, was my secret agent in the Diplomatic Corps, and I always found him faithful and accurate. It is a great loss to me in every way.'

It is not difficult to collect, from *Lord George Bentinck* and from the speeches which we have quoted, Disraeli's views on foreign policy at this time. They avoid the extremes of Palmerstonian meddlesomeness on the one hand, and of Cobdenite pacificism on the other. Owing to his opposition to Whig adventures, the Disraeli of these years has sometimes been claimed as a supporter of non-intervention. Non-intervention, it may be observed, is an ambiguous word. It is most frequently used nowadays to describe a policy of complete detachment from European politics of all kinds; but in the debates of the middle of the last century it generally meant only the policy of abstention from intervening in the domestic affairs of other nations. In this latter sense, no doubt, Disraeli then and afterwards was a non-interventionist, as most subsequent British statesmen have been, but Palmerston emphatically was not. To claim, however, that Disraeli advocated at any time a policy of isolation argues a very superficial reading of his

speeches; and, as it happens, he took care, in his first speech in 1849, to define his position. After blaming the Government for their 'mock mediations,' he continued:

> In making these remarks, I am far from wishing to enforce a pedantic adherence to that passive policy which, in the barbarous dialect of the day, is called 'non-intervention.' On the contrary, I am persuaded that, in the settlement of the great affairs of Europe, the presence of England is the best guarantee of peace. But it should be the presence of England in accordance with the law of nations, and with the stipulations of treaties.[1]

Disraeli's foreign policy may, indeed, be summarised thus: The preservation of peace, guaranteed mainly by a steady understanding with France; the strict observance of treaty obligations; the avoidance of intermeddling in the domestic affairs of other nations, and especially of stirring up disorder in other countries under the specious pretext of promoting Liberal institutions; the discouragement of sentimental politics, based either on the idea of nationality, which tends to alter the existing boundaries of States, or on Jacobin notions, which are subversive of all established and traditional order—in a word, the maintenance unimpaired of British interests and British prestige with a due respect for the rights and interests of others. It may appear strange that Disraeli, who had so strong a belief in race, should have had so little faith in nationality. The ideas are surely akin, though he himself maintained that there was a great difference between them. 'Nationality,' he said on August 9, 1848, 'is the miracle of political independence. Race is the principle of physical analogy.' This is a hard saying; but it may perhaps mean that, while race depends on blood, nationality is often more a matter of locality. To a Jew, therefore, nationality could never make so powerful an appeal as race. Race, moreover, was not being used as a lever to upset territorial arrangements and overthrow Governments, whereas nationality was proving to be an eminently explosive force. It is, however, a serious blot on Disraeli's

[1] The intervention of Great Britain in 1914 on behalf of Belgium exactly fulfilled Disraeli's conditions.

reputation for prescience that he entirely failed to foresee what the principle of nationality was to effect for Germany and Italy. His general principles of foreign policy were, in the main, right; but his sympathies were often, especially at this period, on the wrong side.

The revolutionary movements of 1848, which threatened to carry all before them in the spring, did not maintain their ground as the year wore on. Great Britain was unscathed by the upheaval; the Chartist demonstration was a fiasco, the Young Ireland insurrection almost a farce. The rioting in Paris in the summer was put down by Cavaignac; and subsequently Louis Napoleon was elected President by an enormous majority of votes, and France had once more a fairly stable government. This did not happen till December; but by the autumn all over the Continent the reaction had begun, and Metternich could philosophise with comparative cheerfulness over the events and tendencies of the time:

From Prince Metternich.

BRIGHTON, *ce* 2 *Octobre*, 1848.—. . . J'ignore si je vous ai jamais fait part de mes pronostiques pour l'automne dans lequel nous sommes entré avec le mois de Septembre. Si je l'ai fait, alors vous trouverez que mon pressentiment ne reçoit point un démenti par la marche des évènements. Si je ne vous ai rien dit, alors sachez que ma prévision a reposée sur la valeur que j'attache à l'action qui dans le monde politique, comme dans celui matériel, est propre aux deux saisons qui, parmi les quatre qui composent l'année astronomique, sont actives, en opposition avec l'été et l'hiver, qui sont latentes. Jetez vos regards sur l'histoire, et vous verrez que j'ai raison. Si vous voulez une deduction sur ce sujet, je pourrais vous la livrer; comme je ne suis pas enclin à la pedantérie, il me suffira de vous dire que l'expérience m'a appris à fixer dans tous les temps mes regards avec une attention particulière sur ce qui, en règle commun, se fait jour au printemps et tire son premier bilan en automne.

Ceci dit, voyons où en est le monde à l'époque du bilan de 1848.

Si son résultat n'est point favorable aux principes sur lesquels peut seul reposer l'ordre qui forme la base de celui social, il n'est pas d'avantage satisfaisant pour les défenseurs des doctrines subversives. . . .

Où se trouve aujourd'hui le premier élément du désordre—l'enthousiasme ? Quelle valeur ont encore les mots—de *fraternité*, de *nationalité*, de *progrès ?*

La *fraternité* s'est ruée sur les barricades; la *nationalité* est entrée en *liquidation* dans les entreprises du Holstein et Schleswig, et en Italie, où le désinteressement de son principal défenseur ne se couvre plus même du masque de la pudeur; en Allemagne, la nationalité se fractionne en une utopie et une réalité; entre la nationalité une et indivisible et celles particulières qui reposent sur des bases historiques et sont profondément placées dans les usages, les mœurs, et dans la différence de la marche des esprits. En Hongrie les nationalités se colletent sur le champ de bataille, et ce n'est pas celle qui a jeté le défi qui a en sa faveur les chances du succès. Reste le *progrès ;* il est fort discrédité par son ennemi le plus cruel; par la misère qu'il répand autour de lui ! . . .

Au milieu de tant de faiblesses une seule organisation renferme encore en elle les éléments de la vie. C'est celle militaire et qui repose sur la valeur de l'ordre mis en pratique. L'Empire, au salut duquel j'ai, durant le cours de plus d'un demisiècle, voué mes services, en fournit bien des exemples. Aussi les factieux dirigent-ils d'incessants efforts vers l'affaiblissement de l'esprit, faute duquel il n'y a point d'armées, mais des cohues chères à entretenir et dangereuses à posséder. Le sort de la société dépendra en grande partie de la défaite ou de la réussite de ces efforts, et de la direction que les autorités légalement existentes sauront donner à leurs forces militaires. Celles impériales ont jusqu'à cette heure su remplir leur devoir, et un fait digne de remarque est le suivant. La troupe en Autriche prête le serment *au drapeau,* à l'exclusion de tout autre serment, et toutes les manifestations *d'amour,* à commencer par celles *pour le souverain,* lui sont interdites *sous les armes.* Un cri de *Hurrah !* est un délit sévèrement puni. Nos pères—car l'organisation de l'armée autrichienne leur est due—ont été de grands psychologues, et celà peut-être sans avoir consulté un professeur. . . .

Il me reste de vous faire part d'un fait caractéristique. Vous connaissez peut-être personnellement le Comte Etienne Széchèny—il a été souvent en Angleterre—ou, si tel n'est pas le cas, son nom vous sera présent, parcequ'il parait dans les feuilles du jour. Le Comte S. est l'un des fauteurs les plus marquants des changements que dans son organisation intérieure a éprouvé la Hongrie dans le cours des dernières 25 années. Idéologue et à la fois homme d'action; patriote chaud mais exalté; ambitieux dans la double direction du bien général et de sa personnalité, c'est lui qui a introduit dans son pays les produits de la vapeur; les courses de chevaux;

les clubs, appelés en Hongrie *casinos*, et l'idée exaltée de la nationalité Hongroise, servie par la diffusion de la langue Magyar que le bas peuple parlait *seul* jusqu'à l'année 1825. Toutes les affaires se sont jusqu'en 1830 traitées *en latin*. . . .

Le Comte S. arrivé au point où la raison s'est montrée à nu devant lui, c'est elle qui lui a fait défaut. La tête lui a tourné et il se trouve aujourd'hui dans une maison de santé près de Vienne. La faculté ne renonce pas à l'espoir de le guérir et je partage cet espoir, vuela circonstance suivante Il a des moments lucides et dans ces moments il rentre dans les faits historiques. 'Le P. de M. m'a toujours averti du mal que je faisais. Il m'a dit: Ne touchez pas aux fondements de l'édifice sans quoi il croulera en entier. Je n'ai point su profiter de cet avertissement; j'ai tué mon pays!' Alors il rentre en fureur.

Bien des amitiés, mon cher Disraeli. Ma lettre renferme de l'étoffe pour l'orateur au Parlement et pour le romancier. Vous ne m'en voudrez pas.

A postscript, or *annexe*, to this letter, contains sympathetic comments on Lord George Bentinck's death.

To Prince Metternich.

[*Oct.* 12, 1848.]—I thought the equinoctial despatch one of the wisest and wittiest expositions I ever had the good fortune to read, and expressed in a style of which I will only say that for its blended grace and precision it is inimitable. You were quite right in saying that there was stuff in it both for the statesman and the poet, for the principles indicated may guide a troubled Cabinet, and the fate of Széchèny, whom I knew only by reputation, is dramatic and fulfils the laws of poetic justice.

I was so much touched by your 'annexe;' it was full of such delicate expression, and touched with such beautiful feeling, that I shall send a copy of it to the Duke of Portland, for I feel sure that no grief, however desolating, could be insensible to such expressions of sympathy from so great a man.

I write this from my lovely Bucks château. This is a singular province without a large town. Its towns are only villages. It is sylvan and feudal.

For myself (and you told me to write of myself, or I should not), after some weeks of idleness I begin to feel the ability and even the necessity of labor. I have, indeed, some work before me which it is a pious duty to fulfil, but which I am ashamed to confess, though I will confess it to you, I find distasteful. There is an edition of my father's works in ten volumes about to be published, of which I am the nominal

editor.[1] I have, however, undertaken to give a sketch of his career, and, indeed, this complete edition would be the best monument to his memory and to his peaceful course of sixty years of lettered distinction. But my mind is so engrossed with political considerations at this great moment that I feel myself quite incapable of penetrating myself with the tranquil spirit of his studious and secluded life. The life of an author, indeed, is not uneventful, though it is the fashion to think it so; for every book is a battle lost or won, and fame, after all, in his, as in all other careers, must be the result of brilliant achievement and well-sustained effort.

I cannot, however, bring my mind to the task. You, who, amidst all your great deeds and greater thoughts, always command the serenity of your spirit, may not understand this feebleness of mine, but I want your sublime repose.

I think Brougham's letter[2] to Lord Lansdowne very good, vigorous, and well timed. He says what all think, but he is the first who has said it so completely. It will tell. I think I shall write him a line of thanks. I never praised anything he did before. I have looked upon him of late as an old harlequin, rather restless than active, and more full of mischief than vigor and grace.

The great drama of Europe becomes every day more complicated, and in my opinion adduces fresh proofs of your wisdom and unrivalled aptitude for affairs.

What if these victorious captains of Lombardy, Bohemia, and Croatia set up for themselves, and rival Wallenstein and the Duke of Weimar? The perspective of another thirty years' war sometimes seems to open: The want is a great political genius at Vienna to direct and concentrate their careers.

I shall come and make a pilgrimage to Brighton,[3] tho' too late for the mystic equinox. I shall come and see you, not merely because you are the only philosophical statesman I ever encountered, not merely because I catch wisdom from your lips and inspiration from your example, but because I feel for you the most tender and respectful affection, which could not be more profound if you were once more in your palaces and castles, and which the irresistible law of sympathy can alone produce.

[1] See above, p. 960.

[2] On the French Revolution of 1848. Long extracts are quoted in *The Times*, Oct. 9 and 10. In answer to Disraeli's congratulations, Brougham wrote, Oct. 22: 'I am quite vexed not to have seen you before I start for L'Enfer (*Paris ci-devant Paradis*). . . . If I am not consumed, you shall hear from me; and if I am massacred, why then it will not be the first, and certainly not the last, murder committed there.'

[3] See above, pp. 946, 947.

Metternich remained in England till October, 1849, and interested himself, as we have seen, in Disraeli's elevation to the leadership. In Disraeli's letters we catch a few more glimpses of the intercourse of the two statesmen:

To Lady Londonderry.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April* 30, 1849.—. . . I went yesterday to pay a visit to the Metternichs. They live in a most charming old house on Richmond Green, called the Old Palace. Nothing can be conceived more picturesque, and with a sunny day—with its gardens, glimpse of the river, birds, dogs, and long gallery library—it was really worthy of Watteau. I met there Duchess of Cambridge and the Colloredos. . . . .

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Aug.* 21, 1849.—. . . The Sunday before I left town, I went to pay my adieu to the Metternichs. I found the Princess, no longer on the turf amid her birds, and screaming like her own parrots, but in her saloon; but occupied as she was at my previous visit, making lint for the Austrian wounded. Brunnow with her 'whispering at the ear of Eve.'

I had hardly been seated a five minutes, when the Duchess of Cambridge and the G. Duchess[1] were announced—and I would have retired, but they begged me to remain. Then came Metternich himself, whom I had never seen since his illness. He was much altered, very extenuated, and it did not seem to me, that he spoke as clear as heretofore, but his apprehension not less bright. Kielmansegge followed immediately, and there came with their Royal Highnesses a Mr. Hutchinson, our Protestant chaplain at Rome. The conversation was animated and extremely agreeable—well kept up. It soon became political—anti-Liberal, of course. Kossuth, the Red Republican Canino, Bunsen especially, all well dressed, then Palmerston. 'Worse than Canino!' exclaimed the Princess, when at this instant Lord and Lady Palmerston were announced, and of course most cordially received. The Prince even went to the hall to welcome them. I then retreated, and as I was getting into my brougham tumbled over your friend, the Baroness Delmar, who was about to attend the levée. . . .[2]

Ld. Ponsonby, who is a good judge of men, spoke very

[1] Of Mecklenburg.

[2] This and the previous visit are also described, in very similar terms, in letters from Disraeli to his sister. See *Letters*, pp. 218, 222, and 223.

highly to me of the young Emperor,[1] as a man of character and resource; firm, of great integrity, and warlike. He seemed to think he would develop greatly in these troubles....

Disraeli endeavoured to get Metternich to visit him at Hughenden, but apparently without success:

To Prince Metternich.

[*Undated, August or September,* 1849.]—It made me very happy indeed to see you before I left Town.

Great events have since occurred, and they will not, I am sure, retard your recovery.

I am now reading critically the papers on the affairs of Italy presented to the House of Commons at the end of the Session. Their perusal will very much redound to your honor. They have, I confess, somewhat lowered my opinion of Palmerston. He has been fortunate, but he has not deserved to be *felix*. These papers afford indubitable evidence of his want of temper in the conduct of affairs, and of a reliance on the views and information of very second-rate persons, such as our Minister, Mr. Abercromby, at Turin, whom I should be very sorry to employ. Lord Napier at Naples seems a flippant schoolboy turning theme sentences *à la* Tacitus. Palmerston's own despatches are very badly written, though they aim at composition. They very unfavorably contrast with your own, which are, as I ever find them, models of diplomatic communication: precise, singularly clear, founded on thorough knowledge of circumstances and principles, and, though always distinguished by that sunny temper which is your characteristic, not without a species of archness, which often exposes with happy humor the weak points of your less-disciplined antagonists. I have particularly in my mind at this moment your management of the Ferrara question.

I wish I could induce your Highness to find a total change of air and scene amid our Chiltern Hills. I can easily understand why you should decline invitations to grand châteaux, and shrink from the weariness of pompous circles. We have no golden saloons to welcome you with, but only affectionate hearts: but you would be master entirely of yourself and of your time, and the Princess should drive a pony-chair in our woods, which would suit her exactly. Little more than half an hour's course on the Great Western would carry you to Maidenhead, and there our carriages should meet you and yours, and carry you ten miles through a sylvan country to this roof. I would arrange that your despatches should come

[1] The Emperor Francis Joseph.

to you twice a day. Think of this, my dear master, seriously. I am so persuaded that it would do you good that I have almost the audacity to write to the Princess herself, and entreat her to support my proposition.

'Sur le point de quitter ce beau et bon pays-ci,' Metternich wrote on October 7, 1849, to Disraeli, to tell him how anxious he was that his departure should cause no break in personal relations which he highly valued. Their spheres of labour had been different, he said, but their principles were similar. They agreed in the aim of their policy, 'la conservation,' the only object worth spending a life in defending and cultivating. It was 'a beautiful and affecting letter,' Disraeli told his sister. 'I received it in time to embrace him, exactly half an hour before he left England.' The two men did not meet again, though occasional letters passed between them. Metternich never returned to office, but he was able to go back to Vienna in 1851, and there exercised great influence over the counsels of the Austrian Court till his death in 1859. Disraeli always retained an affectionate recollection of his intercourse with him in 1848-49.

To Lord Stanhope.[1]

GROSVENOR GATE, *Feb.* 12, 1864.—You have much gratified me by your kindness in sending me a copy of the letters of Prince Metternich to yourself, which are most interesting. Events have given them a fresh relish, but his letters are too full of thought ever to become obsolete.

What a different man he really was to what those fancied him, who formed their judgment in the glitter of Vienna! A profound head and an affectionate heart! Had he not been a Prince and a Prime Minister, he would have been a great Professor. He said to me once, 'J'étais né penseur.'

To Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Dec.* 30, 1849.—. . . I find the pressure of public life so great in this age of struggle that I have been forced to give up every country house except my own, and have been too much engrossed to ask anyone there. I am surrounded by piles of blue-books, and two posts a day

[1] The 5th Earl, the historian.

bear me reams of despatches; so that my recess of relaxation has combined the plodding of a notary with the anxiety of a house steward. Pleasant! and what is called gratified ambition.

What an imbroglio of affairs! Your friends, the Free Traders, say, that, if we retrace our steps, there will be a revolution; and most certainly, if we do not do something, there will be one, for before four-and-twenty months are passed, every farmer will be a Republican. Indeed, it requires unceasing vigilance, and constant resource, to keep them, now, steady. Can you solve the knot? . . .

I think I told you of my farewell with Metternich. Tho' nobody talks of foreign affairs, I hear, among the initiated, that there are odd whispers, and the general state of things is anything but satisfactory. The fact is the elements of government do not exist in the greater part of Europe, and we are destroying them pretty quickly in England. Russia alone develops herself, and will develop herself still more in the great struggle which is perhaps nearer than we imagine. Once destroy the English aristocracy, and enthrone the commercial principle as omnipotent in this island, and there will be no repelling force, which will prevent the Slavonians conquering the whole of the South of Europe. I look upon France as quite exhausted: insolvent in purse and soul: no Republic can restore it, for there is no plunder left to support a Republic: and plunder was the inspiration of the great movement of the last century.

Amid all this confusion, Ireland may rise from its ashes: it will repudiate the commercial principle, and you will become a feudal Princess in the Tower of Garron.

CHAPTER VIII.

'THE HOPELESS QUESTION OF PROTECTION.'

1849–1850.

'I found the Tory party in the House of Commons, when I acceded to its chief management, in a state of great depression and disorganisation. Lord George Bentinck had only mustered 120 in his motion on the Irish Railways, which was to try our strength in the new Parliament. By a series of motions to relieve the Agricultural Interest by revising and partially removing the local taxation of the country, I withdrew the Tory party gradually from the hopeless question of Protection, rallied all those members who were connected either personally or by their constituencies with the land, and finally brought the state of parties in the House of Commons nearly to a tie.' Such was Disraeli's succinct account, given in 1860, of his labours and successes during his early years of leadership.

The party was indeed depressed and disorganised when he became responsible for its management in the House of Commons. Its disorganisation had been shown in the difficulties which attended the choice of a leader; its depression was the natural result of the waning fortunes of its principal policy. In spite of all Disraeli's and Bentinck's efforts, the Whig Ministry, steadily supported by Peel and his friends, had broadened and deepened the Free Trade system. The fact that many of the hopes held out by the Free Traders had not been realised, that the change in the commercial system had been followed, not by plenty at home and peace abroad, but by domestic distress and European convulsions, had not caused the

commercial and manufacturing classes or their Parliamentary leaders to lose confidence. A cause that could survive so unpromising a start would count an increasing body of adherents when better times came, and both in numbers and in wealth that part of the nation which believed in Free Trade must become more and more predominant. As Dr. Cunningham writes: 'In England the industrial classes hold the key of the position.' On Disraeli, as he surveyed the inheritance into which he had entered, reflections of this kind were inevitably forced. If he did not realise at the outset that, whatever justification there might be for Protection in theory, it was practically, in the England of that day, 'a hopeless question,' the experience of the session and the facts that came before him drove his mind surely, and not slowly, in that direction.

The duty to his hand was to build up a strong Opposition party which might be ready to carry on the Government whenever disaster should overtake the feeble Whig Ministry. In the first place it was necessary to hearten and solidify the strictly Protectionist ranks, and in the next place to attract support from the outside. An accession of strength could most readily be obtained from the rank and file of the Peelites, who were in general harmony with the Protectionists on all subjects except commercial policy. There was clearly no possibility of obtaining in the 1847 Parliament any repeal of the Corn Law of 1846. It was therefore wise policy not to push Protection into the foreground, but to endeavour to secure for the Agricultural Interest in other ways compensation for the loss which they had suffered. At the same time, though the conditions were not quite so bad in 1849 as in 1848, there was still famine in Ireland, and commercial suffering and agricultural distress in Great Britain, to show that the prophecies of the Free Traders had not been fulfilled. In his speech in moving an amendment to the Address, Disraeli said the new commercial system had had a fair trial and had failed. He

pointed to reciprocity as the proper policy. On the principle of reciprocity, which was at once cosmopolitan and national, the commercial system could be reconstructed in a manner beneficial to the Mother-Country and advantageous to the Colonies. But questions of commercial policy occupied a comparatively small portion of a speech which an unfriendly journal[1] was compelled to describe as a 'masterpiece of comprehensiveness'; 'the world was all before him where to choose, and he chose the whole of it.' The state of Europe, and the interferences of the British Foreign Office, were his principal theme. 'There wanted but one ingredient in the mess to make the incantation perfectly infernal. A republic without republicans, an empire without an emperor, required only mediations without an object to mediate about; and the saturnalia of diplomacy could mix with the orgies of politics.' Retrenchment had been promised in the Queen's Speech, to meet the wishes of Cobden and Bright. Disraeli said that the Conservative party had always been in favour of retrenchment, but how could retrenchment be possible in 1849, when the world was everywhere disturbed, seeing that in the beginning of 1848, before the convulsions had occurred, increased expenditure was thought necessary? The Government had yielded to the clamour of the Manchester School, who, in Disraeli's paraphrase, 'counselled the people of England to lower their tone.' Disraeli, however, denounced the politics and defied the predictions of that school, because he had faith in the people of England, their genius, and their destiny. It was a spirited opening of the campaign; but Palmerston made a clever defence of his policy, and, as a motion for adjournment was defeated by a considerable majority, Disraeli withdrew his amendment.

The first of his motions to relieve the Agricultural Interest was introduced a month later, on March 8. In

[1] *Morning Chronicle.*

the interval the anxieties of the past weeks had brought on illness.

To Sarah Disraeli.

March 7, 1849.—I ought to have acknowledged your affectionate letter, but in addition to all my troubles, perhaps in consequence of them, I have had for the last fortnight one of my worst attacks of low fever, so that till to-day I have never had an hour to prepare for the speech of to-morrow, from which so much is expected. The country is up in arms about my motion. I have received between forty and fifty letters every day, from every county indeed, except Bucks. The meeting of the farmers in Willis's Rooms was remarkable, and my name received, Lord Malmesbury told me, with the greatest cheering he ever heard.[1]

The meeting to which allusion is here made was held on the previous day, and attended by a thousand tenant farmers from all parts of the country. They demanded revision of imperial and local taxation, and the repeal of the malt tax, in order to mitigate the evils produced by the abandonment of Protection; and the report in *The Times* bears out Malmesbury's statement that Disraeli's name was enthusiastically received, and his Parliamentary conduct spoken of in terms of warm approbation.

Disraeli's motion was that the House should go into Committee to take into consideration the burdens on land, and especially the unequal pressure of local taxation. He said he was not going to enter into controversy about recent changes, but he still believed that the only means to be pursued against hostile tariffs were countervailing duties. It was estimated that the income of the whole country was £249,000,000, while the rental of the land amounted to £67,000,000. Why should the £10,000,000 raised in rates be charged only on the £67,000,000, instead of also on the other £180,000,000? The maintenance of the poor was not specially a local duty. It was a social duty; and the same reasoning applied to the administration of justice and the repair of roads. The question was a simple one: Was it just or unjust that real property, forming one-fourth of the income of the country, should

[1] *Letters*, p. 217.

alone bear burdens imposed on account of matters in which all property was equally interested? His plan was to put half the local rates on the Consolidated Fund.

Disraeli ended with an impressive warning to the Government. The landed interest considered that it had been treated unfairly. It was proverbially loyal, but Ministers would do well not to abuse that loyalty. The descendants of those who refused to pay ship-money were not to be trifled with. Their motto was 'Live and let live'; while the Manchester School said that England could prosper without any agriculture at all, provided it became the workshop of the world.

> Your system and theirs (said Disraeli to the Free Traders) are exactly contrary. They invite union. They believe that national prosperity can only be produced by the prosperity of all classes. You prefer to remain in isolated splendour and solitary magnificence. But, believe me, I speak not as your enemy when I say that it will be an exception to the principles which seem hitherto to have ruled society, if you can succeed in maintaining the success at which you aim without the possession of that permanence and stability which the territorial principle alone can afford. Although you may for a moment flourish after their destruction, although your ports may be filled with shipping, your factories smoke on every plain, and your forges flame in every city, I see no reason why you should form an exception to that which the page of history has mournfully recorded; that you, too, should not fade like the Tyrian dye, and moulder like the Venetian palaces. But, united with the land, you will obtain the best and surest foundation upon which to build your enduring welfare: you will find in that interest a counsellor in all your troubles, in danger your undaunted champion, and in adversity your steady customer. . . . . I wish to see the agriculture, the commerce, and the manufactures of England, not adversaries, but co-mates and partners—and rivals only in the ardour of their patriotism and in the activity of their public spirit.

The motion was opposed by Ministers, Radicals, and Peelites alike. Sir Charles Wood, for Ministers, in what Disraeli called 'a very plausible, well-managed speech,' maintained that, as rates were a deduction from rent, the proposal would benefit only the owner, and not the

occupier; and assumed throughout that, in order to find the money to carry out Disraeli's views, there must be a great increase in the income tax. Cobden also held that the interests of landlords and tenants were antagonistic, and that Disraeli's proposal would not benefit the farmer, who could only be benefited by a reduction of the material expenditure. The opposition of the Peelites was a disappointment to the Country party. Malmesbury held that the motion, as it had nothing to do with Free Trade, gave the Peelites a fair opportunity for reconciliation with their old friends; but Sidney Herbert and Goulburn both spoke against it, and their party as a whole voted with the Government. Disraeli, in reply to Wood and Cobden, pointed out that the present generation of farmers would enjoy the remission in full before it became absorbed in rent, and concluded with an assertion that the question could not be regarded as disposed of by this solitary discussion. The real property of the country would no longer consent to contribute two public revenues. They demanded justice; if they were rebuffed, they would come again and again with the cry of a 'protected and regenerated England.'

The motion was defeated on March 15 by 280 votes to 189—a majority of 91. Disraeli professed himself on the whole satisfied, and his friends and political rivals congratulated him. 'Egad, you are a stupendous fellow!' wrote Ferrand. At Lady Palmerston's evening party the congratulations on his opening speech, wrote Disraeli to his sister, 'far exceeded old days, even when I turned out Peel.' He heard indirectly what Russell had written to the Queen about it: 'Great praise as to its power of argument, thought, and rhetoric. Palmerston was still warmer; and Lord Malmesbury told me that Stanley, "who never pays compliments, you know, that's not his way," said it was one of the best things that was ever done.'[1] Manners's compliment was in the grand style. He quoted in his letter the lines,

[1] *Letters*, p. 216.

Cum tot sustineas, et tan a negotia *solus*,
. . . in publica commoda peccem,
Si longo sermone morer tua tempora, Cæsar.

To Lord John Manners.

GROSVENOR GATE, *March* 18, 1849.

MY DEAREST JOHN,—. . . I am much gratified by your opinion of the opening of the late movement: I trust the result has not disappointed you. I look upon the division as of great importance. It far exceeded my expectations, not only in the numbers we ourselves polled—but in the very diminished amount of our opponents. Trials of strength where the government majorities form only *two* figures commence to be interesting. At any rate, our friends ought not, I think, to be dissatisfied with the new management—when in the same week[1]—on vital questions—such a body of troops, and troops full of life and, almost, enthusiasm, have been brought into action with so much discipline and effect.

As a party move, I hold the last to have been most wise and discreet: but as a movement of advantage to the landed interest, I think it, tho' of course not successful in its form, very beneficial in its spirit. . . . We carried the war into the enemy's camp, and acted on the aggressive at the right moment. Our tactics will prevent any fresh addition to our burthens, and will give us a claim to relief if ever there be a surplus. Independently of all which considerations, it gives us a better position for future movements of a more determined character, if the occasion ever be ripe for them.

Granby spoke very well on my motion: I think the best speech he has yet made: with more fire, and not too many documents, which are dangerous materials to handle.

But, alas! my dear John—generally speaking—what is the result of the debate as far as abilities are concerned? Was there ever such an opportunity to develop men! I kept down Bankes, Miles for a long time, Newdegate, and all the old rubbish, and gave a list to the Speaker of men to bring forward—Seymer[2] (who, by the bye, disappointed me), now quite with us—Brooke[3]—Trollope, of whom I have some hopes—Jolliffe[4]—George Manners, etc., etc. I could scarcely get one of them out: the Speaker was absolutely sending Beresford with messages to our men to tell them to get up. They

[1] The division on the second reading of the Navigation Bill was taken in the same week as that on Disraeli's motion.

[2] M.P. for Dorset.

[3] M.P. for South Warwickshire, afterwards 4th Earl of Warwick.

[4] M.P. for Petersfield, afterwards Conservative Whip, and raised to the peerage as Baron Hylton, on Derby's recommendation, in 1866.

funked, and the Speaker was obliged to call Miles and Newdegate, who were always on their legs, and who were the very men I wished to be silent—Miles speaking of nothing but butcher's meat, and Newdegate anathematising imports under any circumstances. Alas! alas! an army without officers! How Stanley, if the Whigs at the end of the season play him a trick, is to form a Government—find at least seven Cabinet Ministers in the Commons, and about five-and-thirty other officials there—surpasses imagination.

As for the Peelites, they are more mysterious and hostile than ever. No one knows what they are after. . . .

I should think on the whole, as far as I am concerned, matters are improving. It is quite clear, that March,[1] and that clique, have entirely waived their prejudices, and generally speaking the machinery works better. But, after all, it will be impossible to go on without some assistance. It is a fact, that I must have forced a division on Monday in order to reply to Wood. This will never do. All my hopes and my heart are turned, in this dilemma and these difficulties, to yourself. With you at my right hand, much might be done: and I cannot believe that any lengthened period can elapse without your returning to a post for which you are in so many respects so greatly qualified.—Ever your faithful friend, D.

The other great party fight of the early weeks of the session was over the Bill to repeal the Navigation Laws—a Bill which had failed in 1848, but was passed in 1849. It was the complement of previous Free Trade legislation; but many Free Traders, remembering Adam Smith's dictum, that 'defence is of much more importance than opulence,' hesitated to carry their principles to a logical conclusion which might impair the efficiency of the Royal Navy. Disraeli did not take the leading part in the fight over this Bill; the protagonist of the Opposition was Herries. The second reading was only carried by a majority of fifty-six, Gladstone, in spite of his Free Trade views, making a speech in favour of reciprocity. In Committee Disraeli made a lively sally against Labouchere, who was conducting the Bill for the Government, for throwing over certain clauses, and against Gladstone for abandoning his amendments in order not to imperil the Bill.

[1] M.P. for West Sussex, afterwards 6th Duke of Richmond, and Disraeli's colleague in 1859, 1866, and 1874.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *March* 26.—Last Friday was most important, but quite burked in *The Times,* probably from being in Committee, where nothing is expected and little reported, yet there is a capital report in the *Morning Post,* which I have sent you; the men returning to the House when it was breaking up; Gladstone and Labouchere both standing, while the cheers after I had sat down resounded, etc., all very animated. Palmerston said he never remembered a more amusing scene; the way I brought the men back, as if I said, 'Hullo! you fellows, come back there!'

The Whigs will go out if the Lords throw out the Navigation Bill, and I think from present appearances the Lords will. I have had several conferences with Stanley as to our future and consequent movements, and the Cabinet is in embryo! He says I must be Chief Minister in the Commons. I confess myself that I think this a little too strong, and would willingly find a substitute. . . .[1]

In the middle of the fight over the Bill came the Easter holidays. From Hughenden, on April 12, Disraeli wrote to tell Lady Londonderry: 'There will be a hot and perhaps eventful campaign between this and Whitsun. Under ordinary circumstances the Whigs ought to go out and, perhaps even under the present, wish it. But what then? The agricultural distress is so great and the general prosperity is so doubtful that, even if we were inclined, fusion under the standard of Peel, or with his adherents even, seems impossible.' The Bill came up for third reading on April 23. Graham in the debate made a great point of quoting Stanley's declaration, on the first day of the session, in favour of Protection. Protection being the only alternative policy, Graham supported the Bill as 'the capital necessary to crown the work we have already accomplished.' Without it that work was imperfect. But if, said Disraeli in reply, the column they had raised had not realised the expectations of their creative fancy, they might hesitate before incurring the additional expense of crowning it with a costly capital. Graham had ended his speech by declaring that he was opposed to reaction, and favourable to pro-

[1] *Letters,* pp. 216, 217.

gress tempered by prudence and discretion. 'Progress where ?' said Disraeli. 'Progress to Paradise, or progress to the Devil ? People don't want to hear any longer of these undefined, windy phrases of "progress"; they want to know where you are progressing to. What are you at ? What do you mean to do ?' The Manchester School were intelligible. They wanted disestablishment, destruction of landed tenure, a change of the whole constitution. But what did the Peelites want ? These 'dilettante disciples of progress' were very dangerous opponents. Disraeli asked the House by their vote to beat down 'that great statistical conspiracy which has so long tampered with the resources and trifled with the fortunes of a great country.'[1] The arguments of the Opposition had their effect, and the Bill was only carried by a majority of 61—275 to 214.

To Lord Stanley.

CARLTON, 2 *o'clock* [*April* 24, 1849].—I send you, by Lord March, a little line, tho' it is long past midnight, to tell you of the result. I think we made a very good division indeed—but Newmarket and Dublin were rather defaulters—the first I think the most inexcusable.

The debate on our side was very well sustained—the best thing we have done. Herries, Walpole, and Tom Baring—the latter very good—and myself to my satisfaction, and, I believe, not to the dissatisfaction of our friends.

The most remarkable circumstance of the night was the elaborate and undisguised declaration of war against us by Graham. He assailed you with venom even, nearly at the conclusion of a very long, lumbering, stupid speech—the latter or, as he called it, the 'political' part, of course, more spicy, and cheered by the Radicals and, a little, by some of the Whigs. I thought it unwise any longer to refrain, as it would only have cheapened you and us, and therefore I tickled him a little.[2]

[1] Disraeli's defence of the Navigation Laws brought him a pretty compliment in the following spring, when there was launched at Milford Haven the good ship *Disraeli*, of 400 tons, described as the finest yet built in the harbour, and bearing as its figure-head an exact likeness of its sponsor, 'holding the Navigation Laws in his left hand and defending the same with his right.'

[2] 'I settled the disciple of Progress,' is Disraeli's phrase in writing to his sister.

To Lady Londonderry.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April* 30, 1849.—. . . There are all sorts of rumours, varying every hour. I think the truth is, that the Lords, at this moment, are about equally divided, but, for my part, I have, as Metternich said to me yesterday, an *instinct*, that the Bill will pass; a week, however, has yet to elapse, and that is time for many intrigues.

Most confidential. A friend of mine had yesterday an interview of an hour with the Duke of Wellington. He is much agitated about the affair, though, I doubt not, will support the Government. Abused the Bill very much, although not so much as he abused Peel, on whom he lavished all sorts of execration. He said that Free Trade had ruined this country, that he had supported all their measures against his will in order to keep out Cobden and Co., and that he feared change now for the same reason. What he feared most, he repeated often, was Change, lest it might lead to that. But all had been a mistake from the beginning. . . .

Disraeli's instinct was right. The Lords, by the aid of proxies, passed the second reading by a majority of ten, in spite of the eloquence of Stanley, Brougham, and Lyndhurst. Perhaps Bright's opinion, which Disraeli reported to his sister, may have been not far from the truth. Bright said the Lords would swallow the Bill; 'for, though they are convinced it will both destroy the commerce and navy of England, they deem such results comparative blessings compared with Stanley being Minister.' That a Stanley Ministry was felt to be quite a possibility during this session is shown not merely by several references in the Disraeli correspondence and in Greville's *Diary*, but by a list in Disraeli's handwriting, preserved among the Beaconsfield papers, headed 'Cabinet for 1849.' It is interesting as including all the principal Peelites except Peel—namely, Aberdeen, Graham, Gladstone, Sidney Herbert, Lincoln, Goulburn, and Cardwell—as Stanley's subordinate colleagues. Disraeli has allotted the India Office to himself.[1] There is no indication who was to lead the House of Commons. But in a

[1] In another Cabinet list of the same character, also in Disraeli's handwriting, and relating to one of the years 1849-1851, he makes himself Home Secretary.

letter from his sister, written probably in July of this year, the question is put: 'Is Gladstone to be your lieutenant?'

To Sarah Disraeli.

HUGHENDEN, *May* 28.—I came down here[1] very indifferent, having dined out the three preceding days running. . . . It is settled that there is to be no coalition between the Peelites and the Whigs, and therefore I conclude that after a decent interval the old Conservative party will be reconstructed under Stanley, and of course without Peel. If the distress continues after the next harvest, Graham and Co. must give up progress, and swallow a little moderate reaction; if it abate, we cannot pretend to disturb *un fait accompli*. I think, therefore, that this time next year all may be well, if one can stand the storm till then. . . .[2]

June 22, 1849.—I am so pressed with affairs, and have been, though much better, so poorly, that I have been unable to write you a line, and must now do it hastily. . . .

To-morrow we go *in state* to dine with the Lord Mayor, who gives a banquet to our party. Lord Stanley is to return thanks for the House of Lords, and I for the House of Commons. H. Bentinck refused, never going to Court and those sort of things, and not understanding the nature of the meeting; but when Trollope told him that he was to see me make a speech in the Egyptian Hall, in a red coat, as leader of the party in the House of Commons, he begged leave to recall his refusal, and is going to appear in a Court dress which I believe belonged to the old Duke of Bulstrode.[3]

The Mansion House banquet to the Protectionist party was a further recognition both of the status which the party had acquired and of Disraeli's leadership in the Commons. The Lord Mayor, Sir James Duke, who was a member of Parliament, was a Liberal, and therefore could not be actuated by party feelings in his hospitality. Londonderry, indeed, who, faithful to his rôle of peacemaker, was endeavouring at this time to bring Aberdeen and Stanley together, regarded the Lord Mayor as a marplot. 'Either my Lord Mayor is a great fool,' he wrote to Disraeli, 'or a very cunning man; if the latter, he has admirably managed to reinforce his own party, the Whigs, and to make it more evident than ever that

[1] For the Whitsuntide recess. [2] *Letters*, pp. 218, 219.
[3] Bulstrode Park formerly belonged to the Duke of Portland.

Pro[tectionist]s and Pee[lite]s can never join.' Party politics were naturally eschewed, and Disraeli said nothing of importance; but Stanley took occasion to insist on the unflinching steadfastness with which he and his followers maintained their opinions—especially the great principle that legislative encouragement ought to be granted to every branch of domestic industry.

Fortified by this public tribute to the solidarity and efficiency of the party, and spurred on by the agricultural agitation out of doors, Disraeli in the last month of the session led a general action against the whole front of the Government. He moved for a Committee into the State of the Nation, and brought forward the motion as one of want of confidence. His speech in introducing it was a sustained effort. He had spent much thought on it, and had been assisted by Edward Stanley, who was entering politics rather under Disraeli's wing than under his own father's. There was nothing of the sportsman about the younger Stanley, but he felt an absorbing interest in politics, especially social politics, and he was attracted by Disraeli's keenness and by his democratic Toryism.

Disraeli, in opening his speech, pointed out that for three years the Government had held office uncontrolled and uncriticised. And yet, if the condition of England abroad and at home in 1846 were contrasted with its condition in 1849, it would be seen that in 1846 there was tranquillity abroad and prosperity at home, whereas in 1849 there were convulsions abroad and depression at home. This was the justification for an inquiry. He severely condemned the treatment of Ireland. Three years ago she was 'like a poor man struggling against entering the workhouse'; now she was 'a contented pauper.' The new commercial system, if it were not altered, bade fair to change the country 'from a first-rate monarchy into a second-rate republic.' He passed a sweeping condemnation on the administration of Colonial affairs—'the darkest page in the history of the Government.' In foreign affairs, 'when the influence of Eng-

land might have been exercised to appease the discontents and settle the difficulties which existed in Europe, England was left without the power of so doing, because she was recognised only as the handmaid and colleague of the discontented in every country.' The great Ministers of Europe, the Metternichs and Guizots, were treated as personal enemies, and passed over as unworthy of consideration.

In his concluding passages Disraeli summed up the transformation which, in his opinion, the new commercial system had effected and was effecting in the character of Englishmen:

> Some three years or more ago, as it appears to me, we thought fit to change the principle upon which the economic system of this country had been previously based. Hitherto this country had been, as it were, divided into a hierarchy of industrial classes, each one of which was open to all, but in each of which every Englishman was taught to believe that he occupied a position better than the analogous position of individuals of his order in any other country in the world. For example, the British merchant was looked on as the most creditable, the wealthiest, and the most trustworthy merchant in the world; the English farmer ranked as the most skilful agriculturist . . . ; while the English manufacturer was acknowledged as the most skilful and successful, without a rival in ingenuity and enterprise. So with the British sailor —the name was a proverb; and chivalry was confessed to have found a last resort in the breast of a British officer. It was the same in our learned professions. Our physicians and lawyers held higher positions than those in other countries. I have heard it stated that the superiority of these classes was obtained at the cost of the last class of the hierarchy—at the cost of the labouring population of the country. But . . . I know of no great community existing since, I will say, the fall of the Roman Empire, where the working population have been, upon the whole, placed in so advantageous a position as the working classes of England. . . . In this manner, in England society was based upon the aristocratic principle in its complete and most magnificent development.
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> You set to work to change the basis upon which this society was established; you disdain to attempt the accomplishment of the best; and what you want to achieve is the cheapest. But I have shown you that, considered only as an economical principle, the principle is fallacious; that its infallible conse-

quence is to cause the impoverishment and embarrassment of the people. . . . But the wealth of England is not merely material wealth; it does not merely consist in the number of acres we have tilled and cultivated, nor in our havens filled with shipping, nor in our unrivalled factories, nor in the intrepid industry of our mines. Not these merely form the principal wealth of our country; we have a more precious treasure, and that is the character of the people. That is what you have injured. In destroying what you call class legislation, you have destroyed that noble and indefatigable ambition which has been the best source of all our greatness, of all our prosperity, and all our power. I know of nothing more remarkable in the present day than the general discontent which prevails, accompanied as it is on all sides by an avowed inability to suggest any remedy. The feature of the present day is depression and perplexity. That English spirit which was called out and supported by your old system seems to have departed from us. . . . As far as I can judge, men in every place—in the golden saloon, and in the busy mart of industry; in the port and in the exchange; by the loom or by the plough—every man says, 'I suffer, and I see no hope.'

Disraeli said that he was prepared to offer a remedy for this state of things, but he omitted to specify it. The omission was naturally the subject of comment throughout the debate, which occupied two nights, July 2 and 6. The Chancellor of the Exchequer wanted to know whether the unnamed remedy was Protection; and Peel, who made an elaborate defence of his own opinions and conduct, and especially of the policy of fighting hostile tariffs by free imports, said the issue was, 'Shall we displace the Government for the purpose of subverting the commercial policy on which it has acted?' Both Wood and Peel disputed with considerable success the extent of the distress which Disraeli alleged; and Russell considered that their speeches covered the ground.

Disraeli, at the close of the debate, records Hobhouse in his *Reminiscences*, 'made a most lively and spirited reply, attacking Peel for his conduct and for his speech, ridiculing Charles Wood, whom he compared to a conjuror pulling yards of red tape out of his mouth, and not sparing Russell.' The reply to Peel is one of the very few in-

stances in which, after 1846, Disraeli reproduced in any degree the famous criticisms of the Corn Law fight; but Peel's pontifical and professorial discourse afforded a legitimate opportunity.

> I must say, with all respect to the right hon. Baronet, that there is something in his manner when he addresses on these subjects his former companions, which I will not say is annoying, but rather I would style somewhat astonishing. One would almost imagine, from the tone of the right hon. gentleman, that he had never, for a moment, held other opinions on this subject; that he had never entertained a doubt upon it; that he had been born an infant Hercules, cradled in political economy, and only created to strangle the twin serpents of protection and monopoly. He speaks with a sneer of those who think that the principle of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market is a new principle invented by the Manchester School. I say the Manchester School. I have a right to use that phrase, for I gave them that name. I gave it them with all respect; I thought it a homage due to their deleterious, but well-disciplined, doctrines. . . . We admit fully the comparative antiquity of the dogma; what surprises us is not the comparative antiquity of the dogma, but the recent conversion of the dogmatist. The right hon. gentleman should view one's errors at least with charity. He is not exactly the individual who, *ex cathedrâ*, should lecture us on the principles of political economy. He might, at least, when he denounces our opinions, suppose that in their profession we may perhaps be supported by that strength of conviction which, for nearly forty years, sustained him in those economical errors of which he was the learned and powerful professor.

Disraeli declined, however, altogether to rest his case solely on the commercial question. He had already told the House that this was no flash-in-the-pan motion, but a serious one. 'Its object is to turn out the Government. We may not succeed; but we shall succeed some day.' He reiterated this view in his peroration, with some effective hits at those Peelites who abused Ministers in private, 'whispering about in corners,' and supported them in public. 'Vote your confidence,' he said, 'in the Government in which you do not confide; but if you give them your votes, at least in future have the

decency to cease your accusations and silence your complaints.'

There was a storm of applause when Disraeli sat down, but the division was a disappointment. The Opposition only numbered 156, and were beaten by a majority of 140. There were many plausible excuses for this failure in the division lobbies. But the plain fact was that, weak and discredited as the Whig Government might be, the House of Commons was not prepared to turn them out by any vote that could be represented as a condemnation of the new commercial system, and a demand for the re-establishment of Protection.

To Sarah Disraeli:

July 8 [? 7], 1849.—My speech last night at ½-past 2 o'clock, and of which there is consequently not a semblance of a report in the journals, was I think the most successful I ever made: and my friends, in the lobby, during the division were really *enthusiastic*. Our division was not as good as it would have been had it not been for the number of false starts which we have experienced: but my friends say the speech made up for the numbers, and are in high spirits. We had thirty good men away without pairs: men who would not pair, but would vote. The division came on at four-and-twenty hours' notice, after a public declaration of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Wednesday (in the absence of Lord John) that it was positively impossible for the Government to give another day; so, as Hume was obstinate, our friends went out of town. On the Tuesday preceding we had 196 men in the House, besides 20 pairs. Yesterday we had 25 pairs. It might have been better: but I have been worried the last week with anticipations of something much worse. The debate last night was very interesting and well sustained.

Peel elaborate in his courtesies to me, and talked of the 'respect due to my abilities and station,' at which my fellows cheered immensely. I am very wearied, having been up till nearly five, and this morning rose at ½-past 9. We dine at the Combermeres. I think I shall fall asleep.

Though Stanley would not hear of any change of policy, Disraeli was more and more being driven to contemplate it as a necessity. He had already, during the session,

to use the language of one of his correspondents, been gradually leading the party 'to abandon the narrow defile of Protection and to give battle on the open plain of reciprocity'; but even so he had not yet conciliated public opinion. He received in August caustic comments from Henry Drummond, which did not even spare Stanley, 'a rash man, the Lord Gough of politics, who as long as he can make a Donnybrook Fair of the House of Lords cares little for anything else.' Drummond recommended the raising, by an equalisation of the land tax, of a sum which should be employed as a sinking fund; preferential treatment of the Colonies; an *ad valorem* duty on articles of foreign produce; and an extension of the franchise. Others pressed strongly for equalisation of taxation as a substitute for Protection, which was 'a lost game.' Ideas of this kind were readily assimilated by Disraeli. A shrewd and friendly journalist, Samuel Phillips, wrote from Folkestone, on July 25: 'I would suggest that the time has arrived for a reconsideration of the political creed of the Conservative party. . . . There are two things very much wanted to give life to politics just now; first, a combined and strong opposition, and, secondly, opposition on grounds which command men's sympathies, and which have a reasonable chance of being finally driven home.'

Strangely enough, while Disraeli's thoughts were all directed to find some other mode of promoting agricultural interests than a return to the Protection of corn, there was for the first time a serious agitation in progress throughout the country districts for such a return. Though there had been several indignation meetings in the autumn of 1846 to denounce Peel's apostasy, yet in the General Election of 1847 the farmers had been apathetic. Now that three years had passed and the Free Trade policy had been solidified by the legislation of the Whig Ministry, while trade and even agriculture had largely accommodated themselves to the new system, a serious attempt was made to upset it out of hand. The movement was taken up with special vigour in Ireland, always, as one

of Disraeli's correspondents wrote, belated in its politics. Disraeli did not believe that this movement, in England at any rate, had any support outside the agricultural classes; and he was convinced that the more thoughtful even among them shared his incredulity as to the practicability of a reversion to the old system. Accordingly he strongly discouraged the agitation, while Stanley viewed it with favour. On this subject Disraeli has left a memorandum, written in the sixties, explaining his action, and the nature of his relations with Stanley in this their first year of joint leadership:

> In the autumn of the year 1849, when, taking advantage of distress, a Mr. G. F. Young and what was called the Protection Society to British Industry were agitating the country, I had made a strong effort to counteract their pernicious course, and to direct the public attention to more practical measures of relief in the remission of taxation, than the frantic reaction they advocated, and which I was convinced no great class in the country itself either desired, or deemed practicable.
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> This had brought strong remonstrances from Lord Derby [then Lord Stanley], with whom my relations during the whole of the year 1849 were uneasy. He was in the hands of the Protection Society worked by this George Frederick Young, who was not an agriculturist, but a commercial and mainly colonial interest man, ignorant of the temper and situation of the farmers; a man of great energy and of equal vanity, but of ordinary abilities and no cultivation, and who was piqued by the success of Cobden and Bright, men of his own class, in agitating England, and thought he would show himself as good and powerful as they. G. F. Young had got hold of Beresford, who had originally intruded himself into the office of First Whip of the Protectionist party, and was in daily communication with Lord Derby, who really saw nobody else but him and a few companions in the House of Lords; all greatly his inferiors in intellect and acquirement. Beresford was a tall, coarse man, who could blend with his natural want of refinement, if necessary, extreme servility: very persevering, capable of labor, prejudiced, and bigoted. Protection and Protestantism were his specifics for all the evils of the State, and the only foundation for strong and lasting Governments: and these were the results that he was always dinning into Lord Derby's ears. He persuaded Lord Derby, that they were the real sentiments of the Tory party in the House of Commons, and especially of the middle class of the country;

of which Beresford affected, as a man of business in his way, a director of banks and insurance offices, with which he eked out a precarious income, to have peculiar knowledge.

The correspondence between the two leaders entirely bears out Disraeli's phrase of 'uneasy' relations. Stanley was unwilling to allow his lieutenant in the other House the latitude which he claimed; and Disraeli probably did not feel that he and Stanley were sufficiently in sympathy for him to unbosom himself frankly as to his political projects. Moreover, his projects were at present rather undefined. He felt that a substitute for the crude policy of a reversion to the old system must be found, but he was during this autumn splashing about a little wildly, and taking up attractive ideas rather at haphazard. A speech delivered by him at Aylesbury at a private meeting in September, and imperfectly reported, the nature of which appears sufficiently from the letters which were exchanged, formed the occasion of the first of Stanley's remonstrances.

From Lord Stanley.

BALLYHISTEEN, *Sept.* 22, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—Within the last few days I have received from various quarters letters of inquiry, and, I am sorry to add, of remonstrance, in reference to the proposition supposed to be made in your late speech at Aylesbury; and it is a little embarrassing to me to have to answer the direct inquiry whether the proposition so made had been the result of previous and deliberate consultation with me, and to be obliged to say that I know nothing of the matter beyond what I have read in the newspapers. Such an answer is of itself a disadvantage to us, because it indicated either a want of concert and agreement between us, or a somewhat hasty promulgation of crude and lightly-considered schemes upon a most important part of our domestic policy. I am well aware of what is said of the necessity of having some 'watchword' or 'party cry,' but while I admit the convenience to a party of having such, that convenience is more than counterbalanced if the watchword be not one which will command universal sympathy, or the scheme such as will stand the severest test of criticism. I always differed on this subject with poor George Bentinck, and deprecated the practice, to

which he was too much inclined, of starting detailed projects in opposition.

I know not whether I correctly understand your views and intentions; but as I read your speech in the papers, you appear to advocate a general equalisation, involving a very great increase in amount, of the existing land tax; and the application of the increased taxation so obtained to the formation of a sinking fund of nearly £5,000,000 annually, which you think would have the effect of increasing public confidence, and thus, by operating on the funds, render the acquisition of money comparatively easy, and in that shape afford efficient relief to the agriculturist. Now it appears to me that, even admitting that the establishment of a *bona fide* sinking fund would have the effect which you anticipate, the formation of the sinking fund involves the necessity of a large annual surplus (in itself a most desirable object)—that surplus to be obtained, however, by an immediate increase, to a considerable extent, of the direct taxation of the country; a principle which I cannot but look upon as fraught with great future and not very remote danger.

But even as a party cry, if it were legitimate to set one up without the fullest conviction of the practicability of satisfying it, I should much doubt the popularity of your suggested scheme. My friends in Lancashire will not thank you for raising their land tax in the first instance from 2d. to 1s. 6d. in the pound; and though that is an extreme case, I understand from you that there would be a large increase in the great majority of the counties. Bucks, to be sure, is not injured; but neither is it benefited, except indirectly; and I suspect your constituents would prefer the immediate boon of being brought down to the Lancashire level, to the contingent advantage of having Lancashire brought up to theirs. You do not, I think, explain how you would deal with *redeemed* land tax: that, of course, you could not touch; and the first promulgation of your scheme would probably lead to a very general redemption, depriving you of the benefit of your expected surplus.

Perhaps, however, I have altogether misunderstood your plan; even if so, I shall not repent having given you the trouble of furnishing me with an explanation of your views, by which I may be able to allay the jealousies and apprehensions which I have already found to have arisen. For my own part, I am not inclined to abandon the principle of raising revenue by returning to some of the duties on importation, which we have unnecessarily and, as I think, unwisely relinquished, and thereby obtaining the power of reduction, rather than increase, of our direct taxation. I much fear that the

adoption of any other line of action, and especially its promulgation by so distinguished a member of our party as yourself, may have the effect of yet further dividing our forces, and weakening our efforts; and I cannot but have my fears that so much of your scheme as sanctions increased burthens on land may be eagerly adopted by our opponents, and the object for which you are willing to submit to it be wholly thrown over by them. . . .—Believe me, my dear Sir, yours sincerely, STANLEY.

To Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, HIGH WYCOMBE, *Sept.* 24, 1849.

MY DEAR LORD,—. . . I am vexed that a coarse report of some casual observations,[1] though made on a very important and well-considered subject, should have led to so much misrepresentation. That they did not give to the persons to whom they were addressed the impression which has been conveyed by the Press will be obvious to you by the enclosed address of Mr. Lowndes of Chesham, which expresses the general conclusions arrived at on the occasion, and in which not the slightest reference to the land tax is made.

All I wished to impress upon my auditors was the policy of petitioning for equal taxation according to the principles which we had advocated in Parliament last year, and that, having secured equality of taxation, they should next aim at achieving mitigation of taxation by the only legitimate means —viz., a sinking fund.

My main grounds for the latter recommendation are very briefly these: Firstly, that in the event of a surplus there is really no tax on the landed interest to repeal; the consequence is that all the indirect taxation of the country will gradually slip away unless some breakwater like a sinking fund prevents it. Secondly, that a *bona fide* sinking fund, by lowering the rate of interest, would relieve the mortgagor and bring capital to improve cultivation.

It seemed to me that these were two good and even great principles for the landed interest to associate itself with. The first is just, the second not only just but honest, and I can't help thinking they might make their way. In an age when so many are prepared by vast reductions to create a huge surplus, and then apply it in such various ways, I thought it might not be altogether indiscreet to remind the country that

[1] Writing to Manners on Oct. 15, Disraeli explained that 'the first start was not very fortunate, for it was not intended as a manifesto, there being no reporters apparently present; and the thing that did appear, though it appeared in several papers, was furnished by one individual and a county hand.'

it might be just as well to pay their debts before they take off the duties on timber and tea.

I am sure that on this as on every occasion I should hesitate before I opened my mouth without the advantage of your opinion. I venture to hope that my fault is certainly not to shrink from advice; but to communicate at this moment was difficult, and it appeared to me that I was only about to express opinions of which in the main the party generally approved, while the remainder were of so general a character that no one could possibly be trammelled by their utterance.

Their effect here was far greater than I contemplated, because the people in these southern counties must have something to rally round. The association was not formed at my instigation, and the chairman is not a political partisan, but quite the reverse. This is the first time that he has interfered in public life, though a gentleman of old family, large estate, and high character, the lineal descendant, indeed, of that Secretary Lowndes whose famous apothegm about pounds and pence you remember.

I have not answered any of the articles in the journals, thinking it better to do so at some public meeting, where the opportunity will soon offer to remove any misconceptions.—I am, my dear lord, yours very faithfully, B. DISRAELI.

From Lord Stanley.

BALLYHISTEEN, *Sept.* 28, 1849.—I hasten to thank you for your letter received this morning. In the objects which you have in view, equalisation of taxation, and the establishment of a *bona fide* sinking fund, I cordially concur, though I think them both difficult of attainment: the one from the necessity of reconciling general taxation with local management; the other from the general prevalence of what Lord Castlereagh, with more truth than policy, called the ignorant impatience of taxation. But I hope that you will find an early opportunity of explaining away, publicly, that part of your supposed speech in which you are made to suggest, as the means of establishing a sinking fund, the increase of the land tax to the amount of five millions a year: this is what has alarmed the agriculturists of other counties, and makes them not very unreasonably apprehensive of a scheme which would seem to provide for the gradual reduction of the National Debt by means of a tax, which falls mainly, if not exclusively, on them. You will have achieved a great work, if you can succeed in turning the mind of the agriculturists to a permanent reduction of the national burthens, rather than to an immediate relief from some particular tax, which may happen to be clamoured for by the masses.

William Beresford to Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 30 [1849].—I am writing to you from Disraeli's. . . . He is living here very quietly, and working very hard. He is reading up all the Blue Books of the past Session, having divided them into classes, and separated them so that each group should comprehend different subjects. He attributes Peel's great power and effect in the House to having always had Blue Books by heart, and having thereby the appearance of a fund of general knowledge greater than he really possessed. . . .

He strikes me as very zealous in the cause, and as feeling himself completely embarked now with us, and I do trust that he is fully compromised and will remain true. He certainly has great powers, and not the least among them is the great command he has evidently over himself and his own feelings and passions. He acts and speaks with the greatest cordiality, and shows the most complete confidence in me. Certainly times are rather altered within one year in that respect. I am sure that you will be gratified to hear that he speaks most highly to me of your son's great knowledge, application, and talent. . . .

To Mrs. Disraeli.

BOREHAM HOUSE, CHELMSFORD, *Oct.* 4 [1849].—I arrived here just in time, and Tyrell[1] greatly relieved by my presence. There was a large dinner-party yesterday: turtle without asparagus. . . .

When a man is in a scrape, as I am, one must not complain of annoyances and sacrifices; but I have paid dear for the misconceptions of the Aylesbury meeting. At two o'clock I go with Sir John, twenty miles across country, to a Mr. White's, where we dine and sleep, and on Friday is the festival: in honour of me, to be held in an ancient baronial castle, the hall of which remains. The affair will not be over till late at night, and so uncouth is the land that, next day, I must travel twenty miles overland again to find a train at Chelmsford, which will bring me to town late at night. Hard work! when one is not in particularly good spirits. However, if the meeting goes off well, the cause may be rallied. . . .

It was at Castle Hedingham, in Essex, on October 5, that Disraeli delivered the speech that was to get him out of the 'scrape.' In it he followed Stanley's advice, and made it plain that what he was advocating was

[1] Sir John Tyrell, M.P. for North Essex, a leading Protectionist.

equalisation of burdens as between land and other property; but he also elaborated his plan for a sinking fund, to be supplied by import duties on foreign produce. He wrote to his sister when he had returned to Hughenden: 'I think the Essex move is successful; it must, however, be followed up without loss of time by a great move in Bucks, and all this is very harassing.'[1]

The 'Essex move' was not successful enough to divert the Protection Society from their policy.

To Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 20, 1849.—I send you, by this post, a reply to a letter which I have received from Mr. G. F. Young, a shipbuilder, who, with Mr. Freshfield, a retired attorney, and a mad Surrey farmer, one Mr. Foskett,[2] are going to organise, throughout the country, hole and corner meetings to address Her Majesty to dissolve her Parliament, in order, to use their own language, 'that a Protectionist Ministry may immediately be formed' and Protection restored. These gentlemen deprecate any movement for specific measures lest this coming Government be embarrassed, as if they, and such as they, were not an embarrassment, which must upset any Government, future or paulo-post-future.

I had my reply privately printed, because I have no secretary here, and I wished that yourself, and some other leading members of the party, should know my feelings on the subject.

I wish you would gravely consider the question of a sinking fund. It is not merely as a plausible mode of obtaining import duties that I press it. I had a very long and confidential conversation with Mr. McCulloch, as I passed thro' town, and he told me that, in his opinion, the effect of a sinking fund of five or six millions would be to reduce the interest on the debt to 2½ and even 2 per cent. This was also Mr. Ricardo's opinion. But then, they say, the difficulty is to maintain the fund. Let us suppose a *strong* Government that can. Conceive the effect on our shattered and embarrassed aristocracy, of the interest on the debt reduced to 2½ or 2 per cent. They would be saved. With this,

[1] Sarah Disraeli reports to her brother the personal impressions of his Essex hostess: 'She [Mrs. Majendie] thinks you not at all altered—that is, not grown apparently older; though to your youthful air is superadded a look of melancholy: but that is as befits a statesman in these days of danger and distress.'

[2] This was rather ungrateful of Disraeli. Mr. Foskett spoke, at the farmers' meeting at Willis's Rooms, of their 'deep debt of gratitude' to Disraeli, and asked them to support him 'to the utmost of their power.'

Californian gold, and a fixed duty, they would be stronger than they ever were since the Conquest. And the policy has all the elements of popularity. . . .

[ENCLOSURE.]

To George Frederick Young.

Strictly confidential.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, HIGH WYCOMBE, *Oct.* 19, 1849.—I had the pleasure to receive this morning your letter of the 17th instant, and the enclosed resolutions of the Protection Society. As I shall not return to town until the meeting of Parliament, and as therefore it will not be in my power to have the advantage of those personal communications, which you so obligingly suggest, I must endeavour, though very imperfectly, thus to convey my impressions on the subject before us.

The present Parliament, freely and recently elected by the people, has betrayed no trust confided to it; and nothing, therefore, can justify your addressing the Crown for its dissolution but overwhelming evidence that the constituencies are passionately desirous to record a decided opinion upon the new commercial system, which at the last, and late, General Election they declined to do. No evidence of this kind has reached me. My judgment is, that in this moment, in case of a dissolution, the Protectionist party would not command a majority, and I am quite sure that if the result were, what some might consider, more favourable, and we were encumbered with a *bare* majority in favour of Protection, it would be a great calamity for this country. Addresses to the Crown for a dissolution of Parliament (not to be tolerated except passed at county meetings, or urban assemblies, formally and publicly convoked), are constitutional weapons, to be had recourse to only in those great public emergencies, which, fortunately, occur rarely in the history of this country; and the political party, that attempts to raise this armour of Ajax in vain, only affords a terrible proof of its national impotence.

The political situation appears to be this: Unless the agricultural constituencies (county and borough) are prevented from running amuck against the financial system of this country, which, out of suffering and sheer spite and vexation, it is not unnatural they should do, it is all over with England as a great free monarchy; and it must become not only, in its imitation of the United States, a second-rate Republic, but a second-rate and manufacturing Republic. The agricultural constituencies, therefore, must at this moment be taught that there is no hope for them in the repeal of taxes, and that in a juster distribution of the burthens of

real property, and in a gradual diminution of the general burthens of the State, by a sinking fund supplied by import duties, they may obtain considerable, and lay the foundation of sufficient, relief. In this manner, the Country party might be reconstructed on two great popular principles—the diminution of public burthens and the maintenance of public credit; and its interests would be associated with the sympathies of the community. It is possible that these projected measures may never pass, but it is a bold and specific policy, founded on principles which would rally men together, and keep them together, until they have power to carry something else still more satisfactory.

With respect to the objection of the Protection Society to proposing specific measures, I can only presume to observe that my personal experience forces me to take a different view from the acting committee. Certainly, in this county, which has always been foremost in its zeal for the old opinions, five men could not be got together by a vague talk of recurrence to abrogated laws, and no farmer will stir, unless you hold out to him some practical object of probable attainment.

It remains for me to notice 'the particular measures of relief' which I have advocated. They are in number two—viz., the juster distribution of local burthens, and the imposition of import duties—and I conceive that the Country party, both in honor and in policy, are bound to adhere to the advocacy of these principles.

To counteract Young's agitation, Disraeli supported a movement in Bucks on behalf of his own proposals. It was called the Bucks Association for the Relief of Real Property. To a friend who was assisting him he wrote:

To G. Lathom Browné.

HUGHENDEN, *Tuesday, Oct.* 23, 1849.—. . . With respect to your letter of to-day, you are frightened at shadows. The ebullitions we have experienced were inevitable. Whom do they come from? Lord Stanhope,[1] a madman; Lord Braybrooke,[2] an ultra-Peelite; and Mr. G. F. Young, the head of the very rump which I wish to put an end to. . . . Not a man of the slightest influence or importance has opened his mouth against us. As for the newspapers you mention, they are nothing. No newspaper is important as far as its advocacy. The importance of newspapers is to circulate your opinions, and a good [report] of a speech is better than 10,000

[1] The 4th Earl, father of Disraeli's friend the historian.
[2] The 3rd baron.

articles. Only secure a good meeting on the 31st, and all this will turn to our credit and success.

As for getting persons of influence to write to people in this county, the idea is too absurd. This county is to teach persons of influence. I have a letter from Lord Stanley entirely approving both equalisation and sinking fund, but I would not publish it to get together 10,000 persons. . . .

From Lord Stanley.

NEWMARKET, *Oct.* 25, 1849.—The post of yesterday evening brought me your letter of the 20th inst., together with the privately printed copy of that which you had addressed to Mr. G. F. Young, and letters from several other quarters expressive of great uneasiness and alarm at the contents of the letter. I must confess to you that I am not myself free from a share in the feelings expressed by my correspondents. I have not seen the letter of Mr. Young, to which yours is an answer; but the answer itself, coming from you, and being printed with your sanction, must be extensively known, and I fear will create feelings of both discouragement and of dissatisfaction among those whom it is most important that we should continue to conciliate. I do not mean to defend the wisdom or the practicability of all the schemes for which the Agriculturists or the Protectionists of any class may be disposed to agitate; I am much disposed to agree with you that addresses to dissolve Parliament for the purpose of forming a Protectionist Government might prove, if complied with at this moment, to be *Divis vota exaudita malignis;* but I am not, for one, prepared to abandon the principle of protective duties; and I do not think it is desirable to discourage expressions of popular opinion in favour of that principle, even although the form which they may assume of petitions to dissolve Parliament (petitions not likely to be complied with) may not be that which we should prefer or consider most judicious.

But I confess that what gives me most uneasiness about your letter is the indication which I fear I see in it, of your not only considering a return to Protection hopeless, but of your wishing to impress on our friends the conviction that it is so. Events alone can show whether at any time, and if so within what time, a return to that principle may be practicable: but of this I am firmly convinced, that the public mind is beginning to be impressed with the conviction that Free Trade has proved a delusion; and at the point at which we now stand, our clear policy is to seek to encourage this conviction. Our hold on the public mind is our adherence to

the principles for which we have contended; and I think we commit a great error, and insure the loss of nine-tenths of the support we have, if we abandon the cause as hopeless, before our friends are prepared so to consider it. I cannot but regret also that you should speak of the county and borough constituencies 'running amuck against the financial system of the country.' Nor can I agree in your opinion that they should be prevented doing so, or that, unless they are prevented, 'it is all over with England as a free monarchy.' On the contrary, our doctrine has been, and my doctrine continues to be, that the change in our financial system has been productive of a great portion of the ruin which we see, and will be productive of more if persevered in; and that in order to restore prosperity we must retrace our steps, and recur to a sounder system of finance.

I do not like, I own, the expression of the 'reconstruction of the Country party.' It implies a change of conduct and of principle for which I am not prepared, and in which I cannot concur. In saying this, I do not wish to imply any disapproval of the two measures which you recommend—equalisation of taxation, and the attainment of a *bona fide* surplus revenue: but I may observe that the statesman who contemplates measures of this character and extent has hardly a right to denounce 'running amuck at the financial system of the country.' For have you in truth considered the means of effecting the objects you propose, and how completely they must, to be successful, upset that system? By equalisation of taxation—which, by the way, is hardly a correct expression—I understand you to mean throwing upon the community at large, not the whole, but a great portion of the burthens now borne by real property, and estimated by you, I think, at eleven or twelve millions. Now, to effect this even to the extent of one-half, you must increase either the direct or the indirect taxation to the extent of five or six millions. (For I think you will agree with me that any *very* large reduction of our expenditure is impracticable.) Assume that you can succeed in this, and I do not think it impossible that you may do so without pressing heavily on the industry of the country, by means, mainly, of import duties. You have then to *begin* to raise your surplus income, which will have to be effected by the imposition of five or six millions more. Do you believe that any Government can hope to persuade any Parliament to consent to such an increase of taxation, and at the same time to bear the continuance of the income tax? which, you will remember, has to be renewed next year or at all events the year after.

You say that a *strong* Government might carry this scheme;

but remember that all the merit of a sinking fund depends upon its being a *bona fide* surplus, and that the vice of the old sinking fund was that we borrowed with one hand to pay off debt with the other. No Act of Parliament, therefore, can give security to the maintenance of a fund the existence of which depends upon annual votes of the House of Commons. The House of Commons in these days is powerfully operated upon by the popular voice; and no Government can be strong which is not popular. Can we hope for much popularity, especially with those who are our natural supporters, in favour of a scheme which sets out with the maintenance, perhaps the increase, of the income tax, the addition of ten or twelve millions of taxes, and no immediate reduction of burthens, except what is to be derived (a great one, I admit) from the redistribution of Poor Rates and other local charges? accompanied also, I must add, by a tacit but virtual repudiation of the Protective principle which has hitherto been the basis of our policy, and the bond of our union. I am very far from undervaluing the attainment of a large sinking fund, if it can be effected; and I have no doubt but that it would to a great extent raise the credit of the country, and reduce the interest of money; both objects of great value: but I foresee immense difficulties in the way of its attainment; and I see no prospect of its announcement producing such a popular feeling in its favour, as should induce the country to submit to the sacrifices necessary to secure it. While, therefore, you say that you do not advocate a sinking fund merely as a covert means of obtaining import duties, I say that I advocate import duties *in the first instance*, with two avowed objects: first, the increase of the revenue necessary to enable it to defray a portion of the local burthens; and next, as a means of protecting domestic industry against an undue and injurious competition of foreign produce; and if, after providing for these objects, a surplus can be obtained, I am in favour of maintaining it for the gradual reduction of debt rather than sacrificing it by continued remission of particular taxes.

If it be true, as you think, that in Bucks 'no five men can be got together by a vague talk of recurrence to abrogated laws,' I believe it to be at least as true that you will neither reconstruct nor hold together a party, certainly not our present party, without holding out adherence, and, if possible, practical recurrence, to the principle of those laws; and it is on this account that I must regret that you have given publicity to some of the opinions contained in your letter, and, you must forgive me for adding, the tone of some of the observations, which I fear are calculated to give needless

offence. In the concluding paragraph of your letter I entirely concur; I agree that 'the Country party, in honor and policy, are bound to adhere to the advocacy of the principles' of 'the juster distribution of local burthens, and the imposition of import duties'; but I hold also that we are bound to advocate the latter not only for the purposes of revenue, but also in accordance with the spirit of those laws, which, if abrogated, I am not prepared to abandon as irrevocably lost. . . .

In order, no doubt, to meet Stanley's views, Disraeli, in his speech at Aylesbury on October 31, at the first meeting of the Bucks Association for the Relief of Real Property, took care to make it clear that he adhered in principle to the general policy of Protection to agriculture, before he proceeded to recommend once more, as the proper course for agriculturists to adopt in the existing circumstances, the advocacy of a sinking fund provided by import duties. Though his sister thought the speech 'full of wisdom and philosophy,' he himself was dissatisfied with the effect produced.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HUGHENDEN, *Nov.* 4, 1849.—. . . I was not at all pleased myself with the Aylesbury meeting, though on the whole the world has not taken so ill a view of it. I thought it was a shabby concern. It has, I think, however, been productive of some little good, though for my part I give up the attempt of rousing the agricultural interest to any decided demonstration. They are puzzled and sluggish, perhaps; when they are a little more pinched they may bestir themselves. . . .[1]

Disraeli got some, but no very large, measure of support for this particular proposal from his party. Manners sent 'a few lines of hearty admiration of, and congratulation upon, the Essex manifesto. I go heartily along with it.' Henry Drummond thought the letter to Young excellent. Tyrell wrote: 'I am only a wheeler, and not a leader. . . . The old dry crust of Protection may be, and I believe is, quite right, but your plan is a much larger, and under the circumstances a more prudent and

[1] *Letters*, p. 224.

practicable, affair.' And even Beresford, though doubtful about the plan, took up the cudgels at a farmers' meeting in defence of Disraeli against Lord Braybrooke's criticisms. But others wrote in a different strain. The Duke of Newcastle said: 'We are against Free Trade, we are in favour of Protection. If we are, why dissemble in the slightest degree?' McCulloch, the economist, was convinced that nothing would come out of the cry of agricultural distress; the Rev. John Cox, an Essex parson of much influence in the Country party, preached patience; and even Manners, without retracting his approbation of the plan, hinted that it was unwise to produce detailed measures.

Early in November the Whip sent Disraeli from town a depressing report of the general feeling, which was hostile to the sinking fund scheme. Accordingly, in his next letter to Stanley, Disraeli dwells mainly on the impossibility of Protection as an electoral cry, and seems to admit that his own substitute has not met with general favour:

To Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN, *Nov.* 9, 1849.—. . . If the party is to be managed by the Protection Society, against which I have no wish to demur, I think that Society ought to have apprised the members of the House of Commons of their plan of campaign, which I now hear has been long matured, as they must, or ought to know, that at no time, and especially the present, is it possible to return to our counties and be quite silent about public affairs.

Instead of this, the Protection Society—suddenly—pass resolutions, in October, condemnatory of my views, and order them to be 'published' throughout the country, without the slightest communication with me—the private letter of Mr. Young to me, enclosing these published resolutions, being nothing more than his Reigate speech. Under these circumstances I should hope that, on reflection, you would not continue of opinion that the tone of my printed reply was calculated to give needless offence, but that, perhaps, on the contrary, I have rather refrained from retaliating against an unprovoked public insult.

I had no wish to take any lead in this matter. The main reason why I attended the meeting in Essex was our wish

that I should not unnecessarily lose a moment in removing a misapprehension then afloat. If, after the Essex meeting, the Protection Society had confidentially communicated with me, I would cheerfully have sacrificed any views of my own to a general purpose more approved; but a public reproof, and from such people, rendered it necessary that I should publicly vindicate my course.

It would be too great an intrusion on your time for me now to enter into the important considerations on which you have touched: and even if I were to trespass to such a degree, my remarks must, necessarily, be so imperfect, that they might lead to misapprehension. I would only make an observation on the state of opinion in this and the neighbouring counties, of which I have taken the utmost pains to inform myself. The cry of Protection will rally no one to our standard here. The farmers think that they have been used as political tools. They require some immediate remedy, or, at any rate, some immediate hope. This is why they are all inclined to run to *Cobdenism, and reduce the taxation of the country ten* millions at one swoop. This is what I meant by running amuck against our financial system. I have endeavoured to combat this feeling by showing them that the Manchester scheme would bring them no relief, by instilling into them some hope from the present House of Commons, and at the same time by suggestions which, as I was instructed, would afford a golden bridge to many who are prepared to join us, if we do not unnecessarily wound their self-love. Mr. Evelyn writes to me from Surrey that he found no feeling for Protection in his canvass, but a strong democratic feeling generally, and a bad humor to the Church.

I would not speak so gloomily of these counties at present, but there is a recklessness afloat which, if they are not tended, will prepare them for anything. Generally speaking, the County of Buckingham, when led by any person of station or Parliamentary mark, from its geographical position and old custom, has always given the tone to Berks and Oxon, and very much influences Herts and Beds, including, of course, their boroughs. At present the impulse which I was earnestly solicited to give has been checked, but I hope I have covered the retreat. Affairs in this part of the world, however, are serious. There has been a general and a considerable reduction of wages, and a dismissal from labor. Yesterday a body of two hundred able-bodied laborers walked in procession in this neighbourhood. At the same time, I am bound to say, that so general is the impulse given to trade, that all the defunct manufactures of these counties have suddenly revived. A great trade in plait is now carried on—all for

foreign demand: the lace trade is very brisk: the chairmakers are all working for the North of England.

On the whole, I cannot resist the conviction that these counties will run to Radicalism, tho' I think, with energy, the catastrophe might have been averted. However, this may be too gloomy a view. With temper and tact we may dissipate the disagreeable results of our late misapprehension, and we should never forget that the world in general is not, perhaps, so sensible of the unnecessary misunderstanding as ourselves.

Disraeli went up to town, and had long conversations with the Whip, to their mutual satisfaction.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Nov. 12, 1849.—. . . I send this to say that I have seen Lord Granby, Newdegate, and that Beresford has just come in. Lord G. had been to Grosvenor Gate. I think things will turn out pleasantly, but it is very lucky I came up.

Nov. 13, 1849.—My interview with Beresford last night was so prolonged, that it was too late to write again: it did not end till past seven. I think on the whole it was promising. They are evidently much more afraid of losing me, than I them: but the difficulties are not inconsiderable, and there are many jealousies, as well as genuine misconceptions, which must not only be put an end to, but rooted out for ever. I think if I am firm, and keep high ground, though conciliating and temperate, things may end with being better than they were. . . .

Granby wants Stanley, myself, and some others, to meet. Granby returns from Paris on Saturday night. I have no particular wish to meet at present; I would rather things would more develop, and the meeting of Parliament were nearer, but, of course, must be decided by circumstances. . . .

The Protectionists are evidently excited, and think they are going to win. I do not. If they gain Cork, which comes off to-day, there will be no holding them in. . . .

Nov. 14, 1849.—It is impossible for me to go into details respecting political matters. I will therefore only say, that everything goes to my satisfaction, and that by keeping my temper I think I shall turn all this to good account, and be in a stronger position than before. I dined yesterday with Stuart,[1] who is excellent and of great use. He is also a good adviser, being of a judicial mind. He says that he has heard, that the D. of Richmond is quite with me, and

[1] M.P. for Newark, afterwards Vice-Chancellor.

praised much my letter to Young. By the bye, in my closet, there are some copies of that letter left. Send me one by post. They have never got about—no one having broken faith—which is satisfactory.

Beresford affects devotion. Asks me to dinner every day; yesterday went into the city after Young, who was at his house at Walthamstow, and has written to him to come up to town immediately, etc., etc. I take it all; but as Tyrell says in his letter to-day, 'If you did trip, I don't think B. is the first man who would pick you up.' However, he is a thermometer.

Nov. 15, 1849.—I have dined out every day: yesterday with B., who had seen Young. He says that nobody can be more anxious to get out of the scrape than Young, who could say nothing to the point, on which all hinges—viz., that he never communicated the plans of the Protection Society to the party. He confessed it was a great mistake, and murmured something that he thought the D. of Richmond would have apprised us. B. seems to have kept his temper, but threw on Young the responsibility of putting all right. But the position of Young is most difficult after the violent course he has taken. Thursday being a dead day, Young returned to Walthamstow, and on Friday (to-morrow) he is to attend a meeting in Kent with Lord Stanhope in the chair! where, no doubt, a great attack was to have been made on me, and where he must now take quite a different line. This, with Lord Stanhope in the chair, is no easy matter.

I think Stanley's letter highly satisfactory and conciliatory. Chatterton, after all, has won the Cork election by an immense majority![1] There will be no keeping our friends in. They have won four important elections since the Prorogation. The general impression in London is, that Stanley is safe to be Prime Minister next Session: but I confess I should like to lead the Opposition another Session, before the break-up takes place.

Stanley's letter deserved the epithets 'highly satisfactory' and 'conciliatory' which Disraeli bestowed on it; but it was also characteristically outspoken.

From Lord Stanley.

KNOWSLEY, *Nov.* 13, 1849.—I am much obliged by your letter of the 9th inst. When I wrote to you, I was not aware that the Protection Society had passed resolutions condemnatory of your views, nor have I indeed yet seen these. Indeed,

[1] The figures were—Chatterton, Protectionist, 793; McCarthy, Liberal, 584.

I think that when I wrote to you I named that I had not seen the letter to which yours was an answer. I cannot for a moment hesitate, from what you say, and what I hear from others, in condemning the course pursued by Mr. Young in his comments upon you as ill-advised and improper, nor have I the slightest wish that our course as a party should be guided by the Protection Society: but I think that body may be useful in keeping alive the spirit of the party, and counteracting the impression actively sought to be produced by our opponents, that a return to the protective principle is hopeless. That hope gone, our principal support is lost to us; and therefore it was that I saw with regret that in a published letter you had taken up a controversial, or I may say a hostile, tone against the Society. I must repeat I was not aware of the provocation you had received; but had I been so, I should equally have regretted that it had drawn forth a retort, and an apparent abandonment of Protection, on your part.

What Mr. Young may say, or what imprudence he may commit, is of comparatively little consequence. His declarations commit nobody, and if he pitches the key extravagantly high, there is no great harm done; but what falls from you is of far more consequence, and if *you* go into the other extreme, and pitch it discouragingly low, serious injury may be done to our friends, and certainly great encouragement will be given to our opponents to persist in their present policy. I hope you will excuse my plain speaking, and with the same plainness allow me to say that I thought the tone of your last speech at Aylesbury far more conciliatory of the feelings of our friends, and very well suited in its tone to meet their views. I entirely approve of inculcating the doctrine that the present Parliament is not to be despaired of; and you know that I have always supported the policy of showing a *pont d'or* to those who may be inclined to think they have gone too far in the Free-Trade line.

I hope your gloomy views of the present state of feeling on the part of the farmers are somewhat exaggerated: but you must remember first that the circumstances of the County of Bucks have been rather peculiar; and next, that if there has arisen a democratic feeling among them, it is caused by distress and by the feeling that they have been *thrown over;* and our best hope of counteracting this tendency is in our convincing them that *we* are not of the number of those who have so treated them. When we meet, I do not think there will be much difficulty in so forming the plan of our Parliamentary campaign, as to remove any appearance of dissension, and show a front at least as united as we did during the last Session.

Beresford's report to Stanley of his conversations with Disraeli is interesting. Disraeli, he writes, 'was very free and confidential in his intercourse with me throughout. He appeared at first decidedly piqued and low about the turn which matters had taken. I strove hard to eradicate all feelings of disappointment or resentment, as beneath his position in the party, and I hope that he is more the thing than he was in that respect.'

The process of peacemaking continued. Young sent Tyrell a letter for publication, explanatory and apologetic. Disraeli was willing to be placated. He wrote to Malmesbury on November 21: 'The scandal of our provincial movement is great and flagrant, but I hope the evil is more superficial than it seems, and that, with tact and temper, the ship may be righted. I have spared no effort, nor has Beresford, but we have had to deal with a wrong-headed man.'[1] He also wrote a letter to Christopher, explaining his views in a conciliatory manner. Malmesbury, who had a few weeks before written to Stanley of the 'great consternation' caused by 'the muck' Disraeli had run, expressed himself satisfied, promised to try and keep Young 'quiet, I mean *silent*,' and added a friendly caution: 'As to yourself, my dear Disraeli, I have only to ask you on all occasions to remember that you have obtained a position which makes every word you say an arm in the hands of our friends or our foes. Every speech you make will be read, marked, learnt, and inwardly digested by all men for their own purposes, and you should never speak on politics without securing a good and friendly reporter.' Admirable advice to all leading politicians on all occasions, but not always possible to follow!

To Philip Rose.

HUGHENDEN, *Dec.* 2, 1849.—. . . I think stout Sir John Tyrell has bowled Young out. They eat their leek very quietly. I am glad I have myself not advanced a jot to

[1] A note in Malmesbury's *Memoirs* suggests that the wrong-headed man was Lord George Bentinck; but, of course, it was G. F. Young.

conciliate them. The next move is mine, and, if played with tact and temper, I have not the slightest doubt I shall get the whole country with me by the time I want it.

Disraeli may not have advanced, but he certainly took pains to conciliate. In his next speech, at Newport Pagnell, on December 5, at a meeting of the new Bucks Association, he said he was quite willing to see a dissolution. Let the farmers petition for it if they liked; but if they did not get it, let them take his practical remedies. So he bound both policies together. 'The meeting at Newport Pagnell was more than good,' he told his sister, 'both in quantity and quality. It surprised everyone by its numbers; nearly 300, and a great acreage. I spoke to my satisfaction, and I think, from all I hear and read, have quite managed the malcontents.' The speech effected its object. Within a few days Young and his friends formally accepted the direction of the Parliamentary leaders.

The breach was healed; but as to the sinking fund, 'we must not deceive ourselves,' wrote Cox; 'it does not take.' Accordingly, when Disraeli resumed correspondence with Stanley as to their programme for the next year, that plan was quietly given the go-by. Adderley, afterwards Sir Charles, and finally Lord Norton, was very anxious to get Disraeli's support for a newly-formed Colonial Government Society, and for its motions in Parliament. The society, which was supported by men of different parties, was established primarily to secure local independence and Parliamentary institutions for the Colonies, with the view, it rightly maintained, of substituting for growing disaffection a loyal and devoted attachment to the Mother-Country. But absolute local independence seemed to conflict with preferential trade arrangements, and the society was therefore held at arm's length by Stanley and Disraeli.

To Lord Stanley.

Confidential. HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Dec.* 17, 1849.—I enclose you a letter I received a day or two ago from Adderley.

I declined, of course, being a member of the Council in question, on the double plea that I was not sufficiently acquainted with their purpose, and, were I so, was too much occupied to give the due attention. I offered also the usual and obvious reasons against the expediency of amendments on the Address, which particular circumstances can alone render advisable, and counselled a substantive and well-concerted motion, to which he might bring all the force of the Protectionist party, in addition to that of the new Colonial movement. I apprehend myself that all these Colonial motions and manœuvres, in whatever form and by whomsoever proposed, are, in fact, the stir of Wakefield,[1] in whom I have little confidence. One Godley,[2] in whom I have less, is, I think, the instrument that acts upon Stafford and Adderley in the first instance. However, there is no doubt that these Colonial Reformers have organised their force, and are determined to be troublesome to the Government. It is, therefore, of importance that we should decide upon the course to be taken by the party. I am now pretty well qualified to listen to your ideas and instructions on this head, which I was scarcely last Session, as I have given a good deal of time during the recess to the Colonial question in all its branches. To obtain our support, Molesworth and Co. would modify their motions and movements a good deal, and it is not impossible that a deadly blow might be struck in this district of the Administration. Your son, too, I hope, will have returned by that time, and may be of vast use to our not too powerful ranks.

And on this head I may venture to express my deep regret that the D. of Richmond could not have contrived to lend a helping hand to John Manners at Shoreham. He would be of great use to us, because he is really a working man, has mastered the great questions by reading blue-books (the only way), and is a fair and improving speaker. On the rumor, but only a provincial one, of Quintin Dick's impending demise, I tried to run Lord John for Aylesbury.

A general amendment to the Address depends, of course, on the complexion of the times when Parliament meets, but assuming that we may not think it advisable to embark on one, and that it is of importance to lose no time in making a considerable diversion, I take the liberty, in the roughest manner, as you will recognise, to sketch the scheme by which I think the question of local taxation should be worked at present.

I would introduce the question to the House totally in a

[1] Edward Gibbon Wakefield, the Colonial Reformer.

[2] John Robert Godley, friend and supporter of Wakefield; largely concerned in founding and guiding Canterbury, New Zealand; afterwards Assistant Under-Secretary at the War Office; father of Lord Kilbracken.

new aspect. I would accept the declarations of our opponents, that there is no difference in land from other property; that land, in fact, to use their often repeated phrase of last Session, is nothing more than a *raw material*, and to be dealt with as other raw materials. I would then ask how they can justify the extension to this raw material, and the most important of all raw materials, of a different economical and fiscal system from that which they extend to all other raw materials. I would pursue this in detail, and your lordship will easily see the gross and flagrant consequences to which it would lead. I would argue the question on its sheer merits, as a question of justice to the proprietors and of policy to the community, and would not introduce the inferential benefit to be derived by the farmers, because that would lead to controversy; and as the farmers have generally made up their minds that they would reap the benefits of the proposed change, it is unnecessary to discuss the point any further in Parliament.

Another and more important point. I would openly and formally include Ireland in the proposition. It would be a motion for a Committee of the whole House to consider the local taxation of Great Britain and Ireland. Two great points to consider: the form of the motion, or rather measure; and the means of supply of consequent deficiency. Is it necessary for us even to intimate the latter? Is it not the duty of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to satisfy all just claims, and to keep the Queen's Exchequer sufficiently replenished?

With regard to the nature of the measure, in order to retain local administration, etc., etc., I can't for the life of me devise any suggestion very different from that we produced last year. But all this I submit to your lordship's better judgment. . . .

Stanley, in reply, strongly advised having nothing to say to the Colonial Government Society. It was difficult to imagine a more heterogeneous combination of names than those of its supporters, who would be sure to differ in opinion on the most ordinary matters of Colonial government. With regard to relief for agriculturists, he thought the party must take the field in earnest next session, though there were difficulties attending all plans.

To Lord Stanley.

Private. HUGHENDEN, *Dec.* 28, 1849.—The Colonial Dilettante Society have given up their amendment to the Address which I think is well. There is to be a substantive motion,

to be made by Molesworth and seconded by Walpole (who seems to have strangely mixed himself up with these affairs), and which motion is to be submitted to us previously, and modified in any way we desire consistent, or rather not inconsistent, with their general aim. Adderley, who seems very excited, and sadly deficient in judgment, has sent me the programme of their society, which contains only one idea—what they call self-government—and is written without any dignity or depth.

Henry Baillie writes to me that he has been in correspondence with Lord John and Lord Grey, *re* Ceylon. They have refused to send over for the witnesses, by a promise to do which they avoided, at the end of the Session, the virtual vote of censure of the Ceylon Committee.[1] Joseph Hume is furious, and I believe will shortly appear in print anent. He writes to Baillie that he is prepared to join in any motion to upset the Government, and especially Lord Grey, and mentions with self-complacency that he did not vote confidence in them on my motion on the state of the nation. All this foretells and foreshadows, as far as the House of Commons is concerned, a serious Colonial crisis. What are we to do?

You have sketched with the hand of a master, and with the inspiration of experience, those difficult considerations which I had only arrived at by many painful months of plodding. Clearly, instead of more Wakefieldism, we want less: and it appears to me that the real key of Lord Grey's position is that he talked much too much Wakefieldism out of office, and found, when at length Secretary of State for the Colonies, that his theoretical Colonial Reform was a delusion. But being a clever, proud, strong, and rather wrong-headed man, he has endeavoured to reconcile his visionary projects with a sane practice—hence this imbroglio! Now it appears to me—I say it with unaffected deference—that it would be possible to arrange a motion on the part of the Colonial Reformers that our party, as a party, might support, provided they held their tongues as much as possible, while myself, or someone else, might make a speech which, while it justified our voting for the motion, should, at the same time, completely develop our own Colonial system, and express our own tenets on all the great points of local government, emigration, waste lands, penal settlements, etc.

Lord Grey is open to all attack, not only on account of the results, but of the system he has pursued with respect to the Colonial Committee of the Privy Council. I hold that no man has a right to aspire to be Secretary of State for the Colonies

[1] The House of Commons had appointed in the previous session, at Baillie's instance, a Committee, of which Disraeli was a member, to inquire into the grievances of Ceylon.

who has not arrived at personal conclusions on the subjects which he has referred, and proposes to refer, to that Committee: in many other respects also a most objectionable arrangement. But to the point. In this Colonial discussion we must deal with frankness with the commercial question. Can we again establish a commercial tie with the Colonies without the odium of inflicting high prices on the metropolitan consumer? Could this be done by terminating all import duties whatever on Colonial produce? By really making them integral portions of the United Kingdom? No sugar duties on either Indies, and a duty on foreign corn, might set the more important Colonies on their legs (a duty on foreign timber still existing), and would comprise some elements of popularity.

I conclude it is too late to introduce thirty Colonial M.P.'s into St. Stephen's. Were it possible, it would be a great element of future strength to the Conservative party of this country. . . .

I thought John Manners was whitewashed by leading the forlorn hope against Rothschild,[1] and that thereafter he was to be considered not only a Christian, but a Protestant.

Sir Robert's letter is not, I think, very happy: at the same time pompous and trite. He has succeeded in conveying an impression that his estate is in very bad condition. He seems to think that drainage is an universal specific, tho' in truth a very partial one. Tho' he really says nothing which might not have been said if the Corn Laws had not been repealed, he nevertheless writes with an awkward consciousness of having led his friends into a hopeless scrape.

Peel's letter was one to his tenants, in which he told them that what had been done was irrevocable, and that Parliament would never again sanction the taxation of food. They must make up their minds to low prices. He recognised that there might be distress among them, and, though he would not make a general reduction of rent, he would consider any special case. He was prepared to co-operate with his tenants in beneficial improvements to farms—for instance, by drainage—and would remit 20 per cent. of the rents for that purpose for two half-years. The admission that there was distress, and a substantial ground for assistance to farmers, was welcomed by the Protectionists.

[1] At a by-election in the City of London.

To Lord John Manners.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Jan.* 1, 1850.

MY DEAR J. M.,—. . . I have just come from Quarter Sessions, and hear even in the rural districts that pauperism is diminished. How is this? I hear also that the shipowners are building more ships than ever. How again?

Tell Dr. Trench that it will not do to agitate the sinking fund now, as the suggestion has not been generally taken up, and will distract. It must sleep till the right time.

The National Debt was incurred for the foreigners: levy from the foreigner 5 millions per annum to pay off the National Debt. By which means you have virtual Protection on a popular principle; gradually every year diminish general taxation; and in a short time pay off the £400,000,000 of mortgages, or rather reduce their interest to 2 per cent. This is the affair in brief, but 'tis the gist. *Multos et felices annos!*—D.

There should be more variety in the movement. Something to break the low, tho' welling, chorus of the agrestic multitude.

Stanley, in reply to Disraeli, postponed a detailed discussion of the Colonial question till the party leaders met at Burghley, but intimated that he was in favour of preferential duties, and against the admission of Colonial representatives to Parliament.

To Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN, *Jan.* 11, 1850.—I had written the day before I received your letter to Lord Exeter, begging leave to withdraw my refusal of his kind invitation to Burghley, as I thought the aspect of affairs had become critical, and that we had better, all of us, meet as speedily, and confer as amply, as practicable. It is possible that the Government suffrage scheme may be of a conservative tendency, and projected to arrest the progress of the 40s. freehold movement. At the same time, it is not likely that they will propose any measure of this kind without considering the interests of their party at our cost, and at all events the measure will occasion discussion, in which it will be difficult for us to avoid taking a distinct position on a question which will probably be the key to future power. I look forward with great interest to your views on this subject.

Cobden's evening invasion of Bucks was very sorry. He made a mistake. Had he met the farmers boldly, the result might have been very different.

The agitation of the 'National Association' has operated

much as I anticipated. It was evidently projected by men who were ignorant of the real state of the country. To address the Throne for a dissolution of Parliament, with commerce and manufacture thriving, the revenue increasing, money abundant, and pauperism reduced even in the rural districts, which is certainly the case, was the *delirium tremens* of politics. One could hardly present one of these addresses to the Queen without a smile or a blush. The injurious effects of this movement are otherwise, also, not inconsiderable. It has forced us into an extreme position when circumstances counselled a very moderate one. It has terribly cut away golden bridges. It has unnecessarily exposed the agricultural interest in the nakedness of its isolation. Not a single meeting has taken place among the shipping population, among the Colonial or commercial interests, among any class of the labouring multitude. I don't say that our friend Mr. Young has been ineffective. He has done a good deal, but what he has done he had better not have done. He has gained the trick by trumping his partner's best card.

'Cobden's evening invasion of Bucks' was a meeting which he held at Aylesbury on January 9, where, at an hour suitable to the labourers and the artisans of the numerous small industries of the county, he addressed a mixed audience, which included only a few farmers, on the advantages of Free Trade. He had invited Disraeli to meet him; but Disraeli preferred to dine with the farmers at Great Marlow on the previous day, explaining that he had the pleasure of meeting Cobden in the evenings in Parliament during seven months of the year. In his speech Disraeli made great fun of Cobden's flying visit, fixed for an hour very inconvenient to the farmers whom he desired to convert. One phrase which Disraeli used, in accordance with the proposals in his letter of December 17 to Stanley, that the land was 'a raw material,' and should be treated as such, was taken up and apparently accepted by Cobden, and frequently appeared in the debates of the following session.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

BURGHLEY, STAMFORD, *Jan.* 22, 1850

MY DEAREST WIFE,—A hasty line to say all goes right. The exterior of Burghley magnificent and unique—in an immense park crowded with ancient timber.

Here I found Duke of Richmond, Stanley, Lord and Lady Sandwich, Lord and Lady Southampton (the only women), Sir Robert Inglis, Granby, Herries, Christopher, H. Bentinck, Trollope, Maunsell, and Stafford—M.P.'s for the county—Beresford, etc.

Lady Exeter is what we heard, but I have scarcely seen enough of her to say more:[1] of the other women nothing as yet. This house, which is immense, can only accommodate altogether *twenty!*

We had a Cabinet last night, and are to have another to-day at five, Stanley being now shooting. Granby would not bring his guns, in order that he might lose not a moment in conferring.

I did not go to the fine ladies yesterday, but they sent Wilton, or rather he brought himself after me, being most eager to talk politics 'with his leader.' . . .

Frank Grant[2] has asked, through Granby, to paint my portrait. He will charge nothing. He does it for the sake of the engraving. I made sufficient difficulties, but at last promised. His charge is 300 guineas. Adieu, my dearest. I count on hearing from you to-morrow.—Your affec. husband, D.

Henry Bentinck and Trollope went this morning.

The Duke of Rutland arrived: very cordial.

Jan. 23, 1850.—Yesterday we had four Knights of the Garter at dinner. The D. of Richmond is very cordial and hearty. Stanley shoots too much, but draws well with me, and the result is altogether satisfactory.

Disraeli impressed upon the friends and colleagues whom he met at Burghley the fact, which was very unpalatable to the ultra-Protectionists, that every interest in the country, except the landed, was improving. The visit was successful in establishing better relations between the leading personages of the party, and giving Disraeli a more assured position among them. At Burghley, too, he completed an arrangement to restore Manners to Parliament, an object which he had much at heart. The Conservative member for Colchester resigned, and after a contest Manners was returned in February. 'May this step, my dearest John,' wrote Disraeli, 'lead to your prosperity and happiness; and may you secure both by serving that great country which we both love!'

[1] Writing to his sister, on Jan. 24, Disraeli says: 'Lady Exeter tall, still handsome, engaging, and very pious.'

[2] Sir Francis Grant, P.R.A. For the portrait, see frontispiece of this volume.

With friends and political acquaintances not belonging to his own party Disraeli seems to have made no concealment, about this time, of the direction which his thoughts were taking. His old friend and fellow-traveller, James Clay, now a Liberal member of Parliament, gave him a pamphlet in favour of Protection, and told him that the author thought Protection was in the plight of Lazarus—not dead, but sleeping, and might be awakened. 'Protection is not only dead, but damned,' said Disraeli. Early in 1850 he dined with John Bright at Bellamy's, and admitted to him that Protection was gone, and that he had been doing all he could to prevent squires and farmers making fools of themselves in the recess. Mr. George Trevelyan[1] has revealed to the world that during these years a considerable friendliness sprang up between Disraeli and Bright, each of whom undoubtedly had a fascination for the other. Mr. Trevelyan expresses surprise at this, and maintains that they were the two men in the House of Commons most unlike. But surely, if there were obvious points of difference between them, there was also much in common. Each sprang from a small and despised religious community, the one being a Jew, the other a Quaker; each had won his way to a front rank in the House by force of character and power of oratory; each looked at the political facts before him from his individual standpoint, and not by the aid of party spectacles; and each was strongly opposed to the domination of the Whigs. The present writer has more than once heard Bright, in his last decade of life, refer with severe condemnation to the days when 'those old men, Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston, were misgoverning the country.' There was, moreover, a democratic fibre in Disraeli as well as in Bright; though, of course, there was also in Disraeli an aristocratic fibre, which was wholly wanting in Bright, and in Bright a prevailing middle-class feeling which Disraeli certainly did not share.

[1] In his *Life of John Bright*.

To Londonderry Disraeli talked in February in the same sense about Protection as he had to Bright. 'He had long seen Protection was out of the question, and was looking to practical measures.' As a corollary he was anxious to conciliate the leading Peelites, and especially Graham, their principal debater, after Peel, in the House of Commons. Graham and he had had many sharp encounters, but Disraeli never bore rancour. Accordingly he told Londonderry, who was on very friendly terms with Graham, that the time for action was approaching, and that he was ready, as Londonderry wrote to Graham, 'to call his friends together, and tell them they must look to the best practicable mode of governing the country; that Sir James Graham was the only man then to be at the head of the House of Commons; that *he* should cheerfully act under him; that whatever coolness now existed between Graham and Stanley he was himself not conversant with, but that he had always found Stanley so manageable and agreeable to act and deal with that he felt sure he would see these views as they would be placed before him; and that, with Stanley in the Lords and Graham in the House of Commons, the country would have a very strong Government.' Graham refused to entertain the suggestion, but expressed his satisfaction that Disraeli was convinced that Protection was out of the question, adding caustically: 'The public good will be promoted if the leaders of the Opposition act steadily and boldly in conformity with these convictions. As yet they are entertained in secret, and the measures taken in public seem to be at variance with them.'[1] There was some justice in the criticism; but, after all, it hardly became Graham to make it, as Peel and many of his fellow-Ministers were thorough Free Traders some years before the fact was revealed in 1845 to the world; and, as we shall see, Disraeli laboured hard to convert his colleagues and his party, with ultimate, but tardy, success.

[1] Parker's *Sir James Graham*, Vol. II., ch. 5.

CHAPTER IX.

A Successful Opposition.

1850–1851.

The agricultural distress was so undoubted, and the agitation among the farmers so violent, that, when Parliament met on January 31, 1850, all parties felt that they must define their position on the question of the hour. Accordingly, the Government put up the great Whig Free Trader, Villiers, instead of some inexperienced member, to move the Address in the House of Commons, and he made a detailed defence of the new system. There had been a perfunctory mention of the distress in the Queen's Speech, and Villiers admitted its existence; but he frankly told the agriculturists that he saw no way of helping them. This attitude invited opposition. Trollope moved an amendment, attributing the distress to recent legislation and heavy local taxation; and Disraeli supported him. The agricultural party were not asking, he said, for a return to 'abrogated laws'; what they did ask was that the Free Traders should be true to their own principles. Those principles would not tolerate the taxation of raw materials. Land was the most important raw material of a nation's industry. Why tax it? Russell professed not to understand what Disraeli meant, but asked the House not to sanction any change in the commercial system; and Cobden challenged a discussion on the whole question of Free Trade and Protection. The issue being thus judiciously shifted, the Government, after a couple of nights' debate, obtained a majority of 119.

But this was only a preliminary skirmish. The principal fight was two or three weeks later, when Disraeli made the presentation of petitions from Buckinghamshire

owners and occupiers the basis of a motion for a Committee of the whole House to mitigate agricultural distress by revising the Poor Law. He and his friends, he said, still believed in Protection; but they could not shut their eyes to the practical conclusion that it was the opinion of a large majority in both Houses[1] not to disturb at present the settlement arrived at. In that case they ought to adapt the position of agriculturists to the altered conditions. He had received no answer to his argument about the proper treatment of the land as raw material. The Poor Law charges of which he proposed to relieve the agricultural interest amounted to some two millions

The debate, which lasted two nights,[2] was a full-dress one, in which all the leading politicians spoke. Grey, the Home Secretary, in opposing the motion, did Disraeli the justice of saying that he had not encouraged the delusions of the extreme Protectionists; 'that *ignis-fatuus*, the restoration of Protection, has been declared by him utterly hopeless and impracticable during the present Parliament at least.' Bright asked if the old Corn Law was unjust, how could its abrogation give the agriculturists any just claim to compensation? Graham took the familiar line that the adoption of the motion would involve a reversal of the policy of the last few years. Then fortune, in Disraeli's language, sent him an unexpected champion who 'fairly unhorsed' Graham. This was Gladstone, who, acting with Sidney Herbert and other Peelites, was of opinion that the agriculturists had a grievance which ought to be redressed, and that this proposal was a legitimate method of redressing it. They should look, he said, to the merits of the actual proposal, and not, as Graham insisted, to possible ulterior proposals. The adoption of the motion would tend to weaken the agitation for Protection, as showing that just demands would be conceded by Parliament. As a matter of essential justice, all property should be made liable for support

[1] A Protectionist amendment to the Address in the Lords was defeated by 49.

[2] Feb. 19 and 21.

of the poor. Peel, answering Gladstone, reinforced Graham's argument, pointing out that Disraeli had never said that the removal of taxation to the extent of £2,000,000 would close the account. He then proceeded to another elaborate, but somewhat ineffective, vindication of his policy and character, while conceding to Disraeli that 'the land is the stable basis of the State.' Russell also trotted out the Protection bogey once more; and finally Disraeli, in Gladstone's words, 'showed the marvellous talent that he has, for summing up with brilliancy, buoyancy, and comprehensiveness, at the close of a debate.' The division amply justified Disraeli's tactics. The Government only had a majority of twenty-one—273 against 252. More than twenty Whigs and nearly twenty Peelites, including Gladstone, voted with Disraeli; Herbert was away ill. Hobhouse tells us that, when the numbers were declared, 'the Protectionists set up a shout, as well they might, but they seemed overpowered by their success, and did not cheer as much as usual. Our friends looked foolish enough.'

It was a great thing to have reduced the majority against the claims of the agricultural party from ninety-one to twenty-one in one year; but it had not been accomplished without seriously taxing Disraeli's strength. At the end of February he had rather a severe attack of illness —apparently influenza—and was confined to his London house during most of March. His absence from the field of battle demonstrated how necessary he was to his party; foes as well as friends recognised the fact. Graham wrote to Londonderry: 'There can be no doubt that Disraeli has been seriously ill: the Protectionists cannot do without him; and his presence after Easter will be much wanted by them.' Beresford lamented to Disraeli on April 3: 'Never was there so unfavourable a state for a party to find itself in as ours for the last ten days before the Recess. No Leader whatever: I was left quite alone and unsupported.' One beneficial change in party arrangements was effected during this period of illness;

Newdegate, to Disraeli's relief, resigned his position as one of the Whips,[1] and was succeeded by Forbes Mackenzie, a capable man, with whom the new leader could work heartily.

To Lady Londonderry.

GROSVENOR GATE, *March* 21, 1850.

DEAR LADY,—I send you my first letter. I have not yet left my room. My illness turned out more serious than I imagined, and if we had not called in Dr. Ferguson about ten days ago, I might have been in a scrape. However, I have now quite recovered, or am rather fast recovering, and only mention all this to account for the stupidity of this letter, for I have not been out, even for a drive. . . .

I have seen my friends the last two or three days; Lord Stanley was here on Monday, and talked over everything. Tell Ld. L. under the rose that the fusion between Ld. Aberdeen, Gladstone and Co., with Stanley and Co., ripens rapidly, and assumes in every phasis an encouraging aspect, but our mysterious friend Graham continues to baffle all conjecture.

Private. I am told that Peel said to Aberdeen, that even he could not make out what Graham was after. Some say that, if the Whigs can get their Irish Reform Bill well thro' this year, they mean to try their hand next season at an English measure, that Graham has an understanding with them on this subject, and is to lead the new revolution. A pleasant prospect!

The Government are very shaky, and, if we could only agree among ourselves, could be extinguished in eight-and-forty hours. . . .

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *March* 27, 1850.—Being told that the morning was more genial, I slipped my anchor on Tuesday, like a ship escaping from one of Palmerston's blockades, and about twenty miles from town encountered a snow-storm. When I arrived, the landscape was Siberian, and almost the climate; nevertheless I bore my journey well, and am better daily. . . .

To Sarah Disraeli.

HUGHENDEN, *March* 31, 1850.—. . . The weather has been very ungenial ever since [our arrival], and constant east winds, which I cannot face; my progress has therefore been rather slow.

Never was the political position more complicated, difficult, and urgent. I hope, but dare not determine, to be in my place on the 8th. If I cannot lead the party after the holidays, I had better retire altogether. There will be a fierce and

[1] See above, pp. 951, 952.

eventful Session. The Whigs could be turned out in a week if we were ready. I don't think my absence as yet has been productive of any serious harm, the great before-Easter result having been obtained. . . .

HUGHENDEN, *April* 5, 1850.—I go to town to-morrow to catch a Council with Stanley, flitting between Whittlebury and Goodwood. The political position is interesting, and I should not be surprised if our troops are brought into line immediately. They will be so if my plans are adopted; but there are so many people to consult and to persuade that it is like commanding an army in Italy under the Aulic Council at Vienna. However, I have not much cause to complain, as they are sufficiently docile; but there are moments which require rapidity of decision and execution. I am sorry I could not stay here a few days more; this north-west breeze renovates me wonderfully, and I am quite myself again.[1]

Disraeli's grumble about the number of persons whom he had to consult and persuade was no doubt provoked by a phrase in a letter which reached him that morning from Stanley: 'Consult your friends, *including Herries.*' Disraeli, as we have seen, never seems to have done more than tolerate the Committee of management, consisting of Herries and Granby besides himself; he neglected to call his colleagues together and ask their advice; and Stanley, now that the Committee was practically superseded, was specially anxious that proper deference should be paid to the veteran of the party. A month before, in reference to the selection of a new Whip, he had pressed upon Disraeli, also with all the urgency of italics, '*Don't forget Herries.*' In truth, Stanley and Disraeli, both strong men, were alike in a disposition to take their own course on important occasions, and consult their colleagues afterwards.

To Lady Londonderry.

[LONDON] *Sunday, April* 20, 1850.—. . . Here we have only two subjects, and both gloomy ones—Religion and Rents. Schisms in the Church and the ruin of landed proprietors are our only themes. The Church question has scarcely commenced, and may, before a very short time, effect some startling consequences. It pervades all classes—literally from

[1] *Letters*, pp. 228, 229.

the palace to the cottage. Gracious Majesty much excited, and clapped her hands with joy, when the critical decision[1] of the Privy Council against the Bishop of Exeter was announced to her. On this you may rely. . . .

A member of Brooks' told me yesterday, that he now never went to that club, the controversies among its members about Protection having become so acrimonious. The Duke of Bedford, who has held up very well to this spring, now wails and gnashes his teeth, and says that Peel was mistaken in all his calculations. Assheton Smith,[2] throughout a Free Trader, asked, in a letter from a friend, what sport he had had this year, replied: 'Don't talk to me of sport; I can think of nothing but these infernal low prices.' Granby showed me the letter, which was, I think, to Sloane Stanley. Lord Poltimore's steward, after his audit a few days back, sent him £1,200, and told him to take care of it, as it was probably the last he would ever receive—this, Devonshire, where things are very bad indeed. But you hear these sort of stories everywhere; what I tell you all come from the Whigs. It is, however, too late for those who voted for the Repeal of the Corn Laws to repent or to complain. As long as the great body of the people are well employed at a good rate of wages, all the proprietors, and all the farmers, too, may be ruined without redress. If the evil goes deeper, then we shall have a change.

As for Parliamentary politics, it is impossible for an Opposition to do more than we have done without turning out a Government. We have had a pitched battle nearly every night since we reassembled, and in some of them the Government have received ignominious defeats. Even their Budget has been destroyed.

It was a cheering situation in the House of Commons to which Disraeli returned after his illness. Ministers were constantly being put in a minority over one question and another. The Budget, which was produced during his absence, was responsible for several checks. Sir Charles Wood, with an estimated surplus of a million and a half, proposed to repeal the excise on bricks, and to lower the value of the stamps on the sale and mortgage of land. The Stamp Bill had a troubled career. Disraeli's letters to his sister at this time are written in high spirits.

[1] The Gorham case. Judgment was given on March 8 against Bishop Phillpotts, who had refused to institute Mr. Gorham to a living on account of his supposed heretical opinions about Baptismal Regeneration.

[2] Well-known sportsman, master of hounds, and M.P.

owing to the frequent defeats of the Government, and his own increasing consideration in the social and political world.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April* 18, 1850.—The great victory on Monday[1] quite redeemed the Friday check.[2] I hardly know what the Government will do—anything but go out. The Radicals so frightened at what they have almost unwittingly done, that Tuesday night, the moment I announced my intention to support the repeal of the excise on paper, they fled the House in confusion or voted with the Government. By these means the division was not good;[3] but their tactics have had this among other effects: destroyed the Radicals' monopoly of Liberal propositions, which they will take care no longer to make now there is a chance of their being carried. . . .

The Royal Academy have asked me to their annual banquet in May. One gets into a great many good things (at least what people think good things) by being leader of the Opposition; which, according to Sir Charles Wood, if you are not a Minister, is 'the next best thing.' . . .

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April* 26, 1850.—I have little to say, my life being passed in this House of which you are furnished daily in the journals. The Government have saved themselves from a crushing defeat to-night, on the Stamp Act, by an ignominious surrender at discretion yesterday: but they have troubles enough before them. . . .[4]

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *May* 3, 1850.—The visit to the Jolliffes was very agreeable, notwithstanding a north-east wind, that really cut me in two. . . . Notwithstanding a blazing sun, I was obliged to keep in the conservatory, or could only venture out in a bearskin coat. It was the coldest day this year.

I hardly know what has happened since, I have been so busy; I think all politics. Tuesday was not a bad division[5] and, according to my friends, my best speech this year, though meagrely and coldly reported in *The Times*.

Yesterday the Government received another apoplectic stroke;[6] they are drifting—but I suppose, and perhaps hope, they may escape the breakers this year. . . .

I sat an hour with Lord Lyndhurst to-day; in good

[1] Defeat of Ministers on the Stamp Bill.
[2] Committee of inquiry into diplomatic salaries, etc.
[3] Majority of 101 for Government.
[4] *Letters*, pp. 229, 230.
[5] Majority of 96 for Government on Henley's motion to reduce salaries in the public service. See below, p. 1067.
[6] Defeat of Government on a minor bill by 155 to 136.

spirits after a year of darkness. When the weather is warmer they will operate. . . .

CEYLON COMMITTEE ROOMS, *May* 13, 1850.—I am so much occupied that I must endeavour to send you a line in the midst of the hubbub of this never-ending committee. The dinner at the Academy was very agreeable, though they took me out of the wits, among whom I sat last year, and which were represented this by Rogers, Hallam, Milman, Thackeray, Lockhart, and placed me among the statesmen: I sat within two of Peel, and between Gladstone and Sidney Herbert. A leader of Opposition who has no rank is so rare, if not unprecedented, an animal, that the R.A.'s were puzzled how to place me; and, though they seem to have made somewhat of a blunder, it went off very well, Gladstone being particularly agreeable.

Afterwards we went to the first assembly of Mrs. Abbott Lawrence, the wife of the American Minister, which was very numerous. Mr. L. is a very opulent man, and has given for Ld. Cadogan's fine house on Piccadilly Terrace a rent equal to his salary, £2,000 *per annum*. All the world was there. Lawrence is a very fine specimen of the New World—good-looking and cordial and well-bred—a high Protectionist. I had heard much of him from John Manners, as he stayed a week at Belvoir, and they were all much pleased with him. There were a good many Americans, among them the Peabody family—great people. As Mrs. Lawrence says, 'the Peabodies are the Howards of America.' The chief Peabody was presented to me. He said of the D. of W[ellingto]n, who was there as well as at the Academy dinner, where he made a speech, 'The two hemispheres can't show a man like that, sir.'

On Sunday I dined with the Molesworths—a most agreeable party. The Lovelaces, the Rossis, Lady Morley, C. Villiers, Stafford, Milnes, Henry Hope, the Turkish Ambassador. I never saw a house better *monté* or a dinner better served.

The postponement of the Sugar battle on Tuesday was very unfortunate. The division on the Irish Franchise Bill was much better than I expected.

I dined yesterday (Saturday) with the Londonderrys *en petit comité*, and afterwards went with M. A. to Lady Palmerston's and Lady Stanley's. It was a hard day, as in the morning I was obliged to receive Professor Aytoun to breakfast. He had called on me several times and written often, and as I could not ask him to dinner, it was the only thing left. I was very jaded, but after breakfast got some sleep by taking bang, and woke quite fresh.

Lord Eglinton had asked me to a great banquet on Thursday which he gave to Aytoun, whom it is the fashion to *fêter* among the grand folks, in gratitude for the Protection articles

in *Blackwood*, of which he is the author; but I declined, as I thought it a bore, which large male dinners are. I got J. Manners and young Stanley, Boo Lennox, Lord Mandeville, and Lord Naas[1] to meet him.

Lady Blandford, next to whom I sate yesterday at dinner (Brunnow on my other side), told me that she had heard that *Sin and Sorrow* was the joint production of George Smythe and Lady Sligo. I think if I saw it I should find him out. I suppose he supplied the sin, and his sister the rest.[2]

The February motion and division—'the great before-Easter result'—was Disraeli's main effort this session on behalf of the agricultural party. But he constantly kept rural distress before Parliament and the Government. He began[3] by making sarcastic inquiries as to what it was really meant to do with the Budget which had been introduced in his absence. He understood that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, having got a surplus, voluntarily offered to relieve the agricultural interest. He could not believe that the repeal of one excise duty—welcome as that was—represented the whole Budget of the Government. He was answered tartly by Russell that all Wood had promised was to devote half the surplus to relieve public burdens. A day or two later[4] he supported a motion of Henley's to reduce salaries in the public service, in order to lighten the burden on those who paid most of the taxes. He maintained that economy was necessary, and that the Conservatives were the party of economy. Peel and Cobden opposed, and the Government were sustained by a majority of ninety-six. At the end of the session he supported ineffectually a motion to relieve tenant farmers of income tax. On two occasions independent Whigs, alarmed at the serious effect on agriculture of measures which their party had supported on the faith of representations that the land would not suffer, brought forward motions for its relief. One of these motions advocated the reimposition of an

[1] Afterwards 6th Earl of Mayo; thrice Chief Secretary for Ireland; and Governor-General of India.

[2] Brit. Mus., Addit. MSS. Part of this letter appeared in *Letters*, pp. 231, 232.

[3] April 26.

[4] April 30.

import duty on corn; the other the immediate repeal of the malt tax, involving a loss of nearly five millions to the exchequer. Neither would have been introduced by Disraeli, and he anticipated the large majorities (114 and 124) by which they were rejected. But he welcomed them as the acts of repentant Free Traders, and supported them because he thought it was the duty of the Government to do something to relieve agricultural distress, and they had procured the rejection of his own February motion without making any proposal in its place.

On the proposal for placing an import duty on corn, he explained[1] that he would not have approved its introduction because it was of a partial character, and took into consideration the interests of only one class. He would prefer to have compensation, not in this manner, but by a fair adjustment of taxation. However he might differ from the policy of 1846, he did not suppose that the country would, 'like a capricious woman,' turn round at once and rescind all it had done. On the proposal[2] to repeal the malt tax, the Ministerial speakers declared themselves to be horrified at this light-hearted suggestion to sweep away a revenue of over £4,500,000; and Russell quoted Stanley as having said that he would not vote for a motion which would create such a deficiency till he saw how to make it good. But these arguments, though they produced a good majority for the Government, did not deter Disraeli from supporting the motion. Ministers had rejected all other proposals for remedying the distress, and would propose nothing themselves: they must be brought to their senses. The present mode of raising revenue, which pressed so unfairly on the land, could not go on. The proper course was to reduce excise rather than customs; as, whatever dispute there might be in the case of customs, the foreigner certainly paid no part of the excise. In this connection Disraeli made an important profession of his faith as regards Colonial policy.

[1] May 14. [2] July 5.

If there be any object which, more than another, ought to engage the attention of the statesmen of this country, it is the necessity of consolidating our Colonial Empire. If we wish to maintain our political power or our commercial wealth, we can only secure those great results by the consolidation of our Colonial Empire. I will not advert to the political means by which such a consolidation might be maintained. I will not enter into the difficult but important consideration, whether the Colonies ought or ought not to be represented in this House—although these are questions which we ought not to discard from our minds—but looking only to the commercial and fiscal part of the subject, I cannot understand by what means in the present day, following the current of our recent legislation, that consolidation can take place unless we can reduce into a fact a phrase which political economists are so fond of using—namely, that our Colonies should be placed on the same footing as the counties of England. Now let me ask the House, when this claim has been made on behalf of the Colonies, what has been the objection? It has always been met by the plea that it is impossible the Colonies can have the same footing as our English counties, because they do not bear their share of the Excise duties. But in attempting the great commercial and fiscal reforms which have gone on for the last six or seven years, if you had directed your attention to the Excise, instead of the Customs, you would have increased the means of the people to provide themselves with articles of consumption, and diminished in a great degree the burdens of the people, while at the same time we should have destroyed the great barrier to that consolidation of our Colonial Empire; and, while we relieved and employed our people, we should have increased the imperial strength of this still, I hope, great Empire.

Though agricultural distress was Disraeli's main preoccupation, he discharged effectively the ordinary duties of Opposition leader. The Ministerial programme mainly consisted of two Irish Bills, one lowering the Irish suffrage, and the other abolishing the Lord-Lieutenancy. The first passed in a modified form. The second was abandoned. The lowering of the Irish suffrage was defended on the ground that, owing to famine and impoverishment, the electorate had seriously decreased. Disraeli replied that the Government should rather have attempted to settle in a statesmanlike and moderate

manner the long-controverted relation between landlord and tenant. The abolition of the Lord-Lieutenancy involved a risk which Disraeli was not prepared to run; and, in any case, he strongly opposed the creation in its place of another Secretaryship of State. Such a procedure was very uneconomical. Every new office of the kind involved an 'equipage of clerks.' Why not, if you must change, put Ireland under the Home Secretary?

The most really important measure of the session was a Factories Bill, introduced by Lord Ashley and taken over by the Government, to settle the law about hours in factories. An Act of 1847 was supposed to have definitely limited to ten the number of hours during which women and young persons could be employed. But the Courts had construed it in such a way as made it possible for manufacturers to evade the spirit of the law. Unwillingly Ashley accepted a compromise offered by the Government, which implied a ten and a half hours' day. Manners protested against this as a breach of faith with poor working people, and Disraeli, who explained that, though he had voted for limitation, he had never spoken before on the question, supported him. An overworked population, he said, had started a movement for ten hours thirty years before, but only obtained the limitation in 1847. The Act had been successful; manufacturers were prosperous in spite of it; why abrogate it now? The honour of Parliament was concerned in not taking advantage of a legal flaw. 'The voice of outraged faith is no respecter of persons. Its cry cannot be stifled; it will penetrate the Senate and reach the Throne. . . . The most important elements of government are its moral influences.' The speech was instinct with the spirit of *Sybil*, and its objects have long since been more than attained. But for the moment the Government carried the day by announcing that they would take no further charge of the Bill if the compromise was disturbed.

In regard to another measure of social legislation, Disraeli seems to have rather listened to the voice of

friendship than followed his natural political course. Inspection of coal-mines was proposed, and the coal-owners, among whom Londonderry, the lord of Seaham, was conspicuous, uttered strong protests, which Disraeli echoed in the House of Commons. He made use of familiar phrases; it was hasty and ill-considered legislation—an unreasonable interference with the rights of property. He was unable to do more than delay the measure for a short while, and was probably not inconsolable for his want of success. To Londonderry, disgusted at the passing of the 'infernal' Bill, Disraeli explained that he was helpless. 'My friends, who are philanthropists, could not with consistency, after the ten hours affair, oppose it, and to my surprise the political economists were also in its favour.'

The most memorable debate of the session was that on the Greek question and Palmerston's foreign policy. The system of intervening in other nations' affairs, and giving unasked advice, which we have already discussed,[1] had been continued; but Ministers could, and did, boast that, throughout all the convulsions of the last two years in Europe, England, under their auspices, had been orderly at home and at peace abroad. The Greek question arose out of several petty claims of British subjects, largely Ionians, against the Greek Government. The most important were those of Finlay the historian, some of whose land had been expropriated for a royal palace; and of Don Pacifico, a Portuguese Jew born in Malta, whose house had been sacked by an Athenian mob, headed by persons of position. Neither Finlay nor Pacifico endeavoured to put the Greek law in motion to secure damages, but applied for redress to Palmerston, who disquieted Europe by sending the British fleet to the Piræus. The mediation of France was offered and accepted; but, without waiting for its operation, the British Admiral proceeded to seize Greek vessels in order to enforce his demands, with the result that the French

[1] Ch. 7.

Ambassador was withdrawn from London. Russia also protested against British action. Palmerston's clumsy and high-handed proceedings, which were thoroughly disapproved by most of his colleagues, called loudly for criticism; but the debate was not of Disraeli's contriving, nor, though he summed up the case of the Opposition at the close of four nights' contention,[1] was it one in which he showed to special advantage. Palmerston made the finest speech of his life, defending himself for five hours through a summer night, 'from the dusk of one day until the dawn of the next'; Peel spoke for the last time; and Gladstone, Graham, Roebuck, Molesworth, Cobden, and Sir Alexander Cockburn, all made notable efforts.

The movers in the matter were the Peelites; and it was in concert with Aberdeen, if not under his inspiration, that Stanley proposed and carried in the House of Lords a vote of censure on the Government limited to the Greek question. No similar attempt at censure was made in the Commons; and the Government, who refused to resign, found some difficulty in getting whitewashed. Finally, Russell, after taunting the Opposition with their inaction, accepted what Disraeli called 'the obvious and offered machinery' of a motion by Roebuck, expressing confidence in the principles of the Government's foreign policy, but not specifically mentioning Greece. The leaders alike of the Protectionists, the Peelites, and the Radicals, combined in resisting the motion, but in each case failed to command the allegiance of the whole of their followers. The bogey of a Protectionist Government was used effectively by Ministers and their friends, though Molesworth protested that he did not believe that 'the landed gentlemen of England under leaders with the abilities of Lord Stanley, and with the talents of my hon. friend the member for Buckinghamshire,' would pursue a policy leading to confusion and revolution.

It may be doubted whether Disraeli's heart was in the movement against Ministers. He told Bright that he

[1] June 24, 25, 27, 28.

was annoyed at the crisis, and had wished the industrial question to be settled finally before anything of this kind came up. He probably realised that it would be difficult to get the rank and file to vote straight; he was reluctant to attack Palmerston, whom he desired to separate from the Whigs and attract, if possible, back into his old Tory camp; and it was obvious that a combined movement in force would tend to bring Russell to Palmerston's rescue, and close the breach that had been opening between these two statesmen. Stanley endeavoured to push his lieutenant forward; he urged him not to let the debate have too much of a Peelite character, and not to spare Palmerston and the Government. 'You will,' he wrote, 'and I think very judiciously, follow Palmerston; and forgive me if I impress upon you the great importance, on many accounts, of hitting hard and not sparing. Anything short of *guerre à outrance* would have the effect of reviving, in suspicious minds, old misconceptions, and expose you to misconstruction on the part of those who may look with envy at your present high position.'

In spite of Stanley's exhortations, it was Gladstone who answered Palmerston, and not Disraeli, and Gladstone and the other Peelite leaders who dominated the debate. The rare spectacle was seen of Gladstone defending Disraeli against Russell's reflections. Why, he said, should Disraeli be expected to move in the matter ?

> The purpose was to question the vote of the House of Lords and to neutralise and destroy its effect. Was this [Disraeli's] affair ? Sir, it is not for me to speak the sentiments of the hon. member; but if on this occasion I may attempt to divine them, I really apprehend that he was not so ill-satisfied with the vote of the House of Lords as to be desirous to disturb it.

So much did Gladstone take the lead that Cockburn said he supposed they were now to consider him Stanley's representative in the House—'Gladstone *vice* Disraeli, am I to say resigned or superseded ?' and Russell lamented Disraeli's eclipse, as he had always found him 'a fair opponent, ready to take issue on great questions of public

interest, not seeking by any evasion or subterfuge to obtain any undue advantage.' If Gladstone were in future to conduct the debates in the House on behalf of the Opposition, they could not expect, Russell said, the same fairness or justice. The taunts did not move Disraeli, who, in reply, while entirely associating himself with Stanley, repudiated any obligation to move a vote of censure, and reviewed the foreign policy of the Government, characterising it as both meddlesome and unsuccessful. England must beware lest she suffered at the hands of the Powers the fate of Venice under the Treaty of Cambray, 'the sole object of which was to cut the wings of this high-flying Republic of Venice, to terminate the intolerable career of the great commercial aristocracy which had offended them by its wealth and insulted them by its arrogance.' To a proud and self-satisfied House of Commons these sentiments were not nearly so congenial as Palmerston's famous peroration in which he challenged a verdict on the question, 'whether, as the Roman, in the days of old, held himself free from indignity, when he could say *Civis Romanus sum*, so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong.'

The Government obtained the satisfactory and hardly expected majority of 46—310 against 264. On the morrow[1] of the division, Sir Robert Peel, who had both spoken and voted against the Government, had a fall from his horse on Constitution Hill, and within four days was dead. 'Peace to his ashes!' wrote Disraeli in *Lord George Bentinck*. 'His name will be often appealed to in that scene which he loved so well, and never without homage even by his opponents.' Rightly or wrongly, Disraeli was convinced that in his last months Peel was desirous of effecting a reconciliation with him; and he has left an interesting memorandum, written apparently in the sixties, dealing with their relations and with the

[1] June 29.

facts of Peel's death, as well as with the circumstances of the Pacifico debate.

A day or two after Peel's death Gladstone was at the Carlton, and said: 'Peel died at peace with all mankind; even with Disraeli. The last thing he did was to cheer Disraeli. It was not a very loud cheer, but it *was* a cheer; it was distinct. I sate next to him.'

I had concluded the great debate on the Greek (Pacifico) business at four o'clock in the morning. It was the first, and the only time, in which, the Protectionist party acting again with Sir Robert Peel, or rather he acting again with them, I had to assume, and fulfil, the duties of leader in his presence. I wished to avoid it, as I thought it might be distressing to him, and I shrink from anything presumptuous. I had means of communicating with him, through Forbes Mackenzie, who was one of my Whips and who had been a Lord of the Treasury under Peel. Though Mackenzie had resigned his office on the Repeal of the Corn Laws, he still maintained his friendly relations with Sir R. Peel and his old colleagues. Sir Robert answered Mackenzie that he certainly meant to speak, but had no wish to close the debate. And he thought that Mr. Disraeli, from his position, ought to close it.

The majority in favour of Lord Palmerston was unexpectedly large: 46. Mackenzie went to tell Sir Robert the numbers before they were declared. Sir Robert looked disappointed, and said: 'I had thought it would not have exceeded 20.' I heard this myself, for, in that strange state of affairs, I was only removed on the front bench by two persons from Peel, during the latter years of his life. He was very conciliatory to me. Partly because his was not a nature that bore rancor; partly because, as he esteemed success in the House of Commons the greatest of human possessions, he respected a triumphant adversary; and partly, as I know, because he wished to bring back his followers into office under Lord Derby by an arrangement which would have, of course, omitted himself.

Lord Aberdeen had planned the attack on Palmerston, under the inspiration of Madame Lieven and Guizot. The Court, who attributed the fall of the Orleanist family to Lord Palmerston, were favorable to it. Lord Derby (then Lord Stanley) had readily fallen into the scheme, and had brought forward the motion of censure in the House of Lords himself, to cancel the ill effects of which Mr. Roebuck's counter-motion in the House of Commons had been brought forward. Lord Aberdeen, of course, would have been Secretary for Foreign Affairs. There was all reasonable room for the other Peelites,

for Lord Derby had at that moment no men with pretensions to Cabinet Office, except old Herries and myself. Indeed, his difficulty would have been to have had sufficient friends of his own in his own Cabinet; and perhaps Peel, or at any rate the Peelites, saw all this, and looked upon him only as a stopgap.

The great difficulty would have been the Leadership of the House of Commons. I was the Leader of 250 men, and, so far as numbers were concerned, no one could compete with me; but I not only had no official experience of high office, but I had positively never held even the humblest office. There was no confidential intimacy at that time between Lord Derby and myself, and I don't think he would have much hesitated in suggesting a Peelite, one of his old and even recent colleagues, as Leader, if I consented, and the party generally. But who? Gladstone, though he had made a capital speech in the Pacifico debate, and had stamped himself on the House as a man with a future, had certainly not then, without a party, the sufficient position. Lord Lincoln (Duke of Newcastle) and Sidney Herbert had only just got out of the egg. I have always thought that old Goulburn was the man whom Sir Robert Peel and Lord Derby (then Stanley) would have brought forward, and furbished up like an old piece of dusty furniture, under whom we might have all served without any great outrage of personal feelings. But I never could penetrate this. The majority, however, dispelled these dreams. It was caused by a section of the Tories, who saw through the affair and looked upon it as a plot to bring the Peelites back, and put them at the head of the party, and they acted accordingly. Next morning Peel was dead, or as good! He seemed quite well in the House, and spoke well—with none of the bitterness of his followers against Palmerston. (By the bye, Lord P. met me shortly after the debate, and said: 'You and Peel treated me like gentlemen: which no one else did.')

Although he could not have been in bed before 5 o'clock, devoted to the Prince, he rose early to attend a Council about the projected 'Great Exhibition.' There was some financial question. He took it up, but not with his usual lucidity. Then he put pen to paper, but seemed confused, and finally said he would think over the matter, and send his results to the Prince. He went home, and afterwards went out to ride, and it happened. Was it a fit? If so, it was brought on by unnecessary want of rest and repose. I know, as well as most men, what it is to get home at 4 or 5 in the morning after an exciting division. Sleep is not commanded under such circumstances, even by the philosophical. Had Peel taken his fair rest, would he have been saved? Bulwer Lytton thought not when we talked over these matters.

'He had done his work,' he said. 'No man lives who has done his work. There was nothing left for him to do.'

I did not rise, that fatal day, so early as Sir Robert Peel. And in the afternoon my guardian angel persuaded me, instead of going to Clubs and Houses of Commons, to take a drive in our agreeable environs. We were returning through the Regent's Park, and two gentlemen on horseback, strangers, stopped our carriage. 'Mr. D.,' they said, 'you will be interested to hear that Sir Robert Peel has been thrown from his horse, and has been carried home in a dangerous state.'

'Dangerous?' I inquired. 'I hope not. His loss would be a great misfortune for this country.'

They seemed a little surprised, but I spoke what I felt.

Next day (it might be the day after), Peel still lying on his couch, there was a great morning fête at Rosebank; a thatched cottage on the banks of the Thames, surrounded by groves of the flowers which gave it a name, and where, to render the romantic simplicity complete, Lady Londonderry, in a colossal conservatory, condescended to make tea from a suite of golden pots and kettles.

Lord Londonderry was restless and absorbed: he foresaw the revolution which the death of Peel might occasion in parties. He pressed my hand with affectionate anxiety, asked many questions, and, full of intrigue, showed, as usual, his cards. I missed him during the fête. He reappeared towards the end. He came up, and whispered to me. It was hopeless. He had actually galloped up to London, called at Whitehall, and galloped back again, while his band was still playing, and his friends still sipping ices.

In another memorandum, also of the sixties, Disraeli dwells on the increasing civilities of his old opponent:

I observed this also in Peel. He sate almost next to me during the last years of his Parliamentary life. . . . I had recourse to many little arts to spare his feelings, and to get fellows to sit between us and all that: but he never assisted me in these endeavours; quite the reverse, and I have since more than once suspected, that he meant to make our respective positions in the House a means of gradually bringing about a reconciliation.

In one of my great 'Protectionist' motions, as they were called, though I carefully avoided advocating Protection in them, which he was obliged to oppose, he took elaborate pains to assure the House, looking at me the whole time, that he bore no enmity to any member on account of former struggles and differences of opinion. His language was so cordial and his manner so marked, that it was much cheered by his own

friends, and all the men of sense of [our] own party: as indicating ultimate fusion on honorable terms.

There were other traits and circumstances I could mention, and, as Gladstone said, he died cheering me.

This pretty story of Peel cheering Disraeli, and Gladstone testifying to it, was also recorded in 1854 by Smythe, who wrote [1] that he was present on both occasions, and who may indeed have been Disraeli's authority. But it receives no corroboration either from Peel's correspondence or from Lord Morley's *Life of Gladstone*. On the contrary, in the latter a tale is told of Peel's repugnance to any association with Disraeli, which entirely conflicts with Disraeli's consolatory belief in Peel's forgiving humour. Gladstone wrote in 1897, a year before his death:

A very curious incident on this occasion [the Pacifico debate] evinced the extreme reluctance of Sir R. Peel to appear in any ostensible relation with Disraeli. . . . Disraeli, not yet fully recognised as leader of the Protectionists, was working hard for that position, and assumed the manners of it, with Beresford, a kind of whipper-in, for his right-hand man. After the Palmerston speech, he asked me on the next night whether I would undertake to answer it. I said that I was incompetent to do it, from want of knowledge and otherwise. He answered that in that case he must do it. As the debate was not to close that evening, this left another night free for Peel when he might speak and *not* be in Disraeli's *neighbourhood*. I told Peel what Disraeli had arranged. He was very well satisfied. But, shortly afterwards, I received from Disraeli a message through Beresford, that he had changed his mind, and would not speak until the next and closing night, when Peel would have to speak also. I had to make known to Peel this alteration. He received the tidings with extreme annoyance: thinking, I suppose, that if the two spoke on the same side and in the late hour just before the division it would convey the idea of some concert or co-operation between them, which it was evident that he was most anxious to avoid.[2]

[1] In an article in the *Press*, Jan. 7, 1854, unsigned but known to have been written by Smythe. 'This is not rumour or hearsay,' it said, 'for the writer of this article sat next to Sir Robert Peel on that occasion. A few days after, when the horrible tragedy was over, amid a group of mourning disciples, we heard Mr. Gladstone urge as a consolation, "Peel died at peace with all mankind. He even lived to cheer Disraeli."' See pp. 937, 938, and below, ch. 14.

[2] Morley's *Gladstone*, Bk. III., ch. 4.

It is impossible to reconcile the two versions of Peel's disposition towards Disraeli at the last. Gladstone's memorandum was written nearly forty years after the event, and when he himself was failing. But he had a tenacious memory for detail, and was likely to be acquainted with Peel's sentiments. Disraeli's account was written within fifteen years of Peel's death; but then he was a man of high imagination, with no gift of accuracy in detail. Gladstone's statement is disfigured by obvious *animus* against Disraeli, as shown by the carping reference to Disraeli's leadership of the Opposition; and it is possible that the devoted follower of Peel may have imputed to his more magnanimous leader a resentment which was at that date felt only by himself. Disraeli is certainly justified in claiming that in Peel's later speeches his former assailant was always mentioned with respect; but, of course, he would wish to believe that Peel cherished no more animosity against him than he did against Peel, and he would be likely to magnify any tentative approaches towards reconciliation. In dealing, however, with men of large nature and wide outlook, as were both Peel and Disraeli, the more generous and less cynical view is likely to be correct; and in Smythe we have a witness who claims himself both to have seen Peel cheer, and to have heard Gladstone's testimony. Therefore, we shall not greatly err if we accept the words put into Gladstone's mouth by Disraeli: 'Peel died at peace with all mankind; even with Disraeli.'

No one more strongly seconded Disraeli's movement to dissociate the Conservative party from any attempt to revive Protection in its old form than his chief's son, Edward Stanley.

From the Hon. Edward Stanley.

ALBANY, *Monday, July* 29 [? 1850].—I cannot forbear telling you, in confirmation of our common opinion on the 'industrial question,' that I had a long interview with a constituent on Saturday morning—one on whom I can thoroughly rely—and he said that, except a few old and obstinate men who

never would give up their crotchets (these were his words), all the gentlemen farmers of his neighbourhood were agreed in thinking a return to high duties at any time, and to Protective duties, however low, at the present, impossible. This man calls himself a stanch Protectionist, and was one until very lately—indeed upon principle he is one still, and the head of that interest in Lynn. . . .

Again, from Paris, on October 19, Edward Stanley writes: 'It really will not do to make another Protectionist demonstration; the very turnips of Norfolk will cry out against us, as the turnip-headed inhabitants thereof have already begun to do.' On the other hand, one of Disraeli's closest political and personal friends, Manners, implored him to abide by their old cause. 'I am for thorough,' he wrote on September 10. 'The only three republics known to England (for Switzerland has just established a Protectionist tariff) are Protectionist, and so are at least one-half of our Chartists. . . . On what question can one stand an appeal to the country with a better prospect of success than that of Protection?' But Manners's remonstrances only served to draw Disraeli into a still stronger statement of his resolve to find a substitute for the policy of Protection.

To Lord John Manners.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 16, 1850.

MY DEAR COMRADE,—. . . I am also greatly engaged in endeavouring to prepare some great measure, or rather scheme of policy, which may set us on our legs, but the labor is great, for the task is most difficult.[1]

If 'general prosperity' and agricultural distress be concurrent when Parliament meets, which is not improbable, and we are equal to the occasion, we might do something. The great point is to devise a scheme, which will rally the landed party, and yet be suited to the spirit of the age. As for Protection in its old form, I look upon that as dead. In this county, able-bodied pauperism is extinguished. I imagine the same result in Oxon made Henley make the unnecessary confession in which he indulged. In case of a dissolution on the old protective cry, it is not merely the manufacturing masses

[1] To Lady Londonderry, on Oct. 22, Disraeli wrote: 'It is a difficult business to evolve order out of chaos, which is the present state of the Tory party of these realms.'

that would be arrayed against us: the peasantry would be equally hostile. This is my judgment from what passes under my eye in this eminently agricultural county. The same report reaches me from the contiguous counties.

Your 'three republics' are very ingenious: but the classes directly interested in 'Protection' in those countries are very considerable in amount. The awkward feature of rent does not arise, too, among the peasant proprietors of France—our great republican authority for agricultural Protection.

Moreover, it appears to me pretty clear, that the landed interest is the only one that seriously requires something to be done for it. I think the shipping case is not a good one; and protection to W.I[ndian] sugar is involved in almost inextricable difficulties. If the W.I. colonies are protected on account of their deficiency of labor, why should the E.I. territories enjoy that Protection with a redundancy of labor? And could you make a distinction? And so on.

Well, then, it is impossible, independently of other objections, to attempt to revive the old form of Protection merely for the land. That would never do. All which leads me to the conclusion, that unless, when Parliament meets (the circumstances being such as I previously assumed), we have some comprehensive proposition, which meets the exigency, we are done, and shall fall to pieces: but if we could hit the right nail on the head, we might put the Government in a minority in their own house, when Lord Carington thinks they would dissolve, but I doubt that, if the *coup d'apoplexie* were dealt them in February.

Write whenever you can. I hope you will be able to decipher these Sibylline leaves, but I have been writing all day, and my hand is quite exhausted.—Ever yours, D.

Manners was not convinced: 'In my poor opinion, "Away with the Income Tax, and hurrah for the Custom House!" ought to be our cry.' But there can be no doubt that Disraeli, with his wonted insight, had discerned the current of public opinion. Abraham Hayward, who was always malignant in his hostility to Disraeli, wrote to Lady Morgan on November 2: 'Protection is dead, and Disraeli very nearly, if not quite, forgotten. How soon one of these puffed-up reputations goes down! It is like a bladder after the pricking of a pin.' The cause of Protection might be lost, and, indeed, that was Disraeli's own belief; but it was very short-sighted to suppose that Disraeli, who was steadily riveting his hold on his party

and the House of Commons, would disappear with it. A close observer of politics had, with more discernment, written to him earlier in the year: 'The Whig game of misrepresenting you, I think, has fairly run itself out.'

The perennial topic of Protection was temporarily overshadowed in the autumn of 1850 by what was known as the Papal Aggression. What happened is graphically described in *Endymion*:[1]

> At the end of the autumn, his Holiness the Pope had made half a dozen new Cardinals, and to the surprise of the world, and the murmurs of the Italians, there appeared among them the name of an Englishman [Cardinal Wiseman], Archbishop *in partibus*. Shortly after this, a Papal Bull, 'given at St. Peter's, Rome, under the seal of the fisherman,' was issued, establishing a Romish hierarchy in England. This was soon followed by a pastoral letter by the new Cardinal 'given out of the Appian Gate,'[2] announcing that 'Catholic England had been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament.'
>
> The country at first was more stupefied than alarmed. It was conscious that something extraordinary had happened, and some great action taken by an ecclesiastical power, which from tradition it was ever inclined to view with suspicion and some fear. But it held its breath for a while. It so happened that the Prime Minister was a member of a great house which had become illustrious by its profession of Protestant principles, and even by its sufferings in a cause which England had once looked on as sacred. The Prime Minister, a man of distinguished ability, not devoid even of genius, was also a wily politician, and of almost unrivalled experience in the management of political parties. The Ministry was weak and nearly worn out, and its chief, influenced partly by noble and historical sentiment, partly by a conviction that he had a fine occasion to rally the confidence of the country round himself and his friends, and to restore the repute of his political connection, thought fit, without consulting his colleagues, to publish a manifesto, denouncing the aggression of the Pope upon our Protestantism as insolent and insidious, and as expressing a pretension of supremacy over the realm of England which made the Minister indignant.
>
> A confused public wanted to be led, and now they were led. They sprang to their feet like an armed man. The Corporation of London, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, had audiences of the Queen; the counties met, the municipalities memorialised; before the first of January there had

[1] Ch. 99.

[2] This should have been the Flaminian Gate.

been held nearly seven thousand public meetings, asserting the supremacy of the Queen, and calling on Her Majesty's Government to vindicate it by stringent measures.

The Prime Minister's manifesto was Lord John Russell's famous Durham letter, so called because it was addressed to the Bishop of Durham. Besides protesting vehemently against the Pope's action, it also denounced the excesses of Puseyism as 'a danger within the gates' which alarmed the writer even more. The letter was dated November 4, and published on Thursday, November 7. Disraeli, naturally anxious, as a good party leader, that the rising Protestant indignation of the country should not be appropriated for the political benefit of the Whigs, immediately wrote a letter to the Lord-Lieutenant of his county, which he contrived to get into *The Times* of November 9. In it he requested the Lord-Lieutenant to call a county meeting to express reprobation of the Aggression, but at the same time pointed out that the Government, who expressed so much indignation at the establishment of a Romish hierarchy in England, had recognised officially on several occasions the corresponding Romish hierarchy in Ireland. 'I had no idea,' he wrote to his sister, 'of Lord John's riding the high Protestant horse, and making the poor devils of Puseyites the scapegoats, when he, after all, is the greater culprit.' Greville, coming to the rescue of his friend Clarendon, the Viceroy of Ireland, replied in *The Times* that the Whig Government were only conforming to the practice established by Peel in 1845 in a royal warrant issued under the Charitable Bequests Act. Stanley wrote to ask what was to be done to avoid the country being placed, after all this bluster, in a ridiculous position.

To Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN, *Nov.* 16, 1850.—I received your letter this morning. I will first advert to the Popish question. I believe the position of the Government with respect to it to be one of extreme embarrassment. Naas writes to me that Corry Connellan[1] had just left him 'furious.' He said: 'Johnny must

[1] Private Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

have for the moment forgotten the existence of Ireland.' It was a stultification of the whole Whig policy towards this country for the last half-century and more. 'It will lead to such a complication as has never even in Ireland been witnessed.' Naas himself adds: "The whole Papist population are bursting with fury at Johnny's letter. If they only act up to one-quarter what they say, they will never let an Irish Member vote for a Whig measure.'

It has confidentially reached me also from a very great quarter in Ireland, that Clarendon himself is extremely annoyed and perplexed with the affair.

I assume from the sudden silence of *The Times*, after lashing up the agitation, no leader referring to the question appearing for four days, and all the meetings shoved into the back of the paper, that Lord John already repents of indulging in his hereditary foible—to wit, having a shy at the Papists.

What will the Government do? If after the Downing Street Bull they do nothing, in deference to the Romans, then the Protestant cry, now legitimately raised, will gather to us, and we will not let it dissolve: if they act against the Pope in the manner you have intimated, the Roman Members will take the earliest opportunity, probably by a vote in favor of the land, to which they are always predisposed, to embarrass the Government. This is my general view.

Knowing that Lord John, a week before his manifesto, had written in reply to the remonstrance of the Bishop of London quite on a contrary tack, believing that both through Lord Minto and by other means the Government had long been cognisant of the Pope's intention, and were far from unfavorable to it, I thought not a moment should be lost in giving some check to what I conceived, on Lord John's part, to be a disingenuous and audacious ruse—'insolent and insidious,' in my opinion. His manifesto in Thursday's *Times* did not reach me until Friday morning, and to obtain the insertion of my rejoinder on Saturday I had, of course, not a moment to lose. I might have made the statement more complete, but there are times when the opportune is preferable to the excellent.[1] I wished to give a warning hint to our too eager friends of the Spooner school, who have no doubt all fallen into the trap, but who, when Parliament meets, will recover from their hallucination, when they find the champion of Protestantism still the ally of McHale.

You are under a misconception in supposing that I ever referred to the Charitable Trusts Act or to Lord Grey's circular. I made no allusion to either. It was Greville who

[1] Disraeli used this same phrase in writing the day before to his sister.

vindicated Lord Clarendon on the ground of the precedent afforded by the C. T. Act. That statute itself does not mention any member of the Roman Hierarchy, nor even with the addition of the warrant would it pass muster as a precedent if well squeezed. I have not replied to C. G., as newspaper controversy is not satisfactory, and the proper opportunity will occur.

I have before me, among other analogous documents, a letter from Lord Clarendon addressed to 'His Grace Archbishop Murray of Dublin,' requesting him to submit the statutes of the New Colleges for the consideration of the Pope, for whom he entertained 'a profound veneration'—also the address delivered to the assembled Irish Roman Catholic Hierarchy by the Lord-Lieutenant in 1847, beginning 'My Lords,' and well larded with Lordships, and which ends by 'desiring their counsel and co-operation.' Also a list which is represented to me as the official list of the *entrée* during the Queen's visit, in which I observe Archbishop Murray takes precedence of the Lord C. Justice of the Queen's Bench, of Lord Abercorn, and of the ten Bishops of our Church. I wrote my letter from memory, which, however, seldom deceives me in political matters, and I apprehend that these and other documents fully justify my statement. That statement was studiously confined to Ireland. It did not touch the Colonies or other branches germane to the matter.

These remarks have already run to such a length that I can venture only cursorily to notice the second, and in truth more important, division of your letter.

Assuming, as I have done for a long time, that 'general prosperity' and agricultural distress would be concurrent when Parliament meets, I have been busied in preparing some propositions for your consideration which might lead to a settlement of the controversy between Town and Country, for which, under the circumstances referred to, the occasion would be favorable. They are necessarily of a somewhat comprehensive character, but essentially practical and popular; and if introduced and conducted in a moderate and conciliatory tone, and rather as an adjustment between contending claims, than an attempt to give a victory to a party, I think might be jockeyed thro'. They would have a very good chance indeed if the Papists are disaffected to the Ministry.

These propositions would involve some relaxation of the restrictions on Banking in accordance with that system of relaxation which is now extended to all branches of our system. Upon this head I am in *strictly* confidential correspondence with Herries, between whom and myself in this particular I apprehend there will be no difference. It is,

however, almost impossible to hold counsel on such affairs by the pen, and we have mutually made some attempts to visit each other, but in vain. These propositions are hardly yet quite ripe enough in their details to be submitted to your Lordship, but when they are sufficiently advanced I apprehend they will require very deliberate discussion. I hope, therefore, that if we meet before Parliament assembles we may have the advantage of a little more, and less hurried, counsel than last year. I should advise, if the propositions are ultimately approved of by you, that notice of their introduction should be given the first night of the Session, and not a day unnecessarily lost in bringing them to a vote. Under these circumstances I will not now enter into other financial measures, as if these resolutions be carried, or even very strongly supported, very important consequences must ensue either to the position or the policy of the Cabinet.

In my opinion London and your library is always the best place for business, and I would always attend your summons for that purpose if not in town, tho' at the time best for council, the latter half of January, I should probably be fixed at Grosvenor Gate.

I shall be in town for a few days at the beginning of next month in case you are passing thro'. . . .

The Government were indeed embarrassed. As Disraeli put it in *Endymion*:

> Unfortunately, it was soon discovered by the Minister that there had been nothing illegal in the conduct of the Pope or the Cardinal, and a considerable portion of the Liberal party began to express the inconvenient opinion, that the manifesto of their chief was opposed to those principles of civil and religious liberty of which he was the hereditary champion. Some influential members of his own Cabinet did not conceal their disapprobation of a step on which they had not been consulted.

Disraeli can hardly have shared the popular alarm and indignation. He wrote to Londonderry in a jesting spirit on November 3: 'What do you think of Cardinal Wiseman? The people are very much alarmed in this county. Even the peasants think they are going to be burned alive and taken up to Smithfield instead of their pigs.' But however much Disraeli may have regarded the agitation with amused contempt, he was deeply impressed by it, as the vivid account in *Endymion*, written in his old age

shows. It convinced him of the essential Protestantism of the British character, and its effect may be traced in the complete abandonment of the Tractarian tendencies of his 'Young England' days, in the unfavourable picture of Roman methods drawn in *Lothair*, and in the famous Bill to 'put down Ritualism.' For the moment he was chiefly concerned to secure that the commotion should be utilised to help, and not to hinder, the advance of the Conservative cause.

To Lord Stanley.

CARLTON, *Dec.* 7, 1850.—. . . I have now been in town two or three days, and have reconnoitred the position, which seems to be about this:

There is great discontent and disquietude in the Liberal ranks. I think that Lord John will propose a Bill, as limited as possible in its operation, to prohibit the assumption of ecclesiastical and other titles, conferred by foreign Powers without the permission of the Sovereign. With the present commotion in this country, this will be rather a technical remedy than a political one. He will be legislating rather against an isolated grievance than taking those measures for the security of the Protestant realm which are required. There will be great disappointment in the public heart, if he takes this course. If, while his technical remedy be supported, we propose something more comprehensive and satisfactory, Lord John will fall back upon the Romanist party, and say: 'See what you must meet if you upset my Government: a Parliament elected under a "No Popery" cry, a purely Protestant Ministry, and the repeal of the Emancipation Act.'

They will, under these circumstances, find it most expedient to swallow the technical remedy, and continue to support the Government on the old understanding.

I have seen Inglis,[1] and conferred with him at great length. He is well disposed to us, but his ignorance of human nature will render it quite impossible for him to steer the course without our counsel and co-operation. Even he, however, has given up talking of keeping Lord John to his manly and straightforward declaration, having discovered that, if Lord John be pledged to anything by his letter, it is only to make a scapegoat of a section of the Church.

Inglis would be prepared, if only the technical remedy I

[1] Sir Robert Inglis, who represented Oxford University, took the lead among the Tory party of the movement to repel the Papal Aggression.

have intimated be proposed by the Government, himself to propose the more decisive course under our advice and sanction. If beat on this, which probably we should be, we should, at least, have outmanœuvred Lord John from his 'insidious position' as Protestant leader, and then we shall have the legitimate Protestant feeling on our side.

I have seen Lord Lonsdale,[1] Lord Ponsonby, and Herries, who came up from St. Julian's to meet me. Lord Ponsonby tells me that the Cabinet would have been broken up if its successors were ready. But where are they? The general idea among the Whigs is that what are called the Peelites are pro-Catholic and all that, but this I think to be without any solid foundation. After all, of the Peelites, there are only two men of first-rate calibre, and who would give the tone and color to the section—Graham and Gladstone. The first remains in the North, alert even after dinner, and Gladstone is at Naples—*not at Rome*. The idea that the Peelites are very Catholic arises from the tone of the *Chronicle*, but that is Sidney Herbert, to whom, I believe, the journal belongs. He is in town, very fervent, acting under the influence of Archdeacon Manning, who, I believe, has gone over. . . .

I have discussed affairs very much with Herries, and on the whole very satisfactorily. I am still of opinion, stronger even every day, that, whatever may be the excitement as to religious questions, when Parliament meets our policy should be to launch, as early as possible in February, some agricultural motion, which may lay the basis of a settlement of the industrial controversy, and may attract support.

If there be any discontent among the Irish, it would, I think, be carried; and if the Government are placed in a minority by these means, and at such a moment, with the Protestant question unsettled, and the Income Tax looming in the distance, I think their position would be distressing. But the form of this motion requires the most deep deliberation.

Lord Lonsdale thinks that we have lost a great opportunity by the precipitation with which our friends gulped down Lord John's letter. But there is a great revulsion on this head, and a letter published by Mr. Bennett[2] is making an extraordinary sensation here, and, when read, must affect the country. You have probably seen it, and there has been a new edition every day. It rather touches Lord John's private honor. When one finds that for the last seven years he kept the fasts and festivals of S. Paul, subscribed to S. Barnabas, that Bennett was his father confessor, people are

[1] The 2nd Earl, Postmaster-General 1841-1845, President of the Council 1852.

[2] The well-known Ritualist clergyman, of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, and afterwards Vicar of Frome.

startled that, with the Eucharist from Bennett's hands almost sticking in his throat, he should denounce his spiritual pastor as a mime and an impostor. . . .

The difficulties of the Government indicated that a Ministerial crisis might be at hand, but the Conservative Opposition, though their discipline and their spirits were better, were still lacking in *personnel*. These political conditions, and the death of Peel, which had left his followers somewhat forlorn, naturally suggested to the leaders of the regular parties the desirability of making fresh overtures to the Peelites, who, though weak in cohesion and numbers, were strong in administrative capacity and experience. It is not surprising, therefore, to find, in the winter of 1850-51, Disraeli resuming, in a more formal manner, the overtures which he had made through Londonderry in the previous spring to Graham. But for that affair, it would seem rather strange that Graham should have been the Peelite approached. We have seen that there had been, during the past session, sufficient community of action between the leaders of the two wings of the Conservative party to suggest the possibility of association in government; but the Peelites who had shown conspicuous friendliness were Aberdeen and Gladstone. Graham, on the other hand, had ever since 1846 approximated more closely than any of his colleagues, save Peel himself, to the Whig Government; and this attitude had been so marked as to bring him in January, 1849, an offer of the Admiralty under Russell. Moreover, he had had several sharp passages in debate with Disraeli, who enjoyed tilting at the 'disciple of Progress.' The choice of Graham was no doubt due mainly to his outstanding position, after Peel's death, in the House of Commons, but partly to the accident of his friendship with that persevering peacemaker, Londonderry.

To Lord Londonderry.

Confidential. HUGHENDEN, *Dec.* 29, 1850.—I am still in time to wish you and Lady L. a merrie Christmas, unless, indeed, you think it too Popish. . . .

The political phenomena of an autumn, to be decided in February, are data much too distant for speculation. I can't even now decide with any confidence to what degree the fervor may subside, but of this I feel persuaded, that Ld. J. R. has shaken himself very much in the confidence of all those whose good opinion a statesman should wish to possess. . . . The whole affair seems to me hasty, vulgar, and cunning.

I make no doubt, that it would not be very difficult to subvert his Government on the meeting of Parliament, but I am not prepared myself to engage in such an enterprise, without the probability of forming a strong and enduring administration. Such an administration must represent great interests and great parties in the country. Any attempt to achieve or to retain power in England by a mere reputation for administrative ability will never do. Peel tried it, and even he, with great adventitious advantage, signally failed.

In the meantime, trust me, that unless such a Government be formed power will slip from the hands of the aristocracy for ever, and results be precipitated which might, perhaps, have been for ever prevented.

With respect to Graham, you know my opinion of him. Both from personal regard and my high sense of his abilities, I should be unaffectedly glad to see him assume that position in the House of Commons and the State for which he is so eminently qualified; but I really don't think that Mr. Pitt himself could stand four-and-twenty hours, unless he were prepared with some wise and comprehensive settlement of the industrial question. Unless I greatly mistake, public opinion in almost every class is in favor of some temperate adjustment of this long controversy. It would permanently array on our side a large body of the population, again loyal.

My chief was not 'mum,' as you say, because of a bad fit of the gout, from which he has not yet recovered, but because he is too proud to bid for power, either by writing letters or making speeches, and I think he is right.

To Lord Stanley.

CARLTON, *Jan.* 21, 1851.—I arrived in town last night. This morning I received a letter from Lord Londonderry, which had been forwarded to Hughenden, of interest and importance.

You know that he always maintains a political correspondence with me, under the guise of social, and had more than once pressed me to go to Wynyard on the 17th to meet Graham. I declined with courteous expressions as to G.

Pressed again, and many compliments to myself in an extract from a confidential letter from G., I thought the

matter was now ripe, and near eno' to bring these long-cherished negotiations to a crisis; and therefore, while I again declined going to Wynyard, on the fair excuse of having friends with me, I took the occasion, in a letter strictly confidential, but which I knew would be shown, to speak definitely on the political position.

My main points were these: that I could contemplate no Government of which you were not the head; that I should be sorry to see you attempt to form any Cabinet which had not a fair prospect of governing the country for a considerable period, and that I knew you shared these feelings; that a strong Government required not merely ability in the Houses of Parliament, but sympathies of numerous and powerful classes out of doors; that with respect to G., while there was no one who would more gladly see him than myself in the position in the House of Commons and the State which his great talents and experience fit him for, still I was confident he was indulging in an illusion in supposing that any man or body of men could rise to power in this country by a mere reputation for administrative talent; that even Peel had tried it and failed; that a Cabinet must be supported by powerful classes; and that the settlement of the industrial question, as far as agriculture was concerned, was the only basis of a strong Conservative Ministry; that, in my opinion, a great change had taken place during the last year in the public sentiment on this head; that even among the trading classes it was felt that the land had not been fairly dealt with; and that I believed the great majority of the country would be glad to see an equitable and temperate adjustment of the landed question, and a remission of taxation which might be supplied by a moderate duty on foreign agricultural imports, etc.

Lord Ly. writes to-day, urgently, that Graham has expressed his assent to most of my views; that he appears to be perfectly reconciled to serving under you; that he is *d'accord* with you on foreign affairs, and on the Irish question, considering a partial measure to be fatal to the existence of the Irish Church. The industrial question remains, and is doubtless the key of everything. But as, without doubt also, he has read and digested my letter, I conclude, tho' he does not choose to commit himself on that head at this moment, he will ultimately swallow this draught as well as the subordinate office points. . . .

Stanley expressed his interest, and congratulated Disraeli on his diplomacy, but shrewdly doubted whether Graham would even be 'brought to a *pourparler*.' How-

ever, the two leaders held a conference, and Disraeli wrote on January 29 to Londonderry a letter[1] which might form the basis of negotiation. There was no obstacle, he said, on the part of Stanley, who had no other feelings towards Graham than those 'which the recollection of long years of confidence and cordial co-operation would naturally inspire.' He himself, too, would allow no personal feeling to stand in the way. 'I would, however, observe that such arrangements, generally speaking, do not entirely depend upon the readiness of an individual to concur in them. It is scarcely possible for any man to lead, under any circumstances, a powerful party in Parliament, without developing such a degree of sympathy in his behalf, that his followers may not be very content that one, who has sedulously represented their opinions in debate, should subside to a secondary post.' He was persuaded, however, that at present he could overcome these difficulties. But it was an essential element of reconstruction to adopt conciliatory measures to the agricultural interest. 'There is a very prevalent and growing feeling, that the land has been hardly used, and that a temperate and well-matured conclusion of the controversy between town and country would meet with very general acceptation, because it has, for some time, been very generally expected.' If Graham shared Stanley's and Disraeli's general views on the subject, and was equally desirous to obtain the meditated result, Stanley would listen with the utmost willingness and deference to suggestions. 'We have a painful but irresistible persuasion, that the continued neglect of the agricultural classes may considerably, and, in all probability, permanently, impair the future elements of Conservative government in this country, in the same degree as an unequivocal, though temperate, disposition to do them justice would confirm their predilection for the present constitutional forms.'

Londonderry had apparently omitted to let Graham know what he was doing; so, in passing on this letter to

[1] Published in Parker's *Graham*.

him, he deprecated his annoyance, assuring him that his only object in the negotiation was to see the Conservative party consolidated under the best statesmen left to depend on. Graham did not conceal his displeasure and his feeling that he had been placed in an awkward and unsatisfactory position. It was incorrect to say that he wished for an opportunity of resuming his political connection with Stanley. 'My intimacy with Lord Stanley has been unfortunately interrupted. But the terms on which we lived together for nearly twenty years, and on which we even parted, were such that I could not allow any other person to interpret to him my feelings and opinions. When I wish to communicate them to Lord Stanley, I shall ask his permission to state them for myself. At the present moment I have no such desire.' It was the policy of Protection on which Stanley insisted that formed the barrier. Disraeli's letter could lead to no consequences. 'I hope, however, that Mr. Disraeli will be assured that I have never wished to supplant him in the lead of the Protectionist party in the House of Commons, which he has won by his superior abilities.' Only two parties could exist, and were he a candidate for office he should sink differences and make his choice; but the effects of the disruption of 1846 had not yet subsided, and he meant to hold himself free from engagements.[1] In short, Graham's refusal was absolute. Perhaps Londonderry, in his eagerness to promote reconciliation, had not been entirely discreet. But Graham could hardly have been won by any manner of approach. He was much in request this year, as Russell again offered him Cabinet office, both at the beginning of the session and in the autumn. But the offer was on each occasion declined.

Graham was not the only Free Trade statesman with whom Disraeli endeavoured to establish this winter friendly relations which might lead up to political co-operation. The following mysterious letter can hardly

[1] Parker's *Graham*, Vol. II., ch. 6.

refer to anyone but Palmerston, to whom Disraeli felt constantly attracted.

From Count Reventlow.

Feb. 19, 1851.—I met our friend last evening near the famous cul de sac of Downing Street, and as his lordship proposed me to accompany him to the House of Commons, I availed myself of this excellent opportunity pour m'acquitter de votre commission, et je pense avec un plein succès, car notre ami a exprimé qu'il serait charmé de s'entretenir avec vous, et je l'ai prié de vous en donner une occasion, ce qu'il a promis; il va sans dire que je n'ai pas fait la moindre allusion à l'objet sur lequel vous désiriez lui parler, ce qui aurait été d'un très mauvais goût.

About this time Beresford warned Stanley that Disraeli had been 'coquetting and trying to deal with Lord Palmerston; that the latter expressed the impracticability of their different creeds and opinions, one being a Free Trader, the other a Protectionist. D. challenged Lord P. to produce one sentence in any of his speeches in which he had ever advocated Protection *per se*.' It will be remembered that on the Pacifico motion Stanley urged Disraeli to give no colour to misconceptions which might arise from sparing Palmerston in the debate.

It was a busy winter with Disraeli; his mind occupied with three great questions—the relief of agriculture otherwise than by Protection, the Papal Aggression, and the negotiations with Graham—all involving much correspondence; besides the biography of Bentinck, to the writing of which all his spare time was now given. If we are to believe Beresford's gossip, he made experiments during this recess with his personal appearance:

William Beresford to Lord Stanley.

THE DEEPDENE, *Friday* [*Dec.*, 1850].—. . . Disraeli, I hear, is figuring about with a fierce pair of moustaches. Now this is very sad, for he is not the person who ought to attract attention by *outré* dress and appearance, but by his talents.

I do trust that this style is only assumed while he is rusticating in the beech-woods of Buckinghamshire, and that he will appear in the world in a more humanised form in January. . . .

To Sarah Disraeli.

Wednesday, Jan. 1,–1851.—I went on Monday to the Q[uarter] S[essions]. A great meeting. All the magnates there. The Lord-Lieutenant, the three county M.P.'s, Chandos, Verney, Calvert. The dinner very crowded—even the Carringtons remained to do the honor to Sir Thomas Aubrey, who resigns the chair. A note from Jem, which I found on my table yesterday, informs me of your merry Christmas dinner, and of his incipient influenza; but I hope he overstates his case, as I am the same, but impute it to the strange weather, the walls of H[ughenden] House in and out reeking with damp. At first I thought I had a cold. . . .

I found on my table letters from Lord Lyndhurst, Hardwicke, Granby, Buller, J. Manners, and Lord March, and all, even L.'s, at length, some almost pamphlets, so you see I have enough to do, but cannot reply to-day. Lyndhurst apologises for his handwriting, as he was always a poor scribe . . .; but it was dark. The truth is, I thought his handwriting very much improved. I think I told you Edward Stanley had returned—' to my great joy,' his mother adds.

I wish you a very happy new year. Our plans remain all unsettled, in consequence of Stanley's state. Belvoir, Burghley, and Wimpole are contending for the honor of being the seat of the congress.

HUGHENDEN, *Jan.* 13, 1851.—I find myself very incapable of exertion in this weather, and particularly so of writing letters, which I daily and weekly postpone, till the arrear frightens me. My public correspondence becomes a great tax, as the paper in the country is always damp, ink thick, and pens consequently incompetent. I expect young Stanley to-morrow, and on the 24th we go to Burghley. Lord Stanley wrote me his first letter, proposing to come up to town the 17th to consult; but, as the Burghley arrangement had been made, I thought it too great an effort for him to come 500 miles, so I suggested waiving it. I have not the slightest idea what will happen.

The new edition of the *Curiosities* seems to swim. My father's memory has been kept alive and done justice to, which was the great, indeed sole object. *Bell's Messenger* says in the review: 'He is still more admired now that he is dead.' . . .

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 22.—I have been obliged to come up suddenly for some public business. . . . Young Stanley's visit to Hughenden, though hurried, was very agreeable. He seemed charmed with the hill country, after

Lancashire, and with everything else. Having no horses, we took long walks together—one day to Hampden, which pleased him much; another to the Abbey:[1] no one there, so we rambled all over the park; the view of Hughenden from the heights is quite marvellous. I had never seen it before, and this must be the view which Stafford was full of in the House of Commons last year, when he returned from staying at the Abbey. We walked to Denner Hill and its sylvan neighbourhood, and on Sunday, after church, we walked on the hills in view of Dashwood's park, till we got to West Wycombe Church. There is a regular journal for you!

The political horizon seems fair, and I never knew a session about to commence with better prospects. . . .[2]

[1] Wycombe Abbey. [2] *Letters*, pp. 236, 237.

CHAPTER X.

On the Brink of Office.

1851–1852.

The session of 1851 in the main bore out Disraeli's anticipations of better fortunes for the Conservative party. The Opposition leaders,[1] who dined with Stanley just before the meeting of Parliament, and sat talking politics, as Malmesbury tells us, till one in the morning, must have been in good spirits. The Government were very vulnerable both on the question of the land and on their anti-Papal policy, and on both subjects Disraeli struck, in the debate on the Address,[2] the note of his subsequent criticism. Ministers had lamented agricultural distress in the Queen's Speech, but without any suggestion of action. They expressed 'confident hope' that the depression would pass away; that, said Disraeli, was 'the language of amiable despair.' He gave notice that he should move in the matter on the earliest possible day. On the question of Ecclesiastical Titles he anticipated the paltriness of Ministerial intentions.

Russell lost no time in bringing in his Bill, which merely forbade the assumption by Roman Catholics of territorial titles within the United Kingdom under penalty of a fine, and rendered void all bequests or donations made to persons under such titles. The mountain had brought forth a mouse, as one of the Irish members said. It was a 'little paltry, miserable measure,' declared Bright. The Irish, the Radicals, and the Peelites, opposed it outright. Disraeli, in Stanley's words, gave it 'a contemptuous support.' He would vote for it in order that people might

[1] Besides Disraeli, Herries, Malmesbury, Redesdale (Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords, 1851-1886), and Beresford, there was also present Edward Stanley. 'He is very discreet,' wrote his father in explanation.

[2] Feb. 4.

see what was the result of that remarkable agitation which had been fostered by the Government. The weapon they had forged was not equal to the office for which it was intended. Was this all? Was a piece of petty persecution the only weapon they could devise on a solemn political exigency? It was a purely technical remedy. No principle was asserted or vindicated, and no substantial evil would be remedied. Russell, said Disraeli, called the Pope's letter a 'blunder on the sudden.' But the Pope's action had been deliberate. He had no doubt been encouraged by Russell's opinion, given in Parliament in 1845, that there were no grounds for continuing the restriction which prevented a Roman Catholic Bishop in Ireland from assuming a title held by a Bishop of the Established Church. Besides, the Government had received notice of the Pope's intentions through a communication made to Minto, but disregarded by him. Parliament might have legislated in reference to the recognition, on terms, of a Roman Catholic hierarchy; but the Government had shirked this difficult problem. Their Bill would effect nothing. Disraeli's position, in fact, was that the Government, if they were not prepared for comprehensive legislation, should have left the question alone altogether. This was, in his opinion, merely an electioneering Bill; his support was of an equally tactical character, to prevent the Whigs from extracting all the profit from the extravagantly Protestant humour of the nation. After a debate which raged for four nights, leave was given to bring in the Bill by an enormous majority consisting of the regular supporters of both front benches.

Before the vote was taken, Disraeli had brought forward and almost carried, his motion on agricultural distress. It took the simple form of laying down that it was the duty of Ministers to introduce without delay effectual measures for the relief of a distress which they acknowledged to exist. He based his case on that concurrence of general prosperity and agricultural depression which

he had written about in the recess. In that concurrence there must be something wrong which Ministers should remedy. The arguments he used in his long and elaborate, but studiously moderate, speech were necessarily familiar, as he had pleaded the cause again and again. He asked that the Minister, whose tone implied that he recognised in his heart the injustice suffered by the land, should act.

> I am altogether innocent of mixing up this question with the passions of party politics. The speeches I have made in this House are not speeches which are adapted to please thoughtless societies out of doors or meetings which are often held in the country, at which my name is mentioned as one who does not do sufficient justice to the sufferings of those who complain. Sir, I pardon all these innuendoes; I can make allowance for the strong feelings of worthy men placed in the trying circumstances in which the farmers of England are now labouring. But, right or wrong, of this I am convinced, that the course I have taken with respect to their interests has been the result of long thought and careful observation, and that I have asked for nothing for them which justice does not authorise and policy recommend. . . . I now appeal to the House of Commons. . . . They may step in and do that which the Minister shrinks from doing—terminate the bitter controversy of years. They may bring back that which my Lord Clarendon called 'the old good-nature of the people of England.' They may terminate the unhappy quarrel between town and country. They may build up again the fortunes of the land of England—that land to which we owe so much of our power and of our freedom; that land which has achieved the union of those two qualities for combining which a Roman Emperor was deified, *Imperium et Libertas*. And all this, too, not by favour, not by privilege, not by sectarian arrangements, not by class legislation, but by asserting the principles of political justice and obeying the dictates of social equity.

It is difficult, after reading this eloquent and obviously sincere passage, to understand Russell's description of the speech, in his letter to the Queen, as 'not that of a man who was persuaded he was undertaking a good cause.' Ministers, and Graham and Cobden, who came to their rescue, had nothing to answer except that general prosperity must eventually benefit agriculture, and that the

motion was in reality a demand for a return to Protection. This, which had been Peel's favourite argument on previous agricultural motions, carried less conviction when it no longer came from his lips. Moreover, Disraeli had in his original speech emphatically repudiated any interpretation of the kind. He would not, he said, in that Parliament make any attempt to restore an abrogated system. He could not consent that the laws regulating the industry of a great nation should be made the shuttlecock of party strife. Were it possible to bring Protection back by a chance majority, he would shrink from doing so. 'That must be done out of this House; and it must be done by no chance majority, but by, if not a unanimous, a very preponderating expression of public opinion.' Surely that was a sufficiently definite pronouncement, and he repeated it in his reply at the close of the second night's debate. It was on this occasion that Croker said to Disraeli, 'The speech was the speech of a statesman, and the reply was the reply of a wit;'[1] and Stanley characterised both speech and reply as masterly. The division[2] gave the Government a majority of only 14—281 against 267—on what amounted in effect to a vote of want of confidence. Disraeli's efforts for the reorganisation of his party had been crowned with success; but we must not forget that, as Stanley wrote to Malmesbury, 'our division was not as good as it looked, for we had several with us on whose general support we certainly could not count.' The serious impression produced upon Ministers may be gathered from the fact that in the Budget, introduced four days later, they conceded, though in a minute fashion, the principle against which they had so obstinately contended, by proposing a grant-in-aid of £150,000 to be handed over to local authorities for the maintenance of pauper lunatics.

'Notwithstanding the efforts of all persons and parties to keep them in,' wrote Disraeli to Londonderry on February 19, 'I doubt whether the Government can

[1] See p. 625. [2] Feb. 13.

stand. The Budget is universally derided, and adds to their difficulties, when they have received a body-blow.' The very next day they suffered a defeat which drove them to resignation. A band of Liberals and Radicals had long been discontented with the Reform Act of 1832, and wished to widen the electorate; but they had been foiled by the apathy of the Whigs and of the public in general, and by Russell's unwillingness to reopen a question in the settlement of which he had borne so honourable a share. Locke King, the member for East Surrey, had taken in charge a cause of which Hume was the most prominent Parliamentary champion; and he repeated, on February 20, a motion which he had made unsuccessfully in the last days of the previous session, for leave to introduce a Bill to equalise the county and borough franchise. Russell resisted the motion on both occasions, but on the second occasion promised a Bill for the following session. Disraeli, in July, 1850, supported Russell in his resistance, and spoke on the same general lines as when he opposed Hume in 1848. The franchise, in his view, should be 'the privilege of civic virtues,' and not treated as a universal right. It was better to adhere to the 'mitigated monarchy of England, with power in the Crown, order in one estate of the realm, and liberty in the other.' But he had no dread of the people. If they had universal suffrage to-morrow, the artisans would not support the Radicals. They would be for Monarchy and the Empire, and would give a national verdict against any scheme of national degradation. Even with the support of Disraeli and the Conservatives, the Government had some difficulty in defeating Locke King in July. The numbers were 159 to 100. Now, in February, the Conservatives, while retaining their hostility to the motion, left Ministers to fight by themselves the battle with their unruly followers. Disraeli and his friends 'moved off,' says Hobhouse, 'almost in a body,' with the result that the Government were beaten by 100 to 54; and of the 54, 17 were Protectionists

and 27 were officials, so that all the support they received from their own party amounted to ten votes! The Opposition believed that Ministers, embarrassed by the difficulties of their anti-Papal policy and the unpopularity of their Budget, were not honestly exercising their influence to defeat the Bill; and the facts certainly support this theory.

Whether they were riding for a fall or not, the Government resolved not to put up with treatment so ignominious, and resigned at once, Russell stating to the Queen that the smallness of the majority against Disraeli's motion, and the defeat on the franchise, showed that they did not possess the confidence of the House of Commons. Both the Queen and the retiring Minister were agreed that the proper course was to appeal to Stanley, whose first step was to consult his lieutenant in the Commons before his audience. 'Come down to me,' he wrote on February 22, 'as soon as you possibly can. I have received a summons to be at the Palace at 3 o'clock.' The Queen asked Stanley to form a Government; but he demurred, owing to his lack of available statesmen. 'There was one, certainly, of great ability and talent, Mr. Disraeli, but who had never held office before; and perhaps Mr. Herries.' He advised that an attempt should first be made to obtain a Coalition Ministry of Whigs and Peelites, and that he himself should not be called in except as a *dernier ressort*.[1] It was excellent advice, and it was followed. The Queen sent for Aberdeen, Graham, and Russell; and but for the Papal claims, on which Russell was deeply committed to legislate, while the Peelite statesmen would not hear of legislation, that Coalition, which was patched up somewhat factiously in December, 1852, in order to oust a Ministry which had abandoned Protection, would have come about naturally as the official recognition of what, in order to prevent a return to Protection, had been the working arrangement of the 1847 Parliament. A Coalition being found to be impracticable, the Queen turned to Aberdeen, but in vain.

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters*, memorandum by Prince Albert, Feb. 22, 1851.

The *dernier ressort* had been reached, and Stanley was summoned once more.

Disraeli, who felt from the outset that Protection would be the difficulty, endeavoured, between Stanley's first and second summons, to bring his chief's mind to contemplate a tariff, as we should now say, for revenue only, and merely incidentally protective.

To Lord Stanley.

Private. Sunday, Feb. 23, 1851.—Pardon the liberty I take of venturing to impress on you the importance, at this moment, of viewing the question of a countervailing duty on foreign grain in its pure and scientific character. It is a financial arrangement only, and in no degree an industrial one: in the same category as drawbacks. The highest authorities so view it. If it have also the effect of preventing an illimitable depreciation of the home market, that is a consequence that would make a countervailing duty *politic* as well as *just*—but this feature need not be dwelt on. Duties on foreign grain and foreign sugar may be completely vindicated without impugning any of the principles of the new commercial system.

Stanley had already, in his first audience, spoken to the Queen on the subject in a dubious sense, saying that he should propose to place a duty on corn, for revenue only; but the duty must be six shillings at least, to bring the price of corn to forty-five shillings, 'which Sir R. Peel had stated to the House of Commons was in his opinion the lowest price wheat would fall to after the abolition of the Corn Laws.' This moved the Prince Consort, very naturally, to call attention to Disraeli's recent tactics, which had certainly pointed to the abandonment of Protection.

I told him (the Prince wrote) the Queen and certainly myself had been under a delusion, and that I was sure the country was equally so, as to his intention to return to Protection. Sometimes it was stated that Protection would be adhered to, sometimes that it was given up, and that it was *compensation* to the landed interest which the Protectionists looked to. His last speeches and the motion of Mr. Disraeli led to that belief, but that it was of the highest importance that the country should know exactly what was intended.

Both the Court and Disraeli had realised the fundamental difficulty of the Conservatives, and the need for dealing with it in a drastic fashion.

Disraeli has left among his papers a most interesting memorandum, apparently drawn up during the long years of opposition in the early sixties, with reference to this abortive attempt to form a Conservative Government in 1851. Oddly enough, he makes no reference to Stanley's advice to the Queen, in his first audience, that Her Majesty should begin by trying to obtain a Coalition Ministry. Accordingly, it is not quite clear whether the conference of the two leaders described in the early paragraphs of the memorandum took place before Stanley's first summons to the Palace on Saturday, the 22nd of February, or before his second on Tuesday, the 25th. The word 'immediate' in the first sentence suggests the former date. The reference, later on, to the summons to Buckingham Palace 'early on the following morning' implies the latter date. The matter is of very slight importance.

> This *coup d'état*, as Bankes called it, rendered an immediate conference between Lord Derby [then Lord Stanley] and myself necessary. There could be no doubt that the Queen would send for him: in fact, there was no other person. There had been long a House of Commons rumor that the Protectionists must try their hand. My agricultural divisions had brought it to this pass. Again the eternal question, How was a Government to be formed? Lord Derby thought he could manage sufficiently in the House of Lords, but at all times, when a party was rich in patrician statesmen, it was unwise to rest too much on the House of Lords for the materials of a Ministry: said he thought that 'Malmesbury would make a good Colonial Secretary.' Reducing it to a minimum, to be excused only by the extraordinary circumstances of the case, it was impossible to meet Parliament with less than six Cabinet Ministers on the front bench of the House of Commons; it ought to be eight. It did not appear that from our own resources we could furnish more than three men—Herries, Lord Granby, and myself—and of these three only one had any official experience, and though an able man was worn out, and the intended Leader of the House not only never having been in office, but with very little Parliamentary ex-

perience. Mr. Disraeli[1] had been ten years in Parliament—from 1837 to 1847—and never been placed on any Committee; and it was only during the four subsequent years that he had had any opportunity of making himself in any degree acquainted with the multifarious duties of a leading member of the House of Commons.

It was evident that Lord Derby was sanguine of a fusion with the Peelites, and of the revival of the old connection. They sat (even Graham) on the Opposition benches; they were a staff without an army; it seemed a necessary and a natural solution. Graham had paid me a marked tribute in debate: Gladstone had supported my motion and voted with me. Mr. Disraeli was very much in favor of such an arrangement, and always encouraged it. But he was not sanguine as to the result. The difficulty was the Leadership of the Commons. It was impossible that the colleagues of Sir R. Peel, veteran and even illustrious statesmen, could be led by one who had stepped out of the ranks, had destroyed their famous leader, and covered them with confusion. For this reason, from the first, Mr. D. not only expressed his readiness to waive his claims, but impressed upon Lord Derby the necessity of such conduct on his part. Lord D., perhaps from delicacy or consideration for Mr. D.'s feelings, never reciprocated this feeling. Indeed, he once said that he had no idea that the man who had brought things to this point should not reap the great reward. But the truth is, the difficulty was one which could not be removed by individual sacrifice. The Protectionist party, though they were prepared (though not very willingly) to accept the services of the Peelites in a subaltern position, made it a condition *sine qua non* that the Ministry should be led in both Houses by their own chiefs. Irrespective of the Protectionist quarrel, the Peelites were very unpopular at this moment in the country on account of the line they had taken respecting the Papacy.

Lord Derby, evidently indisposed towards Graham, and neither desirous nor sanguine of any arrangement with him, was still more than hopeful that he should obtain Gladstone, and that G. by his influence and management would obtain sufficient aid from his friends to give us, in the present state of parties, a working majority. Still, it was necessary, with the royal audience impending, to contemplate the possibility of having to form a Government from our own resources, and ultimately I proposed to Lord Derby three names, in addition to the preceding ones, who I thought might be reputably introduced to Parliament as advisers of the Crown. These

[1] In the opening paragraphs of this memorandum Disraeli writes sometimes in the first person and sometimes in the third.

names were Sir Robert Inglis, whom I proposed for the India Board; Mr. Henley, who, I observed, had obtained a certain position in the House; and Mr. Henry Corry, who had been Secretary of the Admiralty under Sir Robert Peel, had the reputation of a good administrator, and always addressed the House on the duties of his department with fluency, clearness, and a knowledge of his subject.

Lord Derby shrugged his shoulders, but made no difficulties, which was not his way.

We parted, and I think that it was in the evening that I received a note from Lord Derby informing me that he had been summoned by Her Majesty to Buckingham Palace early on the following morning, and should call on me immediately after his audience.

The remainder of the memorandum describes what happened between noon on Tuesday, the 25th of February, when Stanley had accepted the Queen's commission, and four o'clock on Thursday afternoon, the 27th, when he notified Her Majesty of his failure. Disraeli has compressed the events of the three days into two; the meeting of colleagues at Stanley's house, which he so humorously describes, took place, not on the Wednesday, as the narrative suggests, but on the Thursday:

Accordingly, he [Stanley] called at Grosvenor Gate early—I should think by noon—and came upstairs to me in the blue room. His face was radiant, his eye merry, as he entered, and he said, raising, as was his custom, his mocking eyebrows, 'Well, we are launched!' And then he became serious. 'I have not kissed hands,' he said, 'but I have promised the Queen that I would try to form a Government.'

To effect this object, he informed H.M. that he would appeal for assistance to the followers of the late Sir Robert Peel, and that with that view [he] was willing that the question of Protection should be an open one until the country by a dissolution should have had the opportunity of giving its opinion upon it. He told me that Her Majesty had inquired of him to whom he proposed to entrust the Leadership of the House of Commons, and he had mentioned my name.

The Queen said: 'I always felt that, if there were a Protectionist Government, Mr. D. must be the Leader of the House of Commons: but I do not approve of Mr. D. I do not approve of his conduct to Sir Robert Peel.'

Lord Derby said: 'Madam, Mr. D. has had to make his position, and men who make their positions will say and do

things which are not necessary to be said or done by those for whom positions are provided.'

'That is true,' said the Queen. 'And all I can now hope is that, having attained this great position, he will be temperate. I accept Mr. Disraeli on your guarantee.'[1]

'And now,' said Lord Derby, 'I am going to write to Gladstone to call on me. Be with me late in the afternoon to know the result and consult.'

The interview[2] between Lord D. and G. was entirely unsuccessful. No question arose as to the materials of the Government, or as to Leadership of the House. Gladstone would not listen to Protection being an open question: he required an absolute renunciation of that policy; a specific declaration that the new Government completely accepted it —*un fait accompli*. Lord Derby was in good spirits. He told me that he had written to Sir Stratford Canning at Constantinople to offer him the Sec. for F.O., of which I greatly approved, and to the D. of Northumberland the Admiralty, than which nothing could be better. In fact, Lord Derby was full of resource, which was not his characteristic. 'I have written,' he said, "to Ellenboro', and Lord Lonsdale, President of the Council, to Sir Robert Inglis, Henley, and Henry Corry, as you advise, to call on me to-morrow; and of course Herries and Granby. You will be with me early after breakfast.'

When I called the next morning, accordingly, he was in high spirits. He said: 'An answer from the Duke of N.

[1] This conversation between the Queen and Stanley is given in the following form in Prince Albert's memorandum, dated Feb. 25, 1851, in *Queen Victoria's Letters*: 'Lord Stanley said he should have to propose Mr. Disraeli as one of the Secretaries of State. The Queen interrupted him by saying that she had not a very good opinion of Mr. Disraeli on account of his conduct to poor Sir R. Peel, and what had just happened did not tend to diminish that feeling; but that she felt so much Lord Stanley's difficulties, that she would not aggravate them by passing a sentence of exclusion on him. She must, however, make Lord Stanley responsible for his conduct, and should she have cause to be displeased with him when in office, she would remind Lord Stanley of what now passed. Lord Stanley promised to be responsible, and excused his friend for his former bitterness by his desire to establish his reputation for cleverness and sharpness; nobody had gained so much by Parliamentary schooling, and he had of late quite changed his tone.' 'What had just happened' was that Disraeli in the House of Commons had given a somewhat blunt contradiction to a statement made by Russell, correct as far as it went, but incomplete and therefore misleading, as to the outcome of Derby's first audience of the Queen. It was a trivial matter, but there was immense fuss at the time; and not only Russell, but the Court, were rather seriously offended. See *Queen Victoria's Letters*, under date Feb. 24 and 25, 1851.

[2] This interview took place on Wednesday, Feb. 26, the very day of Gladstone's arrival from that Italian tour which resulted in his famous letters to Lord Aberdeen about Neapolitan misgovernment.

accepting; Inglis has been with me and accepted. Ellenboro' is to be here in half an hour. No other answers.' Malmesbury was to be Secretary for the Col., Canning for the F.O., and myself Leader of the H. of C. and Home; Herries C. of Exchequer, Henley Board of Trade, Inglis India, and the Duke of Northumberland—a great card—Admiralty; Lord Lonsdale President. Things did not look very bad. They were showy, but, after all, the great thing was the House of Commons, and that was not settled.

While we were talking—in the library at his first house in St. James's Square (now Tollemache's)—Lord Ellenboro' was announced. He was, I think, to have been Privy Seal, but it never came to mentioning office to him. I would have retired, but Lord Derby told me to go into his dressing-room, that was adjoining, on the same floor, a spacious apartment, and conceal myself. In about half an hour I heard a merry shout: 'Come out from your dungeon!'

He was so gay that I was hopeful: but no! the mighty Earl had refused—on the same grounds, almost the same words, as Gladstone.[1]

'Never mind,' said Lord Derby. 'It's the House of Commons we must look after.' And almost as he was speaking, the Groom of the Chambers announced Mr. H. Corry in attendance. I returned to my dungeon, but was not kept there very long.

Henry Corry had not absolutely fainted, but had turned very pale when the proposition was made to him of becoming a leading member of a Protectionist Government, and had declined what, as Lord Derby said, under no conceivable circumstances, a year ago, could ever have been offered to him, and which never can be offered again.[2] Lord Derby was a little more serious, but still up to the mark. 'With Canning,' he said, 'we have still six Cabinet Ministers in the Commons.'

At two o'clock, which was now approaching, there was to be a general meeting: Lord Lonsdale, Lord Malmesbury, Lord Granby, Beresford (Chief Whip), Sir Edward Sugden, who had accepted the Chancellorship, and some others. Herries and Henley, who were also to have attended, but who were to have called previously, had never arrived. Just as the

[1] Stanley told the Queen that 'at one time Lord Ellenborough had accepted, but, having been sent on a mission to Mr. Goulburn in order to see whether he could convert him, he came home himself converted, and withdrew his acceptance again' (*Queen Victoria's Letters*, memorandum by Prince Albert, Feb. 27, 1851).

[2] An unfortunate prophecy. Henry Corry, father of Montagu Corry, Lord Rowton, was taken by Lord Derby into the Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1867, on the resignation of Lord Cranborne, Lord Carnarvon, and General Peel.

servant had informed Lord Derby that these personages were assembled, a letter arrived from Sir Robert Inglis withdrawing his assent. Lord Derby's countenance fell.

However, he came in and addressed his friends with cheerfulness and dignity (Henley had arrived). He told them that the Queen, as they were aware, had sent for him; that he had undertaken to try to form a Government; that he had applied to Mr. Gladstone and his friends, but they refused, unless Protection was unequivocally relinquished; that we were therefore thrown on our own resources; that he had written to Sir Stratford Canning to accept the F.O., and that Lord Lonsdale, who had consented to be President of the Council, had kindly agreed to transact the duties of F.O. until Canning arrived; that the Duke of Northumberland had consented to be F.L. of Admiralty; that Lord Malmesbury was to be Secretary of State for Colonies; that what he wanted was official support in the House of Commons; that he felt confident that I would completely discharge the duties of Leader of that House; that he was sure the country would be satisfied if finance were entrusted to the experienced hands of Mr. Herries, whose unexpected absence he regretted; that Lord Granby would take a place in the Cabinet; that he hoped their friend Mr. Henley would consent to become President of the Board of Trade; that he had counted on the assistance of one or two more in the House of Commons, but had been disappointed, and now should like to hear their general views on the matter. Lord Lonsdale followed like a man of the world; said it was not a time to make difficulties; the Whigs were prostrate; we must support Lord D.; he would be provisional Secretary of State.

All this time, Henley, whom I believe Lord Derby did not personally know, or scarcely, sat on a chair against the dining-room wall, leaning with both his hands on an ashen staff, and with the countenance of an ill-conditioned Poor Law Guardian censured for some act of harshness. His black eyebrows, which met, deeply knit; his crabbed countenance doubly morose; but no thought in the face, only ill-temper, perplexity, and perhaps astonishment. In the midst of this Herries was ushered, or rather tumbled, into the room, exclaiming, 'What's all this?' Then there were explanations how and why he had not received a letter, and had not been there at 12 o'clock in the morning, to know that he was to be Chancellor of the Exchequer.

If Henley were mute and grim, without a word, suggestion, or resource, Herries, who had considerable experience of official life, to my great surprise was as unsatisfactory in a different manner. He was garrulous, and foresaw only diffi-

culties. He seemed to be full of fear of Goulburn, who was to do this, and to prevent that, and in short render the administration of the finances by a follower of Lord Derby an impossibility. We none of us then knew much about finance; but the impression that Herries, who was deemed a great judge in such matters, contrived to convey was that our monetary affairs were in a critical state, and that Goulburn would eat us up alive if we presumed to touch them. It turned out afterwards that no difficulties of moment existed, but by postponing our Government we insured—as, for instance, in the matter of the Income Tax.

When Henley spoke at last, he flatly refused to take the Board of Trade: and, being a very suspicious man, it came out afterwards, as Herries told me, that he thought there was some sort of conspiracy to throw all the difficulties of the Government on himself and Herries, who would have had to fight the battle of the revised Tariff, which these profound statesmen were to introduce to counteract the free trade measures.[1]

Lord D. and myself exchanged looks, and I pretty well understood what was passing in his mind. Lord Malmesbury suggested some other place to Henley, murmured something about the India Board; Lord Lonsdale tried to soften him into an approach to the manners of civilised society. There was something like the general chatter of a club-room, when Lord Derby made a sign to me, and we withdrew to the end of the room.

'This will never do!' he said.

'I am not sanguine: but don't be in a hurry.'

After a few remarks on the extraordinary scene he returned to the table. There was silence, and he gave it as his opinion that it was his duty to decline the formation of a Government, and particularly from his inability to find members of the House of Commons who were prepared to co-operate with him.

Sir Edward Sugden, though he lost a peerage, agreed with Lord Derby; Lord Lonsdale seemed disappointed, Malmesbury distressed; Herries and Henley said nothing. Beresford frantically rushed forward and took Lord Derby aside, and said there were several men he knew waiting at the Carlton expecting to be sent for, and implored Lord Derby to reconsider his course. Lord Derby inquired impatiently, 'Who was at the Carlton?' Beresford said, 'Deedes.'[2]

'Pshaw!' exclaimed Lord D. 'These are not names I can

[1] Malmesbury, describing this meeting in his diary under date Feb. 28, 1851, says that 'Disraeli did not conceal his anger at [Henley's] want of courage and interest in the matter.'

[2] M.P. for East Kent.

put before the Queen. Well, my lords and gentlemen, I am obliged to you for your kind attendance here to-day: but the thing is finished. Excuse my leaving you, but I must write to the Queen at once.'

We dispersed: lingering in the hall, Lord Lonsdale said, 'Never was such an opportunity lost. They were prostrate. We ought to have dissolved Parliament to-morrow.'

'The best thing the Country party can do,' said Malmesbury, 'is to go into the country. There is not a woman in London who will not laugh at us.'

Herries, who seemed annoyed that all was over, kept mumbling about not having received his summons till three o'clock: and that he remembered Governments which were weeks forming. Henley continued silent and grim. Beresford looked like a man who had lost his all at roulette, and kept declaring that he believed Deedes was a first-rate man of business.[1]

Disraeli was always in these earlier years for the bold course, and Stanley, who knew his feelings, tried to convince him that their failure was inevitable.

From Lord Stanley.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Feb.* 28, 1851.—. . . I am afraid you are not satisfied with the result of our deliberations yesterday. The more I reflect on the state of the case, the more I am satisfied it was inevitable, however mortifying to us as a party; and I think giving the explanation in the sense you suggested will save the *amour propre* of our friends, as far as it can be saved. I have only seen Hardwicke this morning. He is convinced we did right. I am sure we had got to the point at which boldness would have degenerated into rashness.

Disraeli concludes his narrative of the crisis thus.—

As the Government had resigned, and Lord Derby had declined, it was necessary to extricate the Court, and everybody else, from an embarrassing and almost absurd position; so the Queen—after sounding Lord Aberdeen[2] (I believe), who shrank from the proffer—to act in a strictly constitutional

[1] Stanley's statement in the House of Lords on Feb. 28 adds the information that he offered the Foreign Office unsuccessfully to Lord Aberdeen and to Lord Canning in succession. Also, one member who was prevented joining his Ministry 'by the pressure of extensive private affairs' must be Thomas Baring.

[2] The application to Aberdeen was before, not after, the second summons to Stanley.

manner, sent for the Duke of Wellington, who, of course, advised Her Majesty to request her late Ministers to continue in office. After all was arranged, His Grace called on Lord Derby and talked over affairs. He evidently thought them very satisfactory for Lord Derby, and generally for his old political friends, with whom His Grace always sympathised. Thus he summed up the position: 'Well! they are in the mud, and now you can look about you.'

The Duke of Wellington contemplated the reunion of the Conservative party under Lord Derby when the next and inevitable crash took place. I did not take that view. The extraordinary circumstances of 1851 brought their moral to me, but it was different from the D. of W. The Whigs might be in the mud, but it was clear to me that another party was not in a more clean predicament.

One thing was established—that every public man of experience and influence, however slight, had declined to act under Lord Derby unless the principle of Protection were unequivocally renounced.

Disraeli was seriously depressed at the timidity and mismanagement which had dashed the cup of office from his lips. And he must have shared the annoyance of the party generally at the terms in which Stanley, in his statement in the House of Lords, contrasted the inexperience of his own friends in the House of Commons with the experience and talents of the Peelites. He sympathised with the disgust of that stout old Protectionist Christopher, who wrote to him that, as official experience could not be learnt in opposition, the party must apparently wait till the Greek Kalends to acquire it. In his letters in the next couple of months to his sister he talks of the 'impenetrable clouds' in which public affairs are involved, costing him 'great trouble, and harass, and anxiety.' He intends 'to make another great rally of the party; but I fear it is too late.' Whatever his private reflections may have been, he did not slacken, but rather increase, his efforts to extricate his party from the 'mud' of Protection, so that they might be more prepared for office on the next occasion; and to plunge their opponents deeper in their own 'mud,' the futile Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. When Russell's Ministry returned to

office, they reduced their unlucky measure to a simple prohibition, under penalty, of the assumption of the new titles. Still, the debate on the second reading extended over seven days. Disraeli made a short, scoffing speech on the last night. 'What a mockery,' he said, alluding to the practice in Ireland. 'when Her Majesty's Ministers themselves be-grace and be-lord these individuals, that they should now propose penal enactments because they are treated by the rest of Her Majesty's subjects with respect and with honour!' The Bill legislated against phrases, and not against facts. It asserted no principle, and was a mere spiteful enactment. But he could not agree with the line taken by the Peelites. In the speech of Gladstone, who preceded him, he discerned a reluctance to accept the royal supremacy over the Church of England. Graham had threatened the House with civil war in Ireland, and this gave Disraeli the opportunity for a remarkable deliverance on Irish policy:

> It is utterly impossible that Ireland can be again governed, openly or covertly, directly or indirectly, on the principle of Protestant ascendancy; but equally certain it is that no Government can exist which is not faithful and devoted to the Protestant Constitution of this country. In its maintenance are involved greater interests than the existence of a Government, the fate of a Crown, and the destinies of an Empire; and, trust me, among all the blessings which it insures to us, not the least important and not the least precious are the civil and religious liberties of the Catholics themselves.

The Bill passed through its various stages by enormous majorities, Disraeli constantly taunting the Government on their high-sounding words and trumpery proposals. *Punch*, in a famous cartoon, depicted Russell as a little boy who chalked up 'No Popery' on Cardinal Wiseman's door, and then ran away. Disraeli's criticism throughout was on these lines. They were meeting by 'petty religious persecution,' 'petty penal legislation,' what Russell had declared to be part of a conspiracy against the civil and political liberties of

Europe. Almost all the session was wasted over this measure; but, as was generally predicted, alike by Peelite opponents and by Conservative supporters, the Act was never put into operation, was gradually forgotten, and then twenty years afterwards was quietly repealed. But the Government had undoubtedly been rolled in the 'mud.'

Disraeli's other task, to extricate his friends from their own mire, was not so easy. His memorandum of the sixties, the beginning of which we have already quoted,[1] relates the development of the difference between himself and Stanley on Protection, and the action which he took after the failure of February, 1851.

> In 1850 the relations between Lord D. [then Lord Stanley] and myself had become more cordial.[2] I had become the sole and recognised leader of the Tory party in the House of Commons, and had begun to shake the Ministry by my motions on Agricultural Relief. The possibility of 'a Protectionist Government' began to be talked about. I attempted on several occasions to bring Lord Derby to bear on the subject of Protection, but I soon found that his prejudices on the subject, and his distrust of me with regard to it, were not to be easily removed.
>
> The ludicrous catastrophe of 1851 determined me no longer to trifle with the question, and I laid before him my views, that he ought to seize the opportunity afforded by his not being able to serve his sovereign, in consequence of inability to form an administration on the Protective principle, publicly to relinquish that ground, so that he might be free to act with other statesmen, and thus, Sir Robert Peel being no more, place himself at the head of the reconstructed Conservative party. I also in a full and unequivocal manner impressed him with my conviction, and the grounds for that conviction, that he misapprehended the feeling of the country on the subject, and even of his own friends; and I assured him, with no mean opportunities of observation on the matter, that the agricultural classes in the main looked upon a recurrence to Protection as an impossibility, and looked upon its advocacy as an obstacle to practically remedial measures. I intimated that every year, from the necessity

[1] Ch. 8.

[2] In May, 1850, Stanley changed the formal 'My dear sir' of his letters to his chief lieutenant, to 'Dear Disraeli.'

of things, a recurrence to an abrogated policy becomes more difficult, and I impressed upon him that I already saw changes in the state of affairs which indicated that the pressure on the land was diminishing.

Disraeli was unsuccessful in his attempts to persuade Stanley publicly to relinquish the protective principle; but he must have made a considerable impression by his representations, as the position which Stanley took up in his statement in the House of Lords after the crisis was of a moderate character. It was, first, that the income tax should not be allowed to degenerate into a permanent tax; second, that there should be a moderate countervailing duty on corn; and, finally, that the question of Protection must be settled, once and for ever, at the next General Election. If the country proved to be against it, Stanley would bow respectfully to its decision. He had no desire to reverse, but only to modify, Peel's commercial system. Disraeli was quite disposed to accept Stanley's view about the income tax. But he was opposed to insistence upon a countervailing duty on corn, because, though he held it to be right in principle, it was no longer possible of attainment. He cordially agreed that the question of Protection must be finally decided at the next General Election, but with the important proviso that the Conservative party should not go to the country identified, as a party, with Protection. He was confident that the country would maintain the new commercial system; and he was determined to make it clear that there was an important section of the party, headed by himself, who only asked for a verdict in favour of compensation to agriculturists, and not of Protection in any shape. With this view, though without any open breach with his chief, he pressed on several occasions during the remainder of the session the policy he had advocated in his motion on agricultural distress in February. He first fell upon Wood's amended Budget, which, while abolishing the window tax and establishing an inhabited house duty, withdrew the small grant-in-aid to

local authorities. The orthodox Free Traders had frightened the Chancellor of the Exchequer from this act of justice, which, petty as it was, was the admission of a principle—a principle, it may be added, which, though Disraeli's own efforts were unsuccessful, has long since been accepted by both political parties in this country. Disraeli proceeded to make one more effort to get Parliament to accept the view that in any readjustment of taxation regard should be had to agricultural distress. He earnestly disclaimed any desire to set country against town, and so he made no objection to the repeal of the window tax. But he once more appealed to the House, not, indeed, to revert to an 'abrogated' policy —the constant repetition of the epithet is a feature of his speeches at this period—but to adopt some plan of compensation to the land by the relief of either rates or taxes. He hoped that 'the spirit of the great departed' would not be evoked to stand between an abundant Treasury and suffering farmers. Stanley's pronouncement in favour of a countervailing duty on corn lost Disraeli the support he had received in the previous year from Gladstone, who averred that he could no longer believe that the Protectionists were ready to acquiesce in the new commercial system. Bright, however, said he gathered from Disraeli's speeches that he was convinced that any project of returning to Protection was a delusion. No doubt Bright's perception of Disraeli's meaning was quickened by expressions used to him in private. But the whole drift of Disraeli's recent language could hardly be mistaken by an unprejudiced observer. The division,[1] 263 against 250, was better, by one, than that in February; but even the fact of getting within 13 of the Government forces failed to restore Disraeli's spirits.

To Sarah Disraeli.

Sunday, April 13, 1851.—I rose so late on Saturday, not having got to bed the previous night till past four o'clock, that I could not write you a line, and give you tidings of the

[1] April 11

division, which has very much inspirited our friends; though the truth is, it now turns out, that we ought to have won, or at least reduced the majority to an almost infinitesimal quantity. However, our blood is up again, though I fear we shall never regain the occasion so sadly lost. In February the Whigs were prostrate, and even if beaten now, of which I have little or no hope, they will be formidable and well-organised foes. I spoke to my satisfaction, which is rarely the case. We shall go to Hughenden on Tuesday, thus closing a campaign seldom equalled for its events, its excitement, its chagrin and wasted energies. I am sorry, very, that I could not come down to see you before I went away, but, independently of the painful absorption of my pursuits, I have had little heart for the expedition. May, perhaps, may bring brighter skies and fortunes, though we cannot complain of fortune, only of our inveterate imbecility, which could not avail itself of her abundant favours. . . .[1]

To Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN, *April* 20, 1851.—. . . With respect to politics, the situation is this: The Whigs having become again elate, and talking of a working majority of fifty, I took advantage of a clear error of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the reconstruction of the Budget—viz., the omission of the once proffered relief of the landed interest, and forced them once more to a trial of strength. I did it entirely on my own responsibility. Some of our friends—I might say many—faint-hearted after all that had occurred, were prophetic of overwhelming defeat, and believed the braggadocio of the Government, that they would have a majority of 80! Their majority was only a bare one—13, one less than on my previous struggle at the beginning of the year. But the annoying thing is that, disheartened and misled by the enemy, enough of our good men were absent to have gained the victory! Among them, I am sorry to say, were the two sons of your great house. I did not much count on Castlereagh, but I am, for many reasons, annoyed about Seaham. However, we must forget it. Four men who voted for my first motion voted against me this time, making alone a difference of 8! In fact, the enemy was in our power, had not some of our friends mistaken their wooden guns for well-proved ordnance. The effect of this division, however, has shown that the Whigs are as weak as before, our troops have gone in great spirits into the country, and the after-Easter campaign will be a very active one. We shall certainly try

[1] *Letters*, pp. 238, 239.

to knock up the Government again, if only for the fun of the thing. But, seriously, Stanley has obtained some adherents whom he did not reckon on, and is prepared to take the helm, and I think will display a *personnel* for which the world does not give his Cabinet credit.

The struggle after Easter will, I anticipate, be rather of a religious than a fiscal or agricultural character. The Papal Bill comes on in Committee on the 5th. No doubt the Protestant party will move resolutions to make it more efficient, and no one, however learned in the House of Commons, can anticipate the consequences. There is no lull in the anti-Catholic feeling in this country; on the contrary, the middle classes are more alarmed than ever. The recent conversions sustain the excitement. James Hope, the glory and boast of Scotland, and who was to have been Sir Robert Peel's next Lord Advocate, the bosom friend of Gladstone, joined the true faith about a fortnight ago. Archdeacon Manning, the spiritual adviser of Sidney Herbert, about the same time, and, horrible to say, was received not merely by the Oratorians as Father Newman was—the Oratorians being a sort of Papistical Wesleyans—but by the Jesuits, whom he has joined. He was received in Farm Street Chapel, or rather Jesuit Church. The whole of the clergy of one of the principal churches in Leeds have gone over in a body, and part of their congregation. The people of this country are really very agitated, and it is difficult to calculate the extent of the consequences, were a man of very great station and abilities to put himself at the head of the Protestant movement. Some think that Gladstone has already joined Rome; S. Herbert is looked upon with a very suspicious eye; but the most remarkable rumour is a local one, told me by Lord Henry Bentinck—viz., that the Duke of Newcastle[1] is about to bow to the Vatican! But I confess, notwithstanding my safe authority, I am very incredulous as to this last. . . .

To Sarah Disraeli.

GROSVENOR GATE, *May* 24.—Yesterday our chief won the Oaks, a compensation for his other loss, or, as some think (not I), an omen of recovering it. The day before we met him at the Hardwickes'—a sort of Cabinet dinner (Cabinet of St. Germains), the Malmesburys, Redesdale, Herries, etc. On Wednesday we went to the Great Exhibition. You must contrive to go, if only for once, as I did. Any day you like to come up Mary Anne will go with you, who by that time will know all the points, for one wants a guide. . . .

[1] Lincoln, the Peelite, had succeeded his father as 5th Duke of Newcastle on Jan. 12, 1851.

I met at Stanley's the other day the new Irish M.P., Mr. Whiteside,[1] who promises, which is much more than our political prospects do. I am not in much spirits for writing, but send this line to keep up the chain, and show that you are not forgotten. . . .[2]

The Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, which was opened by the Queen on May 1, was a godsend for the Government, by diverting public attention from their blunders. It was a temple of Free Trade, and therefore not popular with the extreme Protectionists, who regarded it as facilitating the entry of foreign wares to compete with home products. Colonel Sibthorp described it as an 'unwieldy, ill-devised, unwholesome castle of glass,' but his leader, with more propriety, if in his most courtier-like manner, as 'that enchanted pile which the sagacious taste and the prescient philanthropy of an accomplished and enlightened Prince have raised for the glory of England, and the delight and instruction of two hemispheres.' This discrepancy of feeling was not the only sign of the gap which Disraeli's educative policy on the hopelessness of Protection was opening between him and his more reactionary supporters.

A motion by Hume on May 2 to limit the grant of the income tax to one year, instead of the three proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, afforded Disraeli the opportunity of defeating the Government once more, and at the same time of making his own position clearer. Hume explained that his object was to obtain the revision, not the removal, of a tax which in its present form was unequal and unjust. But he was seconded by Alderman Thompson, a Protectionist, who expressed the view that a portion of the revenue should be raised by a duty on foreign corn; and supported by Granby, who declared himself against direct taxation. Cobden, though he was in favour of a revision of the tax, would do nothing to endanger the principles for the establishment of which it

[1] Afterwards Solicitor-General and Attorney-General for Ireland in the Derby-Disraeli Administrations, and ultimately Chief Justice of Ireland.
[2] *Letters*, p. 240.

was imposed; and Wood protested against placing £5,000,000 of annual revenue in jeopardy. Disraeli attempted, not very successfully, to show that Granby and others were not advocating a duty on foreign corn; but retorted, with more success, on Cobden, who now spoke of the income tax as the foundation of the new commercial system, his denunciations of it in 1845. Then Cobden said it was ' a fungus growing from the tree of monopoly '; ' one great monopoly, the Corn Law, alone renders that tax necessary.' This was the way, said Disraeli, that public opinion was ' doctored and drilled.' It was intolerable that men who had made speeches of that sort should charge those who objected to income tax with putting forward that objection as a mask under which to attempt to get back abrogated laws. That was a ' stale old *ruse*.' Russell, in his reply, showed that he perfectly understood both Disraeli's policy and his difficulty. They never had, he said, a question brought forward in that House with regard to local taxation, or the malt tax, or any matter affecting the landed interest or the general taxation of the country, but some of Disraeli's supporters got up and made the avowal, ' After all, our real object is the restoration of Protection.' Then Disraeli had always to rise after them and say, ' Don't take them at their word; whatever you may have heard, I did not hear it.' Indeed, Disraeli always seemed to be in such a situation that he did not hear a word of Protection. He would get tired, if his friends were not more prudent. If they would always march forward when he wished them to keep back, he would, Russell thought, at last say, ' Upon my word, you are too bad; I will not march through Coventry with you any more.' Government were beaten by a majority of fourteen, but the differences among the Opposition could not be concealed. There was great disinclination, the Whip reported, to support Disraeli on June 30, when he followed up the victory over the income tax with a motion that, as that tax could no longer certainly be depended upon, and the surplus was therefore prob-

lematical, it would be wrong to make any material sacrifice of public income in effecting changes of taxation. The result was a minority of 113, in spite of the votes of Gladstone and Sidney Herbert.

The speech delivered on that occasion has a special interest as the considered utterance on the general principles of financial policy of one who was shortly to assume the mantle of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He laid down in the course of it several principles, many of which are eminently sound. 'If you have to raise in a country like England a revenue of the amount which we at present do raise, it would be quite impossible to obtain such results by adhering strictly to any particular mode of taxation. I feel convinced that the greater the number, the more various the means of supply, the greater will be the facility for raising the revenue.' 'Direct taxation should be as general as indirect taxation,' is another of his maxims. The fault of the income tax, imposed by Peel for a temporary object, was that it was on too narrow a basis. 'If you maintain that the essence of direct taxation is that it should be limited to a class, that it should be founded on large exemptions, it is not so much a direct tax as a forced contribution. It is a tax upon capital. It is a constant invasion of the fund which is employing labour.' As to other kinds of direct taxation, 'a house duty is a duty as just in principle as can well be conceived.' A surplus should not be frittered away. 'It is much wiser, if you have a surplus, to do something that is efficient—to discover what interest is most suffering, what tax most oppressive, the remission of what duty would give the most elasticity to trade, or add most to the comfort and the happiness of the community, than to hold as a matter of course that the commercial class, the agricultural class, the inhabitant of the town, and the shipbuilder, should each have his share.' On what principle should taxes be chosen for remission? 'I am not one of those who think that there is any abstract excellence in a Customs duty—I am not one of those who think that,

as a rigid rule, or even as a general rule, you should remit an Excise duty in preference to a Customs duty.' 'I think, if there be a particular interest in the country which is subject to great difficulty, is experiencing great distress, and incurring a long and continual depression, that it is the duty of the Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . to see whether the remission of any tax would tend to relieve it.' It was most important to do nothing to shake public credit. How was it that this little island produced a revenue greater than so many vast dominions? What was the magic spell? 'It is that in this country we have associated our material interests with the inspiration of a great moral principle, and that we have built up public wealth on the foundation of public credit. That is the choicest production of the British Isles, more precious than all the harvests of tropic climes, than all the gems of Golconda, or the auriferous deposits of the sierras of the Pacific.'

The repudiation of the theory that Customs duties are to be specially encouraged is a marked feature of the speech. Another feature was what his sister called the 'burning caustic' applied to an independent Conservative member who had criticised his agricultural motions.

The hon. member for Berkshire (Philip Pusey[1]) has lately made some comments upon my Parliamentary career, which would have been less inconvenient, and certainly not less ingenuous, if they had been made here, and in my presence. The hon. gentleman is of opinion that the motions which I have brought forward were futile motions; and, secondly, that in bringing them forward the mover of them was insincere. These are very harsh opinions. It is possible that the motions which I have brought forward with the twofold object I have mentioned may have been futile, but at any rate motions that have been supported by a large party in the House of Com-

[1] An eminent agriculturist, who had become a Free Trader; 'by his lineage, his estate, his rare accomplishments and fine abilities, one of the most distinguished country gentlemen who ever sat in the House of Commons,' to quote Disraeli's posthumous praise of Pusey in 1875. At the General Election in 1852, after holding the seat for seventeen years, he 'was obliged,' in Greville's words, 'to retire from Berks'; and a regular supporter of Disraeli was elected in his place.

mons have upon their surface *prima facie* symptoms of not being considered altogether inefficient. It is possible that a member who brings forward a motion may be insincere, but it is difficult to penetrate the bosom of any man. We should rather give him credit for motives more natural, more obvious, and more charitable. I may have been mistaken, and not insincere; my reason may have been misled, vanity may have misguided me; I may have been a foolish man or a vain man; it is better to think that than that I should be an insincere man. At any rate, my motives under the circumstances may remain a question of controversy. But what are we to say of a member of Parliament who, when motions are brought forward which he believes to be futile, by a gentleman who he is convinced is insincere, omits no opportunity of following him into the same lobby, and supporting him by his suffrage ?

The leadership to which Disraeli had attained was indeed no bed of roses; and, in spite of the apparent imminence of a Conservative administration, at least twice in the year between the failure of February, 1851, and the success of February, 1852, he seems to have been more than half inclined to give up the thankless task which in the winter of 1848-49 he had been so eager to undertake. On June 5 Thomas Baring proposed a motion to prevent the adulteration of coffee by mixing chicory with it; and Edward Stanley made an admirable speech on the same side. The Government resisted the motion, and were supported by several Protectionists, like Trollope and Tyrell, on the ground that chicory was a home product, and therefore to blend it with foreign coffee should not be treated as adulteration. But for this help, Ministers, who only had a majority of five votes, would have suffered another defeat; and Disraeli, discouraged by the ill-success of his efforts, and impressed by the mover's talents, appears to have tried to get Baring to come forward as leader in his place. Baring was disposed to regard the suggestion as *persiflage*, but, if it was to be treated seriously, said that he was incapacitated for a prominent position by want of ability, education, and energy, and that he preferred his occupations and his independence to political responsibility.

To Thomas Baring.

[*June* 6, 1851.]—. . . The more I reflect upon what passed between us, the more I am convinced that the suggestion I made, after long deliberation, was a right one for all persons and interests concerned. But I feel that it was crudely made. It required for success the opportunities of habitual intimacy. I was so sensible of the imperfect manner in which I had laid the matter open to you that I had intended in the country to have drawn up a memorandum for your private eye, in which I would have endeavored to place the subject in a complete light, to calculate the contingencies of the political world, and to indicate the means by which the too limited base of the party might be expanded into a broader and really conservative foundation. But I feel that the effort would be useless.

I can assure you that I am in no mood for *persiflage*. Totally irrespective of all personal considerations, which I trust I never intrude, I am naturally grievously distressed at leaving in so forlorn a condition a body of gentlemen who have conducted themselves towards me with great indulgence and cordiality, and for many of whom I entertain a sincere affection.

Nothing came of this overture to Baring, and Disraeli's despondency about the position continued.

Lord Malmesbury to Lord Derby.

ACHNACARRY, *Aug.* 19, 1851.—. . . I saw Disraeli the day before I left town. He seemed to me to be very much *down*, and full of fancies, one of which was that Graham wished to serve under you as *leader* of the H. of Commons. Whether he feared this as pushing him (D.) from his stool, or wished it as giving you a better chance of forming a Government, I could not make out, but one thing is certain—viz., that he *wants* to throw over 'Protection.' . . . Dizzy means to be perfectly quiet during the recess. . . .

The thirteenth Earl of Derby, who was an eminent naturalist, but who had never taken a prominent part in public life, died on June 30 of this year, and Disraeli's chief succeeded to the title which he was three times to inscribe on the roll of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers; while Disraeli's friend and political pupil, Edward Stanley, became in turn by courtesy Lord Stanley. In the struggle which was now proceeding within the party over the abandonment of Protection, the two Stanleys, as we have

seen, took opposite sides. The father, who had incurred the reproach of lukewarmness for the cause in 1846-1848, was now untimely resolute and Disraeli's principal obstacle; while the son, who had not entered the House of Commons till after Bentinck's death, had been almost a Free Trader from the beginning, and was Disraeli's warmest supporter in opposing policies of exclusion and restriction. Disraeli took the opportunity of two agricultural meetings in Bucks—one at Aylesbury on September 17, and the other at Salt Hill on October 7—to force the issue in a more unequivocal fashion than he had yet used. The harvest had been excellent; and the farmers, being more prosperous, were more likely to listen to his advice.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 19, 1851.—I was at Aylesbury on Wednesday, where I dined with the old Society, Lowndes of Chesham in the chair. I made a good speech in a difficult position and on a difficult subject, and the meeting seemed in heart. I saw to-day in *The Times* two columns of incoherent and contradictory nonsense which made me blush, though I ought to be hardened by this time on such subjects. I am only afraid the world will think it all Delphic and diplomatic, and that the wordy obscurity was intentional, whereas I flattered myself I was as terse and simple as suited a farmers' table. . . .

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 4 [? 9], 1851.—On Tuesday I went to Salt Hill, expecting to find Labouchere in the chair, but he had not returned from Spain, and we had a regular political meeting, though against the rules. It went off well. . . .[1]

In both speeches Disraeli claimed always to have spoken on the question with the utmost frankness, and to be merely repeating and enforcing what he had been saying for three years in the House of Commons. When the protective system was attacked, he did his best to uphold it. 'No one fought more ardently, no one, I hope, fought more sincerely, than I did. My sabre was notched from top to bottom before I ceased to struggle.' 'But

[1] *Letters*, pp. 241, 242.

to uphold a system that exists, and to bring back a system that has been abrogated, are two different things, and I am convinced myself that . . . the protective system can never be brought back unless it is the interest of all classes—at least, of all classes of importance—that that should be the principle which should regulate the national industry, and unless the nation speaks out upon the question in an unmistakable manner.' The farmers could not obtain it by themselves. There must be 'an almost universal feeling in the country.' 'Protection to a particular class, irrespective of all other classes, is out of the question;' and 'all other classes almost are announcing to us that they are profiting' by Free Trade. He did not advise them to give up the principle of Protection for British Industry, but to remember that it was a system which no longer existed, and could not be got back in a hurry. Therefore they should not ask Ministers for a fixed duty or a sliding scale, to cure their suffering; but for political justice and financial equity; for the reduction of burdens, and the removal of restrictions, on the agricultural class. It is not to be wondered at that a leading farmer, at the close of the Aylesbury dinner, wanted to know if 'Protection' was a word which should be blotted out of our language.

Derby this time made no direct protest, but two or three weeks later, in a letter mainly occupied with other subjects, said that he thought Disraeli's line 'a judicious one, though of course it did not satisfy the more eager Protectionists, and though I myself am far from thinking that what you suggest will fully meet the justice of the case, nor should I be prepared to acquiesce in it as a final settlement of accounts.' But the extreme party felt that Disraeli had definitely made his choice, and would no longer fight for Protection. Lord Stanhope described the speeches as 'most indiscreet'; and even the faithful Sarah Disraeli, who was moving in very Protectionist circles in Herefordshire, doubted their policy. 'One thing everybody is certain of,' she wrote, 'and that is

that whoever puts himself at this moment courageously at the head of the Protectionists must be Prime Minister two years hence. You are throwing it away.' What was of more consequence, immediately on reading the second speech, Granby, the recognised leader of the old guard, determined to resign his place on what he called 'the tripartite committee of management.' This defection was a blow to Disraeli, who was determined to carry the party with him. A visit of Granby to Hughenden did not bring the two men together. 'Granby's visit was very short,' Disraeli wrote to his sister on November 17. 'He stayed long enough, however, to ask Redrup,' the village butcher, 'to whom he paid a visit with me, "whether there was any land that had gone out of cultivation in this neighbourhood."' The astonishment of Redrup, who has just sold his barley for 30s. per quarter, may be conceived.' Beresford, who saw Disraeli about the same time in the autumn, reported to Derby on November 26: 'I was with Disraeli on Monday for an hour and a half alone, and I own I heard from him certain opinions which struck me as anything but in conformity with the principles by which the party has been conducted and animated for the last five years, and he enunciated sentiments which appeared to me as antagonistic to the policy which you have hitherto held, and by which your administration was to have been guided, unless I very much mistake your views.'

Disraeli was quick to see what Granby did not see, and what most of the farmers refused as yet to recognise, that agriculture was beginning to revive, and therefore the restoration of Protection was rapidly ceasing to be a question of practical politics. As he told Derby this year, the pressure on land was diminishing.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 17, 1851.—I think you err in what you say as to the price of wheat—3s. per bushel, which would be 24s. per quarter. It is still much nearer to 40s. per quarter than 24s. At this moment, with the exception of wheat, all

agricultural produce is as high as the average of the last twenty years—barley, oats, beans, horses and cart colts, cows, sheep, pigs, wool, and hay.[1] It is a question yet difficult to solve, whether wheat is to partake of their elevation, or they to sink to its depreciated level, as former experience has shown these disturbances of the general equilibrium to be but temporary. But circumstances are changed, and former experience may not be any longer a guide in this respect. It is possible that agriculture may flourish without a high price of wheat, and without producing any. There certainly seems to me no reason for its appearance in the Chilterns, unless it fetches a high price. I believe all the farmers in this district who have decent capital are much more than making both ends meet.[2]

Granby brought matters to a head by a very frank letter to Derby, written either in the end of December or on one of the first days of January.

Lord Granby to Lord Derby.

[*Dec.*, 1851, *or Jan.*, 1852.]—. . . From various causes, principally from my own want of energy and ability, the position I held was a mere nominal one, which I should not have minded if I had not also felt it was a false one, for I was held responsible, and supposed to be conversant with, counsels and tactics of which I knew nothing. Even this I might have borne if I had felt convinced it was for the advantage of the party, but it seemed to me, on the contrary, that it was rather a disadvantage than otherwise, inasmuch as it cast ridicule upon us, and laid us open to the sneers and taunts of our opponents.

What, for instance, could be more absurd than our position as a great party in the debate on the Income Tax ?[3] Having to the best of my power stated what I believed to be the views of the party on that subject, Disraeli rose almost immediately afterwards and took an entirely different view. And when Charles Wood came and asked me what were the real views of the party, and whether Disraeli and Granby and Herries had not consulted together previously as to the line to be taken, I felt that the tripartite arrangement was an absurdity, and the sooner it was dissolved the better for the party. When first the Committee was arranged, I proposed

[1] Sarah Disraeli acknowledged her mistake as to the price of wheat, but added: 'No one will allow here [in Herefordshire] that wheat is the only depressed article; beans are as bad, and cattle worse—and everything else too.'

[2] *Letters*, pp. 242, 243.

[3] See above, pp. 1119, 1120.

to Disraeli that we should meet once a week to talk matters over, and if that had been agreed to, this could not have happened. But such being the actual state of things, and the position of the party, it appeared to me that it was very desirable to free ourselves from this ridicule. And since Disraeli's talents and power of speech had become everywhere known and acknowledged I felt my name was no longer required, and by withdrawing I should not only follow my own selfish inclinations, but at the same time (by consolidating the leadership in the Commons) add weight and strength and unity to the Protection party. . . .

Granby added that he hoped he did not undervalue the relief that Disraeli proposed to afford by a reduction of burdens, a shifting of weight, and a revision of taxation; but as a national policy these were inadequate. There were two systems before the world, and England must choose. He was himself in favour of a protective policy for all classes. In view of Granby's attitude, Disraeli had taken steps to ascertain whether the party wished him to continue, and whether they would give him their confidence and cordial co-operation.

To Lord John Manners.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Jan.* 13, 1852.—. . . When I came down here before Christmas, I received two letters written 'by persons of quality,' not addressed to myself, but evidently written with the intention of being confidentially submitted to me: in one of which it was frankly stated that 'Mr. D. had ruined the agricultural party'; and in the other that 'steps should be taken to prevent Mr. D. giving that prominence to the subject of local taxation in the House of Commons which he hitherto has done,' quite forgetting that that prominence had given us last year the Government of the country.

This being the case, and having received a very friendly letter from Miles about the 'Political Biography,'[1] ending by wishing to know our plans for the ensuing session, I thought it best to communicate the contents of these two letters to him; to detail to him the appeal of Granby; to call his attention to the agricultural manifesto of November *Blackwood*, in which my policy was denounced as 'a policy of finesse,' an expression in conversation approvingly adopted by Granby; and finally stating that I considered the address of the National Protection Society, and the alleged causes of its extraordinary meeting in December, as an open vote of censure

[1] *Lord George Bentinck.*

on myself; and that under these circumstances I wished him, as a leading country gentleman and one who had busied himself in bringing me forward in the Protectionist party, to put himself in communication. . . .

The correspondence with Miles was calculated greatly to reassure the desponding leader. If Disraeli and Derby were agreed on vital points, Miles thought there would be no difficulty in placing Disraeli more firmly 'in that position which, with unwearied assiduity, talent, and energy, you have occupied for the last three sessions, to the advantage, as I believe, of the country, and to the admiration of those friends—and they are *more* than your too sensitive nature leads you to imagine—who, lacking ability in debate, and unused to contemplate and act upon a wide political field, were solely removed from contempt by the universality of your genius and powers of debate.' As to Protection, although profits and wages were less, trade was never in a sounder state, and the poorer classes were never better off. 'It would be a suicidal act . . . to endeavour to uphold early next session the obsolete question of Protection.' By January 19 Miles had collected, for Disraeli's information, the views of most of the leading members of the party in the House of Commons. With the exception of Henley, who complained that the party had no well-defined principle, and Stafford, who was offended—as was Henley too—by the famous chapter about the Jews in *Lord George Bentinck*, then just published, there was a chorus of approval both of Disraeli's leadership and of his policy in declining to call for Protection. Herries earnestly deprecated any personal changes, and thought a spontaneous Protectionist attack would be a most inexpedient course. Similar sentiments were expressed, generally in more cordial language, by Baring, Bankes, Trollope, H. Baillie; March, for his father the Duke of Richmond and himself; Worcester, for his father the Duke of Beaufort and himself; Jolliffe, who held that Protection for wheat would never be obtained by any direct act of legislation; and Christopher, who thought that, 'like all men of genius,'

Disraeli was too sensitive. Buller considered this sensitiveness, in the circumstances, very natural.

Sir John Yarde Buller to William Miles.

DILHORNE HALL, *Jan.* 21, 1852.—. . . I am not surprised at his sensitiveness, for the way in which he is spoken of by Protectionists at the Carlton must have reached his ears; add to which *I* do think that we in the House of Commons have not placed him in the position he ought *now* to fill—namely, that of our *one* acknowledged leader — and I am ready to assist in placing him in that position. I have used the word 'now' because, when first Mr. Disraeli was mentioned as the successor of Lord George, I thought I saw the difficulties that were about him, and I ventured to say to some of our friends that I thought it would be better not to constitute him our leader then, but to wait till by his talent and by his management of our cause he had won the place. I think that he has done so, and I am ready to place my confidence in him. . . .

From William Miles.

LEIGH COURT, [*Jan.* 20, 1852].—I have received your kind invitation to dinner on Monday the 30th, to talk over the Queen's Speech; and I shall have much pleasure in attending upon you on that day. This is as it ought to be, Ld. Derby receiving the Lords, and yourself the Commons; and I do hope that, through Jolliffe's exertions, asperities may have been so smoothed down that we may be enabled to have at your house the meetings of the Commons this session, as I want you to be thoroughly recognised as our leader, mouthpiece, and adviser. It will be still Lord Derby's party; but the very fact of heretofore having always met at Lord Derby's for necessary discussion has led to the surmise that a want of confidence existed in the party towards yourself.

Now, as Lord Derby and yourself have, as I believe, always agreed, I think it would frequently be for his lordship's convenience that you should occasionally meet the Commons, and yourself explain what should be the united tactics of the party. You would thus become much better, more generally, known to individuals, and would, I feel confident, by degrees acquire that confidence which may now be wanting to make our party complete. . . .

This correspondence was most gratifying to Disraeli; but its underlying condition, as Miles constantly pointed out, was that Disraeli and Derby should be in agreement. The misfortune was that they were not.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. KNOWSLEY, *Jan.* 18, 1852.—As I am sure that our communications ought to be without reserve, I have no hesitation in writing to you on the subject of a correspondence which I have seen between Mr. Knox of the *Morning Herald,* and Mr. S. Phillips, in consequence of the former having refused to insert a leading article sent by the former (*sic*), urging the necessity of the abandonment of Protection; to which Mr. Phillips replies that 'he knows exactly the wishes and views of Lord Derby,' and urges the necessity of preparing the way, by a series of articles, for my abandoning, as soon as I take office, the very question which placed in my hands the lead of the party. It is no very high compliment to my honesty that I should be supposed capable of meditating such a proceeding, even were I more anxious than I am to undertake the labour and responsibility of office; and I should have looked upon this assertion as only an unwarrantable piece of presumption on the part of Mr. Phillips had he not, while refusing to *name* the person from whom he derived his information, made use of terms which would lead to the inference that he spoke in consequence of communications which he had had with you.

Now, I know that you do not entertain any very strong idea that the result of the approaching election will be such as to render possible the reimposition of even a moderate duty on foreign corn; and I am ready to say again, as I have said already, that if that should prove to be the case, I was not prepared indefinitely to maintain a hopeless struggle; but until the country shall so have pronounced its opinion, I shall maintain my opinion, that on the grounds both of finance and of national interests a reimposition of duties on imports, including corn, is desirable, and shall seek to enforce and uphold a policy founded on that opinion; nor should I think it fair or becoming secretly to instruct our agents in the Press to throw cold water on the prospect of attaining that which our friends are desirous of attaining, and which has formed one of the chief bonds of our union. If, therefore, Mr. Phillips has referred to you, I am quite sure that he must wholly have mistaken any expressions of yours which have led him to form the inferences he apparently has done; and as I believe that you are in frequent communication with him, you will oblige me by correcting the misapprehension under which he apparently labours as to my 'views and wishes,' and also by hinting to him that he has no authority to be the exponent of my opinions, which, when necessary, I prefer explaining for myself. The time is very critical—the game is, I believe in our hands; but in order to be played with

ultimate success, it must be played honestly and manfully, and to take office with the purpose of throwing over, voluntarily, the main object of those who have raised us to it is to follow too closely an *exemplar vitiis imitabile,* to which I never can submit. . . .

As we meet on Thursday at Burghley, we shall have full opportunity to discuss our course of proceeding.

Disraeli describes this letter as 'written apparently with some irritation, for which there was no cause, as I had no communication whatever with the scribe to whose labours it relates.' In the end of 1848 and during 1849 Disraeli had been frequently in communication with Phillips;[1] but the correspondence had ceased for some time and was not resumed till July 24, 1852, when Phillips wrote, 'In times past I had the good fortune to render you some service,' and suggested that he might be of some service again. So it was not difficult to pacify Derby on the personal question; but it was evident that the 'wishes and views' referred to, if not Derby's, were certainly Disraeli's. Strong, however, in the support of the other most important members of the party in the Commons, Disraeli held his own in the Burghley conferences, though he did not convert all his colleagues.

To Lord John Manners.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 26, 1852.—Granby has given you an account of what took place at Burghley. The affair is skinned over, and we must all hope the best. I cannot but feel that there is some degree of estrangement between Granby and myself, and I deplore it. I take the blame entirely to myself. He has misapprehended some expressions and misconceived some actions. But explanations are seldom felicitous, and on the eve of the momentous and critical events with which I have now to deal, and for the result of which, right or wrong, I must be greatly responsible, I must dismiss the subject, tho' with regret, from my mind. . . .

To Sarah Disraeli.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 26, 1852.—. . . We came from Burghley on Saturday night, having there a large party—Derbys, Salisburys, Granby, Herries, Malmesburys, etc. Lord

[1] See Ch. 5 and Ch. 8.

Derby is, fortunately, very well, much thinner for his illness, but looking, perhaps in consequence, ten years younger. He is in good heart and sanguine, but I see tremendous troubles ahead; if not breakers, waves mountains high. . . .[1]

Meanwhile Disraeli had published a book, in which he had sung the swan-song of Protection. The work had occupied his scanty leisure for a year and a half.

To Lord Henry Bentinck.

[*August*, 1850.]—. . . I have always been actively desirous of erecting some monument, I will not say more lasting than marble, to the memory of your brother. I am not myself an admirer of those biographies which start up at the death of an eminent man—*précis* of the moment, crudely accomplished. They generally bear the marks of their hurried parentage, and are usually deficient in discrimination and depth, and rarely take any hold on the public mind. From this reason I should under any circumstances have been silent in 1848, and last year, though often revolving the theme, my time was so taken up in endeavouring to control the provincial movement that I wanted the repose necessary to its proper treatment.

This year, however, I am resolved to be tranquil, and the death of Peel facilitates the historic treatment of our subject.

I shall aim rather at a delineation of political character than at a formal biography, and I shall confine myself to the three years during which our lost friend took a leading part—three years which I find distinguished by three great subjects with which he identified himself. In 1846 Protection, 1847 the application of the credit of the State to the development of Irish resources, 1848 the relief of the sugar-growing Colonies by the Legislature, in which, notwithstanding he was a mere Member of Parliament, he succeeded. When a complete review is thus taken of his public character and achievements, I think the country will understand how much might have been expected from the man whom they have lost.

Why I particularly write to you now, tho' I should under any circumstances have written to you, is to consult you on the point of the introduction of his correspondence.

As I wish to make a popular book that all classes may read, and may come home to their business and bosoms, I should avoid the formal publication of letters; but I think it desirable to introduce into the narrative passages from his correspondence that may throw light upon his character, and interest the readers by the evidence they offer of his personal qualities.

For example, I purchased his correspondence with his Manchester agent. I may not extract twenty passages from these

[1] *Letters*, p. 246.

fifty letters, but still these passages may give a lively impression of his indefatigable industry and thirst for information. My own letters from him are numerous, and in many respects interesting; but they do not refer to his life in the House of Commons, from the natural reason that there we were always together. With whom was he in active correspondence during the Session of Parliament? With anyone? The Duke, for example? and if so, should I see these letters? Can I? Think of all these points, and let me know what you feel about them or any others connected with the subject.

We go to Knebworth to-morrow, Sir E. Lytton's, for a week, and then to Bucks, where I shall find complete solitude, and propose to dedicate my time to your brother's memory. I shrink from further delay from a feeling that, as far as I am concerned, if it be not done now it may be never done. . . .

To Lord John Manners.

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 13, 1850.

MY DEAR JOHN,—We only arrived at Hughenden yesterday, and your letter reached me this morning. We left town about a month ago for Knebworth, where we intended to stay a few days, and remained a fortnight! Bulwer has restored the seat of his ancestors in a manner which a 'large-acred' poet could alone imagine and accomplish. It is one of the best things in England: a rich Tudor edifice in an ancient deer-park, with towers, cupolas, glittering vanes, and embayed windows; within and without faultless. I find him a moderate Protectionist, and I think ready to act with us. The Lovelaces were there at the beginning of our visit, but latterly we were almost always alone, and nothing could be more agreeable. Our host is charming under such circumstances. We took long rides every day, and went to Hatfield, the Hoo, Brocket, etc., etc. After this we went to Downham, Norfolk, and stayed a pleasant week with the William Powletts: a good many people there, among them Seymour and Francis Baring and Hotham.

I have had holiday enough, and am at work at a political biography of Lord George Bentinck. It ought to have been done before, but I never have time. The Duke of Portland has sent me two chests full of papers. Lord Henry says that G. B. had an active correspondence with Mr. Chapman, whom he liked. I do not intend to publish any correspondence, but rather to insert passages in the narrative which may illustrate his character and doings. I think you know Chapman very well: perhaps you would communicate with him at your convenience, and see whether he would like me to look over this correspondence. . . .

I wish also, at your leisure, you would throw on paper some of your general impressions of G. B.'s character and career to guide me. I shall not publish it, so don't be nervous. Charles Villiers has been very kind in doing this. He was on the W.I. Committee, and has given me his impressions thereanent in a couple of sheets.

I hope you are well. Give my love to G[eorge] S[mythe], if you see him. Write to me whenever you can; as often and as long as you choose. You are the best correspondent in the world. Adieu, my dearest comrade.—D.

The work did not make the progress that autumn which the author hoped for. He wrote to Manners in October: 'I get on very slowly with the biography, for the subject expands under my pen, since it includes, in truth, every topic of present interest in the political world;' and in December: 'G. B.'s life expands into a rather great work. It . . . touches on such vast themes that the pen often pauses to think.' Accordingly, one autumn was not sufficient, and the work occupied the recess of 1851 as well as that of 1850, 'the last line of the last chapter,' as he told his sister, being finished on December 6. It was 'a mournful office,' he wrote to Londonderry, 'like commemorating the exploits of the Grand Army at St. Helena.'

Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography was published in December, 1851, though, in accordance with the then common practice, it bore the date 1852 upon the title-page. It was dedicated to Lord Henry Bentinck. Disraeli told Delane that the book was 'the Parliamentary history, and perhaps something more, of three eventful years.' As the Parliamentary history of the years 1846-1848, with Bentinck as the central figure, it has been necessarily the foundation of those chapters of this biography which deal with Disraeli's political development and achievements during the period; and this aspect of it has been sufficiently illustrated by reference and quotation, though its graphic character can only be properly appreciated by those who read it through. But it is also 'something more.' There are various digressions in which Disraeli puts forward his own political views, most of them woven more or less closely into

the general narrative, but some—and one especially, the twenty-fourth chapter on the Jewish question—rather in the nature of excrescences; and, of course, the book abounds in detached expressions and sentences of Disraelian philosophy. In these respects it holds a unique position as an interpreter of his opinions; it is the one book of his political maturity which is not cast in the form of fiction; and therefore the views expressed in it may perhaps be taken literally with comparative immunity from misconstruction. With those expressed on the Jewish question, on the all-importance of race, on the mode of government of Europe, and on the influence of secret societies, we have already dealt. There are others which claim our attention.

The position of the Crown is only once touched on, but in an important passage it is strongly maintained that the royal veto on Bills passed by both Houses has not lapsed by disuse, but may yet in conceivable circumstances be employed with advantage to the State.

> As a branch of the legislature whose decision is final, and therefore last solicited, the opinion of the Sovereign remains unshackled and uncompromised until the assent of both Houses has been received. Nor is this veto of the English Monarch an empty form. It is not difficult to conceive the occasion when, supported by the sympathies of a loyal people, its exercise might defeat an unconstitutional Ministry and a corrupt Parliament.[1]

The Crown is therefore a reserved force in the constitution of the country. The actual holders of power should be the aristocracy, whose first duty it is 'to lead, to guide, and to enlighten; to soften vulgar prejudices and to dare to encounter popular passion.' 'England is the only important community that is still governed by traditionary influences,[2] and amid the shameless wreck of nations she alone has maintained her honour, her liberty, her order, her authority, and her wealth.' Disraeli deplored the Radical tendency to 'yearn for the trans-

[1] Ch. 4.

[2] Similarly Bagehot, in his *English Constitution*, writing in the sixties, says, 'England is the type of the deferential countries.'

atlantic type.' In America there was a virgin soil, no tradition, and no surplus population. 'There may be sympathy of feeling between Great Britain and the United States, but there is no analogy in their political conditions.' The governing aristocracy must be broadly conceived and widely recruited. 'The aristocracy of England absorbs all other aristocracies, and receives every man in every order and every class who defers to the principle of our society, which is to aspire and to excel.'[1] There is, in fact, a *carrière ouverte aux talents* in this country, by which Disraeli himself had profited! In this connection there is a well-known passage, written of Peel as an historical fact, but, we can hardly doubt, of the author himself as an aspiration—an aspiration by no means wholly fulfilled in 1851:

> An aristocracy hesitates before it yields its confidence, but it never does so grudgingly. In political connections under such circumstances the social feeling mingles, and the principle of honour which governs gentlemen. Such a following is usually cordial and faithful. An aristocracy is rather apt to exaggerate the qualities and magnify the importance of a plebeian leader. They are prompted to do this both by a natural feeling of self-love and by a sentiment of generosity.[2]

The instrument by which government must be carried on is party—an instrument which Peel never fully appreciated. 'The first duty of an English Minister is to be faithful to his party. . . . Good and honourable government in this country is not only consistent with that tie, but in reality mainly dependent upon its sacred observance.'[3] This does not mean, of course, that statesmen are to prefer party to principle, but that a Minister should not use power conferred upon him by his party for one purpose to promote measures of an opposite character. Again in this connection we have a personal touch, based partly on experience and partly on aspiration:

> The favour of courts and the applause of senates may have their moments of excitement and delight, but the incident of deepest and most enduring gratification in public life is to possess the cordial confidence of a high-spirited party, for it touches the heart as well as the intellect, and combines all

[1] Ch. 27. [2] Ch. 17. [3] Ch. 20.

the softer feelings of private life with the ennobling consciousness of public duty.[1]

The party which Disraeli led had been formed to maintain Protection, and the book is the history of its heroic but ineffectual fight for that policy under Bentinck. What bearing had the book on the issues of the moment in December, 1851, and what course did it recommend the party to pursue? Here Disraeli showed considerable reserve. But the farmers are told that they lost their opportunity by their apathy at the General Election of 1847, and have no right to be dissatisfied with 'the temperate course which is now recommended to them by those who have the extremely difficult office of upholding their interests in the House of Commons.' The Corn Law struggle is, moreover, treated as only one phase of 'the great contention between the patriotic and the cosmopolitan principle which has hardly begun, and on the issue of which the fate of this island as a community depends.' The suggestion clearly is that the ground should be shifted, so that the national and patriotic party might fight to more advantage. On only one aspect of the discarded system is stress laid in such a way as to imply an appeal for early reconsideration. Disraeli clings to the principle of reciprocity, and makes out an excellent case on its behalf. It appears, he says, 'to rest on scientific grounds, and it is probable that experience may teach us that it has been recklessly disregarded by our legislators.'

With Irish policy, which occupies a considerable number of pages, we have dealt in part already, and shall return to it again. In regard to one or two isolated questions, the book throws an interesting light on Disraeli's opinions. Of the Anti-slavery legislation his view was very much that of Gladstone in his early days. 'The movement of the middle classes for the abolition of slavery was virtuous, but it was not wise.' The history of that movement and its consequences would be 'a narrative of ignorance, injustice, blundering, waste, and havoc, not easily paral-

[1] Ch. 8.

leled in the history of the world.'[1] These may seem hard sayings, but they would find even now many supporters in the West Indies and in South Africa. Disraeli criticises the county court system, just established, as impairing, if not destroying, 'that mighty fabric of centralised jurisprudence which was the most enduring element and perhaps proudest achievement of the Norman Conquest.' Was that progress, or reaction to Saxon ideas?

To revert to the main theme of the book, Lord George Bentinck and his three Parliamentary campaigns, it is impossible not to admire the manner in which the dignity of history is thrown round the narrative of what was almost contemporary politics. Though the pages are enlivened with wit and humour, there is a sense of seriousness and responsibility and balance throughout. 'Truth after all,' writes Disraeli in the opening chapter, 'is the sovereign passion of mankind;' and he claims to have combined 'the accuracy of the present with the impartiality of the future.' The claim has been generally conceded. In one respect he was conspicuously impartial—in his estimate of the qualities of his principal adversaries. We have already quoted his character of Peel.[2] Bright wrote of it at the time: 'I think it a very fair and a masterly picture of a remarkable man. Disraeli never denies any merit his opponents may possess.'[3] Greville thought much the same, though his Peelite friends[4] naturally disagreed. Russell is always treated in the book with great respect. We read of his 'dignity,' of 'the lustre of his reputation'; he is called the 'somewhat rash but still unrivalled leader' of the Whigs. The Prime Minister reciprocated the courtesy shown him.

From Lord John Russell.

CHESHAM PLACE, *Jan.* 22, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—I wrote to thank you for your political life of Lord G. Bentinck before I had read it.

Having read it, you must permit me to express to you how

[1] Ch. 18. [2] Pp. 703-706. [3] Trevelyan's *Bright*, p. 158.
[4] Graham told Greville that the character of Peel was 'a great and malignant outrage.

much I have been interested and gratified. The great struggle of 1846 is described in a masterly manner. Altho' the summary of Sir R. Peel's speeches is hardly fair, yet the character of the statesman and member of Parliament is drawn with great power and truth.

For my own part in these great affairs, altho' in some particulars you are mistaken, you have done me more than justice in the main. It was a disadvantage in a biography to have a hero whose forte was in statistics and arithmetical details, but with such a hero you have made your work very entertaining, while Mr. Canning, a wit and an orator, is reduced to commonplace by an ill-assorted fate of having a dull biographer.—I remain, yours truly, J. RUSSELL.

Of the last speech of the great Irish leader, O'Connell with whom Disraeli had had angry differences in the past. he gives a sympathetic account. O'Connell spoke from the front Opposition bench. 'His appearance was of great debility, and the tones of his voice were very still.' 'It was a strange and touching spectacle to those who remembered the form of colossal energy, and the clear and thrilling tones that had once startled, disturbed, and controlled senates.' 'To the House generally it was a performance of dumb-show, a feeble old man muttering before a table; but respect for the great Parliamentary personage kept all as orderly as if the fortunes of a party hung upon his rhetoric.' Other distinguished men meet with similar appreciation. We hear of Graham's 'lucid arrangement of details' and 'comprehensive management of his subject'; of Molesworth's speeches as 'highly finished and full of thought and information'; of the 'multifarious information and the vast experience of Mr. Hume, who towers' among the English Radicals 'without a rival'; of the 'persuasive ingenuity of Mr. Cobden,' and elsewhere of 'that clear and saucy style which he knows how to manage'; of the 'terse eloquence and vivid perception of Charles Villiers'; of Charles Buller's 'vivacity and clear argument'; of 'the practised eye' of 'Bear' Ellice; of 'an orator no less accomplished than Mr. Shiel'; while Palmerston, Sir George Grey, Sir Charles Wood, and Lord Lincoln, are spoken of in complimentary language.

The merits of his own friends in the House of Commons are, as we have already seen,[1] naturally warmly acknowledged, and the character of the hero skilfully brought out. But there is one very curious feature, which was noticed at the time, and has frequently been matter for comment since: namely, the very slight mention—throughout what is mainly the story of the Protectionist party, its victories and its defeats—of the leader under whom Bentinck and the rest of the party fought. The references to Lord Stanley, who when the book appeared had just become Lord Derby, are indeed courteous. His conduct in quitting Peel receives its due meed of approbation; he was the 'one distinguished exception' in an unduly compliant Ministry. Disapproval is indeed hinted of his refusal to attempt to form a Government when that Ministry broke up in 1845, Peel's 'protesting colleagues' being criticised for having shrunk, when the opportunity offered, from 'the responsibility of officially vindicating their opinions.' But Stanley, though acknowledged to have been Bentinck's 'political leader' in the Peel Ministry, appears in the book mainly as Bentinck's old friend; we hear of his 'warm personal and political sympathies' with him; of their joint secession from the Whigs; and of a couple of occasions in three years on which, in the House of Lords, the peer defended and vindicated the commoner. And that is all. In general Stanley's action is ignored, and his leadership of the Protectionist party is only referred to in a hypothetical way. It was believed in the early part of the session of 1846, we are told, that 'Lord Stanley might eventually think fit to guide [the party] by his counsels, and become, if necessary, personally responsible for its policy;' but we are never told that he actually assumed the position. The whole direction of the policy pursued by the party is ascribed to Bentinck, aided occasionally by that discreet 'friend' the author; though we know from other sources, as in the case of Disraeli's famous speech at the close of the session of 1848,[2] that the impulse came in many

[1] Ch. 4. [2] *Ibid.*

cases from Stanley, quite as much as from Bentinck or Disraeli.

Some of the reasons for this reticence are not difficult to see. Disraeli was a literary artist, and, as such, would naturally concentrate attention on his hero. The arena of the great fight for Protection was the House of Commons. It was there that Bentinck wielded his weapons: but there Stanley had no longer a place, and therefore he could not take so prominent a part in the battle as Bentinck. Bentinck, however, felt, as his frequent outbursts of dissatisfaction showed—and Disraeli probably shared the feeling—that, even so, Stanley had not done all he might. He allowed himself to be prevented, by the objections of the Duke of Wellington at the beginning of the session of 1846, from explaining and vindicating his position to Parliament and the country until the Corn Bill reached the Lords in May. During all these months Bentinck stood, in the popular eye, as the leader of the revolt against Peel, and was so regarded in many quarters at the election of 1847. Stanley, in fact, was only active in the cause by fits and starts. Still, reasons of this kind hardly cover the ground. Disraeli's artistic sense did not prevent him from digressions from his main theme on subjects of which his mind was full. Moreover, though Stanley's action was fitful, and he was of course unable to share in the attack on Peel in the Commons, he declared the fact of his opposition to Peel's policy quite early in the session of 1846; he was chosen Protectionist leader in March; he led the resistance to the Corn Bill in the Lords, and made fine speeches against it there; he was recognised by Bentinck as his chief at the Protectionist banquet in July; he was in frequent collaboration with Bentinck about the policy of the party; and it was to him that Bentinck wrote a formal notification of resignation. So it seems to be necessary to seek for more convincing reasons for Disraeli's unwillingness to place Stanley in a prominent light, and we may find them, perhaps, in the delicate relations of the two men. They were the leaders of the same party in their respective

Houses, and in frequent consultation; but there was at that time, as Disraeli has told us, 'no confidential intimacy' between them. It was difficult, it might be held to be in doubtful taste, either to praise or to criticise. Moreover, as Disraeli's main political preoccupation for two years had been to endeavour to persuade Stanley to abandon Protection, the moment was hardly opportune for emphasising Stanley's share in the struggle to maintain it. Bentinck was dead; the limelight could be turned on to him without compromising present politics.

William Beresford to Lord Derby.

LONDON, *Tuesday*.—... I have read over Disraeli's book again more carefully, and have taken notes for the purpose of looking to certain statements and facts which strike me as incorrect.

I am still of opinion that the work, brilliant as it is in the diction, acute and vigorous in its fine critical review of the debates, is disappointing as a biography. To you I freely say that it is untrue and unjust. The great hero of the book, either openly or by insinuation, is the author. In future times, a reader taking it up would consider that Lord Stanley was a secondary personage in the party and the legislature.

In regard to the treatment of Stanley, Beresford's criticism was justified. What about his further charge, that the real hero of the book is Disraeli himself? Some countenance to this view has been given in later times by Lord Rosebery, who, in his brilliant monograph on Lord Randolph Churchill, says that Disraeli had to justify in *Lord George Bentinck* the part that he himself had taken by Bentinck's side 'in violent polemics,' without mentioning his own name and without affectation, and that he succeeded. Further, that, as Bentinck was from the political point of view 'a difficult figure to drape with picturesque effect,' Disraeli made his book a political treatise in which Bentinck plays a minor part. That Disraeli wished to justify the course which he and Bentinck had taken together is evident, and also that he has woven into the narrative much of his political philosophy; but that, in so doing, he reduced Bentinck to a minor part is surely a strange misreading of the book. Rather is Mr. Whibley's[1]

[1] Introduction to edition of *Lord George Bentinck* published in 1905.

the truer appreciation: that the biography is a drama, with two chief actors, Bentinck and Peel, 'brilliantly disengaged from the dingy background of the House of Commons'; and that Disraeli modestly underrates the importance of his own part. He is a 'friend' who is always in intimate association and correspondence with the hero, and who makes him suggestions from time to time. But of his famous philippics which really overthrew Peel there is little trace, and an uninstructed reader would suppose that the decisive factors in the struggle were the tactical manœuvres and ponderous oratory of Bentinck. The digressions express, no doubt, Disraeli's rather than Bentinck's views; but, with the exception of the purple patch about the Jews, they can hardly be said to divert attention from the hero to the author. The book really fulfils the aim which Disraeli set before himself, as stated in his letter to Henry Bentinck, of depicting in high relief his friend's political action in regard to three great subjects in three successive years—Protection in 1846, the development of Irish resources by the credit of the State in 1847, and the relief of the sugar-growing Colonies in 1848.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Aug.* 8, 1852.—... Tell Julian [Fane], with my kind regards, that his friend is quite at liberty to translate the 24th chapter [of *Lord George Bentinck*]; and would I were at liberty to think and write of no other subjects! I have never seen the book since it was written, and have no copy here to turn to: but a clergyman writes me that I have made the Crucifixion in the time of Aug. Cæsar—which, however, I did not do. What I wrote in my MS. was T. Aug. Cæs.: and my editor, tho' otherwise very accurate, not knowing that Tiberius was also Augustus, had it printed Aug. Cæsar. This should be changed in the translation to 'Tiberius Augustus Cæsar.'

I don't know of any other errors, for the passages denounced as heterodox by English clergymen, who are more ignorant of theology than any body of men in the world (the natural consequence of being tied down to 39 articles, and stopped from all research into the literature which they are endowed to illustrate), are only reproductions from St. Augustin and Tertullian.

Froude[1] states that Disraeli 'received a large sum from a private hand' for *Lord George Bentinck*; but there is no

[1] In his short Life of *The Earl of Beaconsfield*.

trace of any such transaction in the Beaconsfield papers, and Froude does not give his authority. The book only appealed to a political public, and therefore had not the sale of the more popular of the novels; but it went through four editions (2,750 copies) in half a year. The reviews, as was perhaps natural, ran rather on party lines; and, as the Press was overwhelmingly Free Trade in sentiment, they were generally somewhat unfavourable. Disraeli, like other authors before and since, and with equal want of success, endeavoured to select his own reviewer in *The Times*. He asked Greville, whose connection with Delane was known in political circles, to write the notice, but was told it was out of the question. The review which actually appeared in the great journal, though of very complimentary length—'at least a great advertisement,' wrote Disraeli—was rather critical than appreciative. Bentinck's family expressed their gratitude, and Disraeli received the congratulations of his friends, though some of them echoed Manners's criticism that the insertion of the famous twenty-fourth chapter was unjustifiable. Greville, on the other hand, admired the Jewish episode for its courage. Sarah Disraeli was enthusiastic over the last book of her brother's that she was to read. 'Such a piece of English history must remain a classic so long as human nature endures. . . . It will be to the civilised Polynesians what Sallust is to us. . . . Surely a memorial so exalting never was raised by the hand of Friendship.' Lord Ponsonby called the book a 'triumph.' It showed doubters, he thought, that Disraeli was 'possessed of the qualifications necessary to a great statesman. The book, in all those parts of it where you treat general subjects of policy, is a convincing proof that you ought to be the directing mind in this country, as it shows that you have the wisdom to pardon as well as the generosity to praise many whom you might justly have censured.' Disraeli was in a few weeks to have his first opportunity of showing what he could effect, if not as the directing mind in the country, at least as the directing mind of a Ministry in the House of Commons.

CHAPTER XI.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

1851–1852.

'Affairs are very stirring,' wrote Disraeli to his sister on December 7, 1851, 'but how they are to turn out the most prescient can hardly see. There ought, I think, to be a Conservative Government.' He was quite right in his expectation; in less than three months there was a Conservative Government; and the stirring event which indirectly brought it about was Louis Napoleon's notorious *coup d'état* on December 2. That introduced a new factor into politics.

Till then, the English political situation had been dominated during the recess by the prospect of a Ministerial Reform Bill in 1852. The defeat on Locke King's motion had forced the Ministry into action. Disraeli had said in Parliament that, so long as the Reformers upheld their own Act of 1832, it would have been unwise to disturb it. Now that the very statesman who framed, modelled, and ushered that measure into the House gave up his own handiwork, Disraeli considered himself free. Naturally, his autumn correspondence with Derby dealt mainly with the prospects of Reform, and has a special interest as their first formal interchange of views on a subject so bound up with their political reputation.

From Lord Derby.

KNOWSLEY, *Oct.* 26, 1851.—. . . Subject to what I may hear from you, and to the opinion which you can form far better than I can of the probable temper of the House of Commons, my idea is that we should abstain from pledging ourselves to resist any and every measure which may be brought forward, at the same time that we deprecate the

introduction of any extensive alteration as uncalled for by any necessity or any strong public feeling, and as prompted in the present instance by a desire to save a tottering Administration by diverting public attention from its misgovernment to a subject of popular discussion and agitation. I should, nevertheless, express myself ready to hear their proposal, with the grounds on which they, and especially John Russell, justify its introduction; but I should declare that I would strenuously resist any measure which should have for its object to disturb the existing balance between different interests, to give additional power to the congregation of large masses, and to swamp the county representatives (which is the object of the Radical party) by assimilating the town and county franchise, as they have done in Ireland, and bringing the unrepresented towns to overbear by the household or a more extended franchise the county constituencies, which now rest in the main on landed property.

Pray tell me whether you concur generally in the policy of this game, and how far you think its announcement, if we decide on it, either publicly or privately, should precede the introduction of the Government plan. . . .

To Lord Derby.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 30, 1851.—I was grieved to hear of your long sufferings; but as reaction is the law of life, I will indulge in the belief that you have now entered on a renewed lease of health.

Your theme is indeed a dreary one, but you mitigate its annoyance by your frankness and cordiality.

My impressions as to our conduct at this moment coincide, I think, in the main with those which you have expressed. As regards the impending Reform Bill, it would be dangerous for us to make the first move. I agree with you that there are some points on which we may at once decide. I think we should alike refrain from being anti-, or constructive, reformers. A vehement declaration in the first vein will gain us no strength, as the Finality School must go with us, and any concerted scheme of enfranchisement on our part must end only in distraction and discomfiture. The circumstances of the hour alone can bring a golden opportunity like the Chandos clause, and if it offer we can seize it. There is evidently a deadly silence on the subject at present, which we ought not to disturb; and were we to do so, we should be playing the game of the Whigs, who are watching for indications. I think all we ought to pledge ourselves to at present is professing our disposition to give a fair hearing to the

Government, to resist any scheme the main object of which is merely to consolidate the Whig party, or to check the constitutional influence of the land. These conditions would justify any degree of ultimate opposition. But reserve is our game. . . .

A few weeks later, Disraeli revived and elaborated a far-reaching suggestion which he had previously thrown out.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. HATFIELD, *Dec.* 9, 1851.—. . . Is it impossible to make a great push, founded much on the alarming state of Europe and the consequently unstable character of our foreign trade, to reconstruct our Colonial system, or rather Empire, by freeing the Colonies from all duties, or some other mode, and conceding to them as represented in the Imperial Parliament the vacancy occasioned by the disfranchised boroughs, so bringing a third element formally into the House, and healing that too obvious division and rivalry between town and country? If feasible, it would allow us to prevent, perhaps, the increase of the town or democratic power, without the odium of directly resisting its demands.

This crude idea, more crudely expressed, might perplex some, but you will see at a glance what I mean, and have not pretended to convey, and will be able to decide better than any other person in the country whether the move is practicable.

Lord L[yndhurst] thinks we ought to be prepared for every hypothesis of change. The expediency of considering the question in the light intimated in this letter occurred to me in the train. It might blend many sympathies, commercial, political, and imperial, at this moment. . . .

Derby, in a long and carefully reasoned reply, pointed out the enormous difficulties in the way. How were the Colonial members to be elected? By the inhabitants or by their legislatures? What about Crown Colonies? How can Colonial representation be made to fit in with the Free Trade system? He had considered these questions carefully at the time of the great Reform Bill, and found no solution. Disraeli was not convinced.

To Lord Derby.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Dec.* 18, 1851.—. . . I have deeply considered your last letter in all its points, but have not yet

relinquished the views I previously suggested to you. We should clear the course very much by confining ourselves now entirely to the political part of the subject, and on a future occasion, if Colonial members are sitting in the House, and we have an opportunity to revise and reconstruct our financial system, we may find them convenient allies. In the general management of the question I am much guided by the example of the United States towards their Colonies.[1] Altho' the American system is not one I should willingly appeal to for our domestic or foreign affairs, there is, I think, nearly a complete analogy between the two countries as regards their Colonies. The Senators at Congress are elected by the two Houses of each independent State, and this, I think, would do, if we could always find two chambers in our Colonial Constitutions. But in the last Australian Constitutions that was not the case. But these are very unpopular, and if we combined, with Imperial representation, an attempt to settle, on an intelligible principle, the construction of their municipal governments, the Australians would willingly surrender their one-chambered Constitutions, which are very unpopular with them, and we might appropriate all that section of what are called Colonial reformers, who hitherto have only been busying themselves with the municipal principle, and dissolving the Empire by mistaking it for what they call local government.

I can't help thinking that, if this move were matured and well managed, it might give a new phase to politics, appropriate a great section of support irrespective of our friends, tranquillise the Colonies, revive their affection to the Metropolis, and widen the basis and sympathies of our party. But the question is one so very much of detail that it is very difficult to write upon it. At present I would only impress two points: the expediency of postponing the commercial part of the question, and of finding in the American system some solution of the difficulties as to the constituent body of the projected Colonial members. . . .

I saw Lord Lyndhurst on Tuesday. He has had the gout, for the first time, and has been in bed for three days. He was on the sofa when I saw him, and otherwise extremely well. He had no information. I spoke to him, in complete confidence, on our Colonial idea, but rather to elicit his views than to develop our own. He was very favourable to the project at the first blush, as the only means of diverting an increase of the power of the towns, and as a method of consolidating Imperial strength. The Colonies are interested in

[1] Disraeli uses the term 'Colonies' of new states admitted to the Union. Florida, Texas, Iowa, Wisconsin, and California had all been admitted in the previous half-dozen years.

all questions of peace and war, and if they had, as it were, their Ambassadors sitting in our Senate, their hearts would be with us in a struggle. It must be an organic principle of the arrangement that they are not to be liable for any portion of the public debt. I wrote to Stanley[1] on the 8th to Calcutta. If the views in this letter at all develop, I shall sadly miss him. Indeed, these are not times for him to be so long away.

Disraeli did himself an injustice in speaking of his idea as 'crude,' and representing it as having only occurred to him in the train. The possibility of combining the advocacy of Colonial representation with the Conservative attitude towards the Government Reform Bill may have only just suggested itself to him; but his mind had been dwelling on Colonial representation for some time, and he had even mentioned it in writing to his chief on December 28, 1849.[2] As he had then told Derby, he had been studying the whole Colonial question, and he discussed this particular point often with Edward Stanley. 'The Colonies still appear to me to be our safest card,' wrote Stanley to him on October 19, 1850; 'and I am firm in faith as to the ultimate popularity of Colonial representation; besides, popular or not, the thing ought to be done.' Disraeli was never content with the *laisser-aller* policy of many of the Whigs and most of the Radicals of the day—merely to give the Colonies representative institutions, and entirely disregard the use to which they might put them. He constantly sought methods by which, without impairing their local independence, he might bind them with a living interest to the Mother-Country and the Empire. Colonial representation was open, no doubt, to the detailed objections which Derby urged; but if the principle had been adopted sixty years ago, it is possible that we might by this time see our way

[1] Edward Stanley, in his early years of public life, was wont to spend much of the Parliamentary recess in foreign travel for purposes of political observation. Immediately after his grandfather's death he had started for the Far East. 'May our next campaign,' he wrote prophetically in a farewell note to Disraeli in July, 'instal you as leader of the House of Commons!'

[2] See above, p. 1053.

to that representative organisation of the Empire which is the necessary alternative to ultimate disruption.

Disraeli communicated his idea to his Hatfield host, the second Marquis of Salisbury, father of the Prime Minister, who was much struck by it, and thought it might be 'most useful in reconciling our alienated Colonies and quickly nullifying the Free Trade policy,' and who also encouraged him to deal with franchise extension in a bold way. As finality had been given up, Salisbury wrote on January 17, 1852, it was all a question of expediency. 'It is difficult to give a reason why an £8 occupier in Ireland should be entrusted with a franchise which you would only allow to a £10 occupier in England. It is difficult to argue that a £6 occupier is not as fit to be entrusted with it as one who is rated at £8.' 'The popularity obtained by this extension of franchise would enable our party to make such regulations for the prevention of mischief as they never can hope to do under other circumstances. I believe that, if the present county franchise is to be materially altered, the lower you go the more influence you will give to property.' He was sensible that the Minister who carried out these suggestions must be a bold man, but it was a choice of difficulties. Comments of this kind from an unimpeachably orthodox Tory would confirm Disraeli in the belief that the party would follow him in a wide measure of Reform whenever he considered the moment favourable.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HATFIELD, *Dec.* 10 [1851].—. . . This is a splendid place, in the highest state of renovation. There was a ball last night in the great gallery, 500 persons. In the house are the Hardwickes (Lord Royston), Robert Grosvenor (one girl), Rokebys (three girls), and Henry Bulwer, and a multitude of dancing men; also the county member and his wife (Halsey), and the candidate for the county, Sir Lytton.

Lady Salisbury[1] is an admirable hostess and a very pleasing woman; great simplicity, quite a Sackville, with four most

[1] Afterwards wife of Edward Stanley, the 15th Earl of Derby.

beautiful young children—a boy just like a young Cantelupe. . . .[1]

Bulwer Lytton, the novelist, was a promising recruit whom the leadership of his friend Disraeli had attracted to the Conservative party. He had sat in the House of Commons as a Liberal, and even a Radical, from 1831 to 1841, but had failed to obtain a seat in either of the Parliaments which brought the Free Trade system into operation. Though a Liberal, he had always been a Protectionist, so the action of his party in combining with the Peelites to introduce the new system alienated his support. Like Disraeli, he was romantic rather than utilitarian, national rather than cosmopolitan in his politics; and very naturally, when his old party connection was severed, he rallied to his friend's standard. They had, apparently, not seen much of each other of late years, until Disraeli and his wife, in the early autumn of 1850, accepted an invitation to Knebworth. Lytton had written: 'I don't think the wondermongers will find much to cavil at in our conjunction. After all, I am a Protectionist, and authorship is neutral ground.' The visit, which proved so agreeable to both host and guests that it was prolonged from a few days to a fortnight, seems to have finally determined Lytton's course; and he had now become, with Disraeli's assistance, Conservative candidate for Herts. He brought a popular name and great oratorical gifts to a party which needed both; but, till he got back into Parliament, his assistance was necessarily of an imperfect character.

Russell's Reform Bill, which was introduced at the beginning of the session, proved not to be of the sweeping character which Disraeli expected. It proposed to lower the county franchise from £50 to £20, and the borough franchise from £10 to £5. Disraeli did not treat it very seriously. He chaffed the Reformers about the short commons they had received, and expressed the opinion that the Bill did not necessarily

[1] *Letters*, p. 244.

call for opposition. He had always been an advocate of industrial suffrage. But the Bill discomposed Derby, and seemed likely to make a coolness between him and Disraeli. Malmesbury wrote on February 13, 1852:

> Lord Derby seems quite knocked down by this Reform Bill, for which, strange to say, he seems to have been unprepared. I found him to-day without his usual energy. I am very anxious he should meet it by a counter Bill or resolution, but he will not hear of it, and treated Disraeli coldly when he proposed it. A mutual dislike between them might have serious consequences, but the two men are so different in character that it can hardly be otherwise; yet they cannot do without one another at present. I have great confidence in Disraeli's good-temper and ambition to see that such is the case.

The subsequent history of the Reform question shows that Malmesbury's confidence was justified. But this particular Reform Bill was never properly alive. Before the beginning of the session the quarrel between Russell and Palmerston had come to a head: Palmerston had been dismissed,[1] and the Russell Ministry, with its Reform Bill, was doomed. Palmerston's independent and masterful methods of conducting foreign affairs had brought him throughout the duration of the Ministry into frequent collision both with the Crown and with the Cabinet. The offence given in the autumn by his too sympathetic treatment of the exiled Kossuth was aggravated in December by his spontaneous and unauthorised declaration to the French Ambassador that he entirely approved of the *coup d'état* by which Louis Napoleon had forcibly made himself master of France. The Cabinet were anxious to express no opinion, and public feeling in England was strongly stirred against the President, no epithets being too bad for him in the Press. On hearing of Palmerston's dismissal, Disraeli wrote to Lord Henry Lennox: 'I fancy the *coup d'état* of the 22nd December portends a Peelite reconstruction. The real question therefore is: what effect would a Peelite reconstruction

[1] Dec. 22, 1851.

have upon the prospects of our party? If you have any Christmas games going on, this will be a very good question to ask your friends.'

To Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN, HIGH WYCOMBE, *Dec.* 28, 1851.—. . . The success of Napoleon seems to have given Johnny a taste for *coup d'états*. . . . They talk of a Peelite reconstruction; but if in embryo, it certainly is not hatched, and if born, will not live long.

The fact is the stroke of Napoleon has changed the whole complexion of politics, and for an English Minister to bring in a Reform Bill, in deference to the clamor of a very weak movement party, at the present moment is preposterous. Yet, if Lord John proposes anything temperate, the movement party will spring at him like hounds. In short, he ought to resign. . . .

Overtures were made by Russell first to Newcastle, and afterwards, as on several previous occasions, to Graham, but without result. The Government were evidently 'very sick,' as Disraeli wrote to Derby, in a long letter in which he told the story of Palmerston's dismissal as he heard it, obviously from Palmerstonian sources. 'I was not turned out; I was kicked out,' he reported to be Palmerston's own phrase. 'Lord P. was sacrificed to the mislikings of "the elder statesmen of Europe," and to a hoped-for *rapprochement* between Whigs and Peelites, impracticable while he was a Minister.' Disraeli told Derby that he heard confidentially that there was great alarm in the Cabinet lest the Conservatives were going to coalesce with Palmerston. 'I ridiculed the rumor and reprobated the factiousness of such a sudden alliance, adding we hoped we were strong enough to carry on affairs without taking in the discarded partner of an insolvent firm, and thought that with fair play we should not be driven to such a course. This morning I have a line from the same correspondent reminding me that six weeks ago he had informed me that Palmerston was doomed (which was true: it was about Kossuth), and now adding that another person (meaning Johnny) was in "as bad a plight."'

When Parliament met, it was found that it was not Russell, but Palmerston, who had a bad case. The Prime Minister had no difficulty in proving the disregard shown by Palmerston both for the Crown and for the Cabinet; and he revealed a memorandum of August, 1850, in which the Queen had laid down the duty of a Foreign Minister towards the Crown, which Palmerston had promised, but failed, to observe. Palmerston's reply was not successful. Russell was fully justified in reporting to the Queen that Palmerston 'made no case, and was not supported by any considerable party in the House.' His approbation of the President's conduct seemed to confound the Liberal party.' Disraeli told Lord Normanby that he had watched Palmerston during Russell's speech, and doubted whether the hanging of his head were not merely acting; 'but before he had spoken two sentences he saw he was a beaten fox.' To Henry Bulwer also Disraeli exclaimed: 'There *was* a Palmerston.' Whatever he may have jestingly said, he was too shrewd to think anything of the kind. At any rate, in his speech—mindful, no doubt, of the probability that Palmerston, after his breach with Russell, would soon be acting with the Tories, in opposition if not in office—Disraeli treated the reasons assigned for the dismissal as unsatisfactory, and pointed out, with perfect justice, that down to this last escapade Ministers had adopted Palmerston's policy, and were responsible as a body for his blunders. If the policy were to be the same, he would prefer that the same Minister, who was an able man, should carry it out.[1]

To justify Palmerston's removal was easy; to carry on an already tottering Administration without one of the only two men who gave it distinction in the eyes of the world was impossible; and Palmerston had his 'tit for tat with John Russell' in little more than a fortnight from the

[1] A passage in this speech shows that Disraeli had begun to appreciate the middle classes. Their power and prosperity, he said, were 'inseparable from the greatness of England.' He owed his own seat to them, for 'the farmers of the United Kingdom are the most numerous and the most important portion of the middle class.'

opening of the session. The conditions of the Continent, and particularly of France, had directed attention, as often before and since, to our deficiencies in home defence; and Russell proposed to establish a militia force, not the old regular militia, but a local militia. Palmerston expressed strong approval of the general policy of strengthening our home defences, but moved, before the Bill was introduced, that the new force should follow the old plan of regular militia. Russell was indignant at a Government measure being treated in this cavalier fashion; but Disraeli supported Palmerston, and the Government were beaten by 135 to 126 votes.[1] The Whig Ministry, so feeble and so tenacious, so often threatened and so long-lived, had fallen at last. The opportunity of the Conservatives had come; but they were still hampered by the Protection policy, which all Disraeli's arguments had not persuaded his chief to discard.

How the crisis developed and the first Derby-Disraeli Ministry was formed is told in the memorandum of the sixties from which we have already quoted the introductory portions:

> In the autumn of this year [1851] the expulsion of Lord Palmerston from the Cabinet had taken place, and the Government was consequently more in the 'mud' than before. All indicated a crisis on the meeting of Parliament.
>
> Lord Derby took the opportunity on the first night[2] (I think) of its meeting in 1852 to make a declaration on the subject of Protection. I really believe that, in taking this course, he was influenced by my representations, and wished to make a declaration that on the whole would reconcile all parties. His scheme seemed to be the adoption of the American tariff. It appeared to me to be Protection in its most odious form, and I was without hope.
>
> Lord Palmerston lost not a moment in moving an amendment to the first Government measure, which insured their defeat (Militia Bill). An eager friend,[3] anticipating that

[1] Friday, Feb. 20.

[2] Disraeli seems to be confusing Derby's speech on the Address on Feb. 3 with his speech on taking office on Feb. 27. It was in this latter speech that he expressed approval of the American system as the most defensible in principle and the least burdensome in practice.

[3] Sir Benjamin Hall, M.P. for Marylebone.

Lord P. would be sent for by the Queen, would not allow Lord John Russell an opportunity of escape, but forced him to pledge himself that night to consider his Ministry finished.

But the Court, though it disliked the Protectionists, disliked Lord Palmerston, whom they had absolutely dismissed in the autumn, more, and Lord Derby, to the great astonishment of Lord Palmerston's friends, was again sent for.[1]

Lord Derby was not in town: he was at the Duke of Beaufort's, at Badminton, a shooting-party. I wrote to him from the House of Commons counselling him to seize the opportunity of forming a strong Government: to offer the leadership of the House of Commons to Lord Palmerston, and places in the Cabinet to such friends as he desired, and to assure Lord P. from me that he would find in me a loyal lieutenant. I sent off Mackenzie, the Junior Whip, at once to Badminton, who arrived there the following morning, before the news of the resignation was known.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. Friday night.—Mackenzie will tell you the great event. Palmerston has defeated them by the militia, when the regular troops failed. As you will have a good opportunity to think over your many difficulties in your journey up, I write this to beg that I may not add to them. Don't let me be in your way. It is everything for your Government that P. should be a member of it. His prestige in the House is very great; in the country considerable. He will not give you trouble about principles, but he may about *position*. He would not like to serve under me, who he looks upon as a whippersnapper. I am sufficiently repaid in having gained your confidence and not altogether disappointed our friends, and I beg therefore you will understand this.

Here is the answer from Lord Derby, who had just arrived in St. James's Square:

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, ½ *past* 9 [*Feb.* 21, 1852].—Whatever may be the issue of the present crisis, or the details of the arrangement consequent upon it, I shall never forget the generous self-sacrifice offered by the note which I received by Mackenzie at Badminton this morning. While I am sure that every instance of the kind tends to raise the character of public men generally, I am equally convinced

[1] Russell told the Queen that Palmerston had no party, and that he supposed Derby was prepared to form a Government. See *Queen Victoria's Letters*, of which copious use has been made in this chapter and the next.

that each case, even if the offer be accepted, must ultimately redound to the credit and advantage of the man who makes it from public motives. I have already had other intimations that P. is not unwilling to join us—but I shall studiously *not* see him till after I have had my audience of the Queen, which is appointed for ½ past 2 to-morrow. I am equally anxious that I *should* see *you*. Will you therefore have the goodness to call here at one o'clock to-morrow ?[1]

On the previous evening I had met Lord Palmerston at Lady Foley's. He said to me inquiringly: 'Well, how long will Derby's Government last ? He may have it for five years.'

'I think Lord Derby's Government might last more than five years if it be properly formed,' I replied. I was greatly tempted to open the subject to him at once, but from a feeling of delicacy towards Lord Derby refrained.

I saw Lord Derby before the audience.[2] He went resolved to form a Ministry and to kiss hands.

When Lord Derby informed the Queen of his intention of applying to Lord Palmerston to combine in forming a Government, and of offering him the leadership of the House of Commons, H.M. seemed distressed. 'If you do it,' she said, 'he will never rest till he is your master.'[3]

After leaving the Queen, Lord Derby had his interview with Lord Palmerston. Lord Derby had kissed hands, which Lord P. knew. What was Lord P.'s real view at that moment must remain a mystery. I am inclined to believe that he might have been induced to join Lord Derby. His political position was very desolate. He had no party. Not a single man of mark had followed him when he was ignominiously ejected from office. Indeed, only two individuals, and those obscure, had expressed their determination to blend their public fate with his. Lord Derby impressed upon him that the offer was made entirely with my sanction, and that he would find me an able, loyal lieutenant. Lord P. said he was quite satisfied on that head—he had no doubt of our getting on well together. With regard to friends for the Cabinet, he had none to suggest except on public grounds, equally open to Lord Derby as himself; with respect to any followers or private friends in regard to subordinate office, he had no wishes; there was nobody that he cared to provide for. This seemed promising enough; but then came the main principles

[1] These letters have been inserted in their proper places in the memorandum which refers to them.

[2] Sunday, Feb. 22.

[3] Derby told the Queen he was not afraid of Palmerston; he felt sure he could control him.

on which the Cabinet should be formed. Lord Palmerston did not think that Protection should be left an open question; that it could be left in an ambiguous position. He had no prejudices on the subject. He had always been in favour of a moderate fixed duty on foreign corn. He had advocated it in 1846 to the very last. But it was too late to think of such things in 1852. He would be party to no Ministry which contemplated the possibility of any change or modification in the Free Trade measures.

This ended the affair, and Lord Derby came to me from Piccadilly Terrace (Beaumont's house, where the Palmerstons then lived) at Grosvenor Gate. He would make no further overtures: in that he was wise, as it could only have been a waste of time. He recurred to my being Chancellor of the Exchequer, which he had opened to me before. I had then demurred, as a branch of which I had no knowledge. He replied: 'You know as much as Mr. Canning did. They give you the figures.' He said then definitely that Lord Malmesbury was to be Secretary for Foreign Affairs, but nothing of his position as regarded Sir Stratford Canning. Herries, he said, must be Colonial Secretary; Henley should go to the Board of Trade; Walpole, a recruit of last year, was to be Home Secretary; John Manners to be in the Cabinet, *vice* Granby. He must now go home at once: he had to write to the Queen, and to all these persons and many others, and begged me to be with him early on the morrow.

When I called on the morrow,[1] I found his house already full of people: men in every room. His servant told me Mr. Herries was with his Lord, and that he had inquired several times for me, and that my name was to be taken in immediately. A very few minutes elapsed before I was in his presence. It was rather a face of consternation. 'I really think we shall break down,' he said. 'What am I to do for a Colonial Secretary?'

So then it turned out, that Herries, evidently disgusted at not being C. of E., had peremptorily refused the Secretaryship. I instantly counselled my giving up the Chancellorship, which I didn't want, but Lord D. would not hear of it. The recollection of the scene of last year evidently influenced him; besides, he thought that the Leader of the House of Commons should be under the same official roof as himself. What was to be done?

'I know the man,' I said; 'he will do very well.'

'Who?'

'Pakington!'

'I have just sent for him to be U.S. to Walpole. It should

[1] Monday, Feb. 23.

be a country gentleman. I thought it was a capital arrangement. He will be here in a few minutes.'

Sir John Pakington was announced. He remained in the waiting-room, while I was convincing Lord Derby that he would make a competent Secretary of State. It was, naturally, rather hard work. I don't know that Lord Derby had even a personal acquaintance with Pakington at that moment. The exigency at last conquered him; he said, with an almost merry face of perplexity: 'Will you be bail for him?'

'To any amount,' I said.

I had only a public acquaintance with Pakington, who, though obliged to vote with the Protectionists, always kept aloof, and fetched up with the Peelites, for which Peel made him a Baronet. But I had observed him, especially on Lord G. B.'s colonial committee.

Pakington was introduced, elated with the impending destiny of becoming an U.S. Lord Derby explained the situation in his happiest manner. Never shall I forget Pakington's countenance, as the exact state of affairs broke upon him: never did I witness such a remarkable mixture of astonishment and self-complacency.

The Cabinet was finally composed as follows:

First Lord of the Treasury ..	EARL OF DERBY.
Lord Chancellor	LORD ST. LEONARDS.
Lord President	EARL OF LONSDALE.
Lord Privy Seal	MARQUIS OF SALISBURY.
Home Secretary	S. H. WALPOLE.
Foreign Secretary	EARL OF MALMESBURY.
Colonial Secretary	SIR JOHN PAKINGTON.
Chancellor of the Exchequer ..	B. DISRAELI.
First Lord of the Admiralty ..	DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND.
President of the Board of Control..	J. C. HERRIES.
President of the Board of Trade ..	J. W. HENLEY.
Postmaster-General..	EARL OF HARDWICKE.
First Commissioner of Works ..	LORD JOHN MANNERS.

Outside the Cabinet the Earl of Eglinton was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and Lord Naas Chief Secretary; Christopher was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Beresford Secretary at War. Stanley, who was still on his travels when the Ministry was formed, was appointed Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and on his return represented his office in the Commons. Thesiger was

Attorney-General, and Fitzroy Kelly Solicitor-General, Bankes Judge-Advocate-General, and Trollope Chief Poor Law Commissioner. Lyndhurst, who was in his eightieth year, had declined the Chancellorship. Granby and his following stood aloof.

Of the members of the Cabinet only three—Derby, Lonsdale, and Herries—had been Cabinet Ministers before, and none of the rest was even a Privy Councillor. It was a memorable scene when they went to Windsor to receive the seals, and has been characteristically described by Disraeli himself in *Endymion*:[1]

> A dozen[2] men, without the slightest experience of official life, had to be sworn in as privy councillors, before even they could receive the seals and insignia of their intended offices. On their knees, according to the constitutional custom, a dozen men, all in the act of genuflexion at the same moment, and headed, too, by one of the most powerful peers in the country—the Lord of Alnwick Castle himself—humbled themselves before a female Sovereign, who looked serene and imperturbable before a spectacle never seen before, and which, in all probability, will never be seen again.

'One of this band,' Disraeli continues, 'a gentleman without any official experience whatever, was not only placed in the Cabinet, but was absolutely required to become the leader of the House of Commons, which had never occurred before, except in the instance of Mr. Pitt in 1782.' It was a proud occasion for him. No wonder that at the mere prospect of it he should have 'felt just like a young girl going to her first ball,' as he told Malmesbury. He had now, with his whole party, 'got a *status*'; and he was to show whether one who, in the opinion of a Liberal historian,[3] was 'perhaps the best Leader of Opposition that the House of Commons has ever seen,' could lead the House itself with equal distinction, and prove himself a statesman as well as a great Parliamentarian.

At the dinner of the Royal Literary Fund, in May, Thackeray, who had often laughed at and parodied him,

[1] Ch. 100.

[2] The exact number of new Privy Councillors sworn in on this occasion was seventeen; but several of them were outside the Cabinet.

[3] Mr. Herbert Paul, in *A Modern History of England*.

hailed the romantic success of a brother-novelist in a speech which was half banter, half appreciation.

> Could a romance writer in after-years have a better or more wondrous hero than that of an individual who at twenty years of age wrote *Vivian Grey,* and a little while afterwards *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy;* who then explained to a breathless and listening world the great Asian mystery; who then went into politics, faced, fought, and conquered the great political giant of these days; and who subsequently led thanes and earls to battle, while he caused reluctant squires to carry his lance? What a hero would not that be for some future novelist, and what a magnificent climax for the third volume of his story, when he led him, in his gold coat of office, to kiss the Queen's hand as the Chancellor of the Exchequer![1]

Disraeli's father was no longer alive to enjoy his triumph; but he could still count on his sister's sympathy and applause.

Sarah Disraeli to Mrs. Disraeli.

> [? *Feb.* 26, 1852.]—I have fallen from the excess of light into such profound darkness and repose that I am bewildered, and should think all the wonderful events of these last seven days were so many dreams, were I not roused every now and then, and convinced that all the world are believing in their actuality.
>
> I had to grant perpetual audiences yesterday to people who want something. First came my little postman to ask me to put him on the town district; he did not ask me for my interest, but requested me at once to transfer him. I noticed he spoke with a very tremulous voice, which impressed me strongly with a sense of my extraordinary power. Then came a friend of mine who wants the Chancellor of the Exchequer to read a pamphlet he had written on the currency. Then a letter from a lady who wants a place for her husband. . . .
>
> Tell dear Dis I left the Board of Inland Revenue in a state of great flutter; all speculating on their new master. Mr. Pressly, one of the mainsprings—Dis knows him—had heard that he had grown somewhat grand of late.

Congratulations came from Disraeli's first political mentor, and also from an old follower and friend, now a political opponent.

[1] *The Times,* May 13, 1852. 'Great Asian mystery' has been substituted conjecturally for 'mystery of the great Caucasian theory,' which appears in the actual report.

From Lord Lyndhurst.

Feb. 25.—I congratulate you most sincerely and warmly upon the high position which you have so deservedly attained. It recalls to my recollection in a very lively manner the political conversations and scenes which passed between us so many years ago, and which the course of events has brought to so brilliant a conclusion.

You will, I am sure, evince to the world that addition and subtraction are not the only qualifications for a Chancellor of the Exchequer.

From the Hon. George Smythe.

[*Feb.* 24, 1852.]—Those who hailed the dawn have the best right to salute the meridian. Believe, therefore, dear Dis, in the sincere congratulations with which I kiss Mrs. Disraeli's hand, and am, your affectionate opponent, G. SYDNEY SMYTHE.

I can't help laughing at your having disinterred Sir Roger de Coverley to stick him in the Colonies. It is so like one of *your old strokes—in fiction.*

Smythe's gibe at Pakington[1] is characteristic of the kind of reception which this untried team received from the public, and especially from the newspapers which supported Free Trade. They were at once dubbed the 'Who ? Who ?' Ministry, because the Duke of Wellington, partly from deafness and partly from unacquaintance with the new men, kept exclaiming 'Who ? Who ?' as the Prime Minister in the House of Lords repeated to him, one by one, the names of his colleagues. Palmerston said that there were only two real men in the Government, oddly forgetful of the fact that there were only two men who counted with the public in the late Government—Russell and himself. The Queen did not realise at first that there was more than one man; there was, at any rate, only one whom the Court really knew. She wrote to King Leopold on March 23: 'In the present case our acquaintance is confined almost entirely to Lord Derby, but then *he is* the Government. They do *nothing* without him. He has all the Departments to look after, and on being asked by somebody if he was not much tired, he said: "I am quite well with my babies." '

[1] Greville, in July, writes: 'The appointment that created the greatest surprise and was the most criticised, that of Sir John Pakington, has turned out . . . one of the best.'

Of all the appointments, few were more unfavourably criticised than Disraeli's. That he should lead the House was not so surprising, but why put him at the Exchequer? It was a *mauvaise plaisanterie*, said one journal; he will find it difficult to be both a wit and a Chancellor of the Exchequer, said another. People had forgotten, or had paid little attention to, the remarkable speech on finance at the end of the previous session, from which we have culled in the last chapter some admirable financial maxims. At the same time it may be admitted that there was no special suitability in the post, except its comparative freedom from departmental duties, and the proximity of the official residence attached to it to that of the First Lord of the Treasury. But hitherto, when the Prime Minister was in the Lords, the leadership of the Commons had usually been associated with a Secretaryship of State; and such was the position assigned to Disraeli in the abortive negotiations of 1851. It is possible that the prejudice of the Court against Disraeli may have determined Derby to instal his colleague in an office that does not necessitate much personal intercourse with the Sovereign. In 1847 the Queen had been shocked at the mere suggestion that Disraeli was destined to hold high office in the next Cabinet,[1] and in 1851 she had only accepted his nomination on Derby's guarantee. On the other hand, Derby was in real difficulty for a Chancellor of the Exchequer. Palmerston had refused; there is good reason to believe that Thomas Baring had refused; and, after Herries' timidity in the previous year, Derby was determined not to give him another chance of the post. In the awkward position in which the party found themselves, part anxious to restore Protection, part resolved to get quit of that policy, the management of finance was a very delicate matter, and was naturally entrusted to the most dexterous hand.

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters:* 'The Queen . . . was a little shocked at Sir Charles Wood . . . designating the *future Government*, and selecting Lord George Bentinck, Mr. Disraeli (!), and Mr. Herries as the persons destined to hold *high offices* in the next Government' (The Queen to Russell, Dec. 19 1847).

It has been suggested that Disraeli had cherished the idea of uniting, like Canning, the leadership of the House with the Foreign Office. The interest in foreign affairs which he constantly manifested from the beginning to the end of his political career makes such an ambition a natural one; and a note written during the formation of the Ministry shows that Lyndhurst, who, as an old colleague of Derby's and friend of Disraeli's, was likely to be well informed, believed that Disraeli was to be Foreign Secretary. 'I think,' Lyndhurst wrote, 'you have chosen rightly in selecting the Foreign Office, for which you are admirably suited. We shall not, in future, blush for our foreign despatches, or foreign diplomacy.' Sir William Fraser, too, says that Disraeli, who had become the headstone of the corner in 1878, had been rejected as Foreign Secretary by 'the builders' in 1852. It may be taken for granted that neither the Queen nor Derby would have consented to his appointment at that date; but there is no evidence, in the Beaconsfield papers or elsewhere, that he put himself forward for it. In the various lists of possible Ministries which he drew up during these years, he places himself sometimes at the Exchequer, sometimes at the Home Office, and sometimes at the India Office, but never at the Foreign Office. On the other hand, he did not entirely share the satisfaction which Derby entertained for Malmesbury's conduct of that office, at any rate during the Ministry of 1858; and in 1859 he roundly declared that Malmesbury 'must go—at least, from his present position.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

March 2, 1852.—Having recovered from the horrors of a torpid liver, which has overwhelmed me the last few days, I send you an official letter, to tell you we get on very well: the Court gracious, the Press amiable, and our friends in the country considerate. To-morrow is a levee; Friday a Council; and Saturday our first Cabinet.

A fortnight in my office without the H. of C. to distract me is a great advantage at starting. My election is fixed for the 12th, the day the House reassembles: rather awkward.[1]

[1] *Letters*, p. 246.

Disraeli's optimism was natural in his first week of high office. But the difficulties before him and the Government were serious. It was true that they had come in because the Whig Government could no longer hold together; but they were in a decided minority in the House of Commons, and the Free Traders, of all sections, were likely to unite against them in Opposition. Their own attitude to Protection constituted their main difficulty. It had already prevented Palmerston from joining them; it had in the previous year put a stop to the negotiations with Aberdeen, Graham, and Gladstone; it had frightened off Lord Canning, Ellenborough, and Henry Corry. No doubt the question was treated as a more open one in the formation of the Government this year than it had been in 1851; and Lord Hardinge, at any rate, accepted the post of Master-General of the Ordnance as an avowed Free Trader. But Derby, in his first declaration of policy on behalf of the Government in the House of Lords, on February 27, having, as he wrote to Disraeli, 'ticklish ground to go over,' held up the American tariff to admiration as compared with the Free Trade system, and restated his individual opinion that corn should be no exception to a general system of imposing duties on foreign imports; while declaring that no general financial scheme of the kind could be introduced except by a Government strong in the confidence both of Parliament and of the country. To Disraeli this seemed to be 'Protection in its most odious form,' qualified by postponement of action till after the General Election. His own first intimations of policy were much more cautious. He had, of course, to submit himself for re-election on taking office. In his address he told the electors of Bucks that the first duty of the new Government would be 'to provide for the ordinary and current exigencies of the public service; but, at no distant period, we hope, with the concurrence of the country, to establish a policy in conformity with the principles which in opposition we have felt it our duty to maintain. We shall endeavour to terminate that strife of classes which, of late years, has exercised so pernicious

an influence over the welfare of this kingdom; to accomplish those remedial measures which great productive interests, suffering from unequal taxation, have a right to demand from a just Government.' They were 'favourable to progressive improvement in every department of the State.' In other words, his programme was not Protection, but justice to the agricultural interest by a readjustment of public burdens, coupled with administrative reform. On the hustings he went into more detail. Three great interests, he said—the agricultural, colonial, and shipping interests—had been injured by the legislation of 1846-1849; justice should be done to them, to the British producer as well as to the British consumer. The landed interest, especially, suffered under heavy burdens that must be redressed; the people of England, as things were then, were eating a farmer every night for their supper. A countervailing duty was recommended by eminent economists, and was probably the best method; but if the people of the country were—as he seemed to assume they were—opposed to it, then some other method would be found. The Government did not shrink from appealing to the people, but there was necessary business to get through before dissolution was possible, and defence and Chancery reform were ripe for treatment. Hobhouse found this speech as mysterious as those of Disraeli's colleagues; and no doubt Derby's indiscretion made it difficult for Disraeli to be plain.

This speech was delivered on March 12, the day Parliament met again after adjournment, and on the following Monday, the 15th, the attack on the Government began in both Houses. The Free Traders were, or professed to be, alarmed. The Anti-Corn Law League was revived in Manchester, and meetings of protest arranged in many big towns. The Liberals had met at Russell's house, and under his inspiration determined that no close time should be accorded to the new-comers; Lord Grey, on March 6, told Malmesbury the Government would not last three weeks. In the Lords, Derby was asked whether it was the intention of the Government, in a new Parliament, to

recommend an alteration in the present policy with regard to the importation of corn; and he declined to say more than that the question could only be solved at the General Election, and that no duty should be imposed on corn by a bare majority, but only after a very general concurrence of opinion. The debate in the Commons was described by Disraeli in his first letter, as leader of the House, to the Queen. Disraeli's letters were a new experience to Her Majesty, differing greatly as they did from the somewhat stereotyped official form to which previous leaders of the House had accustomed her. She told her uncle on March 30: 'Mr. Disraeli (*alias* Dizzy) writes very curious reports to me of the House of Commons proceedings—much in the style of his books.'[1]

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *March* 15, 1852, *Monday night.*—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his humble duty to your Majesty, informs your Majesty of what occurred in the House of Commons this evening.

Mr. Villiers opened the proceedings, terse and elaborate, but not in his happiest style. He called upon the House to contrast the state of the country at the beginning of the year and at the present moment. But he could not induce the House to believe that 'all now was distrust and alarm.'

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in reply, declined to bring forward in the present Parliament any proposition to change our commercial system, and would not pledge himself to propose in a future Parliament any duty on corn. He said a duty on corn was a measure, not a principle, and that if preferable measures for the redress of agricultural grievances than the five-shilling duty on corn (mentioned by Mr. Villiers) could be devised, he should adopt them—a declaration received with universal favour on the Government side.

Lord John Russell replied to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in consequence of some notice by the former[2] of the strange construction of a new Opposition to force a Dissolution

[1] Disraeli himself was often dissatisfied with the literary form of his reports. On Nov. 14 he apologised to the Queen for 'a somewhat crude note.' 'He humbly begs your Majesty will deign to remember that these bulletins are often written in tumult, and sometimes in perplexity; and that he is under the impression that your Majesty would prefer a genuine report of the feeling of the moment, however miniature, to a more artificial and prepared statement' (*Queen Victoria's Letters*).

[2] Apparently a slip for 'latter.'

of Parliament by a Minister who, three weeks ago, had declared such Dissolution inexpedient. It was not a successful speech.

The great speech on the Opposition side was that of Sir James Graham: elaborate, malignant, mischievous. His position was this: that Lord Derby, as a man of honour, was bound to propose taxes on food, and that, if he did so, revolution was inevitable.

Mr. Walpole followed with great taste and moderation, confining himself to the constitutional question, and avoiding the statistics which Sir James introduced.

Mr. Gladstone and Lord Palmerston both spoke in the same vein: the necessity of immediate Dissolution after the passing of the 'necessary' measures; but the question soon arose, What is 'necessary'?

Lord Palmerston thought the Militia Bill 'necessary,' upon which the League[1] immediately rose and denied the conclusion.

There seemed in the House a great reluctance to avoid[2] a violent course, but a very general wish, on the Opposition side, for as speedy a Dissolution as public necessity would permit.

The evening, however, was not disadvantageous to the Government. All which is most humbly submitted to your Majesty, by your Majesty's most dutiful subject and servant, B. DISRAELI.[3]

Derby was naturally nervous about the performances of his 'team of young horses' in the Commons in their first trial, and was anxious before he went to bed to have a report from his lieutenant.

From Lord Derby.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, ½ *past* 10 [*March* 15].—I hear from many quarters that you made a *magnificent* speech, and after our conversation this morning I have no fear that there should appear any divergence of opinion which could by possibility be laid hold of between us. . . .

But if you have time for a line written on your knee, as you have no reply, and consequently nothing pressing upon you, I wish you would relieve my anxiety by letting me know what was John Russell's line, and its success; that our men have not marred the effect of your speech, and that the favourable commencement of the night has been sustained. Shall you get your vote of men and money? Remember *nothing* can be done till the Mutiny Bills are secure, and the defence of

[1] The Anti-Corn Law League.

[2] Disraeli seems to have meant 'reluctance to take' or 'desire to avoid.'

[3] *Queen Victoria's Letters.* The paragraph about Walpole's speech is omitted in the book.

the country must be the first step. I should not deprecate a little *factious* delay to our necessary measures, which should *unavoidably* carry on Parliament till June or July.

Disraeli's reply, written from his place in the House of Commons, was couched in much the same terms as his letter to the Queen, though he went into more detail about Russell's speech, which he declared to be 'a complete failure. He made a feeble reply to my attack, which forced him up, and then took refuge in a prepared glorification of his Government—speech of statistics, which, from the dulness and the dinner-hour combined, broke up the House.' Disraeli announced in his speech the measures which the Government hoped to pass: first, the Bill for the disfranchisement of St. Albans together with the Ministerial proposals for distributing the forfeited seats; secondly, Chancery reform; and, thirdly, a Militia Bill.

To Sarah Disraeli.

D[OWNING] S[TREET], *March* 17, 1852.—I think we have turned the corner. The public seems with us, and our raw recruits have not made a single mistake. . . .

Ralph and M. A. keep you, I believe, somewhat *au fait* at what happens. For myself, I am very well, but I literally have not time to take my meals.

The Lord President,[1] however, gives to-day his first Cabinet dinner: so business and food may be combined. In the evening Lady Derby gives her first reception, which I shall attend, though otherwise I do not attempt to go anywhere. M. Anne, however, is very gay and ubiquitous.

On Monday night Lord Derby did wonders, and I, in the other House, did not disgrace our friends.

From Lord Derby.

Private. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Thursday* [*March* 18].—I hope you did not think that I urged too strongly last night at Lonsdale's my view of the course to be taken in the House of which you are the Leader. If I did, you must attribute it to my strong sense of what was essential for securing and strengthening our position.

[1] Lonsdale. It was the practice of this Government to hold Cabinet dinners on Wednesdays during the session.

I have this moment Lord Hardinge with me. He says, from Gladstone, that with an understanding that we are to have a dissolution in the summer, and a meeting in November, the body of the Peelites will support us through the session, resist an attempt to cut short our supplies, and not press for a second Parliamentary session of 1852. I have declined entering into any *engagement*, as Gladstone has no reciprocity to offer; but I have authorised Hardinge to tell him privately that such are my views, and that I agree that it is desirable that the country should have an intimation of our commercial policy, as early as is consistent with the object of making the *next* meeting of Parliament that for the session of 1852-53, and not a second session of 1852. If the Peelites act on their personal intentions, and we are firm, but temperate in tone, our game is won.

This expectation of support from the Peelites was fulfilled, save in one conspicuous instance; and consequently, as Derby wrote, down to the General Election the Government were secure. Derby and Disraeli were pleased with the outcome of their first debates, but they could not expect the Whig and Radical Opposition to be; and there is justice in the Queen's comment, in writing to King Leopold, that these debates were 'not satisfactory, because both Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli refuse to give a straightforward answer as to their policy, the uncertainty as to which will do serious harm.' On Friday, March 19, Disraeli was again interrogated by Russell as to whether Ministers would advise a dissolution of Parliament with the least possible delay; and he gave the Queen this summary of his reply:

He held it was not constitutional and most impolitic for any Ministers to pledge themselves to recommend their Sovereign to dissolve Parliament at any stated and specific time, as circumstances might occur which would render the fulfilment of the pledge injurious or impracticable; that it was the intention of the Ministers to recommend your Majesty to dissolve the present Parliament the moment that such measures were carried which were necessary for your Majesty's service, and for the security *and good government* of your Majesty's realm; and that it was their wish and intention that the new Parliament should meet to decide upon the question of confidence in the Administration, and on the

measures which they could then bring forward in the course of the present year.[1]

Upon this answer an attempt was made by Bernal Osborne, who talked of a 'thimblerig Government,' to stop supplies on the ground of want of confidence in Ministers. The motion, though supported by Russell, Cobden, and Bright, was not carried to a division; and it was repelled with spirit by Disraeli, who characterised Russell's behaviour in first throwing up the Government, and then endeavouring immediately to force the new Ministers to resign, as factious. It was a false move of Russell's; and, as Disraeli told the Queen, 'the discomfiture of the Opposition was complete.' The first week had certainly gone well for the Government, and Derby so reported to the Queen. Her Majesty's account of his conversation shows that Disraeli's arguments, or the manifest trend of public opinion, had already had an effect on his views; for he told her that, though he anticipated a Conservative majority at the General Election, it would not be a majority for the reimposition of a duty on corn, 'certainly not a majority large enough to justify him in proposing such a measure.' But his 'honour and credit' prevented him from abandoning Protection till the country had pronounced against it. The Queen interpreted this ambiguous statement, in the light of her strong common-sense, to mean that 'Lord Derby is quite prepared to drop Protection.' She told King Leopold that the Government would get through the session, dissolve in June or July, and meet Parliament again in November; 'and then Protection will be done away with.' That was what Disraeli foresaw and desired to be prepared for; what Derby was coming to expect, but would not provide against.

The Government lost no time in bringing in their Militia Bill. They proposed to create an additional permanent force of 80,000 men for national defence, to be raised by bounties of £3 or £4; the period of training and drilling to be twenty-one days, the Crown having

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

power, in case of necessity, to extend it to fifty-six days. The cost would be about £1,200,000. The Bill was introduced[1] by Walpole and generally welcomed; its only opponents were the Manchester School, whose arguments, said Disraeli, really meant that in the present state of the world no country need defend itself. An easy passage was expected for it; but on the second reading, to the general surprise, Russell supported a motion for its rejection, on the ground that it followed the plan of the old militia which his Government had condemned.

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April* 19, 1852 (*Monday night, half-past twelve*).—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his humble duty to your Majesty, reports to your Majesty that, after a dull debate, significant only by two of the subordinate members of the late Administration declaring their hostility to the Militia Bill, Lord John Russell rose at eleven o'clock and announced his intention to oppose the second reading of it. His speech was one of the ablest—statesmanlike, argumentative, terse, and playful—and the effect he produced was considerable.

Your Majesty's Government, about to reply to it, gave way to Lord Palmerston, who changed the feeling of the House, and, indeed, entirely carried it away, in a speech of extraordinary vigour and high-spirited tone.

The Ministers were willing to have taken the division on his lordship sitting down, but, as the late Government wished to reply, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would not oppose the adjournment of the debate.

The elements of calculation as to the division are very complicated, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer is still inclined to believe that the second reading of the Bill will be carried.[2]

Russell had a second time since the formation of the Government made a false move, and Palmerston's protest against mixing up party feeling with the defence of the realm carried the House with it. On the morning of the division Disraeli wrote to his sister: 'Lord John, after much deliberation, has chosen his own field of battle, and if he get beat to-night, which I think he will, he will have

[1] March 25.

[2] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

proved himself a very unfortunate, not to say a very unskilful, general.' Many Whigs, as well as most of the Peelites, voted with the Government, who carried[1] their Bill by nearly two to one in a full House—315 against 165. It was a notable triumph, and, though due to an extraordinary blunder in tactics of the leader of Opposition, was none the less calculated to increase the hold of Ministers on Parliament and the country. The Bill passed through its remaining stages with little trouble, and, being blessed by the Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords, became law in almost exactly the shape in which it was introduced.

Russell did not propose to proceed in opposition with the Reform Bill which he had introduced on behalf of his Government; and the new Ministry naturally decided to leave the question alone. But Hume and Locke King were irrepressible, and Disraeli had to resist, and, with Russell's aid, defeat two familiar motions by these Reformers. In his speeches he said that neither he nor his party was opposed to Parliamentary reform, though they did not consider an extension of the franchise to be synonymous with the extension of democratic power. They were opposed to crude and unnecessary proposals, based on erroneous calculations, which would merely give further representation to property. It would be a different matter if a well-matured measure were brought forward, not for party purposes, but with the sincere desire of giving the deserving artisan the exercise of the suffrage in a manner consistent with the maintenance of the institutions of the country. Besides these Reform motions, Disraeli had to meet financial resolutions, brought forward in advance of the Budget, and calculated to deprive the Exchequer in one case of the income derived from the hop duty, and in the other of that arising from the paper duty and the newspaper stamp and advertisement duties: With both proposals, as we know, he had considerable sympathy; but, as a Chancellor of the Exchequer de-

[1] April 26.

fending the Treasury, he naturally opposed both. The Government could not pledge themselves, and he appealed, and appealed successfully, to be allowed to make his financial statement without being hampered by preliminary votes of the House.

These debates, and the multifarious duties devolving on a leader of the House with very insufficient support on his own bench, together with official work at which he was a novice, left the Chancellor of the Exchequer little opportunity to consider his Budget. 'I have neither time to feed nor sleep, though pretty well,' he tells his sister on the Monday before it was due; 'great debates every night, and the Budget on Friday, for which I have literally not time to prepare.' The Queen, 'alarmed by vague rumours that it was the intention of the Government to propose great changes in the present financial system,' made inquiries about the Budget at the beginning of the week.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Sunday night* [*April* 25]. —The enclosed note from H.M. will show you that she means to know *everything* that is going on. I have sent her in answer one of our confidential printed papers of the Budget, and told her that, though at present we had come to no positive and formal decision, I apprehended we should have a 'provisional' Budget with one year's income-tax; I have told her the deductions to be made from any apparent surplus, and the necessity of keeping something in hand to go upon, *if, as appeared probable,* we could derive no income from foreign corn. . . .

As Derby now no longer concealed from the Queen or from his colleagues that he was beginning, however reluctantly, to recognise the hopelessness of Protection, Disraeli determined to treat the Budget as a great opportunity for counteracting the ill effect of his chief's opening declaration on financial policy. Not that in his actual financial proposals there was any scope for showing the tendency of his mind. The Budget was necessarily provisional; and it was provisional, not merely because the Government were a Government without a majority and pledged not to modify the new commercial system till after the General

Election, but also because the income tax had only been voted, in 1851, for one year, and a Committee was sitting to take the whole question of that tax and its incidence into consideration. But it was obvious that the Chancellor of the Exchequer could not review the financial situation without giving a fairly clear indication of the principles on which he held that the taxation of the country must be based. This expectation, the piquancy of Disraeli's position, the fascination of his career, and the absurd *canards* circulated by the Free Traders as to the probability of reactionary proposals, produced more than the usual excitement and curiosity about the Chancellor's statement; and when he rose on April 30 the House was fuller than it had been since the great Pacifico debate.

From the beginning he struck the note of complete impartiality and detachment which he maintained throughout. He asked members to dismiss from their minds all prejudgments and prejudices, and join with him in an attempt clearly to comprehend the exact financial position of the country. Owing to Hume's motion in 1851, limiting the income-tax to one year, an important branch of the revenue had lapsed; what was the soundest means of supplying the deficiency? The revenue of the country was raised in three modes: first, by duties on articles of foreign import; secondly, by duties on articles of domestic manufacture; thirdly, by direct taxation. To which of these should he revert in his need? By the method of customs already a large revenue was raised; and since 1842 there had been a systematic and continuous reduction of these duties, amounting to £9,000,000 in all; so that, in the light of history, it would be presumptuous in him to recur to fresh customs duties to supply his deficiency. Were excise duties more encouraging? There were two parties in their financial controversies: one, the more prevalent, which was always in favour of reducing customs; but another, important though not triumphant, which desired to relieve native industry by reducing excise—a party to which his 'ever-lamented friend' Bentinck belonged. If one

side of the House wished to reduce customs, and the other excise, what was a poor Chancellor with a deficiency to do? Besides, even those who considered customs duties the greatest of financial grievances had shown repugnance to raising revenue by excise; and, since 1842, excise duties had been relieved to the extent of £1,500,000. Only a week before a proposal had been made to repeal duties on paper and newspapers which would have meant a further loss of £1,400,000. It was, therefore, an extremely hopeless enterprise to supply his deficiency by increasing excise duties.

Some Liberals talked as if to raise money by direct taxation was a preferable method. The principal direct tax, the income tax, was introduced by one of the most eminent of modern statesmen in 1842 in order to effect reductions in duties; but it was introduced as an emergency measure, and the House and country could not be got to adopt it without its being framed on a large basis of exemption. Moreover, it was only renewed with difficulty, and had at last become so odious and unpopular that in 1851 it had only been continued for one year, on condition that it should be investigated by a Select Committee. That Committee, of which he himself was a member, was still sitting. One of the gravest objections to this tax was that there was no difference in the rate of assessment upon incomes of a temporary and of a permanent character. There were difficulties in adopting any scheme for remedying this defect. 'In questions of finance, the feelings of the people must be considered as well as the principles of science.' The Committee were unanimous that, if measures of direct taxation were to form a permanent feature of our finance, they could not rest upon a system of exemptions. Direct taxation, in Disraeli's opinion, should be nearly as universal in its application as indirect. Otherwise 'it is confiscation. It is making war upon the capital which ultimately must employ that very industry which you wish to relieve.' The instance of the income tax therefore hardly encouraged the Chancellor to turn to direct taxation. Besides, the principal feature of

the Budget of 1851 was the repeal of one of the most considerable sources of direct taxation—the window tax—at a loss of nearly £2,000,000. It was repealed on the 'plausible plea, but miserable pretext,' of sanitary considerations; and a house tax was substituted. But this new tax followed 'the vicious principle which pervaded all our direct taxation,' and only applied to 400,000 out of 3,500,000 houses. The policy of the last ten years had brought us to this result, that 'the House of Commons disapproves of all three methods of taxation.'

Disraeli now passed to the portion of his speech which provoked most comment—his description of the results attained under Wood's Free Trade Budget of the previous year. There was an excess in the receipts over the late Chancellor's estimates of £330,000; but even that statement did not do justice to his merits, as there had been vast remissions of taxation. There had been reductions on coffee, timber, and sugar, and Wood had therefore estimated for losses of £176,000, £286,000, and £335,000 respectively; but the losses had only been, in the three items, £112,000, £126,000, and £309, owing to the enormous increase in consumption. Hence the customs had exceeded the estimate by £270,000. There was the same tendency to rapid expansion shown in excise, stamps, taxes, and Post Office, though in the last case much must be attributed to the Great Exhibition. All this part of the speech was vociferously welcomed by the Opposition.

For the coming year, 'after the marvellous results which I have communicated to the House as the consequence of the last reduction in the sugar duties, one is naturally sanguine' about the revenue. Assuming the income tax to cease, the amount to be collected under that head in the year would be only £2,600,000, and the total estimated receipts on the basis of present taxation £49,000,000, leaving a deficit of £2,125,000 for 1852-53, and of £4,250,000 for 1853-54. If the income tax was retained it would bring in £5,187,000, and give a surplus of £460,000. To retain the tax for a limited period was the only prudent course. That was what the Government

recommended, and they proposed no change of taxation whatever.

Disraeli added a weighty passage on the importance of laying down clearly and decidedly the principles on which the public revenue should be raised. Had the Government been longer in office they would not have shrunk from this laborious task; and they would not be content again, if they had the opportunity, to make provisional propositions.

> They look with great apprehension to the opinions prevalent in this House, which seem opposed to all the great sources of raising the revenue of this country. They consider that nothing would be more injurious than rashly and rapidly to reduce the sources of indirect taxation while you have come to no general conclusion as to the principles upon which direct taxation shall be levied. They are of opinion that if we continue in this mood of mind—admirable as is the industry, vast as is the capital, of this country, great as are the advantages which are received from our political institutions, which have secured it order, wealth, and liberty—it will be impossible to maintain the revenue of this country in that manner which the public credit and the wants of our national establishments require. Sir, we have a profound conviction upon that head. We deem it our duty to impress upon the Committee and upon the country the dangerous course in which they have embarked—to impress upon them the absolute necessity, now or in another Parliament, of arriving at some definite understanding on what principle the revenue of this country ought to be raised. They deem it their duty to denounce as most pernicious to all classes of this country the systematic reduction of indirect taxation, while at the same time you levy your direct taxes from a very limited class.

The speech was markedly successful, and showed, as Thomas Baring said, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had a mind which could grapple with anything. It brought Disraeli what he greatly valued, his first letter from the Sovereign who had hesitated to accept his services, but who was eventually to set him above all her other Ministers in her esteem and regard.

From Queen Victoria.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, *May* 1, 1852.—The Queen has read with great interest the clear and able financial statement

which the Chancellor of the Exchequer made in the House of Commons last night, and was glad to hear from him that it was well received.[1]

Admiration was, indeed, expressed on all sides for the speech itself, and there was general concurrence in the proposal to renew the income tax for a limited period. The Free Traders naturally exulted in the evidence given, in the speech, of the general prosperity. Wood regarded it as strong testimony to the complete success of the financial and commercial policy of the last ten years, and Gladstone was quite prepared to rest the whole case on it. Compliments came also from Bright and Labouchere. A few Liberal members, indeed—including Hume and Wakley—mingled with their approbation taunting references to Disraeli's conduct to Peel, whose principles they contended he was now vindicating; but the prevailing note of the Opposition was one of generous appreciation. The Conservative speakers—Thomas Baring, Tyrell, Alderman Thompson, and Hudson, the Railway King—were equally complimentary, but pointed out that it did not follow that, because the financial position of the country was good, there were not important interests suffering from distress; and also that the Chancellor had not attributed the prosperity of the country to Free Trade. These declarations show that Palmerston's and Greville's statements that the speech was received in 'sullen silence,' 'in silence and discontent,' by the supporters of the Government, are somewhat exaggerated; but those two shrewd observers were not far wrong in concluding that, after the speech, Protection, in the shape of a duty on corn, could no longer be attempted. One very important listener shared their sentiments. If Disraeli had been dissatisfied with Derby's declaration, Derby was no less disturbed by Disraeli's. His anxiety prompted him to write the same evening a long letter of remonstrance. Greatly as he admired the clearness and lucidity of the statement, 'I think the silence of our own friends, and the rapturous and triumphant cheers with which the opposite side of the House greeted

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

each successive illustration of the financial result of the remission of taxes, and the advantage gained to the consumers, must have shown you, as you went on, that you were making out a triumphant case for the Free Trade policy which is the mainstay of our opponents.' What about the interest of the producer? 'It is impossible that you should have overlooked the fact that, with regard to two at least of the items you enumerated—coffee and sugar—and partially also as to timber, the increase of consumption has chiefly fallen on the foreign produce, while the diminution of price has mainly affected the home or the colonial producer.'

On the whole, I cannot but say that I should have listened with far more pleasure to your statement had I been able to shut my eyes, and to persuade myself that I was listening to Charles Wood congratulating the country on the eminent success of his financial policy, and encouraging the country to persevere in and extend it, exaggerating its advantages, and passing lightly over its injurious consequences, than I did when I remembered, able as it was, that it was the statement of the organ of a Government by whom that commercial policy had been, certainly not condemned in the abstract, but censured as having been carried to a reckless extent.

Derby anticipated—and with good reason—a 'yell of triumph' from the Free Trade papers; as he left the House he heard the remark, 'It was the eulogy of Peel by Disraeli.' He had seen no one, and might be mistaken as to the feelings of their own party; but 'I foresee great discontent among our friends, and great embarrassment when we come to the serious consideration of that financial system, on which, if we adopt without reserve the policy of our predecessors, we shall be justly stigmatised as impostors who have obtained office under false pretences; and if we depart from it, we shall be met with rather weighty arguments, drawn from your speech of this evening.'

It was, of course, Disraeli's object to force the note, in order that there might be no mistake about his resolve to extricate his party from a Protectionist policy. He was quite willing himself to make certain reserves, as he showed

in the next few days. Derby, however, in spite of his growing conviction that Disraeli's course was the right one, did not content himself with a private grumble by letter, but took advantage of a City banquet to Ministers a few days later to utter some ambiguous words which once more suggested that Protection might be revived. Undoubtedly there had been annoyance at the Budget among extreme Protectionists; and the farmers, who, as Malmesbury tells us, 'though reconciled to Protection, expected some relief in other ways,' were disappointed at no hint having been given of a measure for their advantage, beyond the promise to examine the whole financial system after the election. Derby in the City was profuse in compliments to his lieutenant, whose speech had refuted the unworthy notion 'that a man possessing high ability, a vivid imagination, and great eloquence cannot master the driest commercial and financial topics.' But he said that, though Disraeli properly did not allude to the subject, no Government ought to lose sight of the interests of those large classes, unconnected with commerce, who were mainly producers. Government must reconcile apparently conflicting interests, and 'by mutual concessions and by mutual compromises' blend them in one harmonious whole.

'Mutual concessions and mutual compromises' might mean anything, and probably in Derby's mind meant no more than Disraeli's policy of compensation to the landed interest. But the phrase immediately aroused suspicions temporarily allayed by Disraeli's Budget speech. *Punch* asked, in a famous cartoon, which horse Derby declared to win with, Protection or Free Trade? The Peelites, who had hitherto supported Ministers, took alarm, and immediately inflicted on them the one serious rebuff of the session. One of the measures which Disraeli had declared to be 'necessary' in March was a Bill for assigning the four seats forfeited by the disfranchisement of St. Albans and Sudbury. On May 10 he moved for leave to introduce the Bill, and made the very reasonable proposal, which was subsequently carried out with slight variation

by Palmerston's Government in 1861, to allot two seats to the West Riding of Yorkshire, and two to the south of Lancashire, both of them districts of great and growing population. In an interesting speech he discussed with sympathy, and only dismissed owing to practical difficulties, the suggestion of introducing new elements into the constituency by allotting these seats to learned societies, such as the Royal Society, the Inns of Court, or the unrepresented Universities. Gladstone got up immediately Disraeli sat down, and moved to disregard the motion and proceed to the orders of the day. It was not necessary or wise, he said, to deal with such a measure in a moribund Parliament. But his real reason for objecting was that the Government were at issue with Parliament on a cardinal point of policy. It was a solemn duty to bring the question to a formal and final decision, which could only be done by dissolution. That process should be expedited and the controversy ended. Government were beaten by eighty-six, and Palmerston as well as Gladstone voted against them. It was characteristic of Derby to write to Disraeli next day: 'I do not think there is much harm done, if any, by our defeat of last night'—a defeat due mainly to his own Mansion House declaration.

To Sarah Disraeli.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *May* 14.—A hurried line to tell you that, after many vicissitudes, affairs seem pretty well and smooth again, except this morning—Lord Derby has the gout! They say it is light; but he is in bed, and how things are to go on without him baffles my imagination.

Yesterday[1] I feasted my followers in a manner worthy of the cause, and as few Chancellors of the Exchequer have of late years. There was an enormous Drawing-room, the banquet and drum at Lady Derby's, not less, I should think, than a thousand. I never got upstairs. The Privy Seal, the Lord President, the Postmaster, all gave gratuitous feasts. The Duke of Northumberland, too—in fact, never was a faction so feasted! . . .[2]

By May 24 Derby had advanced so far in the way Disraeli desired the Government to go that he said openly

[1] Celebration of the Queen's birthday. [2] *Letters*, pp. 247, 248.

in the House of Lords, as he had already told the Queen and Disraeli, that he did not think it probable that so large a majority would be returned at the General Election in favour of an import duty on corn as would render it desirable to reimpose such a duty; and he repeated that without a decided and unequivocal majority the attempt ought not to be made. But even this was very negative and unsatisfactory as a programme for the elections, and Disraeli occupied the Whitsuntide recess in drawing up his address to his constituents, which should make it quite plain that the Government did not, as a Government, whatever subordinate individuals might do, go into battle under the flag of Protection. That there might be no doubt that this document was the authorised manifesto of the Government, he submitted it to Derby for revision. and adopted all the suggestions which he made.

From Lord Derby.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *June* 3, 1852.—I have looked over your address, and have ventured on two or three suggestions of no great moment, but which I would recommend for your adoption. I think one sentence about 'recurrence to the abrogated laws' would appear to condemn in principle, as well as to admit to be impossible, the imposition of any duty—and it is well to let down the agricultural body as easily as we can. I do not like your last sentence. I think my 'auspices' had better be omitted, and the expression of 'making' the country, etc., implies too much as requiring to be done. You will easily amend it. . . .

The important paragraphs in the address, which was dated Hughenden Manor, June 2, and was issued two or three days later, were these:

The time has gone by when the injuries which the great producing interests endure can be alleviated or removed by a recurrence to the laws which, previously to 1846, protected them from such calamities. The spirit of the age tends to free intercourse, and no statesman can disregard with impunity the genius of the epoch in which he lives. But every principle of abstract justice, and every consideration of high policy, counsel that the producer should be treated as fairly as the consumer, and intimate that, when the native producer

is thrown into unrestricted competition with external rivals, it is the duty of the legislature in every way to diminish, certainly not to increase, the cost of production.

It is the intention of Her Majesty's Ministers to recommend to Parliament, as soon as it is in their power, measures which may effect this end.

One of the soundest means, among others, by which this result may be accomplished is a revision of our taxation. The times are favourable to such an undertaking; juster notions of taxation are more prevalent than heretofore; powerful agencies are stirring, which have introduced new phenomena into finance, and altered the complexion of the fiscal world; and the possibility of greatly relieving the burdens of the community, both by adjustment and reduction, seems to loom in the future.

What the exact remedy for the agriculturists 'looming in the future' might be was perhaps misty and doubtful. But that there was to be no recurrence to the old Corn Laws, but on the contrary, 'free intercourse' and 'unrestricted competition,' was made perfectly clear; and this policy received Derby's *imprimatur*. Disraeli summed up the issues before the country in the following words:

The country will have to decide whether it will maintain a Ministry formed on the principles of Conservative progress; whether it will terminate for ever, by just and conciliatory measures, the misconceptions which have too long prevailed between producer and consumer, and extinguish the fatal jealousy that rankles between town and country; whether our colonial empire shall be maintained and confirmed; whether the material development of Ireland shall at length be secured; whether such alterations as time and circumstance may appear to justify and require in the construction of the House of Commons shall be made in that spirit of revolution which has arrested the civilisation of Europe, or in the spirit of our popular, though not democratic, institutions; whether the Church of England shall still remain a national Church; whether the Crown of England shall still be a Protestant Crown.

It will be noticed that Disraeli vindicates the progressive nature of the Conservatism which he advocates, and especially its right to deal with the question of Reform; that he recurs to the material development of Ireland; and that he sounds the note of Imperialism.

To Sarah Disraeli.

June 8, 1852.—. . . The business is very hard and anxious; up to three o'clock every morning, and in my place in the House again at noon. It cannot, I suppose, last very long—at least, if it do, I shall not. However, on the whole, I keep my health. . . . M. A., I suppose, keeps you *au fait* to our, or rather to her, life. Mine you know by the newspapers; I go nowhere. Yesterday I was *not* at the Trinity House, and shall not be at a long series of civic feasts which are coming—E. I. Company, Skinners', M. Taylors'—being all, and perhaps fortunately, on House of Commons days.

I gave Graham a good dressing,[1] and he could not rally.

I am very glad young Stanley has come back.

On Sunday I was two hours with the Prince—a very gracious and interesting audience. He has great abilities and wonderful knowledge—I think the best-educated man I ever met; most completely trained, and not over-educated for his intellect, which is energetic and lively.—Adieu.[2]

It was not to be expected that Disraeli's address would prevent the Opposition from harping on the uncertain attitude of the Government towards Protection. The fear of Protection was by far their best electioneering card, and, before the session ended, it was again played for all it was worth by Russell. This was in a debate[3] which sprang up about the wrongs of a British subject, named Mather, who was cut down in the streets of Florence by an Austrian officer. Malmesbury, as Foreign Secretary, had endeavoured to get compensation for him from Tuscany, and the Opposition contended that he should have applied to Austria. But Russell passed from this topic to a general review of the proceedings of the Government. He accused them of concealing their policy, and not telling the country clearly whether the new commercial system was to be tampered with or not. He contrasted the Budget speech and the address to the electors of Bucks with Derby's declarations, and wanted to know which the House was to believe. The country would never give its confidence to a Government which had no opinions and no principles. It was, of course, only a

[1] On June 7 Disraeli successfully vindicated, in reply to Graham, the management of public business by the Government.

[2] Part of this appears in *Letters*, p. 248.

[3] June 14.

re-hash of an attack that Russell had made more than once before during the session. 'The very first night I took my seat,' said Disraeli, 'the noble lord rose and opened his batteries. He has since returned to the attack; but his drums were muffled, and the fire slackened. Now we have a last effort, but it is a forlorn hope that will not take the citadel.' With regard to the charge of a change of opinions since 1846, he roundly denied it. He and his friends opposed the abandonment of the Corn Laws and the alteration of the sugar duties; but he denied that either he or the bulk of those with whom he acted had ever advocated a recurrence to the same laws that existed before 1846. 'You cannot recall a single speech to that effect; I defy anybody to quote any speech I ever made, or any sentence that I ever uttered, that recommended such a course as desirable or possible.' That statement has been denounced by Disraeli's traducers as audaciously false. The reader of this volume will recognise its substantial truth. Lord Derby, Disraeli admitted, had recommended a fixed duty on corn, though he had now intimated his belief that the country would not support such a policy. But a fixed duty was not a recurrence to the laws which existed before 1846. A fixed duty, as he had often pointed out, was recommended by McCulloch and other economic authorities. But it was not a principle, but a measure; and, as it was invested with popular odium, and repudiated by the popular will, he was not going to pin his political career to it, or make it the basis of his policy. The object of the Government was to do justice to the classes wronged in 1846, but 'without disturbing the system which is now established.' That was a fairly conclusive statement.

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Monday*, ½ past 12 *o'clock* (*a.m.*) [*June* 15, 1852].—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his humble duty to your Majesty, reports to your Majesty that Lord John Russell made his 'observations on the present state of public affairs' this evening: appended to the Mather case.

This latter he treated very cleverly, and had the House with him; but his postscript, which was very general, marred all, and dissipated the attention of the House.

Lord Granby got into high Protection: Lord Palmerston attacked both Governments, but the present gently. The House seemed ill-disposed, and affairs looked black; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer was more fortunate than he expected or deserved. He is just down, and writes this humbly to say that your Majesty's Ministers have outlived a threatening night.

While there was great doubt in the popular mind at home, fomented by the Opposition for party purposes, as to the position of the Government, it is noteworthy that a shrewd and interested foreign observer had already, before the issue of the Bucks address and the debate on June 14, recognised that not only Disraeli, but Derby, had finally abandoned Protection. Metternich wrote to Disraeli from Vienna on May 24: 'Vous avez dû vous convaincre que je ne me suis point trompé sur les exigences de la situation dans laquelle se sont trouvés les chefs du parti réellement conservateur des intêrets de votre grand pays, sous le poids d'une qualification qui n'a trait qu'à une fraction de ses intérêts—sous un poids dont vous et votre noble ami ont déjà su se débarrasser au profit de la cause dont vous êtes les défenseurs.'

The anti-Catholic and anti-Ritualist feeling excited by the Pope's action about ecclesiastical titles in 1850, and by the proceedings of the Tractarians, was still strong in the country, and was reflected in motions in the House of Commons. On June 12 Disraeli wrote to the Queen: 'The feeling of the House of Commons, on both sides, is so determined against Tractarian principles, that the majority will support motions, of which they otherwise disapprove, if they think such votes may incidentally check the aggressions of the sacerdotal party.' In another letter to the Queen, describing a debate on education on June 21, Disraeli wrote: 'The feeling of the House of Commons, probably in this representing faithfully that of the country, is against both the violent parties in the Church, and in favour of a firm, though temperate, course on the

part of the Crown, which may conciliate a vast majority, and tend to terminate dissension.'[1]

In the latter part of the session, Spooner, a strong Protestant Tory, moved to inquire into the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth, which received a Government grant. The debate stretched over several days, and all parties except the Irish professed a willingness to have an inquiry, Walpole for the Government, Gladstone for the Peelites, and Russell for the Opposition. Though much strong language was used, nothing was eventually done, as the debate was not concluded till the session was nearly over, and it would have been ridiculous to appoint a Committee when Parliament was about to be dissolved. It was not a creditable spectacle; but all parties were playing for position at the General Election. Disraeli only took part to state that the Government would not abrogate the grant to Maynooth, and would not advise the appointment of a Royal Commission. Otherwise he let the debate take its course in the electioneering spirit which actuated Derby in writing to him, on one of the days when the subject came up: 'I think you must at all events let your men go as far as you can. Votes will be given to-night in reference to impending elections, and we must not be hard upon men, even in office, who may vote for Spooner, even if we propose, and he refuses, to limit the inquiry.'

To Sarah Disraeli.

DOWNING STREET, *June* 16.—Our unprecedented efforts have nearly steered the ship into port. The Speaker says he never remembers so much and such hard work. I think we shall carry every one of our Bills of the slightest importance; even the Crime and Outrage Bill, of which I once despaired. . . . Things look favourably. The Court is very gracious; I was with the Prince Consort two hours again on Sunday last. . . .[2]

Disraeli was perfectly justified in his complacency about the legislative results of the session, which compared favourably with the recent muddles of the Whigs. The part of the session under the control of the new Ministers

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.* [2] *Letters*, p. 248.

was but three months and a half, and in that time they had passed the Militia Act; an Act giving New Zealand a Constitution; various measures of legal reform, including Acts to diminish the technicalities of special pleading, to amend Common Law procedure, to reform the Court of Chancery, and to extend the jurisdiction of County Courts; and important sanitary measures, for improving the water-supply of London, and restricting intramural interments. Undoubtedly they had found many of these measures left by their predecessors in an advanced state of preparation; but to have passed them all,[1] in the face of a captious Opposition who began by denying the right of the Government to do anything but dissolve forthwith, was a considerable achievement. No wonder that Lyndhurst took the opportunity of congratulating the Government at the close of the session, and that Derby pointed out in reply that it was to the firmness of the Government in resisting premature dissolution that this creditable harvest was due. It was due also to the tactful and judicious manner in which the new leader of the House of Commons had managed its business. Even Greville, who began, on second-hand reports, by abusing his leadership during the first fortnight, admitted his success at the close of the session. Though condemning him as 'a perfect will-o'-the-wisp' as regards his opinions, he added: 'He has given undoubted proofs of his great ability, and showed how neatly he could handle such a subject as finance, with which he never can have been at all familiar.' He exhibited conspicuously, among other things, one admirable quality which marked his leadership during each of his terms of office—a readiness to leave his colleagues to deal with their own departmental work in the House, and not to intervene himself *nisi dignus vindice nodus*.

His manner of speaking during this his first session as leader of the Government in the Commons is preserved for us in a lively, if somewhat unsympathetic, sketch of a

[1] The total was eighty-eight public Acts, and no single Bill or resolution was carried against the will of Ministers. See *Press*, July 22, 1854, article on '1852 and 1854.'

visit to the House which appeared in the *Leader* on September 25 of this year. The visitor has been told that 'Mr. Disraeli is up,' has heard cheers as he approached, and is eagerly looking forward to a feast of oratory.

The House of Commons is before you, and your sensations undergo an instantaneous collapse. Your eye takes in the scene; a full House, listening, too, but lazily and loungingly, the cheer you heard having been made up of an aggregate half-laugh, half-sneer. You see the orator, there at the top. His body is half thrown across the table, one hand resting behind him, flirting with a laced cambric, the other white hand tapping gently a red box. And he is making a great speech ? He is talking to Lord John, whose arms are crossed carelessly, whose thin lips are parted with an easy smile, and who seems to think the eloquence rather amusing. Mr. Disraeli has a most exquisite voice, and he is using only its gentlest modulations. He is quite colloquial, and his tone is friendly and familiar—especially when he comes to a bitter innuendo, when he turns his head to the country gentlemen, that they may hear it and laugh—a low, simmering chuckle, that just agitates the surface for a moment only, Lord John and the Whigs and the Radicals smiling, too, as though the sarcasm were a good-natured joke. Mr. Disraeli is getting near the end of his speech, and is now recapitulating and fastening all the points (not mathematical ones) together, as is his wont; and this is his argumentative style. He approaches the peroration—his forte; and here he raises his head, he throws back his collar, he puts by his cambric, he turns from Lord John, and faces the House. He speaks slower; he ceases his affected stammer; he is more serious and more solemn, but still quiet and unpretending. Talking now to the many, and not to one or two, he becomes more oratorical, and he fixes attention. What he is now saying is the manifesto of a party; not a syllable is lost. He is nearing a meaning, and his articulation is elaborate; and there is a dead silence. But he is still unexcited; dexterously and quietly he eludes the meaning—soars above it, in one or two involuted closing sentences, delivered with a louder voice and with more vehement gestures; and, having got the cheer at the right spot, this great orator, concluding, sinks into his seat, as nonchalant as though he had been answering a question about Fahrenheit, and immediately (Mackenzie having told him how the division will be) turns to ask Lord Henry Lennox whether Grisi was in good voice that night !

CHAPTER XII.

The December Budget.

1852.

Parliament was prorogued on July 1, and dissolved the same day. Derby told the Queen on the last day of the session that he thought he would gain forty seats, which would give him an absolute majority of the House of Commons—of course, not for the imposition of a duty on corn. Such a duty, he added, might now be considered 'as abandoned under any shape whatever, whether for Protection or revenue.'

That was the policy with which Derby entered upon the General Election. But in those days peers did not issue manifestoes, still less make speeches, to influence the return of members to the House of Commons. Consequently the electors were never told by the Prime Minister what he had said to his Sovereign and his colleagues; and they might still legitimately doubt whether he had become completely converted to the views of the leader of the House of Commons. Disraeli's speeches in the election were as unmistakable as his address. At Newport Pagnell, on July 14, he said that, while Protection was sound in principle, 'if the country has chosen to abrogate that system, and if the majority of the people of this country are of opinion that it would be unwise to recur to it, I say we must seek by other means, and in another direction, to place the cultivators of the soil in a fair and just position.' The burdens of local taxation must be readjusted, and there must be such a revision of the system of national taxation as to reduce the cost of production. Granted that the bread of the people must be cheap, care must be taken that the producer of that

bread should be able to produce it as cheaply as possible. On the hustings at Aylesbury two days later he said that he had been taunted with the usual question, 'Are you a Free Trader?' and that he was almost surprised that the big and little loaf had not appeared in the Liberal procession. But 'the time has gone by when these exploded politics could interest the people of this country. No one supposes that the present administration have any intention, or ever had any intention, to bring back the laws that were repealed in 1846.' The old members for the county, Du Pré, Disraeli, and the Whig Cavendish, were duly returned, the somewhat farcical opposition of a local Liberal, Dr. Lee, being easily disposed of.[1]

The official policy of the party involved the abandonment of Protection. But Derby had been brought into line too late to insure discipline among the rank and file, or even among Ministers themselves. Stanley, indeed, who was important, not only from his own abilities, but as the Prime Minister's son and heir, said at King's Lynn that Protection had been set at rest, and he was glad of it. But Herries and Manners, if not Walpole, Disraeli's Cabinet colleagues, Christopher, the Chancellor of the Duchy, and Fitzroy Kelly, the Solicitor-General, hinted that Protection might be again restored. Whig criticism suggested that Free Trade or Protectionist opinions were assumed by Conservative candidates solely in accordance with the proclivities of their constituencies; that in the counties they were Protectionists, and in the towns Free Traders. The contention of the Opposition was that by this profligate trifling with a great question the Government gained seats; but Disraeli, more reasonably, believed that, on the contrary, seats were lost owing to the uncertainty. He was convinced that, if his urgent advice had been taken earlier and Protection unquestionably abandoned by the whole party, the innate Conservatism of the country would have asserted itself, and the Government would have been accorded a fair trial. He, like Derby,

[1] The result of the poll was—Du Pré, 1,999. Disraeli, 1,968; Cavendish, 1,403, Lee, 665.

had been sanguine of a majority, not, of course, for Protection, but for a Conservative policy, which should give Ministers power to erect that barrier against revolution which Derby regarded as his mission. They were disappointed. The party had indeed some remarkable successes. None of their leading men were defeated, and their numbers were increased; but, all told, they did not exceed about 310 in a House of over 650. The numbers of the other parties may be put roughly at about 270 Whigs and Liberals, 35 or 40 Peelites, and 35 or 40 Irish Roman Catholic brigade.. As a large but uncertain proportion of the Conservatives had definitely abandoned Protection, there was a majority of probably three to one in favour of Free Trade; but the Peelites, though their old leader's policy prevailed, were much weaker in the new Parliament than in the old. After the election of 1847 they were reckoned at nearly 100; but Disraeli's policy of readjustment of local and imperial burdens had rallied many of the rank and file to Derby's banner before the close of the Parliament, and after 1852 they were never counted as more than 40. They were weakened, too, by the defeat of Cardwell at Liverpool, Sir George Clerk at Dover, and Lord Mahon, the historian, at Hertford. George Smythe, too, lost his seat, but, Protection being abandoned, returned to his political allegiance to Disraeli. Important Liberals like Sir George Grey, Cornewall Lewis and Horsman, were also beaten; but Macaulay came back, after some years' absence, triumphantly for Edinburgh, and Lowe entered the House as member for Kidderminster. Lytton reappeared in Parliament as a Conservative, and the Tory party had a still more powerful reinforcement in the new member for Belfast, Hugh MacCalmont Cairns, afterwards Disraeli's Lord Chancellor. Another new member, who did not sit long in the 1852 Parliament, as his election was declared void for bribery, and whose subsequent appearances at Westminster were fitful, was Sir William Fraser,[1] a great hero-worshipper

[1] 1826-1898. M.P., Barnstaple, 1852-1853 and 1857-1859; Ludlow, 1863-1865; and Kidderminster, 1874-1880—about ten years out of twenty-eight.

and collector of *ana*, chiefly about Wellington and Napoleon III. and Disraeli, the author of *Disraeli and his Day*, which enshrines, if it sometimes mangles, many of the best stories about its hero.

The successes of the Government had been sufficient to give them a fair chance of remaining in office, if only they could attract a little outside support. Palmerston, the most conspicuous personage in the House of Commons, with the possible exceptions of Russell and Disraeli, stood in rather an isolated position. He had quarrelled with the official Whigs, and had resolved, after the events of the last winter, never to serve under Russell again. He had rested his refusal to join Derby in February solely on the ground that Protection could not be left an open question, and had treated the Government throughout the session in a benevolent manner. Now that Protection had been definitely repudiated, it was to Palmerston that the thoughts of Ministers, anxious, as were Disraeli and Stanley, to broaden the basis of the Government, naturally turned. 'I quite agree,' wrote Stanley on July 19, 'that the ship requires fine steering; but she requires something else as well: an accession to the strength of the crew. There is an old helmsman who would be very useful in taking an occasional spell at the wheel.' He added: 'Lady P. has been going about remarking to everybody that no pledge had been given at Tiverton,[1] and that he was free to act as he pleased.' Derby was ready for a negotiation of the kind, but, wrote Stanley, 'did not express himself very warmly about it.' It was, of course, out of the question to suggest giving Palmerston the Foreign Office, to which he himself had, indeed, no wish to return. He was supposed to prefer the Home Office, and Walpole was ready, he said, 'to do anything to promote the success of the affair.' It was suggested that the Speaker might be willing to retire and take his peerage, and that Walpole might fill his chair. On Palmerston's side there was, apparently, a disposition at least to listen.

[1] Palmerston's constituency.

From Samuel Phillips.

July 24, 1852.—. . . To-day I passed an hour with [Lord Palmerston]. . . . Your name, amongst others, was mentioned, and it was gratifying to note the respect with which Lord Palmerston adverted to his acquaintance with you. He told me how frequently he had been charged with not dealing with you as an inveterate foe . . . and how much he had been gratified with your conduct when you waited upon him in the matter of ——. I told Lord Palmerston that Mr. Macaulay had informed me not a week ago that he believed Mr. Disraeli would be delighted to act with the Foreign Secretary whom Lord John had discarded, and Lord Palmerston did not in any way indicate that he would be otherwise than delighted to act with Mr. Disraeli. . . .

Nothing, however, happened. No direct overtures were made at this moment; and to indirect overtures Palmerston only answered that he was content with his position. There was much to be said for waiting till the reassembling of Parliament, when the disposition of the various parties would be more defined.

To Lord Derby.

Private. HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 5, 1852.—. . . Stanley, who is here still, harps upon reconstruction.

I look upon Parliamentary reconstruction as out of the question; but you have great external cards at your command —greater than any Minister ever yet had. Would Newcastle take India, and Canning Canada? You have also other things, if required. The Governor-Generalship of Australia—now a great post; Van Diemen's Land and Trinidad, both due or vacant.

After his letters to Talbot, the D. of Buccleuch would be the natural mediator, and his interference would not be displeasing to those with whom you are negotiating. It would save you the annoyance of a personal application and its possibly mortifying results.

If successful, you would have a working majority of fifty; if it fail, provided the communication be carried on by the machinery I indicate, it would do us [no] harm.

If you act on this suggestion, I humbly advise that you should see the D. of Buccleuch yourself, and not write.

Mem. also that, irrespective of consolidating the Government, we are really terribly deficient in eminent administrators, and our party would be alike cheapened by continuing the present men or providing them with inefficient successors.

I hope you will be able to collect these hurried, but not hasty, hints.

The understanding on which the Peelites had supported the Government during the session, and on which the Liberals had eventually consented to allow necessary legislation to pass, was that the new Parliament should be called together before the end of the year; and that the Government should then produce at once their fiscal proposals, which were held in abeyance over the General Election. Disraeli, accordingly, as soon as his electoral campaign was finished, busied himself with preparations for his forthcoming Budget, during such time as could be spared from the general affairs of the Ministry. His autumn correspondence gives us evidences of his activity and of the trend of his thoughts. The most interesting, in many ways, of these letters were written to Lord Henry Lennox, a younger son of the Duke of Richmond, who had become member for Chichester in 1846, and continued to represent it for forty years. He was a bright and intelligent, but not highly educated, young man of fashion, who took a keen interest in politics. Disraeli was obviously much attracted by him, as he was wont to be attracted by a combination of youth, birth, smartness, and intelligence, and had put him in his own office as a Lord of the Treasury. It is clear from the correspondence that he imparted to him many confidences both as to his own political aspirations and as to the policy of the Government, and encouraged him to gird at Tory mediocrities whom he himself never suffered gladly. Henry Lennox, who had some of the Puckish qualities of George Smythe, talks, in his letters to his chief, of 'Walpole! the dear, the gentle Spencer!', of 'Packy' as a 'cautious prig,' of Granby's 'incredible folly,' 'dogged obstinacy,' and 'pertinacious dunderheadism'; and even, in reference to a negotiation pending with the Vatican, of 'that dirty Pope.' This exuberance, which may have recalled memories of the *Letters of Runnymede*, far from shocking Disraeli, amused him, and he replied with great affection, and with little or no reproof.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *July* 18, 1852.

MY DEAR HENRY,—Assuming, which I think I may venture to do, that the poll to-morrow will be all right, I shall come up to town in the evening. The Cabinet, which I told the Captain to call on Tuesday, will be a sufficient excuse for not being present on the second day, and missing also the declaration, chairing, etc.

The Times sent down their best reporters on Friday, and conveyed my ideas, and almost my very expressions, to the world, instead of that incoherent rhodomontade which their provincial ally perpetrated at Newport.

Did you mark the leader in *The Times* yesterday on my Aylesbury speech? I thought it very significant. I have myself little doubt that, if I had been permitted to take the bold lead at once, and not have been forced back from the Budget position, *The Times* would never have deserted us, would have written us up, and that our returns would have been several seats better.

We framed an Opposition on Protection and Protestantism. When you commence your studies, and read *Coningsby*, which I will give you in a single volume, you will see how I have treated those exclusive and limited principles, clearly unfitted for a great and expanding country, of various elements, like this of ours. G. Bentinck would not stand Protestantism, and was cashiered in consequence, I believe, entirely by the influence of that master-mind, your friend, the Secretary at War. Notwithstanding all I said and did, they stuck to Protection till the country positively spat upon it. I tore away this millstone, but yielded reluctantly to the belief that the brother burthen, by a fortunate combination of circumstances, was to turn up trumps for us. It seems to me to have done us more harm than the South Sea house-bubble, for that was too absurd to achieve anything real—even mischief.

Utterly disregard what B[eresford] says about your Gladstone vote.[1] I am very glad you gave it. He is the only one of the Peelites between whom and myself there was some inkling of sympathy.[2] As for the rest, they may thank the *Morning Chronicle*, in a great measure, for their discomfiture,

[1] Lennox must have voted for Gladstone in his contest at Oxford University, when he was opposed by Dr. Bullock Marsham, the Warden of Merton.

[2] Gladstone, in his private correspondence about this time, was writing very differently of Disraeli. To Aberdeen, on Aug. 5, he was severe upon the 'unscrupulousness and second motives of Mr. Disraeli, at once the necessity of Lord Derby and his curse' (Morley's *Gladstone*, Bk. III., ch. 8).

which was, I believe, not under his influence, but rather under the judicious inspiration of Newcastle and Herbert. . . .

The nomination was a success. It was not in the Court, which you remember, but in the County Hall, three times at least the size, and seemed full of a turbulent and hostile audience: but I got them as still as the H. of C., and finally obtained almost an universal show of hands.

I am glad you are dull in my absence. I also feel lonely. . . .

Lennox reported from London, on August 6, a rumour, originating in the Peelite camp, that 'you intend to be so liberal as to break up the Conservative Government, and be received yourself into the bosom of the Progressive party.'

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Aug.* 7, 1852.—It was very kind of you to write to me, and most delightful to me to hear from you. Continual waterspouts have almost prevented me from leaving the house for five minutes, so I have worked very hard: indeed, have almost devoured all the papers I brought down for the autumnal gorge, and have greatly advanced many things. Work absorbs, or should absorb, one; nevertheless, I think very often of my young companion, and miss him sadly, for his presence to me is always a charm, and often a consolation.

The Speaker gives us a working majority of twenty, which will be increased, he adds, if there be anything approaching faction. As for what the Peelites intend to do, we must find out who the Peelites are: and as for what any men will do, three or four or six months hence, he is a bold one who, in this rapid age, will prophesy.

Many may be dead, who are now stumbling-blocks. By the bye, Dolly Vane ought to manage Durham, *vice* Granger, without much difficulty.[1]

As for myself, I consider that I am already 'in the bosom of the Progressive party.'

What you have done about the Press is very good. On this subject, always go directly to Stanley, who is master of it, and also knows every turn of my mind anent. You, my beloved, are a little fresh in supposing that your Phœnix[2] could

[1] T. C. Granger (Liberal), who had been elected at the head of the poll for Durham in July, died suddenly immediately afterwards, and Lord Adolphus Vane (Conservative) was returned at a by-election in December, but unseated on petition.

[2] Lennox had written: 'I have found a very clever fellow, who writes very well.'

choose his journal, and that the *Daily News*, incontinently, would permit him to uphold the great captain, and your graceless correspondent. . . .

To Lord Malmesbury.

HUGHENDEN, *Aug.* 13, 1852.—I return you Lord Cowley's confidential despatch. I am not disposed to reduce our duties on French brandies to obtain a reduction of their duties on our coals. We had better leave our mutual tariffs as they stand, unless the French are willing to treat these matters on a much more extensive scale. If they would reduce their duties on linen yarn, cottons, or iron, I should recommend our meeting them with reductions on their brandies and silks. The latter would be a great card for France. We ought now to be for as complete Free Trade as we can obtain, and let the English farmer, and the English landlord, too, buy the best and the cheapest silks for their wives and daughters.

In case anything is to be done in this respect, it should be done with as little knowledge of the Board of Trade as practicable. That office is filled with our enemies. Lord Cowley, therefore, should conduct the business entirely; or we should send some confidential and circumspect agent of our own.

It is useless now to vex ourselves about the Protectionist rock ahead. If this section exist, it can do nothing until the financial statement is made. Every expression of opinion on their side will be suspended until they have heard our financial measures. I confess I have no great fear of them, and I think they and their constituents will be satisfied.

This Fisheries affair is a bad business. Pakington's circular is not written with a thorough knowledge of the circumstances. He is out of his depth, more than three marine miles from shore.

These wretched Colonies will all be independent, too, in a few years, and are a millstone round our necks. If I were you, I would *push matters* with Fillmore, who has no interest to pander to the populace like Webster, and make an honourable and speedy settlement.[1]

The Fisheries dispute related to the encroachments of American fishermen upon Canadian and Newfoundland fishing-grounds—a question which has often disturbed Anglo-American relations. Pakington, by writing, shortly before a Presidential election, a perfectly justi-

[1] *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, under date.

fiable but imprudent despatch, had provoked Daniel Webster, the American Secretary of State, to the use of inflammatory language, and for a while the situation was critical. But Webster died in October, and Disraeli's advice to come to an arrangement with Fillmore, the outgoing President, was adopted with success. The petulant outburst about the 'wretched Colonies,' obviously inspired by the irritation of the moment, and scribbled in confidence to a Cabinet colleague, has sometimes been taken as an indication of Disraeli's real sentiments about the Empire. This superficial view is sufficiently disproved by the correspondence with Derby in the previous winter, in which Disraeli urged the advisability of Colonial representation in the British Parliament, as well as by all his speeches on Colonial affairs. He did, indeed, fear for a moment, as he confessed in 1872, that the Radical policy of encouraging the Colonies to set up for themselves might be successful; but his own efforts were throughout directed to strengthening the bonds of Empire.

To Lord Derby.

Private. HUGHENDEN, *Aug.* 13, 1852.—. . . The Duke of Bedford, I hear, has had 'satisfactory communications' with D. of Newcastle, and says that Graham has agreed to serve under Lord John. This I expected. The Duke says also, I am told, that the only one he can make nothing of is Gladstone. . . .

My Budget greatly expands, and, I hope, matures, and, if we only had a majority to carry it, should give you the Government of this country as long as you liked. . . .

I have been reading my commissariat despatches from the Cape. The prospect is very gloomy. I have no confidence in our new General,[1] because, I observe, he has already changed his system and recurred to the already unsuccessful method of Sir H. Smith. This war is a terrible running sore in our finances. All these Generals of ours are too old. . . .

The Junior Lord of the Treasury, kept in London in the middle of August to transact official business, grew dispirited under these troubles about public affairs in

[1] Sir George Cathcart, who succeeded Sir Harry Smith, brought the Kaffir War to a successful conclusion in March, 1853.

America and Africa, aggravated by the prospect of a very wet harvest. What about his chief's expected Budget? 'Do not suppose that my faith in you and in the great scheme is wavering! No such thing! I am only considering the numerous difficulties you will overcome.' He proceeds to report a rumour that 'the real Peelites' are going to acknowledge as leader one whom he calls, in his irresponsible way, 'that pompous, becoroneted fool, Newcastle.'

To Lord Henry Lennox.

[? *Aug.* 17, 1852.]—Excuse my frankness, but I do not wish, too hastily, to look upon our friendship as the last of my illusions.

I shall be in D[owning] S[treet] to-morrow by two o'clock. I apprehend that my morning will be very much engaged, but I hope we may dine together, alone, at the Coventry.

Politics when we meet: I will only say now that, having vanquished a Sir Robert Peel, I am not going to be upset by a D. of Newcastle.

Lennox got his leave towards the end of the month, and went to Scotland, taking *Coningsby* to read on the way. From the train he wrote an ecstatic letter: 'How true! how painfully true! a picture of human nature! and what language!' and added: 'It strikes me . . . that our position as a party is, or has been for the last six months, nearly identical with the Conservative party in 1834, as described in the fifth chapter of the second book.'[1]

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 1, 1852.—I cannot let another day close without thanking you for your letter, but I am so tired that I can only tell you that I love you.

I have had a great pressure of business this last week, and especially these last three or four days, and have sometimes had to work nine hours a day, till my hand and brain seemed both exhausted.

Write to me very often, and tell me how you are. I am amused about *Coningsby*, and am rather surprised that you never read it before.

[1] The chapter about the Tamworth manifesto of 1834; see pp. 687, 688.

Sir Robert Peel was so taken with it that he shut himself up a whole day in his dressing-room, and locked up the book when he went out, lest his family should get it. His son, the present Sir Robert Peel, told my wife this at the time. He wrote a letter to his sister, Mrs. Dawson, about it, which she showed me, and there he said what charmed him most were the descriptions.

Lord John Russell read *Coningsby* every evening to his wife, as she confessed to Madame Lionel de Rothschild, my informant. Madame R. asked what parts he liked best, expecting, of course, the political disquisitions, or Tadpole and Taper, at the least. Lady John said, 'The love scenes. Johnny was often moved to tears, she added, while reading them.

Don't mention all this, told me by a woman in strict confidence; but I think it rather amusing: the two great politicians reading a political novel, and only reading it because it was a political novel—and we, domestically and familiarly, learning that one admired most the descriptions, and the other the passages of tenderness and passion.

If you ever have inclination or power to read another book—for reading, I suspect, is not your forte—you must manage to read *Sybil*,[1] and especially *Tancred*. I suppose there is a circulating library even at Johnny Groats, and if there be one, you are sure to find both or one of these books there.

I am very troubled about the Chairmanship. W[ilson] Patten will not take it—for private reasons—tho' he will vote for our man. But what man? Some say Newdegate. I don't think he would take it, but I am sure the House would not take him. They would think it as bad as voting for a five-shilling fixed duty.

I have encouraging reports from Rome.

My letter has swollen.

The appointment of Chairman of Committees in the new Parliament greatly exercised Derby and Disraeli. About the Speakership there was no question, when once the idea of putting Walpole in the Chair, to make room for Palmerston, had been abandoned. Shaw-Lefevre had been Speaker in three Parliaments, and by his dignity, courtesy, and tact, had endeared himself to the House. He was, of course, a Whig, and, if he were adopted by the

[1] When Lennox read *Sybil*, he wrote (Oct. 26) to Disraeli: 'I do hope we shall carry out the delightfully liberal, unrestricted views advocated so ably in its pages.'

Conservatives, was sure of re-election without opposition. For the Chairmanship, as the Government were still in a minority, it was important to nominate a man who would be acceptable to opponents as well as to friends. Derby was very anxious to secure for the post an old friend, who had been his colleague for years in the representation of North Lancashire, who had acted rather with the Peelites than with the Protectionists, and who was equally respected in the County Palatine and in the House of Commons, John Wilson Patten, afterwards created, on Disraeli's advice, Lord Winmarleigh. For long Patten refused, to the despair of the leaders, who could not think of any other suitable candidate. 'It would be a terrible thing,' wrote Disraeli, 'to start with being in a minority in almost the first week of a new Parliament; it would be like a paralytic stroke in youth.' Finally Patten yielded to Derby's importunities.

To Lord John Russell.

Confidential. *Aug.* 31, 1852.

MY DEAR LORD,—A new Parliament and an inexperienced leader offer rather perilous prospects, and you will therefore not be surprised that I have done my best to mitigate these difficulties by requesting Mr. Lefevre to allow himself again to be put in nomination for the Chair.

I think it very desirable, under existing circumstances, that the political party with which Mr. Lefevre is in connection should be represented in the proceedings, and, while he is proposed by some gentleman of standing on the Ministerial side, the seconder of the motion should be a follower of your lordship.

This course may be unusual, but it is not, I believe, irregular; and I think it would add to the authority with which Mr. Lefevre would resume the duties he has fulfilled so well.

I think the seconder should be a member of moderate opinions—that is to say, of Whig opinions. This is due to Mr. Lefevre himself, and I hope, also, that you will agree with me that it is expedient in the conduct of the House generally that we should encourage as much as possible the ancient connections and names.

I hope you will not think me arrogant in making these suggestions, for I make them in unaffected deference to your judgment, to which I am always inclined to bow, and which

on several occasions has assisted me by its kind experience. Indeed, my powerful reason for thus troubling you is to beg you, if you do not disapprove of these views, to favor me by turning in your mind and fixing upon the person best qualified, in your opinion, to fulfil the office of seconder of the Speaker, and whom I would then address, mentioning that I did so with your approbation.

I hope Lady John is well, and all your hearth, and I beg you to believe me, with very sincere respect, your lordship's obliged and faithful servant, B. DISRAELI.

P.S.—Mr. Lefevre mentioned to me in confidence that Mr. Cayley had written to him offering to propose him, but Mr. Lefevre replied that the matter rested with the Government.

From Lord John Russell.

Private. THE GART, *Sept.* 3, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received your letter of the 31st, and hasten to answer it.

I agree with you that it is desirable to have the mover and seconder of the Speaker of different political parties, and I acted on this opinion long ago, when I proposed to Lord Castlereagh to second the nomination of Mr. Manners Sutton.

The persons who occur to me as the most fit for seconders are Lord R. Grosvenor and Mr. Pendarves. Of these two I should prefer Lord Robert, as I believe Mr. Pendarves moved or seconded once before. But you may have reasons against both of which I am ignorant. In that case I will think of some others.

When you can make public your intentions respecting a successor to Mr. Bernal,[1] I shall be glad to know them. But I do not ask to be informed before you are in a condition to let your view be generally known.

Many thanks for your inquiries for Lady John. She is much the better for the Highland air, and all my family thrive upon it. I beg my compliments to Mrs. Disraeli, and remain, yours faithfully, J. RUSSELL.

To Lord John Russell.

DOWNING STREET, *Oct.* 9, 1852.

MY DEAR LORD,—I have written to Lord Robert Grosvenor, as I thought the selection most happy, so much so, indeed, that I have somewhat reconstructed my own arrangements to secure his co-operation. I had originally intended to have asked Lord Hotham to have proposed Mr. Lefevre, but it

[1] Chairman of Committees in the last Parliament.

occurred to me that two lords might be held a little too fine, and I have therefore modified the scheme by infusing a little democracy into the proceedings (to please you), but in the Conservative shape of Sir John Yarde Buller.[1]

We shall recommend Mr. Wilson Patten for the Chairmanship. I should be happy if this proposition were to pass off as tranquilly as that of Mr. Lefevre. Unless the circumstances are very urgent, the choice of one to preside over our discussions is hardly, I think, the happiest conjuncture for a party struggle.

We shall have plenty of opportunities for crossing our swords without seeking our battle of Edge Hill in the Chairmanship of Ways and Means. But I feel it is presumption in me to say as much as this.

I beg my compliments to Lady John, and I remain, yours very faithfully, B. DISRAELI.

From Lord John Russell.

DOUGLAS'S HOTEL, EDINBURGH, *Oct.* 12, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—I think you are fortunate in having obtained the consent of Mr. Wilson Patten to serve in the Chair of the Ways and Means Committee. I cannot say there will be no contest, but I shall do nothing to encourage it, and shall be disposed to wait patiently till your real colours are hoisted. If it is the broad banner of Free Trade, I shall rejoice to see your standard.—I remain, yours faithfully, J. RUSSELL.

That broad banner it was certainly Disraeli's intention to hoist. The mere prospect of his financial measures, on a Free Trade basis, excited his young aristocratic disciple to quite a lyrical outburst:

From Lord Henry Lennox.

GORDON CASTLE, *Saturday, Sept.* 11.—. . . I wonder if I am wrong, but I really feel as if your Budget would create a *furore*. Your career will be like William Pitt's; you will conciliate the Court, you will become the first Englishman of your time, and will make England the first country in the world. You will efface party distinctions by the introduction of a colossal measure of financial reform, as he did by the victories of our troops; and you will, like him, cajole the old Tory squires and make them give a hearty assent to all that they have passed their life in opposing. At least, such is my hope and *belief*. . . .

[1] It was Robert Palmer, M.P. for Berks, who eventually proposed Shaw-Lefevre; Lord Robert Grosvenor, as arranged, was the seconder.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 16, 1852.—Your letter was most agreeable, interesting, and, I need not add, most welcome.

I think your life a very wise one.

Although I have never slaughtered the antlered monarchs, I have endeavoured to describe them in some verses which I wrote for Mr. Scrope,[1] and which he printed in his *Deer-Stalking*—a capital work, and the happiest effusion of the gentleman *littérateur* which we have had this century.

The author was the most accomplished gentleman I ever knew, quite conscious that his fathers lived in the days of the Plantagenets, yet easy and polished. He was as great with the salmon as with the stag, having written, like a master, on both sports. He had a very happy pen, was a poet, a very fine scholar and linguist, and, as an amateur artist, superior, I think, to his friend and rival, Sir George Beaumont. He had also that rarest of talents—he could talk well. Add to this a very handsome person and ten thousand a year—so I think he drew a prize in the great lottery of life.

I am in mourning for him now, and wear my weeds sincerely, notwithstanding he left my wife, his kinswoman, a legacy, and me a picture, which I shall hang up in my dining-room at D.S., where I hope it may long remain.

The greater death, which all are talking and thinking of, has brought us a shoal of patronage; but I question whether its tendency, otherwise, is to strengthen the Government. The Duke was very warmly with us of late, and still exercised a beneficial influence for those he wished to serve.

Stanley is staying here, off and on. I have not seen him since the death, but now expect him.

Adieu, my dear Henry, and write to me whenever you can and like: even a line is pleasant from those we love.

The greater death, that of the Duke of Wellington, took place at Walmer Castle on September 14. Serious as the loss was to the party of order, Disraeli, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, took comfort—as it turned out, prematurely—in one reflection. He wrote to his Parliamentary Secretary of the Treasury: 'The death of the Duke ought to be the removal of an obstacle to military economy. Keep your eye awake to all this. Lord Hardinge [the Duke's successor as Commander-in-Chief], I fear, is very prone to expenditure. He must be met sternly.'

[1] See p. 454.

Two months later[1] it fell to Disraeli's lot to deliver a panegyric on the Duke in the House of Commons. The task had rather weighed upon him. He had written to his wife that he was 'a little disturbed by the Duke of Wellington, all the world expecting a great speech from me, and I at least resolved that I will make one without the word "duty" appearing.' The speech was very 'eloquent,' as Russell, who followed him and said he did not want to add a single word, called it; but it was rather laboured, and it has become notorious as containing perhaps the most striking of the many acts of plagiarism charged against Disraeli. It is often referred to as if the whole speech was borrowed; in actual fact, the passage in question is less than a quarter of the whole. He was describing the qualities necessary to a great general, and he did so with ideas, and to a large extent in words, taken from an old article by Thiers on Marshal Gouvion de St. Cyr in a French review. The article was published in 1829, and had been reproduced in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1848. The discovery of the plagiarism was made by the *Globe*, Palmerston's organ, which printed speech and article in parallel columns. Thereupon, to quote *The Times* of a few days later, 'a shout of "Stop thief!" was raised, and a whole pack of jealous *littérateurs* were immediately on the scent of their offending, and perhaps too successful, brother.' Not all of his brethren of the pen took this ungenerous attitude. George Smythe, who had written the article in the *Morning Chronicle*, explained that Disraeli had himself called his attention to the passage from Thiers many years before, so that, instead of Disraeli being indebted to the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Chronicle* was indebted to Disraeli. Monckton Milnes offered his services in a friendly way to put the matter straight:

From Richard Monckton Milnes.

16, Upper Brook Street, *Saturday* [*Nov.* 20, 1852].—Though politically opposed, we are literary *collaborateurs*. If

[1] Nov. 15.

you think it worth while to let me know anything of the circumstances of the passages from Thiers that made part of your speech on the Duke, which you would like me to state, authoritatively or unauthoritatively, in the society in which I live, I shall be glad to do so, as a plain matter of justice.

To Richard Monckton Milnes.

At Dinner. GROSVENOR GATE, *Nov.* 20, 1852.—Your note is like yourself; I really think you have the best disposition in the world.

The facts are these: A good many years ago—perhaps (I shudder to say it) a quarter of a century—I read the passage in question (*not passages*) in a defunct French journal, a sort of Gallic *Quarterly Review—Revue Trimestre,* I think—set up, I fancy, by the Broglie clique.

The way I knew it was that it had contained a review (and a review in French !) of *Vivian Grey,* which, of course, I thought was the finest thing in the world. It began: 'La carrière du roman politique est ouverte en Angleterre,' etc. I could repeat it now, after five-and-twenty years.

I never had heard then of M. Thiers, nor had anyone else. We were both of us then equally obscure.

The passage in question seized upon me, as passages in Mr. Burke, for example, which I have not read for a long time. It was engraven on my memory, though, of late years, I don't particularly remember to have recalled either its sentiments or its language.

Association of ideas brought it back when musing for a moment, amid the hurry and strife of affairs, over a late solemn occasion, and I summoned it from the caverns of my mind. Unfortunately, the spirit was too faithful.

Conceive my astonishment—I ought to say my horror—when I read the article in the *Globe.* Instead of cribbing it from the *Morning Chronicle,* the very fact of my having seen it in that journal would, of course, have prevented my using it.

Literary men may comprehend these psychological curiosities: the world never can. I appreciate your friendship, but I must submit to my fate. I am a Plagiary, but I must bear the mortification with temper, and not, at least, be Sir Fretful.

Milnes, or Disraeli himself, must have communicated this explanation to Delane, as *The Times* embodied it in a leading article on the following Monday, and treated the whole matter as trivial, save only as illustrating the absurd jealousy of literary men. 'Why are authors to

drag down every one of their fraternity who may happen to become a Minister of State ? . . . Authors will never have their proper consideration, in the face of dukes, millionaires, squires, and prize cattle, till they are loyal to their own body.' One of the most popular authors of the day, Bulwer Lytton, rallied promptly to his friend, and even sketched out a speech by which Disraeli should defend himself if he were challenged in the House of Commons ! A 'dull friend in such cases,' he wrote in a hurried note, 'is often more suggestive than one's own bothered personalities.' No such direct reference was made in the House as compelled Disraeli to defend himself; but the curious will find in the Appendix[1] the passage from the speech, the passage from the French review, and Lytton's ingenious explanation. Most people will be content with Disraeli's own confession and avoidance in his letter to Milnes, and will think that, like greater literary men who have been hardened plagiarists, he improved what he borrowed. His reputation, however, suffered at the time, and the innumerable jokes in *Punch* and elsewhere did him and his colleagues no good.

As appeared from the letter[2] to Malmesbury on August 13, Disraeli cherished the hope of signalising his Budget by a comprehensive commercial treaty with France. Such a scheme would carry out his leading ideas both in foreign policy and in finance. British foreign policy, he maintained, should be founded on a thorough understanding with France; foreign trade should rest on commercial treaties concluded on a reciprocal basis. Thanks to Louis Napoleon's friendship for Malmesbury and Malmesbury's tactful management, good relations were now established with France, in spite of the unmeasured licence which the British Press permitted itself to use about the author of the *coup d'état*, and in spite of the alarm felt in many quarters in England owing to the impending revival of the Napoleonic Empire. Those relations would be strengthened and rendered

[1] Appendix C, p. 1394.

[2] See above, p. 1201.

permanent, and the trade of both countries would materially benefit, if the tariffs of the two countries were, by agreement, revised in each other's favour; but Disraeli insisted that the revision must be general, and not limited to one article, such as coal.

To Lord Derby.

D.S., *Oct.* 6, 1852.—I have just received a despatch from Lord Cowley, dated yesterday (5th Oct.), in reply to mine of a few days back, written at the request of Lord Malmesbury, in which Lord Cowley strongly expresses the willingness of the French Government to enter into a treaty of commerce on the broader basis, which I had indicated.

M. D[rouyn] de Lhuys was to leave Paris the 4th to join the President, and will not be back before the 12th; but he means to talk the whole question over with the President, who, he assures Ld. Cowley, is most anxious to improve the commercial relations of France with Gt. Britain. Ld. C. is to see him directly on his return, and will then write to me again.

The French Minister wishes that we should have a list prepared of the articles on which we are anxious to see the duties reduced.

Ld. Cowley adds that he gave him at once to understand, as I had desired, that the linen yarns of Ireland and other manufactures of that country would be an indispensable point with H.M. Government.

If we can manage all this, it will be a dainty dish for the meeting of Parliament. I could easily modify my scheme to catch this breeze. . . .

For awhile the negotiations proceeded favourably, and Disraeli arranged to send Sir Thomas Fremantle,[1] the Chairman of the Board of Customs, to Paris to advise Cowley. But the Board of Trade pointed out early in November that any reduction of duty conceded to France could be immediately claimed by Portugal, Spain, and Sicily; while any concession to any one of the three last could be claimed by either of the other two, but not by France. This and other difficulties it was not found possible to adjust in the short time available before the Budget, which could not be postponed beyond the be-

[1] Afterwards 1st Lord Cottesloe.

ginning of December. Disraeli had the political imagination to conceive, but not the time to mature, or the political forces to carry into effect, a great scheme of the kind. It was left to Cobden and Gladstone, eight years later, to win the credit of negotiating and conducting through Parliament a commercial treaty with France.

Besides French commercial negotiations, the Kaffir war, and the Fisheries dispute, other imperial and foreign questions which occupied Disraeli's mind during the autumn were the Burmese War and our relations with the Vatican. The Burmese War had been undertaken by Lord Dalhousie after a long series of grave complaints against the treatment meted out by the King of Ava to British subjects. Rangoon had been taken after obstinate resistance, and the question arose as to the extent to which hostilities should be carried and territory annexed.

To Lord Derby.

[*Aug.* 31, 1852.]—I write you hurriedly, but on a subject on which I have long and deeply reflected. Although I attach no authority to the statement, I see by the mail just arrived that we are to march to Ava. I cannot forget that Herries wrote to me that the mail of the 8th Sept. ought to carry out definite instructions on this subject. I hope, therefore, that you will not think these lines intrusive, for, irrespective of its being my duty humbly to offer you any suggestions which may occur on subjects of general policy, I cannot help feeling that the question at issue is one which particularly concerns my department.

I know there are authorities who maintain that Oriental States will never observe treaties by which they have lost territory, and that if the work be not done thoroughly it will have to be done again. There may be, and is, much truth in this general principle, and yet it may be a dangerous one to act upon.

Russia does not act upon this principle with regard to Persia; there in all her wars she is successful, yet she conquers in detail. She has pursued the same policy in other instances.

Remember Afghanistan; these general principles were very rife at the beginning of that war. I remember Sir James Hogg, a mere Calcutta lawyer, whose knowledge of Indian politics (now not inconsiderable) has been subsequently

gained [in Leadenhall Street], boastfully exclaimed at the time that the Hindoo Coosh was the natural boundary of our Empire. Yet what a rash and ignorant dogma! And what disasters followed its adoption!

I am not satisfied that, if we try to do it 'thoroughly,' we shall succeed. We may take Ava as we took Caubul, and yet not retain it.

The mere appropriation of Pegu consolidates our territory, and enables us to pursue subsequent enterprises if necessary —and they may not be necessary for a quarter of a century— with comparative economy and ease. Admitting even that we shall hereafter have to commence a third Burmese war, I maintain that it is a preferable risk to the prosecution of the present one on a scale of general conquest.

But the ground on which I object to this project of complete conquest is a ground of finance.

The state of Indian finance already occasions me great disquietude. The Indian revenue has already a deficit of one million and a half sterling. A prolonged war must increase it. We cannot distinguish Indian from English finance ultimately: we cannot permit the Indian Government to be bankrupt. I need not point out the inevitable consequences on our Exchequer. . . .

The D. of W. is for complete conquest, but His Grace is not sufficiently impressed with the great fact that finance is now the most important element of our Indian Empire.

Disraeli's letter did not reach Derby till after the Prime Minister had sanctioned the despatch prepared by Herries, the President of the Board of Control, and by the Secret Committee, authorising further offensive operations. These, however, were not carried out on the scale which Disraeli deprecated, and no attempt was made to march to Ava, as Dalhousie, the Governor-General, in spite of exhortations to a forward policy from home, contented himself with capturing and holding Prome and Pegu, and annexing to the British Empire merely the Lower Province. Thus Disraeli's policy was in effect adopted, and his prediction that subsequent operations might not be found necessary for a quarter of a century was more than fulfilled. The next Burmese war, which resulted in the conquest of Upper Burma, did not break out till 1885.

Lennox, in one of his autumn letters, told Disraeli that there was a report in the Carlton that Sir Henry Bulwer was at Rome 'to try and make terms with the Pope about Bulls and about Ireland.' Rumour was not far out in this case. In spite of his jeers at Minto's mission in 1847, Disraeli found, in office, that good relations with the Vatican were desirable, especially for the Government of Ireland. The Conservative party had beaten the Protestant drum in the elections even louder than Russell and the Whigs, and were regarded in Rome as the uncompromising enemies of the Roman Catholics. Disraeli had never been easy in this situation, and, with Malmesbury's assent, asked Sir Henry Bulwer, then Minister at Florence, to go to Rome, and see what he could effect with the Pope. Bulwer, who, besides being an old friend, was very grateful to Disraeli for defending him when he was Minister in Madrid in 1848, threw himself willingly into the scheme. He did not, perhaps, achieve much; but at least he succeeded in altering the disposition of the Roman Government towards Disraeli and his colleagues from hostile suspicion to friendliness. Further, he received assurances that the Pope and Cardinal Antonelli, his Minister, strongly disapproved of violent language and political agitation in the Irish clergy, and would willingly restrain the extreme party in Ireland, were they not afraid of turning its violence against themselves. Under a Government like that of England, 'which permits everything to be said, and almost everything to be done,' they could expect little support in any efforts they might make beyond the strictest line of prudence.

To Sir Henry Bulwer.

[*Latter half of September*, 1852.]—Affairs in general are proceeding here favorably: the Government is daily strengthening, and the dangers to it which are spoken of are only on the surface, and are, in fact, already dissipated, though the common mind, as usual, does not recognise accomplished results.

I wish I could speak as easily of the embarrassments in embryo, and which relate to the country in which you now reside.

It is impossible to conceal from myself that the religious feeling of England is in a state which may lead to vast and fatal consequences—at least, in the estimation of those who desired a mild and enlightened administration of affairs.

The extreme indiscretions of the High Church party in England and the violence of the Roman Catholic priesthood in Ireland have combined to operate a strange and, even five years ago, inconceivable revolution in the public mind here, and it is just as well that you should be aware of this fact.

As regards our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, this is not the England which you knew when you were in the House of Commons, nor is it the England, even, of the last years of Sir Robert Peel's Government.

Everything is really different from what it appears on the surface. Instead of the continuance of Lord Derby's Government being a circumstance hostile to the rights and privileges of our Roman Catholic population, the existence of that Government is at this moment the only cause which prevents an eruption of feeling against Roman Catholicism, such as this century at least has not witnessed.

You know what have ever been my views on this subject. They are such as every wise statesman would wish to be permitted to cherish.

When our Government was formed, I myself insisted on the nomination of Lord Naas, who, though a Protestant nobleman, was the representative of a Roman Catholic constituency—the county of Kildare—and who is a supporter of the endowment of Maynooth, to the office of Irish Secretary instead of a gentleman otherwise highly qualified for it, but of extreme Protestant opinions. I carried this appointment of Lord Naas with great difficulty, and as a necessary foundation for the system which I intended to pursue. I am informed it was very agreeable to the Roman Catholic leaders in the House of Commons, especially Mr. Keogh and Mr. Moore. Yet the moment it was made and Lord Naas vacated his seat on his acceptance of office in March last, the Roman Catholic priesthood rose against him in mass and expelled him from the county. The consequence of this has been that the policy I upheld in the Cabinet naturally received a blow from which it has never recovered. Hence all the hesitation and unsatisfactory discussions about Maynooth which took place in the last months of the Parliament, and many other disagreeable circumstances too obvious to require notice.

All our arguments in favor of a mild and friendly system,

which had made a due impression in the quarters to which they were addressed, were answered in a manner which seemed to prove their utter fallaciousness, and I now more than fear that, if some favourable change does not occur, no Cabinet will be permitted to govern England for any length of time which does not adopt repression of the Roman Catholic system as the basis of its policy.

It will be strange if for the mild wisdom of a Conservative Cabinet is substituted in this country a *soi-disant* Protestant Government sympathising with the Republicans of Rome; yet, believe me, stranger things have happened.

Even your friendly visit to the Eternal City is looked upon with a very evil eye, and the accounts of your proceedings which appear in the journals, though often exaggerated, and sometimes incorrect, have done no inconsiderable mischief.

The death of the Duke will probably occasion Parliament to be called together a week earlier than was contemplated.

Disraeli did not permit the ingratitude with which his efforts to introduce a conciliatory policy for Ireland were met to divert his course. We know from *Lord George Bentinck* and other sources how deeply he was impressed by the Report of the Devon Commission. He was anxious to carry out its recommendations, and he encouraged the Irish Law Officers, Napier and Whiteside, to prepare Bills which should constitute a complete code for Irish land. When Parliament met, the Queen's Speech announced 'a liberal and generous policy,' and Napier introduced four Bills: to give limited owners power to make improvements and charge them upon the inheritance; to extend the leasing powers of Irish proprietors; to permit limited owners to enter into contracts with tenants; and to give compensation to tenants for improvements, and retrospective compensation. It was not easy to secure the consent of Irish proprietors or of a Conservative Cabinet to these measures; but the principal opposition came from Sharman Crawford's new Tenant-Right party, who considered they did not go far enough, and introduced a Bill of their own. Disraeli hoped he had pacified them by arranging, at the cost of some internal friction in the Government, to send the Tenant Right Bill, along with Napier's Bills, to a Select Committee. The Tenant Right

party, however, irritated perhaps by Derby's strong opposition to the principle of their measure, and also by the proposal to extend the Income Tax to Ireland, assisted in ejecting the Government from office; but they did not thereby avoid the Income Tax, nor did they receive from the succeeding Government even that compensation for improvements which Napier's code provided for. Disraeli maintained in the debates of 1870, that, had the Bills of 1852 been accepted and passed into law, there would have been no need for Gladstone's heroic legislation.

Disraeli, as became a man of letters, was very sensible of the duties of Government to literature, science, and the arts, and in his brief first term of office he took a keen interest in the Prince Consort's scheme for a great scientific and artistic institution at South Kensington. Derby wrote on May 31: 'I have been to-day for above an hour with the Prince, who wants us to take off his hands . . . about 21 acres of land which he has bought with the surplus money of the Commission [for the Exhibition of 1851], and which if we will purchase for a National Gallery, he will be able to buy largely in addition to complete a great scheme for collecting together various scientific establishments.' He sent Disraeli a draft plan of the South Kensington Buildings then suggested by the Prince.

To Lord Derby.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Friday morning* [*June* 4].—I return you the draft report. The plan is worthy of Caliph Vathek. All we want is an architect, or architects, worthy of the vast occasion.

Were the case well put forward, I should not despair of kindling some enthusiasm in the House of Commons and carrying a good vote. The prestige of the Prince's taste and success would greatly aid us; the only difficulty is the prevalent feeling that no public edifice can be raised in this country which is not a failure, or a job, or both. Let us hope, however, that we have arrived at the end of such mortifications, and that the contemplated creation will redeem and sustain the taste and genius of the country. . . .

Disraeli wrote under the influence of the feelings provoked by the new Houses of Parliament recently opened. We are now accustomed to this pile, and dwell rather on its more admirable parts, such as the two fine towers; but the contemporary opinion was mainly one of condemnation, and Disraeli had even jestingly said, in a discussion in the House of Commons on Barry's building, that the low standard of architecture in this country was due to the fact that no architect had ever been shot, like Admiral Byng, *pour encourager les autres*. The Prince's plan was to establish the National Gallery on that part of the South Kensington site which faces Hyde Park, and, after several interviews with him, Disraeli consented to afford help from the Treasury. In December Disraeli moved and obtained a vote of the House of Commons of £150,000 towards the purchase of land at Kensington Gore; but the Ministry went out, and the Bill for removing the National Gallery to the new site was defeated on its introduction in 1856. Disraeli's action procured him an invitation, after the fall of the Ministry, to join the Commissioners of the Exhibition of 1851:

From the Prince Albert.

WINDSOR CASTLE, *Jan.* 22, 1853.

MY DEAR MR. DISRAELI,—Considering the part which you took in obtaining from the House of Commons the grant founded upon the Report of the Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851, the pledges which you gave to the House in your speech, and the warm interest with which you took up the plan for bringing arts and sciences more directly to bear upon our productive industry, I thought it of great importance that you should join our Commission as one of its members. The object of this letter is to ask you whether you would allow me to propose your name for election at our next meeting, on Tuesday next. I have ascertained the concurrence in my views of some of the most important members of our body, and cannot doubt, therefore, of its assent.

Should you be willing to accept my proposal and to trust so far to my preliminary assurance as to call at the Commission Room at the Palace of Westminster at ½ before 12 on Tuesday, I feel sure that your presence would be very useful, as

we are going to discuss the position of the Commission in relation to the Government and the late grant.—Ever yours truly, ALBERT.

The consideration of Disraeli's Irish policy and of his relation to the arts has diverted us from the main stream of politics. As the October Cabinets and the session approached, his frame of mind was hopeful. He wrote to his wife on October 8: 'I think things look well, though, to all appearances, the Waterloo will take place immediately on our meeting. The whole weight, therefore, must necessarily fall on me, as it will be finance. However, I am in good heart.' Serious difficulties, however, soon arose. On the one hand, it became evident that the French commercial treaty could not be obtained—at any rate in time; and, on the other, that more money would be required for the national defences. Both the Court and the public were alarmed about the projects of Louis Napoleon. Russia was busy on the Continent, arranging for a coalition against him, and did her best, but in vain, to induce England to join. She did not forget, we may be sure, that a good understanding with England would also contribute to her designs upon Turkey.

Shortly after the formation of the Government (wrote Disraeli many years afterwards), Baron Brunnow, the Russian Ambassador, proposed to Lord Derby an alliance between England and Russia, offensive and defensive. Lord Derby at once rejected the proposition. It was never brought before the Cabinet; but it was made. It should be remembered the position of France was then very menacing; the French Empire was nearly hatched. We had good information as to Louis Napoleon's (then President of the Republic for ten years) intentions on this head. A month before the imperial declaration, a drawing of Louis Napoleon in full imperial robes and paraphernalia was entrusted to a lithographic artist, with positive instructions to take off only one impression. One, however, was sent to me by a secret agent. I possess it now.

To the Continent a French Empire, with a Napoleon on the throne, seemed to foreshadow a repetition of the long years of war which were only terminated by Moscow

and Leipzig and Waterloo. Russia, Austria, and Prussia came to an understanding as to common action in case the treaties of 1815 were threatened. King Leopold, whose kingdom had been, and, if war broke out, would probably again be, the cockpit of Europe, was naturally foremost in spreading the alarm and infecting his relatives at the English Court. One man in England, who knew the character and appreciated the position of the new Napoleon better than any other statesman, resolutely opposed the general view. Malmesbury told his Sovereign and his colleagues, and has recorded in his diary, that Louis Napoleon's object at that time was 'to gain and secure the alliance with England and consolidate his position with the Great Powers by a pacific policy.' He was perfectly right; but it is difficult to deny that the Queen also had reason on her side when she wrote to Derby on October 23: 'The Queen is no alarmist, but thinks that, the necessity of our attending to our defences once having been proved and admitted by Parliament and two successive Governments, we should not relax in our efforts until the plans then devised are thoroughly carried out.' Both the Admiralty and the War Office pressed for increases; and just before the session opened Disraeli received his first command to stay with his Sovereign at Windsor, where Her Majesty and the Prince urged on him the immense importance of complying with the demands of the military departments. The discussion with the Prince lasted for two hours and a half.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

WINDSOR CASTLE, *Nov.* 3, 1852.—A most successful and satisfactory visit. A very large dinner-party yesterday: the Duke and Duchess of Nemours, Duchess of Kent, etc.

Successful and satisfactory as the visit may have been in some respects, Disraeli came away in very low spirits. He 'ridiculed the panic,' Malmesbury tells us; and saw, in consequence of it, the balance of that Budget, on which the fortunes of the Ministry and the party depended,

completely upset. He was always alive to the necessity of adequate national defences, but could not agree that a special effort was necessary at a moment when, as he rightly thought, no special danger threatened, and when nothing but a popular and successful Budget could keep the Government in power. However, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet supported the demands of the Court and of the services, and Disraeli, however dispirited, resolutely set himself to alter his arrangements to suit them.

The Court steadily kept up its pressure. On November 13 the Queen wrote strongly to Derby on 'the necessity of referring,' in the financial statement, 'to our defenceless state, and the necessity of a *large* outlay, to protect us from foreign attack.' Disraeli assured Her Majesty in reply, on November 14, that, in making the financial arrangements, he had left a very large margin for the coming year (April 1853-54), 'which will permit the fulfilment of all your Majesty's wishes with respect to the increased defence of the country, as he gathered them from your Majesty's gracious expressions, and also from the suggestions which afterwards, in greater detail, His Royal Highness the Prince deigned to make to him. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will deeply consider the intimation graciously made in your Majesty's letter to Lord Derby, as to the tone on this subject to be adopted in the House of Commons, and he will endeavour in this, and in all respects, to fulfil your Majesty's pleasure.' On the same day the Queen expressed her satisfaction in a letter to Disraeli, repeated that the need was '*very* urgent,' and said that Malmesbury, who had talked with the Prince on the subject, would communicate further with Derby and Disraeli on his return.[1]

Some ten days later Derby wrote that he wished to see Disraeli on the subject of '*immediate* naval preparation, about which the Queen is very urgent.' Could he see his way to providing for 5,000 extra seamen and 1,500 marines?

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

To Lord Derby.

GROSVENOR GATE, 11 *o'clock, Tuesday* [*Nov.* 23]. — . . . What I have agreed to do with reference to defence was to carry into effect the complete wishes of Her Majesty and the Prince. I promised to do this, and, as far as I am concerned, I have done it. These arrangements include five thousand seamen and *two* thousand artillerymen. Hardinge only asked for one thousand, but, having told Her Majesty and the Prince that the plan submitted to me at Windsor should be completely carried into effect, I told Hardinge that I thought *two* thousand preferable. I have promised nothing about the Marines; the Prince never mentioned them or included them in his written memoranda. From what I have gathered, I have reason to believe that such augmentation is more than questionable. . . .

If the financial prospect was overclouded, in other ways the Ministerial outlook was not good. Certainly Ministers were not unpopular, and, as Greville noted, they had got 'the whole body of the agriculturists, all the Church, and a large proportion of the wealthy middle classes,' on their side; but their chief asset had been the disunion of the Opposition. Russell, who through his mistakes both as Minister and as leader of Opposition had lost ground with all sections of the Liberals, had hitherto persisted in maintaining his claim to the first place in the next Government. So long as he took this view, neither Palmerston nor the Peelites would join heartily in any attack on the existing Ministry. But, as the session approached, Russell modified his attitude, and announced that he was ready to waive his claims and serve under Lansdowne. Then a note of violent hostility to the Derby Government was struck by the Radicals. At a great meeting at Manchester of the Anti-Corn Law Leaguers held on November 2, Cobden, amid approving cheers, insisted that, if the Ministry were to remain in office, they must begin by a comprehensive recantation of the Protectionist heresy and a direct affirmation of Free Trade dogmas, with no nonsense about compensation to the landed interest.

The Speech from the Throne, read by the Queen in person on November 11, was not considered by the Free Traders sufficiently explicit or unambiguous on this point The words were:

> It gives me pleasure to be enabled, by the blessing of Providence, to congratulate you on the generally improved condition of the country, and especially of the industrious classes. If you should be of opinion that recent legislation, in contributing, with other causes, to this happy result, has at the same time inflicted unavoidable injury on certain important interests, I recommend you dispassionately to consider how far it may be practicable equitably to mitigate that injury, and to enable the industry of the country to meet successfully that unrestricted competition to which Parliament, in its wisdom, has decided that it should be subjected.

Derby, in the House of Lords, supplemented this passage by the announcement that he was prepared to bow to the decision of the country, and, while desirous, so far as possible, to mitigate the injury inflicted by the Free Trade policy, to adopt that policy and to carry it out frankly and loyally. He acknowledged that a great portion of the prosperity of all classes, and particularly of the labouring classes, was due to the Free Trade legislation which had given them cheap and abundant food. This sufficed for the Lords, and was characterised by Greville as a final and complete abandonment of Protection in the most clear and unequivocal terms. In the Commons the Opposition were very hostile, Gladstone and the Peelites, Malmesbury noted, being especially bitter. Villiers, the Parliamentary protagonist of Free Trade, or, as Disraeli called him, the 'stormy petrel of Protection,' rose immediately after the address had been moved and seconded, and described the Speech as vague and deceptive. Protection was such an 'enormous mischief' that the new Parliament must solemnly renounce it. Without waiting for the explanations of the Government, he, acting in concert with Graham on behalf of the Peelites, gave notice of a Free Trade resolution for the earliest possible day. Russell also thought the language

of the Speech evasive. The intentions of the Government ought to be announced in a clear and decided manner, and not enveloped in the mist in which Disraeli loved, like the goddesses of old, to enshroud himself. Gladstone wanted a full, final, and solemn settlement; Cobden insisted that the pure principle of Free Trade must be affirmed; even Palmerston thought a formal declaration of the House of Commons necessary in the public interest. Disraeli protested that there was no intention of disturbing the principle of unrestricted competition, or of producing artificial prices or granting compensation for losses; that what the Government proposed was to bring our financial system more into harmony with our commercial system. He suggested that the House should wait for a Free Trade discussion till he had explained the financial policy of the Government, which he would do at the earliest opportunity after the Duke of Wellington's funeral. But objection was taken to this delay, and, though no amendment to the Address was proposed, mainly owing to the fact that Parliament met under the shadow of the Duke's death, the Opposition determined to make Ministers swallow the leek.

This was not a very chivalrous proceeding, but some justification was found for it in the fact that a considerable section of the Ministerialists advocated a return to Protection at the elections, and that, while some of these were now ready to bow to the expressed will of the country, others, like Sibthorp, were not. During the discussions that followed there was an abundant outpouring of personal explanation as to the origin and drafting of the resolution as Villiers ultimately proposed it. 'The debate,' Disraeli wrote to the Queen on November 26, 'was very animated and amusing, from the rival narratives of the principal projectors of the demonstration, who, having quarrelled among themselves, entered into secret and—in a party sense—somewhat scandalous revelations, to the diversion and sometimes astonishment of the House.'[1]

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

In spite, or because, of all this wealth of explanation, there is still some obscurity as to what happened; but, in general terms, it appears that two groups were drafting resolutions simultaneously, Villiers and his friends on the one hand, and the Peelites, under Graham's inspiration, on the other. The Peelites took the language of the Speech about unrestricted competition, and the statements made by Derby in the Lords, as a basis, and endeavoured to omit any expressions which might be felt to be objectionable by Ministers and their friends. Their draft reached the hands of the Government; and, at a party meeting held in Downing Street on Monday, November 15, Derby advised his followers, if such a resolution were proposed, to accept it frankly. Meanwhile the situation had changed. Villiers, with Russell's assent, had drafted the following resolution: 'That it is the opinion of this House that the improved condition of the country, and particularly of the industrious classes, is mainly the result of recent commercial legislation, and especially of the Act of 1846, which established the free admission of foreign corn, and that that Act was a wise, just, and beneficial measure.' These 'three odious epithets,' as Disraeli called them, at once converted the motion into a party attack, which Government was bound to resist. Russell, though he assented to Villiers's terms, apparently preferred the Peelite draft; but the scale was turned by the Manchester men, who insisted that the Free Trade party, *par excellence*, had a right to a deciding voice in a matter of this kind, and that the justice and wisdom of the Act of 1846 must be categorically affirmed. Villiers's resolution was therefore put upon the paper, and Disraeli gave notice of an amendment which acknowledged that the improvement of the condition of the working classes was mainly due to the cheapness of provisions produced by recent legislation, and that it was the duty of the Government unreservedly to adhere to unrestricted competition as the principle of our commercial system.

To Lord Derby.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Nov.* 19, 1852.—I send a draft resolution for your sharpest criticism.

If, as I assume from all I observe, hear, and think, the object of the Villiers motion is not to break us up, but only to keep us in by a humiliating tenure, I think it not unlikely that a bold move may turn their flank.

It is pretty clear that they have neither a Government nor a policy ready, and they wish to keep us in till they have both. If this resolution of ours is carried and followed up by measures, we shall have not only a Government, but a policy; and, notwithstanding all our difficulties, I can't help fancying that the campaign is now in our hands.

In spite of Disraeli's optimism, his amendment, which was not specially to the taste of his own friends, did not at all satisfy the Peelites, and there seemed every prospect of an ordinary party fight, instead of a solemn pronouncement of national policy. The situation was saved by the action of one powerful personage, Palmerston, at that time very independent of party ties.

From Lord Palmerston.

Private and Confidential. CARLTON GARDENS, *Nov.* 22, 1852.

DEAR DISRAELI,—I dislike the condition in which the House of Commons is about to place itself in regard to Villiers's motion. I wished for a nearly unanimous affirmation of a great principle of domestic policy, and, instead of that, here we are going to be embarked in an ordinary party struggle. Is there no way of preventing this? and might not some third party propose some form of words which the great majority of the House might agree to? You have not stated your objections to Villiers's words, but I conclude your main objection is that many who are prepared to submit to an overruling necessity, and to acquiesce in the continuance of the Free Trade policy, are nevertheless unwilling to declare that they think the changes made in 1846 and following years were just. If that is your objection, might it not be removed by the substitution of a different form of words? Will you cast your eye over the accompanying draft, and let me know privately and confidentially, and, as the lawyers say, without prejudice, what your personal guess is as to the acceptation or rejection of such a resolution if I was to propose it as a middle term in the spirit of conciliation?

Your opinion shall be strictly kept to myself, whatever it may be, but it would serve to guide me in determining whether it would be worth my while to sound people on our side of the House in regard to such a proposal.—Yours sincerely, PALMERSTON.

The resolution which Palmerston enclosed was couched in very similar terms to the original Peelite draft; and this was natural, as he appears to have acted at the request of Gladstone and Sidney Herbert, who 'carried the amendment to him at his house.'[1] Disraeli encouraged Palmerston to proceed, and eventually withdrew the Government amendment in favour of his.

The debate in one form or another was carried on for three nights, November 23, 25, and 26. Villiers, in his opening speech, emphatically declared that he did not mean his resolution to be a motion of want of confidence in Ministers. But, repeating his expression on the Address, he maintained that 'enormous mischief' had been caused by Disraeli's attitude since 1846, and he asked him not to sit down 'without letting us at last know what he does really mean.' On this head Disraeli's answer was perfectly clear; Protection was abandoned. He said that there could be, and there was, no question in Ministers' minds as to the result of the elections. 'There was no doubt that there was not only not a preponderating majority in favour of a change in the laws passed in those years, but not even of modifying them in any degree; that there was a decisive opinion on the part of the country that that settlement should not be disturbed.' In a subsequent speech he repeated: 'The verdict of the country has been of an unmistakable character. We have bowed to that unequivocal declaration.' But he was careful to point out that the Government had not come in on Protection, and had not dissolved on Protection. 'If we had acceded to office in order to advocate a system of Protection—if we had dissolved on that question, and found that the country would not support

[1] Morley's *Gladstone*, Bk. III., ch. 8.

us, we should have felt it our duty immediately to relinquish the posts which we now occupy.'

When he got up to answer Villiers, Disraeli was suffering from illness. Just before the meeting of the House that afternoon, he wrote to Derby: 'I am terribly cut up with the influenza, but I am going down to the House, with no want of courage or confidence, as I think we have a triumphant case. . . . I will see you to-morrow, as I have no doubt a good speech, *sudor rhetoricus*, will cure my fever.' In spite of his illness he entered into an elaborate defence of the course pursued by himself and his friends since 1846, in order to disprove the charge that they had perpetrated 'enormous mischiefs.' Not a single attempt, he asserted, and, when met by cries of 'Oh!' emphatically repeated, had been made, with the sanction of any party, to abrogate the Act of 1846, or bring back the old system of Protection. In opposing the Act, he had acted mainly in the interests of labour; and it was because he found, after experience, that the labouring classes were not injured, though the farmers were, that he did not press for its abrogation. He reminded the House that in the 1847 election, owing to high prices, the farmers were apathetic, and that, when they did agitate for a return to Protection in 1849, the party advised them to look rather to relief of local burdens and revision of taxation. It was a motion of that sort which, being only rejected by a few votes, was the principal cause of the resignation of the Whig Ministry in 1851, and Derby's programme then, when he unsucessfully tried to form a Ministry, did not involve a return to the Protection of 1846, but only a moderate countervailing duty. Derby also then announced that he would accept as final the verdict of the General Election. The Derby Government had come into power by no Protectionist intrigue, but because of the internal dissensions of their predecessors. They would not, however, be Ministers on sufferance. 'Whatever were the exigencies of the case in the old Parliament, we neither desire nor will we submit in the

new to carry on the Government under any indulgence which is foreign to the spirit of the British Constitution.' He finished his speech with an appeal from the factious and vexatious conduct of the old Free Trade party to the new members in the new Parliament. 'I appeal to the generous and the young; and I ask them to pause, now they are at last arrived on the threshold of the Senate of their country, and not become the tools and the victims of exhausted factions and obsolete politics.'

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Nov.* 23, 1852.—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his humble duty to your Majesty, reports to your Majesty that the first night on the debate of Mr. Villiers's motion has been very interesting.

After Mr. Villiers's speech, the Chancellor of the Exchequer endeavoured to make a vindicatory and conciliatory statement for the country, which was not unsuccessful.

Mr. Bright followed very violent; but late at night Lord Palmerston rose, and suggested a very temperate and middle course, which, by omitting the offensive epithets in Mr. Villiers's motion, would save the honour of the late Protectionist party, and yet would unequivocally affirm all that the House and the country could reasonably desire.

Judging from the feeling of the House, the Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks he shall be able to induce his friends to adopt the course suggested by Lord Palmerston, although it involves some admissions which without the previous discussion, they would certainly have not entertained. . . .

The Whigs, the Manchester men, and one, at any rate, of the Peelites, entirely declined to be appeased by Disraeli's speech, or to show the generosity which Palmerston counselled; they were very bitter and vindictive, though the admitted success of their policy might well have made them magnanimous. No doubt they had many old scores to pay off, and thought this was the opportune moment. Some of them roundly denied Disraeli's facts. Bright quoted some extreme sayings and doings of the high Protectionists, and asked if, in view of them, the Chancellor of the Exchequer seriously meant to say that his party

were not attempting to repeal the Act of 1846. 'Why, everyone knows that your whole agitation for six years has been, the first part of the time calumniation of Sir Robert Peel, and during the latter part demands for the Protection you have lost, or for some compensation in place of it.' Cobden said that Disraeli had offered an insult to their reason, their common-sense, and their moral feeling, in attempting to make it appear that he had not been leading or encouraging a party which had kept up this mischievous delusion out of doors. Bernal Osborne said that Protection was the only thing on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been consistent, and that it was most audacious that he should come down to the House, and, 'with a face which I never saw equalled in the theatre,' say that he had never attempted to reverse the policy of Free Trade. Bernal Osborne had ransacked Hansard for proof of his contradiction of Disraeli's claim, but could only produce a few doubtful sentences and votes, all of which have been quoted in previous chapters of this volume, and none of which proved his case. Granby, the leader of the high Protectionists, expressed his cordial agreement with Disraeli's statement. 'I fully admit that the right hon. gentleman never brought the question of Protection before the House of Commons.'

The taunts of Sidney Herbert and Russell were more damaging to Disraeli. 'I acquit the Chancellor of the Exchequer,' said Herbert, 'as far as his own convictions are concerned, of the charge of having ever been a Protectionist. I never for one moment thought he believed in the least degree in Protection. I do not accuse him of having forgotten what he said or what he believed in those years; I only accuse him of having forgotten now what he then wished it to appear that he believed.' And he recalled the attacks on Peel. 'I sat by him [Peel] night by night on that bench when he was attacked by the foulest language, and accused of the meanest crimes.' But Peel was of a generous nature, and would not have desired any man's humiliation. 'It is not words that

humiliate, it is deeds. If a man wants to see humiliation —which, God knows, is always a painful sight—he need but look there,' pointing to the Treasury bench. Russell said that Disraeli had made out a technical case for himself, but not a pleasant one. 'Without thinking Protection could be restored, and being rather in favour of Free Trade, he has allowed this great party, the great party of the farmers of the country, to believe that he would restore Protection, when he never believed in or expected anything of the kind.' If the truth had been fairly told the farmers, the question would have been finally settled four years before. Disraeli, Russell maintained, had shown to the House that, while he was a Protectionist, he did not faithfully serve the cause of Protection; 'I say, therefore, now that he has espoused the cause of Free Trade, let us take care that he is not as faithless to the cause of Free Trade as he has been to that of Protection.'

What justification was there for these taunts, what truth in these charges? Was Disraeli a Free Trader at heart who pretended for awhile to be a Protectionist for his own selfish ends; or, on another theory, a Protectionist throughout who only rendered lip-service to Free Trade at the last to gain, or retain, office; or—a third discreditable alternative—an absolutely indifferent person who adopted either cause as his self-interest dictated? Was his conduct in 1852 comparable to that of Peel in 1845-46, and equally, or indeed much more, culpable? Did he betray either his principles or his party?

In the light shed by Disraeli's private papers on his public actions, no fair-minded person can adopt any of the crude theories for which party *animus* and Free Trade bigotry gained at one time widespread acceptance. It is evident that such ambiguities as appear in his conduct during the six years between 1846 and 1852 are due to the struggle within the party between him and the high Protectionists, something of which was suspected but little definitely known before now. Disraeli took throughout his political life a middle course on the com-

mercial question, and was never a fanatic for either Protection or Free Trade; but he definitely considered moderate Protection the better course for England, especially with a view to securing to the land what he regarded as its due influence in the Constitution. That opinion he never altered, though he did not think that the return to any form of Protection was practicable during his lifetime. Peel came into power pledged to moderate Protection, and used that power to overthrow it, thereby breaking his party into two fragments, of which only the smaller portion followed the Minister. Disraeli set himself, with Bentinck, to organise the larger party, but, recognising that a country could not be always chopping and changing its commercial policy, made no attempt, either at the General Election of 1847 or in Parliament, to upset the new system at once. Even at that time he saw that the sliding scale could not be revived, but that the choice lay between a fixed duty and some form of compensation. What he did at that period, and did effectively, was to show that Cobden's sanguine prophecies of peace and plenty had not been fulfilled in the first three years after the passing of the Act of 1846. But the whole of the commercial and industrial community accepted the new system, and considered that it had helped them to weather the bad times. When they were united, they outweighed the agricultural classes both in numbers and in wealth, and could have their will, even if those classes were agreed among themselves. But agriculturists were not agreed; even among the farmers there were many who thought that, by clinging to Protection, they lost the opportunity of getting help in other ways; and the labourers, who were at first suspicious of a policy promoted by the manufacturers and the middle class for their own ends, had become reconciled to a system under which they obtained cheap food. The well-being of the labourers especially appealed to the Disraeli of *Sybil*. He noted also the growing prosperity of the country, from 1849 or 1850 onwards, which was due, no doubt, largely to extension of railways

and to gold discoveries, as well as to liberation from commercial shackles, but was attributed by the Free Traders entirely to their panacea. In these circumstances, from about the time of his recognition as leader, Disraeli became convinced that public opinion would not tolerate a reversion to the old commercial system. Thenceforward he steadily laboured to dissociate the party from Protection, as Russell and Bright themselves had pointed out in Parliament; and, so far from deluding the farmers, he set his face against G. F. Young's movement, and invited all those interested in the land to look elsewhere for their relief. It was a delicate business, in view of Derby's reluctance to face the facts and of the interests and prejudices of many of his followers; but it was done with consummate ability. He failed, indeed, to convert Derby till too late, but he succeeded in changing the general current of opinion in the party, and in keeping the party together, even after Free Trade was accepted.

Can anyone familiar with what is practicable in politics maintain that it was Disraeli's duty in opposition to proclaim upon the housetops in 1849 that Protection must be abandoned—not on principle, but because it could not be obtained—when the result must have been a further split in the party which he was so laboriously bringing together? For it is absurd to suppose that the rank and file of the party would have been content to follow the Peelite leaders, whom they stigmatised as traitors for their conduct in 1846, and whose Conservative principles they regarded as doubtful, owing to their constant association in political action with Whigs and Radicals. It must always be remembered that the Conservative party, as Walpole well pointed out in the debate, stood for much more than a mere commercial system, and that, in an age of unbounded faith in material progress, such a party was most necessary for the due balance of the State. No one can allege that Disraeli was remiss in doing his utmost to convert his party in private. It is difficult to see what other

course in the circumstances he could have taken in public, than that of saying that, however right Protection might be in principle, however justifiable economically a countervailing duty on corn, the party and the agricultural interest must not expect to obtain any policy of the kind from Parliament, but must look to readjustment of local burdens and revision of taxation. It was his misfortune, and not his fault, that he had not wholly converted his colleagues when circumstances put them in office; but they did not obtain office on a Protective policy, and the programme on which, as a Government, they went into the elections was one of 'free intercourse' and 'unrestricted competition.' It may be that the process of conversion was hastened by office in the case of some of his colleagues, but Disraeli had urged the definite abandonment of Protection on Derby at least a year before.

In accepting and making the best of Free Trade after it had become law, as soon as he was clear that the country was resolved not to go back upon its steps, Disraeli was only following the tradition of English politics—a tradition reinforced by the recent precedents of Roman Catholic emancipation and Reform. It was said that, for the party and the leader who had attacked and overthrown Peel on the question of Free Trade, to acquiesce in it themselves was a humiliation. Wherein did the humiliation consist? Not for a moment did the party thereby condone the use which Peel made of power conferred on him for exactly opposite purposes. It did not even abandon its theoretic belief in the system then discarded. What it did was to recognise the benefits conferred on all classes by cheap and abundant food, and to bow to accomplished facts, accepting the least unpalatable of the unpalatable motions presented to it. It set itself right with public opinion over a matter which public opinion had, with insufficient warrant, erected into a tenet of religion; it recited, in the fashion of the day, the shibboleth which public opinion

exacted of all politicians as a condition of employment by the State.[1]

There were a few of the triumphant Free Traders who showed, in the debate on Villiers's motion, a due appreciation of the position of Disraeli and his party, and consideration for their feelings. One was Gladstone, who, however, somewhat marred the grace of his speech by a definite approval of Russell's criticisms. Gladstone pleaded that the House should imitate the magnanimity of Peel, who did indeed look for revenge, but not in stinging speeches or motions carrying a sense of pain or degradation to honourable men. Peel, he said, looked for the acceptance of his principles first by the country, and then by the world. The cause of the aristocracy should be redeemed from association with that 'obnoxious policy,' whose 'obsequies' they were celebrating in that debate. They should put away the desire to trample on those who had fought manfully, and merely rejoice in the great public good that had been achieved. It was Palmerston, however, who struck the note to which the House responded. 'Sir, we are here an assembly of gentlemen; and we who are gentlemen on this side of the House should remember that we are dealing with gentlemen on the other side; and I, for one, cannot at all reconcile it to my feelings to call upon a set of English gentlemen unnecessarily, for any

[1] Compare the letter of 'Manilius' in the *Press* of May 14, 1853: 'The first act of Lord Derby's Government, on the assembling of the new Parliament, was precisely that anticipated by every man of ordinary sense. It was the recognition of that principle which divides the rulers of a despotism from the Ministers of a Constitutional Monarchy—viz., the submission of men made responsible to the Sovereign for the security of the realm, to the power of public opinion when unequivocally expressed by a legitimate appeal to its verdict. Here all taunts as to the inconsistency of politicians who, in opposition, had opposed a law which in office they ratified, were absurd on the lips of those who had studied our history and comprehended our Constitution. To oppose a law, to represent the hardships it may inflict, to argue on the consequences it may entail, to advise, when it be passed, either congenial modifications or supplementary amendments—all this belongs to the first province of debate. But that law confirmed in all its integrity by fresh proofs of popular assent, and the modifications or amendments advised rendered as impracticable as the repeal—nothing remains for those who have passed from the freedom of opposition to the grave responsibilities of office but to accept the law, and seek, by means analogous to its spirit, remedies for whatever particular grievance it may inflict.' (See below, p. 1312.)

purpose that I have in view, to express opinions they do not entertain, or to recant opinions that may be still lingering in their minds.' He refused to join in taunting and reproaching those who yielded their early impressions to the inevitable force of events. All the country wanted was to be assured that Free Trade was the principle upon which their legislation was to be founded.

Villiers's motion was defeated by 336 to 256, Palmerston and the Peelites, including Graham, voting with the Government; and then Palmerston's amendment, being supported by the Government, the Liberals, and the Peelites, was carried by 468 to 53, about seventy of the rank and file of the Ministerialists declining to vote in the second division. The text of the resolution which marked the close of the great Free Trade controversy ran thus:

> That it is the opinion of this House that the improved condition of the country, and especially of the industrious classes, is mainly the result of recent legislation, which has established the principle of unrestricted competition, has abolished taxes imposed for the purposes of Protection, and has thereby diminished the cost and increased the abundance of the principal articles of the food of the people.
>
> That it is the opinion of this House that this policy, firmly maintained and prudently extended, will, without inflicting injury on any important interest, best enable the industry of the country to bear its burthens, and will thereby most surely promote the welfare and contentment of the people.
>
> That this House will be ready to take into consideration any measures, consistent with these principles, which, in pursuance of Her Majesty's gracious Speech and recommendation, may be laid before it.

It was hardly pretended that even this resolution was literally accepted by many of those who voted for it. Disraeli, in announcing his acceptance of it, said that it contained expressions to which he might demur, and which he should regret to see placed on the journals of the House with his individual authority or sanction; but that was a mere fighting about words, not about facts. As one of the Ministerial rank and file put it, the real question was the passing of a formal resolution that Free Trade was to be adopted. That was done, and, thanks to

Disraeli's management, done with little or no resentment even from the high Protectionists—such as Booker, who sat for Herefordshire; Ball, the farmers' friend; Isaac Butt; and even Granby—none of whom reproached the Government in the debate, but all promised cordial co-operation. The whole, with hardly an exception, of the 53 who voted in the minority, supported the Government in the critical division on the Budget. There were some angry expressions. Lennox reported, in the recess, his father, the Duke of Richmond, as saying of the Government: 'I can see they are, damn them! at the old game of throwing over their principles'; and Sibthorp, in the debate on the Address, talked of their 'duplicity.' But the party as a whole recognised that Disraeli's policy had been right and, indeed, inevitable. There was no cave formed and no serious discontent felt.

The question of reconstruction, which had only been toyed with in the autumn, naturally arose again on the evidence afforded by these debates that Palmerston and the Peelites were ready, in certain circumstances, to come to the aid of the Government against Whig factiousness. Palmerston, who at the moment was being roundly abused by Whigs and Radicals, held the key of the situation. He always wrote and talked as if he had never seriously contemplated joining Derby's Government, but he certainly left the impression both on Ministers themselves and on shrewd outside observers, like Greville, that it was rather a question of terms. The only possible terms were, however, vetoed by the Crown. Derby was not permitted by the Queen to offer Palmerston the lead of the House of Commons; nor, indeed, did Derby himself desire, owing, apparently, to unwillingness to seem to slight Disraeli, to repeat his proposal of February. A private interview which Disraeli had with Palmerston on November 24 produced no result. According to Disraeli's report to Derby, Palmerston's language was perfectly friendly towards the Government; but 'he concluded by declaring that though he sat by Mr.

Sidney Herbert in the House of Commons, and was an old personal friend, he did not act in concert with him or with Mr. Gladstone; and that he did not see, on their part, any disposition to join the Government. After this declaration, Mr. Disraeli felt that it would be useless and unwise to sound him further as to his own ulterior views, and the conversation led to nothing'[1] It does not appear whether Palmerston had heard of the royal veto; but the reports which reached Derby suggested that the Peelites would not join him unless Palmerston led the Commons, Gladstone refusing to serve under Disraeli. In these circumstances Derby reported to the Queen that he had taken no steps towards exercising the discretion she had entrusted to him.

Prince Albert to Lord Derby.

Private and Confidential. WINDSOR CASTLE, *Nov.* 26, 1852.

MY DEAR LORD DERBY,—The contents of the letter which you wrote to the Queen yesterday afternoon, and which she received this morning only, has caused us less surprise than it appears to have done to yourself. You will remember that we expressed some doubts as to the 'commun accord' between the Peelites and Lord Palmerston.

My conviction is now further confirmed that Lord Palmerston is aiming at the leadership of the House of Commons, in order to possess himself of *absolute power*, and that he is taking his position in a way to obtain this, whether the debate may end in a junction of the Peelites with your Government or with Lord John Russell, whom he would in that case wish to see removed to the House of Lords.

Such a calamity for the interests of the country the Queen will feel it her duty to prevent by a firm opposition on her part. If you mean to negotiate further on a further change of Parliamentary prospects, your own and the Queen's safety will mainly depend on the instruments which you mean to employ for your negotiations. If left to be settled between Mr. Disraeli and Lord Palmerston, and the result only to be *reported* to you, I should feel very uneasy, considering the *laxity of the political consciences* which both these gentlemen have hitherto exhibited. You would in that case find it very difficult not to accept any arrangement which they may have preconcerted.

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

Should Mr. Disraeli have to relinquish the lead, Mr. Gladstone would be a much fitter successor than Lord Palmerston, for, whatever his peculiar crotchets may be, he is a man of the strictest feelings of honour and the purest mind.—Ever yours truly, ALBERT.

A memorandum of November 28 by the Prince, printed in *Queen Victoria's Letters*, shows how Derby stood up for his colleague against this disparaging criticism. He declared that Gladstone was quite unfit to lead the House, and that he himself 'could not in honour sacrifice Mr. Disraeli, who had acted very straightforwardly to him as long as they had had anything to do with each other, and who possessed the confidence of his followers. Mr. Disraeli had no idea of giving up the lead.' In reply to a question from the Prince, Derby added that 'he did not think Mr. Disraeli had ever had a strong feeling, one way or the other, about Protection or Free Trade, and that he would make a very good Free Trade Minister.'

There is no reason to believe that Disraeli would have hesitated now any more than in the previous February, or in 1855, to make way for Palmerston, if that had been in question. To make way for a Peelite was another matter. Even if he had been willing, his followers certainly would not have permitted such an arrangement. Gladstone at this time, Lord Morley writes, was 'inspired by the strong hope of Conservative reunion'; but, in a friendly conversation with Derby, he spoke oracularly of 'many difficulties of a personal nature' in any conceivable Ministerial combination, and said that the attitude of the Peelites to the Government depended on the Budget. It was the misfortune of the Peelites, and of Gladstone in particular, and goes far to account for the little affection with which they were regarded, that they never seemed so friendly and so disposed to approximate to their old party as when they were on the eve of taking some definite step to widen the gulf and unite themselves more closely to the other side. Gladstone's friendly disposition now was the immediate precursor of a fatal blow dealt at the Budget; and again, in 1859, he actually

voted with the Derby Government in the division which ejected them from office, and then, without hesitation, joined the Liberal Government which supplanted them.

All hope of reconstruction being abandoned, the Government had to face, without any new blood, the problem of the Budget. There is little in the Beaconsfield papers to show how the financial scheme developed in the Chancellor's mind, but some of the expressions in the Lennox correspondence suggest that Gladstone was not mistaken in his comment after the Budget speech: 'It is plain enough that, when its author announced something looming in the distance, he did not mean this plan, but something more extensive.' We know, of course, that Disraeli had hoped for a commercial treaty with France, which would have necessarily involved important changes in customs dues. That he desired to abolish the Law of Poor Law Settlement, and give the management of county rates to a more popular board, appears from Malmesbury's notes of Cabinet meetings. Above all, we know that the demands of the services, supported by the Crown, necessitated extra expenditure at the last moment, after all his calculations had been made, and curtailed the remissions of taxation which he hoped to announce. These demands were renewed at the eleventh hour.

To Lord Derby.

Private. D.S., *Nov.* 30, 1852.—I fear we are in a great scrape, and I hardly see how the Budget can live in so stormy a sea.

We have had no explanation from Stafford[1] as to his letter of this day to Hamilton[2] that the Navy Estimates for 1853-54 will be increased nearly one million. I trust that the Admiralty have not got into debt, and are attempting to shuffle off this scot on future estimates. This will never do, for, if permitted, we shall never be safe.

We are pledged to the Queen, as far as the seamen and Marines are concerned, and we must not seem to waver; but I think you must exert your utmost authority that there shall be retrenchment, no matter at what inconvenience, in all in which her honour and safety are not concerned. I think Hardinge also ought to give up his extra 1,000 men.

But, turn the matter as I may, I see no way out of it, and

[1] Secretary of the Admiralty. [2] Secretary of the Treasury.

must deeply regret that we should have become involved in such a difficulty at such a moment; and that on the very eve of battle I should be suddenly called upon to change all my dispositions.

Derby replied that he had told Stafford to cut down all Admiralty expenses except those for the additional seamen and Marines; discussed which of the two great remissions contemplated by Disraeli had better be pared in consequence of the new demands; and continued, 'Put a good face upon it, and we shall pull through. *L'audace—l'audace—toujours l'audace.*'

Courage never failed Disraeli; but courage was certainly wanted when he rose on Friday, December 3, in a House (Greville says) 'crowded to suffocation,' to introduce the Budget which was to make or mar the Government. He had had but nine months' official or financial training; he had, indeed, delivered one Budget speech, but had then proposed no change of taxation. He faced adversaries who almost monopolised the official and financial experience of the day, and he faced them practically unsupported. There were opposite him three ex-Chancellors of the Exchequer—Wood, his immediate predecessor; Goulburn, who assisted Peel; and Sir Francis Baring, whose service at the Treasury was, however, of a remote date—and there was Gladstone, already a power in economic debate, and destined to be the most famous Chancellor of the Victorian era. There was Disraeli's old antagonist, Graham; Cobden, eager to detect Protectionist heresy; and the veteran Whig chief, Russell. From none of these men could he expect a favourable, or even impartial, hearing. The Whigs and Radicals were sore at the defeat of Villiers's motion; the Peelites cherished a personal resentment against the man who overthrew their chief. Wood, the most unlucky of Chancellors, had suffered severely under Disraeli's criticism for six years; and Gladstone, though he may have persuaded himself that he came to hear the Budget with an open mind, had really condemned it in advance. He wrote to Aberdeen on July 30 that the Government were

chained to the Budget, and that he, for one, was not prepared to accept Disraeli as a financial organ, or to be responsible for his financial measures; and he found Disraeli's Bucks speeches on revision of taxation each 'more quackish in its flavour than its predecessor.' On the morning of December 3 he wrote to Mrs. Gladstone that startling and dangerous, and perhaps outrageous, proposals were to be expected. Finally there was a feeling common to the Free Traders of all kinds, whether Peelites, Whigs, or Radicals, that it was a monstrous and unnatural thing that one who had been a Protectionist, and was still, though he accepted facts, unconverted in principle, should venture to stand up in the House of Commons and produce a Free Trade Budget.

Before opponents of this calibre and in this frame of mind, Disraeli had to lay no mere ordinary financial statement. It was no question of small increases or remissions of taxation, according as there was a deficit to supply or a surplus to spend. It was no provisional Budget, like that which he had introduced in the spring, which left taxes as they were, and only demanded lucid exposition in its author. This time he had announced his intention of bringing our financial system into harmony with our commercial system. It was his hope to allay the bitter feelings between country and town, to do justice to the interests which had lost Protection, and to equalise taxation while obviating existing anomalies. He had to satisfy the country gentlemen behind him within the limits of the new commercial system, and without rousing the anger of the towns. He had to do this, too, with no assured majority at his back, ready by sheer weight and solidity to push far-reaching proposals through Parliament; and at an awkward moment, four months before the conclusion of the financial year, when estimates both of revenue and of expenditure must be largely guesswork. Moreover, it was impossible that a Chancellor of the Exchequer who was also leader of the House of Commons, and in many ways the animating spirit of the Government, should have been able to devote the personal atten-

tion and care he could wish to the details of his financial arrangements. Happily he had in Sir Charles Trevelyan, the permanent head of the Treasury, expert aid of the first quality, and it was believed that the Budget owed much to Sir Charles's experience and assiduity.

At the outset of his speech Disraeli asked the House to consider his proposals as a whole, a request to which, though it was refused by many of his opponents at the time, history is bound to attend. The principal boons offered by the Budget to the taxpayer were the remission of half the malt tax and half the hop duty; the gradual remission of half the tea duty; the assessment of income tax on one-third of the farmer's rental instead of one-half; the reduction of the rate of the tax on precarious incomes to three-fourths of the rate on realised incomes; the reduction of lighthouse dues and removal of the Admiralty grievances of shipowners; and permission to the sugar interest to refine in bond for home consumption. In order to make good the deficiency caused by these reductions and remissions, Disraeli proposed to extend the area and increase the amount of direct taxation. The income tax was to be extended to incomes of £100 a year of precarious income, and to £50 a year of permanent income, and was to apply to Ireland as well as to Great Britain. The house tax was to be extended to houses of £10 a year rateable value, and to be doubled in amount.

Thus the Budget was essentially based on Free Trade principles. 'The doctrine of unrestricted competition,' said Disraeli, 'is not consistent with restricted industry.' After the solemn verdict of the country, and the formal and definite establishment of the new system, the Government had to consider how they could best enable the community to encounter that universal competition which it must now be prepared to meet. That was to be done 'by cheapening as much as possible that which sustains their lives. We look, therefore, to articles of prime necessity.' 'It is the boast of hon. gentlemen opposite that they have given cheap bread to the community; but the principles upon which you have given cheap bread

to the community are principles which ought to make you cheapen the sustenance of the community in every form.' He proposed, therefore, to reduce the malt tax and the tea duty, and give the community cheap drink as well as cheap food. The reduction of the malt tax was in the interest of the consumer, but it would also benefit agriculturists. As for tea, 'I hardly know anything more diverting than to open Pepys's Diary, where we see it stated, "Took a cup of the new China drink—very pleasant," and to remember that not two centuries have passed, and the exotic novelty that pleased one evening that fantastic gentleman is now the principal solace of every cottage in the kingdom.' He hoped to enable the people to have a supply at a very reasonable rate of a very favourite beverage, and at the same time to give a great stimulus to commerce, shipping, and manufactures. It was said that the consuming power of the people was diminishing, but he saw no evidence of it. There was no doubt considerable emigration; but 'every emigrant from England generally becomes an English colonist, and an English colonist becomes an English customer, and our markets are stimulated, our people are employed, and their wages are improved, by the very circumstances which some regard as tending to our decay and dissolution.'

But, though the Budget was based on Free Trade principles, relief was given to each of the interests—shipping, sugar, and agriculture—which had suffered through the change. Disraeli desired to remove well-founded causes of discontent, and enlist the sympathies of all classes in favour of the new system of taxation. The shipping interests were to be relieved in respect of lighthouses, and anchorage, salvage, and enlistment. In regard to these latter questions, he considered that the Admiralty had pressed hardly on the merchant service, but the Admiralty were prepared to yield their claims. In this connection, Disraeli entirely exonerated the Royal Navy from reprehensible conduct, and added: 'I have no doubt that in the navy, as well as in all departments of life, much

more humanising tendencies are exerting their influence than there did twenty-five, or forty, or fifty years ago.' A harmless remark, one would have thought, especially with the qualification 'as well as in all departments of life'; but Croker regarded the passage as a personal attack upon himself, who had been Secretary to the Admiralty from 1809 to 1830, and he wrote an article for the forthcoming *Quarterly Review* criticising the Budget almost entirely in reference to this purely incidental point.

With regard to the sugar industry, which had undoubtedly been treated in a wanton and indefensible manner, Disraeli granted it the boon of refining in bond, but was unable to go farther, in view of the prosperous state of the trade at the time. In 1852, as compared with 1851, there was an increase in British sugar entered for consumption of 1,250,000 hundredweights, and a decrease in foreign sugar of 600,000 hundredweights.

> I may be called traitor, I may be called renegade; but I want to know whether there is any gentleman in this House, wherever he may sit, who would recommend a differential duty to prop up a prostrate industry which is actually commanding the metropolitan market, under the circumstances which I have placed before Parliament? It is unnecessary to enter into any argument on the point. No person could think of proposing an increase of differential duties except for the attainment of a definite object. If that object be to give the command of the home market to our colonies, it is already attained.

In dealing with the agricultural interest, Disraeli first considered the question of local taxation. This took three forms—the highway rate, the county rate, and the poor rate. A Bill would be introduced for the better administration of the highway rate. As the county rate was slight in amount, he did not propose to recommend any change—an announcement which was received with sensation in the House, causing Disraeli to remind members of his request that his proposals should be considered as a whole. Then he came to the poor rate, where the complaint of the landed interest was exceedingly well founded. The maintenance of the poor should un-

doubtedly be the subject of general taxation, and not fall on real property alone; but, since he first brought the question forward, the burden had diminished 25 per cent. In 1848 the expenditure amounted to £6,180,000, but in 1851 only to £4,962,000. At this there were, naturally, loud cheers from the Opposition. 'I am afraid,' said Disraeli, 'that is really not a cheer on account of the diminution of pauperism. I am afraid it is a cheer for recent legislation.' He did not want to disturb recent legislation, but it had been shown that diminished poor rates might coexist with high prices of corn

> But there are greater subjects for us to consider than the triumph of obsolete opinions. (Great laughter from the Opposition.) Yes, I look upon one-sided Free Trade as an obsolete opinion, just as you look upon Protection: obsolete, because they are lost in the great principle of the day—that of unrestricted competition.

As the burden was now less, Disraeli did not propose to relieve the agricultural classes by the way of local taxation, but he proposed to benefit them by the reduction of the malt tax and hop duty, and by the less onerous mode of assessing the income tax on farmers' profits.

A most important feature of the Budget was the manner of dealing with the income tax. It was clear that it could not be dispensed with at present, but Disraeli determined to deal with its anomalies in the spirit of his April Budget speech. He had then laid it down that direct taxation should be as general, so far as can be expediently managed, as indirect, and that a distinction should be drawn between precarious and permanent incomes; so he included Ireland, hitherto exempt, extended the tax downwards, and fixed the rate on the schedules dealing with trade earnings, professional incomes, and farmers' profits, at three-fourths of that charged on realised property. With extension of the franchise accepted in principle by leading politicians on all sides, it was a statesmanlike policy to provide, as far as possible, that no class should be exempt from taxation required for the benefit of all.

As the remissions provided in the Budget, together with increased expenditure (£600,000) for defence, would cost the revenue £2,100,000 in 1853-54, and more in subsequent years, it was necessary to find some addition to the resources of the country, and Disraeli looked boldly to direct taxation. That was an inevitable result of 'the principle of unrestricted competition, that all indirect taxes should be moderate in amount.' Gladstone and Harcourt and subsequent Chancellors of the Exchequer have found themselves compelled to follow the path pointed out by Disraeli, and to make use of the mighty engine of direct taxation in an increasingly oppressive manner. Disraeli selected the house tax, both for extension in accordance with his principle of avoiding exemptions as far as possible, and for increase. However economically sound, it was a bold decision, as in 1834 an agitation of the newly-enfranchised London householders caused the abandonment of the then existing house tax; and, when such a tax was reimposed in 1851, all houses below £20 value were exempted. Disraeli lowered the exemption limit to £10, and doubled the tax. He justified the increase by reference to the remissions of taxation since 1834, and to the boons conferred by the rest of his Budget, all of which would benefit the inhabitant householder.

The speech contained an eloquent passage on the national defences. Though the tendency of the age, said Disraeli, and the predominant feeling of the day, was peace, it was of primary importance that our shores should be protected. It would have been more convenient for the Government to defer action, but it was their paramount duty to bring the matter forward at once. 'The plans we have matured, and which, if the House will support our proposition, will be carried into complete effect, will be plans which will settle this question of national defences for ever'—a bold assertion, which events speedily falsified. 'You will have all your arsenals and strong points in the kingdom defended, and you will have a real Channel fleet, which can assemble

from its different rendezvous at the moment necessary. and which is the proper garrison and protection of the country.' At the same time he promised a thorough overhauling of the administration in all departments, with a view to that efficiency, which, rather than retrenchment, was the true parent of economy. In conclusion he recommended the proposals of the Government as essentially practical measures. They proposed nothing on which they were not prepared immediately to act. That was the reason why they had not dealt with the succession duties. 'We think we have proposed enough to-night, and we think that what we have proposed is of a character that, if acted upon, we can judiciously advance a step farther.'

This great effort lasted five hours, and Disraeli's wife and friends, remembering that he was only just recovering from an attack of influenza, were anxious about his health. The Parliamentary Secretary of the Treasury sent a couple of notes from the House to reassure Mrs. Disraeli.

George A. Hamilton to Mrs. Disraeli.

Nine o'clock [*Friday, Dec.* 3, 1852].—You will be anxious to know how matters go on. The Chancellor has made a most wonderful effort. He has been speaking nearly four hours, with unrelaxed energy and spirit. The speech has been on the whole very well received by a very critically disposed Opposition, and I am full of confidence.

10 *o'clock*.—The Chancellor has just finished; a more surprising effort has never been made, and he has been greatly cheered. I have no fear for the result. He is greatly fatigued. We must get him to go home as soon as possible.

As Hamilton wrote, the Opposition were very critically disposed, and some of the more important of them permitted themselves to misbehave during the delivery of the speech. Sir William Fraser, who was sitting in the side-gallery, noticed conduct which could not be seen by the majority of the House. 'Sir George Grey and Sir Charles Wood, nearly related,[1] facing Disraeli, the latter having been Chancellor of the Exchequer, kept interchanging signs, and nudging one another, laughing occasionally, while Disraeli was speaking; in fact, turning him

[1] Wood had married Grey's niece.

into ridicule, in a manner which was not only unfair, but ungentlemanlike, considering their social position compared to Disraeli's, their life-long experience of the House, and his extreme difficulties—difficulties which he had encountered in a manly and well-bred manner.'. Macaulay was more generous, and his comment in his diary is characteristic:

It was well done, both as to manner and language. The statement was lucid, though much too long. I could have said the whole as clearly, or more clearly, in two hours; and Disraeli was up five. The plan was nothing but taking the money out of the pockets of the people in towns and putting it into the pockets of growers of malt. I greatly doubt whether he will be able to carry it; but he has raised his reputation for practical ability.[1]

From Queen Victoria.

OSBORNE, *Dec.* 5, 1852.—The Queen thanks Mr. Disraeli for his note received yesterday, and must congratulate him on the very successful way in which he brought forward the Budget, and hopes that he has not suffered from the great exertion which it must have been to him.

From Lord Derby.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Saturday* [*Dec.* 4].—I cannot resist congratulating you in writing, as I have already done verbally (at least, I hope Mackenzie delivered my message), on your masterly performance of last night. I had the satisfaction of hearing the whole of it, except the first half-hour; and I can truly say that I listened to the whole exposition with entire satisfaction, and admiration of the clearness and breadth with which you stated your views, and the skill with which you introduced the various topics and trod over very difficult ground. One ought not to be too sanguine, or to trust too much to first impressions; but I think you have weathered the really dangerous point, and that the ship is now in comparatively smooth waters. I am glad to find from H. Lennox that you are not bodily the worse, and mentally you must be much better. . . .

Lord Lyndhurst to Mrs. Disraeli.

Dec. 4, 1852.—. . . I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of congratulating you on Disraeli's great success, and on the skilful and brilliant manner in which he turned the weapons of the Free Traders and Radicals against themselves, pounding

[1] Trevelyan's *Macaulay*, p. 579.

them in their own mortar. The playful and easy manner in which he treated the subjects and his opponents was, as Derby, who sat next me, observed, quite charming.

The reception of the Budget, at first, was eminently favourable. *The Times* wrote next day that Disraeli had succeeded in showing that the country had new resources and new capabilities; and Greville, three days later, that he thought the Budget would 'go down, and make the Government safe.' On the Wednesday following, Derby and Disraeli had an enthusiastic reception in the City at the Lord Mayor's banquet, postponed from November 9, owing to the Duke's death and funeral. Disraeli, on rising to return thanks for the House of Commons, was received with protracted cheering. He expressed the hope that the new House would take a large view of national circumstances, forget party feelings, legislate not for classes, but for the community, in an impartial and patriotic spirit, and 'resolve, if the measures of Her Majesty's Government are entitled to public confidence and respect, that they shall not be defeated by the manœuvres of faction.'

The manœuvres of faction were already at work. The lead was taken by the Peelites, under the general superintendence of Aberdeen, but with Gladstone as the moving spirit. As early as Monday, December 6, Gladstone rose and strongly protested against any interference with the frame of the income tax, and, in concert with Goulburn, took up solemnly the extraordinary position that to differentiate between precarious and realised incomes was a breach of faith with the public creditor, inasmuch as thereby income derived from the funds was taxed more highly than income earned. The obvious answer was that income derived from the funds would be taxed at exactly the same rate as income from any other investment, and therefore the public creditor was treated in exactly the same way as every other creditor. Though these pedantic objections to the treatment of the income tax might produce little effect, there were other arguments against the Budget of a more popular character. To repeal half the malt tax and half the tea duty, especially

when the latter was done by degrees, was of little value, it was said, to either consumers or producers and importers. There was something in the objection, and Disraeli could not bring forward in public the fact that, but for the increased expenditure on defences into which he was forced, he would have been able to deal more decisively with one, if not both, of these taxes. Again, in spite of Disraeli's expressed desire to reconcile town and country, an agitation was got up in the towns—on the basis of Macaulay's crude appraisement of the Budget as taking money from townspeople to put it into the pockets of malt-growers—to protest against the extension and increase of the house tax. The Irish naturally objected to the extension of the income tax to their island. There were also purists who said that it was monstrous, when you had a surplus, to impose fresh taxation, and not content yourself with distributing boons among the taxpayers. Disraeli was justifiably indignant at being taunted, in the exceptional conditions of his position, with not following 'the miserable routine of commonplace circumstances.'

The debate began on December 10, a week after the statement, and ended on December 16. Disraeli's difficulty in dealing with it was that all his opponents wanted his blood, but wanted it for different reasons. Wood, indeed, condemned the Budget generally as 'most visionary and most rash,' and said that no one in his senses would attempt in one year to deal with tea duties and malt tax, or to increase income tax and house duty. 'Take back your Budget,' he said. Reduce the tea duties, but leave malt tax alone, and give up the house tax. Disraeli need not be ashamed of doing what Pitt was compelled to do. 'I want you to reconstruct your own Budget. . . . Either you know nothing about it, or you have recklessly abused the knowledge which you possess.' Cobden would be glad to do away with the malt tax, if there were a surplus, but would not vote for any new tax in its place. Lowe thought the system of gradual reduction practised in regard to the tea duties was draw-

ing bills on popularity and discounting them at once; and he also exhibited curious learning (not admitted by the head of the firm of Bass) on brewing. Goulburn harped once more on the injury to public credit. Graham protested against extending the area of direct taxation. It was the great resource in time of war; it should not be pressed unduly in time of peace. Much of the criticism of the Opposition was directed to a quite incidental proposal of Disraeli's, to put an end to the Public Works Loan Fund, which he maintained was of no present utility, and the repayments of advances under which he proposed to carry to revenue—£400,000 in all.

'The Budget,' says Sir Stafford Northcote,[1] 'presented too many assailable points to have much chance of being adopted.' That is true; but also, apart from its creator, it had a lamentable want of support in debate. The only speech of importance in its favour among the unofficial members was a spirited oration by Bulwer Lytton. Manners was overtasked in being put up to reply to Wood and Cobden, and Pakington was hardly a match for Goulburn and Graham. Walpole was the most successful Ministerial speaker. He vindicated Disraeli against the 'extraordinary attacks' upon him by the Opposition orators. Why was he assailed at every point? Were they jealous of his success?

> Is it because he has laboured hard and long, contending with genius against rank and power and the ablest statesmen, until he has attained the highest eminence which an honourable ambition may ever aspire to—the leadership and guidance of the Commons of England? Is it because he has verified in himself the dignified description of a great philosophical poet of antiquity, portraying equally his past career and his present position?—
>
> 'Certare ingenio; contendere nobilitate;
> Noctes atque dies niti præstante labore
> Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.'

Palmerston, who sincerely wished the Government well, and might perhaps have averted its fall by some such friendly action as he had taken on Villiers's motion, was

[1] *Twenty Years of Financial Policy*, p. 180.

laid up and prevented from going to the House during the debate. The only kindness he could show was to abstain from the division. His sentiments were conveyed to Mrs. Disraeli by Lady Bulwer: 'I have been to Lady P[almerston]'s—alas! without success. It seems he disapproves of the house tax, and would naturally have voted against it, but abstains from good-will towards the Government. . . . They wish you to stay in, and would do all they could for it. . . . She spoke of joining you, and wishes there were people to follow Lord P., but that the difficulty was for him to go alone.'

Disraeli had staked the existence of the Ministry on securing a general verdict in favour of the Budget. Being strongly possessed of the fighting instinct, and determined not to succumb until he had exhausted every resource, he endeavoured, as the discussion proceeded, to get the question on which the fateful division was to be taken put in such a manner as to give the Government the best chance of surviving. On this point there were many wrangles. The resolution referred to the house tax, and, in presence of the manifest repugnance of the representatives of towns to consent to its being doubled, Disraeli showed a disposition to accept the vote as only determining the principle of extension of area without pledging the Committee to an increase. This was warmly resented by the Opposition, who maintained with reason that without the doubling of the house tax the promised boons could not be given. Disraeli felt that he was being driven into a corner, and, the night before the division, as a last resource, tried to obtain some support in a quarter where he had for long found considerable personal sympathy, even though coupled with strong political antagonism. It was a Wednesday, at that time an 'off' Parliamentary night, and he asked Bright to come and see him in Grosvenor Gate between ten and eleven. Bright had taken no part in the debate, save to say shortly that he did not see that any new tax was necessary; but that, if the necessity was proved to him, he would prefer to vote for a tax upon successions applying generally to all property.

He accepted Disraeli's invitation, and has left in his diary a full account of what his biographer calls a 'strange colloquy.'[1] Disraeli, who was found 'near the top of the house, in his morning gown, surrounded by books, pictures, mirrors, etc.,' unburdened his soul about that 'infernal question,' Protection, and those 'damned defences,' which had between them made such havoc of his Budget. He declared that he would not have touched the malt tax if he could have dealt with tea without doing so, and dwelt on the administrative economies the Government were effecting. All he wanted was a general vote for his Budget, and then he would give up malt tax and house duty, and remodel his scheme. His party had 'stood so much already,' that he did not see why he might not get rid of the 'old stagers' and 'red tapists,' and form a Government, not perhaps all at once, with Cobden and Bright. Disraeli's face, says Bright, was serious; but Bright laughed, and we may laugh with him at the mixture of earnestness and irony in his host's conversation. If Disraeli could get Bright and his friends to be neutral, it was all that he probably hoped for, and he trusted to his own dexterity for a fresh combination after the vote was obtained. But this was only one mood; and, when he found Bright quite irresponsive, he ended his talk in a deeper vein. 'No man knew what he had struggled against and overcome; he had been a Minister, and was now about to be beaten. He had always felt the insecurity of their position, and had not removed to Downing Street[2] on that account. He would not keep office or try to cling to it if they could not have *power*, and it was clear they had not the numbers with them to enable them to go on, and it was doubtful if they could live to Easter if they now escaped.'

This last mood corresponded to that of Disraeli's chief, who no doubt had a shrewd idea of what was passing in his mind, and who was writing to him at the very time

[1] Trevelyan's *Bright*, Journal, Dec. 15, 1852.

[2] Though Disraeli had not gone to live in Downing Street, he had decorated the reception-rooms. He wrote to his wife in September of this year from the official residence: 'The rooms look admirable. I think the saloon the most effective in London: the dining-room all right and very good.'

that this curious scene was being enacted in Grosvenor Gate.

From Lord Derby.

Private and Confidential. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Wednesday night* [*Dec.* 15].—The more I reflect upon the position of our affairs which you presented to me this evening, the less I am satisfied with the position which we shall occupy, if by any concession we obtain a respite from an adverse vote to-morrow night. The case may be different if we can obtain a respite without concession; but even then we shall not stand satisfactorily to ourselves, nor, I am afraid, to the country. We may buy off a hostile vote before Christmas; but how shall we stand afterwards? We have abandoned the principle of Protection in deference to the voice of the country; we always said that we would do so. We prepared our Budget, of which one main element was the reduction of the malt tax as the *only* relief granted to the land, and that granted because it was only incidentally a relief to them, accompanying advantages, in the spirit of Free Trade policy, to the consumers. You say, and I believe truly, that in any case we cannot carry our reduction of the malt tax; but, if we cannot, can we carry any other reduction of taxation avowedly for the relief of the land? I think you will at once answer, No: and I am afraid it is so.

Now, if it be so, shall we not be justly exposed to a double attack, from our friends and our opponents? from the one that we are conferring no boon on them, but, on the contrary, subjecting real property to new imposts; and from the other, that we are needlessly involving ourselves in an extension of direct taxation, most unpopular in itself, and uncalled for by any public necessity? We have staked our existence on our Budget *as a whole*—we have asked for a decision of Parliament, which is to say whether as a whole they will accept it, and us to administer it; can we, with credit, accept a departure from it which, as a whole, doing impartial justice to all the various classes interested, will disturb the general balance, and force upon us, in point of fact, a complete reconstruction? And when we come to reconstruct, what shall we have to say to our agricultural supporters, who will find themselves without a vestige of relief, and even with an increased weight of taxation? We bound ourselves, before the dissolution, to abide by the decision of the country as to the maintenance of the system of Free Trade; but we bound ourselves no less strongly to relieve the land, to some extent, from the consequences of that Free Trade. How can we declare, by concession on the house tax, that we will deprive ourselves of the means of doing *anything* for that interest to which, after all, we owe our position?

If indeed you are of opinion that, by postponing the abso-

lute decision on the amount of house tax, you will be enabled, abandoning the malt tax, to give such other relief to the land as may save our honour; or that you see your way to such a conclusion from a definitive abandonment of the double duty, and the adoption of a lower scale, I am ready to concur with you, though reluctantly, in deferring the crisis of our fate till after Christmas; but I own that if you are only to escape defeat to-morrow by a virtual surrender of your Budget—at least, of so much of it as promises *any* relief to our own friends, and without the prospect of the slightest step in their favour in our subsequent arrangements—I think the temporary respite will be dearly bought; and that you had better be defeated honestly in a fairly-fought field than escape under a cloud, to encounter aggravated defeat with alienated friends and sneering opponents. Perhaps I do not read the House of Commons aright, nor exactly know what are their feelings; but if we are to be a Government, we must be so by our own friends, and in spite of all combinations, and not by purchasing a short-lived existence upon the forbearance of the Radical party.

My deliberate opinion is, that the utmost amount of concession which you ought to make is to accept the principle of extension and increase of the house tax, without binding yourself or the House to the amount of the latter, reserving that for the calm consideration of the Government during the recess; but refusing to pledge yourself *against* the amount as originally proposed, or to any figure which may make the rest of your Budget *impossible*. If the House have not so much confidence in us as to place us in a majority on these conditions, it is high time that the country should satisfy itself whether any other possible combination possesses *more* of its confidence. If such a combination can be found, the business of the country may be carried on, and we shall be, though defeated, not discredited. If no such combination can be formed, we must very shortly return to power, with increased means from the failure of our divided opponents. This is my deliberate opinion, unbiassed, I hope, by any personal considerations; but if you have any doubt as to the course to be pursued, you had better call a Cabinet for to-morrow. I will see none of our colleagues, and my opinion shall be reserved until every member shall have expressed his own.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. GROSVENOR GATE, *Dec.* 16, 1852.—I do not think there is any necessity to call a Cabinet, for, I am sure, everyone must agree with you on the subject.

Your letter has removed the only dark spot in my political career, which was the fear, from something you once said to me, that retirement from office would be the term of your

public life. Personally, I should then feel isolated; but, as it is, I would prefer being your colleague in opposition to being the colleague of any other man as a Minister.

In accordance with the agreement manifested in these letters, Disraeli stated at the beginning of the final night's debate that the Government would regard the vote as involving an increase as well as an extension of the house tax; and thereupon issue was joined. It was shortly after ten when the Chancellor of the Exchequer rose to answer his assailants. 'During a whole week they had baited him; night after night they had derided and ridiculed him, taunted and twitted him, scoffed and scouted him,' writes a contemporary observer.[1] 'He scarcely seemed to hear, and not at all to feel;' his face wore 'that cold changeless look which, in natures such as his, covers depths of smouldering emotion. . . . So he sat, hour after hour, night after night, the full black eye gazing upon vacancy, his pale face veiled in apathy.' Now his hour had arrived. He was never so great as when at bay, and the welcoming cheers of his party showed at once their sympathy and their expectations. He began with studied calmness, and spoke throughout with such precise elocution that every word could be heard; and every word told. 'Superlative acting' it appeared to the moral sensitiveness of Gladstone; a more sympathetic and clear-sighted onlooker saw that 'feelings long restrained and painfully excited were struggling to escape and panting for expression.' Scorn, perhaps, was the prevailing feeling; irony and sarcasm the principal weapons.

Friends and foes alike admitted that the orator's powers had never been more brilliantly displayed. 'Sir,' he began, 'after four nights of criticism, conducted by some of the most considerable reputations in this House, on the financial propositions that I have laid on the table of the Committee, I now rise to vindicate those propositions.' He dealt first with the objections of detail, especially those on his proposed dealings with the sum of £400,000, which were 'assailed in language and a tone somewhat unusual, certainly not very Parliamentary,' by Wood,

[1] In *The Tablet and Telegraph*, Dec. 25, 1852.

who, instead of addressing the Chair, addressed Disraeli personally. Graham had talked of the benefits of this Public Works Loan Fund to country gentlemen. Why, it had been spent behind the back of the House on such profitless enterprises as a Thames tunnel and a park for Battersea, and the money had been lost. 'In stopping a system so iniquitous, I was only doing my duty as a guardian of the public purse.' He did not pay the sum into the balances of the Exchequer, as 'it would, in the present state of affairs, have been just the same as locking up that sum in an iron chest; it would have been immovable and unprofitable.' He apologised for troubling the House with these details of Treasury finance. 'My own knowledge on the subject is, of course, recent. I was not born and bred a Chancellor of the Exchequer; I am one of the Parliamentary rabble'—a mock depreciation of himself as compared with his opponents, which had an instant effect. Defending himself in regard to the drawback on malt to be payable in October, Disraeli held up to ridicule Lowe's ostentatious learning about brewing. 'Why fix the 10th of October?' Lowe had asked. 'Here is a plot; if we can only find out why the Government fix upon the 10th of October, we shall be able at once to penetrate these financial mystifications.' Disraeli was surprised that one who seemed so complete a master of the art of brewing, and had made so eloquent a defence of the system of credit to maltsters, should be unaware that the malting season was from October to May.

Passing to more serious subjects, Disraeli pointed out that, in contemplating a revision of the financial system, it was essential to discover how far the country would consent to direct taxation. For this, Graham, 'prompt in accusation at all times,' had accused him of pushing direct taxation to a rash extreme, and Wood had called him 'reckless.' This charge of recklessness was brought by one who seemed to forget that, when he, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was in possession of both an income tax and a window tax, he came down to the House one day

and proposed to a startled assembly to double the income tax. That might indeed have been called reckless—especially as on the first menace of opposition the same Minister withdrew his proposition.[1] The House was worked up to a high state of passion as Disraeli continued to pour scorn upon his hapless predecessor:

> Talk of recklessness! Why, what in the history of finance is equal to the recklessness of the right honourable gentleman? And what was the ground on which he withdrew this enormous proposition—a proposition which only the safety of the State would have justified him in making? When he was beaten, baffled, humiliated, he came down to the House of Commons, and said he had sufficient revenue without resorting to that proposition! The future historian will not be believed when he states that a Minister came down with a proposition nearly to double the income tax, and, when that measure was rejected, the next day announced that the ways and means were ample without it. But then the right hon. gentleman tells me—in not very polished, and scarcely in Parliamentary language—that I do not know my business. He may have learned his business. The House of Commons is the best judge of that; I care not to be his critic. Yet, if he has learned his business, he has still to learn some other things—he has to learn that scurrility[2] is not sarcasm, and that insolence is not invective.

A storm of cheers and counter-cheers greeted this biting retort, and then Disraeli, in a lower key, dwelt for awhile on his proposals about income tax. The Government were determined to recognise a difference between precarious and realised incomes, but they were aware that 'to frame a complete measure on this subject would baffle the happiest genius in finance,' and therefore the details would be open to modification. Next he turned upon Graham, 'whom I will not say I greatly respect, but rather whom I greatly regard'—a phrase which roused Gladstone's subsequent indignation. There is, however,

[1] See above, pp. 921, 922. It was Russell, the Prime Minister, who actually brought the proposal to double the income tax before the House in 1848; but, of course, he was acting on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Wood.

[2] Hansard has 'petulance' here. I have substituted 'scurrility' on the authority of the late Mr. Augustus Vernon Harcourt, F.R.S., who was present, as a boy of seventeen, at the debate and took special notice of this famous passage. Meaning and alliteration both support the change.

reason to believe that Disraeli did not use it offensively, but only in the sense that Graham, who as a public man was entitled to regard, had no claim to respect as a financial authority. Though this phrase may have been meant innocently, there was certainly intention in the way in which Disraeli compared himself—'my humble efforts,' 'I know my deficiencies'—with Graham, the 'great' Minister who had preceded him. Graham now dwelt on the hard case of the poor clerk with an income between £100 and £150 a year; but, in his own Superannuation Bill of 1834, he had drawn the line himself, like Disraeli, at £100 and not at £150 a year. Disraeli scathingly said that, while he would pay little attention to the *epea pteroenta* of debate, he did think he had found in this Bill 'the calm, solid, and solemn conclusions of a statesman,' 'the better mind' of a most able man,' and that he would be safe in following his example.

Next he passed to the charge that the reduction of half the malt tax, involving £2,500,000 a year, would not benefit the consumer, but would all go to the brewer; but that, he cried, was the old Protectionist argument about the repeal of the corn tax. The loaf, it was then said, would be just as dear; all the benefit would go to those villains, the bakers and millers. Now the villains who would intercept the benefit were the brewers, in the opinion of gentlemen who were once so eloquent on the necessity of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market. Such were the vicissitudes of political life!

> The great friends of the consumer, the enemies of colossal monopolies—here we find them all arrayed in favour of high taxation for the producer; and here we find them, with taunts to us, teaching all the fallacies which we at least have had the courage honourably to give up. Tell me Protection is dead! Tell me there is no Protectionist party in the country! Why, 'tis rampant! And 'tis there! They have taken up our principles with our benches, and I believe they will be quite as unsuccessful.

He was told that in repealing a portion of the malt tax he had shaken to its foundations the credit of England. 'The credit of England depends on a farthing a pot on

the poor man's beer! Never shall I forget how that weird Sibyl, the member for Cambridge University [Goulburn], gave forth that solemn oracle, "The public credit of England is in danger!" ' Why, there never was a period in the history of the country when her resources were, day by day, so visibly increasing; and there were great possibilities of retrenchment in administration, as had been shown by the excellent work done under his direction by Lord Chandos.

'During the invective of Disraeli's speech,' writes Fraser, 'the Opposition presented a most remarkable appearance; not speaking to each other, pale in the gaslight. It reminded one of the scenes in the National Convention of the French Revolution. To complete the effect, although in midwinter, a loud thunderstorm raged; the peals were heard and the flashes of lightning could be seen in the Chamber itself.' It was now long past midnight, and Disraeli drew towards his peroration. Wood, whose Budget in 1848 had been 'withdrawn, and re-withdrawn, and withdrawn again,' had patronisingly given him advice. 'I have been told to withdraw my Budget. I was told that Mr. Pitt withdrew his Budget, and I know that more recently other persons have done so, too. Sir, I do not aspire to the fame of Mr. Pitt, but'—speaking in a louder tone and with a finger pointed at Wood—'I will not submit to the degradation of others.' When parties were balanced and Governments on sufferance, everything degenerated into a party question. Direct taxation—the most important question of the day—had been made a party question; and, were he to bring forward a scheme to save the country a million annually, then administrative reform would become a party question at once.

'Yes!' he cried, 'I know what I have to face. I have to face a Coalition!' There was tremendous cheering as the orator looked significantly at the two benches opposite, the one above the gangway tenanted by the Whig leaders, and the one below the gangway by the Peelite chiefs. 'The combination may be successful. A Coali-

tion has before this been successful.' Then, raising his voice and lifting his right hand, he proceeded: 'But Coalitions, although successful, have always found this, that their triumph has been brief;' and, after a pause for an assenting cheer, he brought his right hand down on the table of the House, to emphasize the famous phrase: 'This, too, I know, that England does not love Coalitions.' On that note he ended. 'I appeal from the Coalition to that public opinion which governs this country—to that public opinion whose mild and irresistible influence can control even the decrees of Parliaments, and without whose support the most august and ancient institutions are but "the baseless fabric of a vision."'

It was one o'clock when Disraeli sat down, amid a roar of acclamation from his party. The atmosphere was electrical. Passions had been roused to frenzy on both sides. It would have been in accordance with precedent for the division to follow immediately upon the reply of the Leader of the House. But the Coalition had determined to have the last word. Gladstone, a grave and handsome figure, sprang to his feet amid the cheers of the Opposition; but he was received in the most hostile fashion by Ministerialists, partly owing to the breach of propriety involved in a mere private member following the Leader at the close of the debate, partly in consequence of their recognition that their impending defeat would be due to the undying rancour of the Peelites. For several minutes he could not make himself heard; and the tone of moral superiority which he assumed, rebuking Disraeli for his licence of language, did not propitiate the Conservatives. Few of his early sentences had an audible finish; the shouts and even screams of some of his opponents from the dark corners under the gallery were answered by the supporting applause of his friends. At last he was allowed to complete a sentence of severe condemnation. 'I must tell the right hon. gentleman that whatever he has learned—and he has learned much—he has not yet learned the limits of discretion, of moderation, and of forbearance, that ought to restrain the conduct and

language of every member of this House, the disregard of which is an offence in the meanest amongst us, but is of tenfold weight when committed by the Leader of the House of Commons.' To this rebuke, which entirely ignored the provocation given in the debates both on Villiers's motion and on the Budget, Disraeli listened with his wonted impassiveness. All trace of vehement emotion had left his pallid countenance, and throughout his rival's speech he remained still, stern, and apathetic. Gladstone proceeded to a weighty criticism of the whole financial scheme, dwelling especially on the treatment of the income tax, the matter which, as he wrote subsequently, made him feel 'that the day was come to eject the Government.' The Budget, he said, was 'the most subversive in its tendencies and ultimate effects' of any he had ever known. The speech deeply impressed the House, and is even said to have changed a few votes. But after Disraeli's brilliancy it did not hold all its hearers. Derby, present to await the fate of his Administration, after listening a few minutes, dropped his head down on his arms, ejaculating, 'Dull!'[1]

Not until nearly four o'clock in the morning of Friday, December 17, was the division taken. The Conservatives alone supported the Government. The Whigs, the Radicals, the Peelites, and the Irish Brigade, including the wavering Tenant Leaguers, streamed into the Opposition lobby; Palmerston abstained. 'There was an immense crowd,' writes Macaulay; 'a deafening cheer when Hayter took the right hand of the row of tellers; and a still louder cheer when the numbers were read—305 to 286.' The Derby Government was beaten by nineteen votes, and Disraeli's Budget destroyed. But in spite of the expert weight against it in the debate, many of the principles on which the Budget was founded have received a triumphant vindication from time. The root idea—that under a Free Trade system direct taxation must be largely in-

[1] I am indebted for knowledge of this incident to the late Sir George Trevelyan, who was present, as a boy of fourteen, at the debate, and sat, with his father, Sir Charles Trevelyan, under the Gallery on the bench immediately behind the Prime Minister.

creased—has governed all modern financial schemes. The justice of taxing precarious—or, as the modern phrase is, 'earned'—incomes more lightly than realised incomes has been recognised. The malt tax has gone; so, after successive reductions, have the tea duties. One admirable principle which Disraeli laid down, that direct taxation should not be based on large exemptions, but should be, so far as practicable, as general as indirect, has indeed met with increasing neglect. But this result of democracy, which tends to exempt almost entirely from taxation the classes who hold political power, fills political philosophers with disquiet for the future.

Ministers resigned at once, and on the following Monday[1] Disraeli announced the fact in the House of Commons. After all the storms of the last few weeks, the parting scene was a peaceful one, to the astonishment of the Queen and the Prince, who had not expected to find the leading spirits of the Commons 'of a sudden all so well-bred.' Russell claimed the credit of having suggested to Disraeli the propriety of taking the initiative in frank apology. Disraeli did so, as Lord Morley says, 'with infinite polish and grace.' Fraser noted that he wore 'an exceptional air of gaiety,' and was particularly neat and spruce in dress and appearance.

> I hope the House will not think it presumptuous on my part, if . . . I venture to offer them my grateful thanks for the indulgent, and I may even say the generous, manner in which on both sides I have been supported in attempting to conduct the business of this House. If, sir, in maintaining a too unequal struggle, any word has escaped my lips (which I hope has never been the case except in the way of retort) which has hurt the feelings of any gentleman in this House, I deeply regret it. And I hope that the impression on their part will be as transient as the sense of provocation was on my own. The kind opinion of the members of this House, whatever may be their political opinions, and wherever I may sit, will always be to me a most cherished possession, one which I shall always covet and highly appreciate.

To this overture Russell, Graham, and Wood, responded suitably. Russell complimented Disraeli on the ability

[1] Dec. 20.

and gallantry with which he had carried on the struggle; Graham declared he had never failed to admire his talents; Wood was only too anxious to return to the old terms of reciprocal kindness with him. Perhaps the good feeling did not go very deep. The blunt Sibthorp, who definitely returned to his allegiance to Derby and Disraeli, said: 'I have heard that you may knock a man down, and then step forward with courtesy to give him a plaster. I neither quite subscribe to the knocking down, nor have I any faith in the sincerity of those who offer the plaster.' He regarded the Coalition as a 'phalanx of conspirators' and meant to be on his guard against 'the man-traps and spring-guns of hon. gentlemen opposite.'

The grace of Disraeli's farewell was not confined to the House of Commons. To the Queen he wrote: 'Mr. Disraeli humbly begs permission to lay at your Majesty's feet his dutiful and grateful sense of the gracious and indulgent kindness which your Majesty has been pleased to bestow upon him;' and he assured the Prince that he would 'ever remember with interest and admiration the princely mind in the princely person,' and be at all times prepared to prove his devotion. To the Treasury, from which he had taken his private secretary, T. P. Courtenay,[1] and where he had made himself greatly liked, he did not stint his acknowledgments; and particularly to its permanent chief, whose reply is a valuable testimony, from one whose standard of public duty was notably high, to the spirit in which the retiring Chancellor of the Exchequer had performed the duties of his great office:

From Sir Charles Trevelyan.

TREASURY, *Dec.* 29, 1852.—I sincerely thank you for your *parting kindness* in writing me a letter containing a great deal more than I deserve.

It is, nevertheless, a satisfaction to me to know that, having done *my best*, my exertions have been appreciated by you.

I feel grateful for the uniform cordiality and courtesy I have experienced from you, and I shall always recollect with pleasure and bear testimony to the direct and obvious regard you have had for public interests in all my intercourse with you.

[1] A member of the Devon family, who died prematurely in 1861.

I have been so long a public servant that perhaps this gives me more satisfaction than even personal kindness to myself. You have my best wishes for your health and happiness.

The Conservative Government had no reason to blush for the results of their ten months' term of office. They had been without a majority in the House of Commons, and the Court, though correct in its attitude, had been markedly unsympathetic. Nevertheless Derby could justly boast that, in spite of Malmesbury's inexperience, the foreign relations of the country were the better for his administration. The difficult question of the recognition of Louis Napoleon, and the still more difficult question of his title—the magic figure III., which had seemed to foreshadow a revival of Continental warfare—had been adjusted without conceding objectionable claims, and without imperilling the good understanding with France which was so valuable to this country. We had kept clear of the Russian combination against France, and shown the Emperor Nicholas that there were British statesmen who knew their own minds. Disraeli himself had been so occupied with the domestic battle that he had not played this time a leading part in the foreign discussions, though the results must have been thoroughly welcome to him. But he had helped, by the Militia Act and by his provision in the autumn, to strengthen the national defences. A Constitution had been given to New Zealand, and legal reform had been materially advanced. Government had been efficiently carried on in spite of the rawness of Ministers. Above all, the Ministry had relieved the country of the doubt about the permanence of the new commercial system which had paralysed so many energies. Free Trade was now established with the concurrence of the Conservatives. By his loyalty to his chief and to his colleagues Disraeli had exposed himself to virulent criticism, which circumstances prevented him from meeting conclusively. But he had, at any rate, shown the almost illimitable range of his political resources; and his position as Leader had been confirmed by ten months of dexterous management. He had proved his capacity for the highest offices in the State.

CHAPTER XIII.

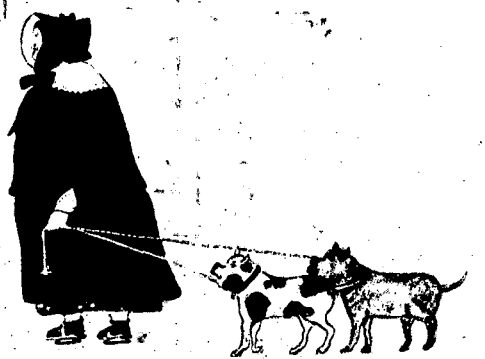
MRS. BRYDGES WILLYAMS.

1851–1863.

About the time of Disraeli's first taste of office a new personality came into his life, and he formed an intimacy of a romantic character which was only broken by death. Though his friends were many, his intimates had been few; perhaps only three, indeed, down to this period —his father, his sister, and his wife. His father was dead; to his sister and his wife was now added—in the person of an elderly widow, Mrs. Brydges Willyams, of Mount Braddon, Torquay—a third woman friend, with whom his relations became only less intimate than with them, and with whom he maintained an affectionate correspondence for more than ten years. About the origin of this 'curious and delicate idyll,' as Froude happily terms it, many stories have been told, of varying degrees of inaccuracy. The true facts have been put on record, from personal knowledge, by Sir Philip Rose, in a detailed memorandum, dated May 1, 1882, which leaves little unexplained:

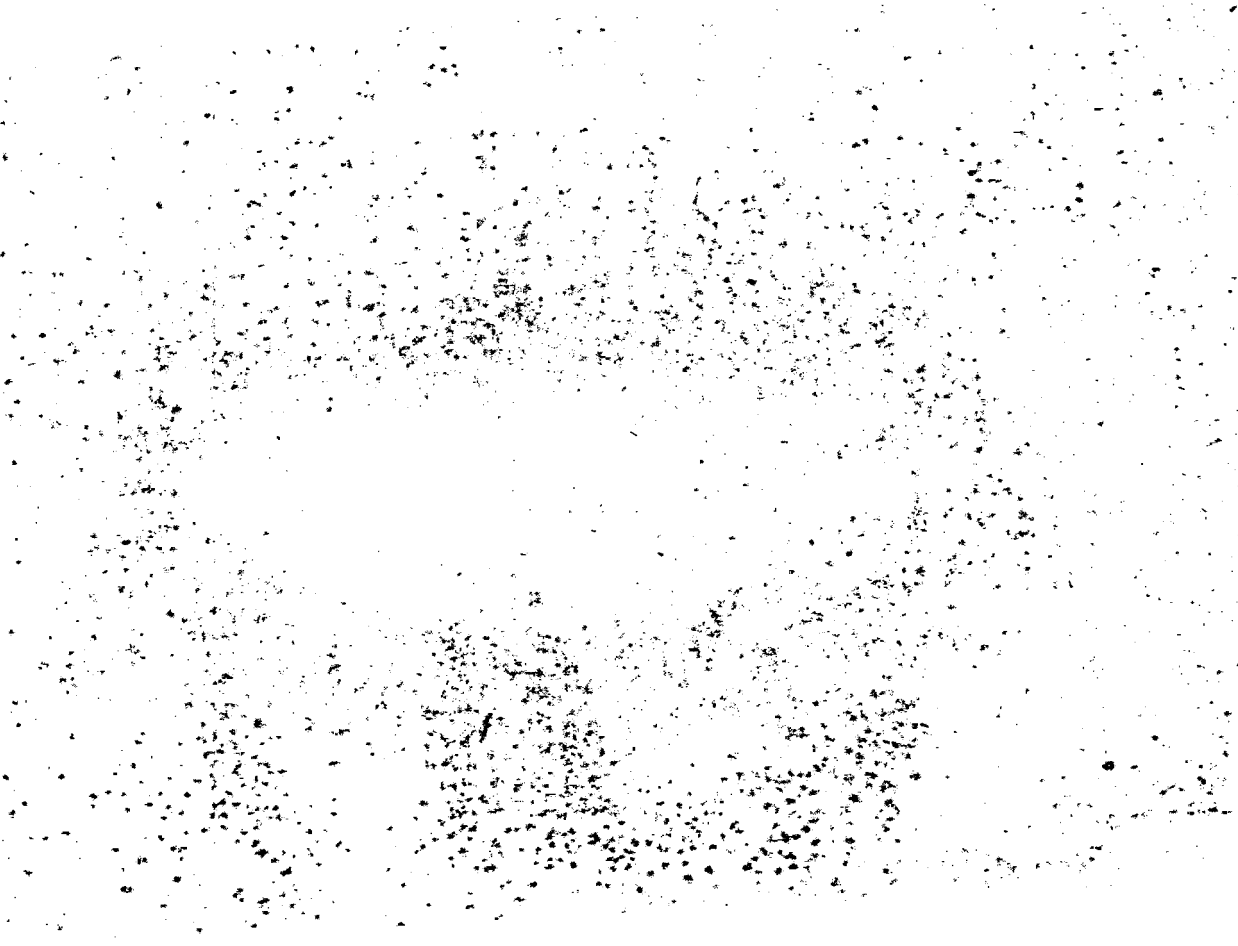
> Prior to the year 1851 this lady appears to have occasionally written to Mr. Disraeli, either after one of his political speeches, or upon the publication of a new work, expressing her profound admiration for the author, and her sympathy with his noble vindication of the race of Israel; but, like most public men, accustomed to receive this sort of homage, especially from ladies, Mr. Disraeli had taken no notice of her letters, and had only ascertained, by a casual inquiry of a Devonshire friend, that a gentlewoman of that name resided at the address from which the letters were dated.
>
> It subsequently transpired that Mrs. Brydges Willyams was *née* a Miss Mendez da Costa, of the race of Israel, though a professor of the Christian faith. Her mother was married a

A Sketch taken at Torquay Devon in 1853



Mrs Bryhges Williams of Braddon Hill Torquay Devon

From a caricature in the possession of the Williams family



second time, to a Mr. Ford, and Miss Mendez da Costa married Colonel Brydges Willyams, who commanded the Devonshire[1] Militia, and who left her a widow without children.

She was a lady of advanced age, of moderate fortune, inherited from her own family, but of great intelligence and considerable intellectual powers, and had an enthusiastic pride in the race from which she sprung; this, in fact, was the tie that first attracted her to Mr. Disraeli, and secured her devoted attachment to him.

In the year 1851 Mr. Disraeli brought me a letter he had just received, which required an immediate answer. I remember his words: 'I have received an important letter, and I come to you, as my best friend, to ask your advice.' He then showed me a letter written in a large, bold hand, without the usual commencement or ending, but only the signature, 'S. Brydges Willyams.' Although all other letters seem to have been preserved, I have not, at present, lighted upon this one among Lord Beaconsfield's papers; but I have the clearest recollection of its contents, and even of the wording, which was original and peculiar, and, to the best of my recollection, as follows:

'I have often before addressed you in reference to your political speeches and your published works; but I now write to you upon a private subject. I am about to make my will, and I have to ask, as a great favour, that you will oblige me by being one of the executors.'

She then went on to mention some trifling matters in which she was interested, and concluded her letter thus:

'I think it right to add that whoever are my executors will also be my residuary legatees, and that the interest they will take under my will, although not a considerable one, will, at all events, be substantial.'

We consulted over this letter, and I gave my advice, which was in accord with Mr. Disraeli's own instinct, that he ought not to be hasty or eager in accepting the proposal; and, beyond a simple acknowledgment of the receipt of the letter, and stating that the subject required consideration, he allowed a month or six weeks to elapse before giving any definite answer; and then he wrote only a conditional acceptance, suggesting that, as he wished for more information, and his arrangements for the autumn recess included some visits in Devonshire, he would take the opportunity of calling upon her at Torquay and making her personal acquaintance.

Upon returning from his first visit to Torquay, Mr. Disraeli brought me a memorandum from Mrs. Brydges Willyams of

[1] It was the Cornish, and not the Devonshire, Militia, which Colonel Brydges Willyams commanded.

her wishes, and a request from her that I would act for her professionally, and prepare a will for carrying them out. As I saw by the memo that there was a pecuniary benefit intended for Mr. Disraeli, I told him that, looking to his interest alone, I thought I had better not act for Mrs. Brydges Willyams, but that he should suggest to her to apply to some local solicitor of high standing. . . . The advice was followed. . . .

As the acquaintance thus formed grew and ripened into a most intimate friendship, other wills were made from time to time, the latest being executed in 1857, by which the residue of her estate, subject to legacies of a considerable amount, was bequeathed to Mr. Disraeli absolutely, Mr. Disraeli and a Mr. Stephen Wilson being appointed executors. Mr. Wilson predeceased the testatrix, who died in 1863. Her estate was sworn under £40,000. The legacies bequeathed by the will would have reduced the residue to about £20,000; but as several of the principal legatees had also predeceased the testatrix, and consequently their legacies had lapsed, the amount of residue actually realised somewhat exceeded £30,000. . . .

A few further details may be added. In 1851 Sarah Brydges Willyams had been a widow more than thirty years, as her husband, James Brydges Willyams, of Carnanton, St. Columb, Cornwall, an eldest son, who predeceased his father and so never came into the family property, died in 1820. Her grandfather was Daniel Mendez da Costa, a well-known and prosperous member of the Da Costa family; her father Abraham Mendez da Costa, of Bath, who was married in 1775 and died young in 1782.[1] Mrs. Brydges Willyams was between seventy and eighty when Disraeli first corresponded with her in 1851, and probably nearer ninety than eighty when she died in 1863.

It was in the spring of 1851 that the correspondence began; and the natural inference from Sir Philip Rose's memorandum is that it was in the autumn of that year that Disraeli first visited Torquay and made Mrs. Will-

[1] I am indebted for this information about the Da Costas mainly to Mr. Lucien Wolf, whose authority on such matters is unquestionable. The ordinary books of reference appear to be wrong in giving Emanuel Mendez da Costa as Mrs. Willyams's father.

yams's personal acquaintance. It may very well have been so, but it was presumably only a flying call; for the earliest letters preserved make no reference to any visit before August, 1853, when, as on all subsequent occasions, Mrs. Disraeli accompanied her husband. It was not till after this period that the correspondence assumed its very affectionate and intimate character. It opened with mutual presents of books.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Aug.* 2, 1851.

MY DEAR MADAM,—I must offer many apologies for not previously acknowledging your obliging remembrance of me, but the death of the late Lord Derby and the illness of the present one have combined to overwhelm me with affairs. I leave town on Monday for Hughenden Manor, where I shall find an entire, and most welcome, repose.

Brown was a favourite writer of my father, who looked upon him as the most sensible and satisfactory of the metaphysicians; and his collected works were very welcome to me.

You will receive to-morrow, or Monday, *Tancred*, which, notwithstanding it is in the form of a novel, I hope you will read, and read even with attention, as it is a vindication, and, I hope, a complete one, of the race from which we alike spring. I have added to the packet the last, and classical, edition of the *Curiosities of Literature*, which you may place by the side of *Charles the First*. In a memoir of my father, prefixed to this edition, you will find the name of your family incidentally mentioned. *Adieu! dear madam.*—*Yours sincerely*, D.

From Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

MT. BRADDON, *Aug.* 4, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you gratefully for a fine logical speech, which I have circulated to enlighten some of my friends, and for two most admirable works, which I shall reserve to devote my time to when I return from London. I am going there to-morrow for a fortnight, to see the Great Exhibition, with one of my nieces who has seen it throughout, and has such an uncommonly fine memory that I could not have a better cicerone. I am extremely glad that you are enjoying 'an entire repose,' so essential to the mind and to existence. If, however, you should happen to come to town whilst I am there, and could appoint a time and place at the Crystal Palace, I should be delighted to meet you, and to

pay my lawful debts; as to other debts, I must not soar to impossibilities.—Ever sincerely yours, S. B. W.

I have taken an apartment at 6, Bryanston Street, Portman Square.

Disraeli had left town when Mrs. Willyams arrived, and did not return to meet his correspondent at the Crystal Palace. Always courteous to ladies, and anxious to show special courtesy to a devoted admirer and benefactress, he reverted more than once, in subsequent letters, to his regret at missing her on this occasion. Two years afterwards he sent her his portrait as a kind of return visit; and eleven years afterwards, at the time of the next Exhibition, he again recalled her invitation and his default.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Feb.* 25, 1853.—I fear the portrait of an ex-Minister can hardly be a very acceptable offering to anyone, but I have, nevertheless, taken the liberty of directing Messrs. Colnaghi to send you one of myself, which they have published.

As I was prevented, by absence from town, having the pleasure of meeting you two years ago, you must kindly interpret the arrival of this silent guest as, in a manner, returning your visit to London, which I should be very glad to hear that you thought of repeating this season.—Ever yours, D.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *May* 9, 1862.—. . . The Great Exhibition is not as fascinating a one as that you remember, when you made me an assignation by the crystal fountain, which I was ungallant enough not to keep, being far away when it arrived at Grosvenor Gate. But, tho' not so charming, it is even more wonderful. One was a woman; this is a man ! . . .

These letters, and Sir Philip Rose's memorandum, seem entirely to dispose of Froude's account[1] of the origin of the friendship. Froude tells us that the lady asked for a meeting at the fountain in the Great Exhibition; that, after some hesitation, Disraeli went; that she told him an unintelligible story, and gave him a packet which proved to contain a case for submission to lawyers and a banknote for £1,000 to pay his election expenses.

[1] *Life of Beaconsfield*, ch. 12.

In reality the first meeting was at Torquay, and not in London, the only question being whether it took place in 1851 or 1853. Mrs. Willyams did not suggest an appointment at the Exhibition till after she and Disraeli were already in friendly correspondence, and that appointment he was unable to keep. The document that brought them together was her proposed will in his favour, and not a case for submission to lawyers; and if, as is quite possible, she ever gave him £1,000 for his election expenses, it was not after the mysterious fashion of this legend, for which Froude gives no authority.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Dec.* 21, 1851.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Passing thro' town, from Hatfield to Hughenden, I took the liberty, yesterday, of sending you a copy of a work which I have just published [*Lord George Bentinck*]. The strife of parties will not be very interesting to you, but, in the treatment of my theme, there may perhaps be some traits of character and some subjects touched upon, which may attract a thoughtful and instructed mind.—Believe me, sincerely yours, D.

Further progress with the friendship thus pleasantly begun was delayed by the formation of the first Derby-Disraeli Ministry. He had little time for letter-writing, and she would not encroach upon his scanty leisure. But a touching letter which she wrote, as the public funeral of the Duke of Wellington was approaching, shows how anxiously she was watching his career, and how quick she was to anticipate any risks to which his health might be exposed:

From Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

MT. BRADDON, *Sept.* 29, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—The assurance of your friendship, which will never be effaced from my remembrance, leads me to express my most earnest wish that you would get a substitute for yourself to attend the grand public funeral in contemplation. I would most gladly vote for medals and monuments that might be a beacon to seamen and a protection to our coast, but not for a fleeting, pompous, melancholy spectacle

which involves a sacrifice of time, health, and life.—With best wishes, I am ever, truly yours, S. B. W.

When in opposition, Disraeli wrote again, resuming the theme of race:

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Feb.* 28, 1853.—. . . It is race, not religion, that interests me in the instance in question. All Europeans, and many others, profess the religion of the Hebrews.

I, like you, was not bred among my race, and was nurtured in great prejudice against them. Thought, and the mysterious sympathy of organisation, have led me to adopt the views with respect to them, which I have advocated, and which, I hope I may say, have affected in thei favor public opinion. . . .

I beg to assure you that I am not at all 'unapproachable' to those who tenderly interest me, like yourself. If you come to town this season, I hope to see you, and very often. And if you do not come, it shall go hard if, before the year elapses, I do not visit your sunny hill on our western coast.—Ever yours, D.

Mrs. Willyams did not come to London, and accordingly the Disraelis went to her at Torquay after the close of the session in the middle of August.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

TORQUAY, *Tuesday* [*Aug.* 16, 1853].—Mrs. Disraeli is very anxious to have the pleasure of being presented to you, and we propose, if a word by the bearer does not tell you are engaged, to take your mountain fortress by assault this morning, and early—about noon.—Ever yours, D.

The Disraelis stayed a week in Torquay, and returned charmed with the kindness and sympathy of their new friend, who, on her part, was confirmed in her devotion to him and attracted by his wife. Till they came again she would, she told them, 'live on retrospection.' 'We passed a most agreeable week,' he wrote on August 25, 'and have done nothing but talk of you and yours ever since.'

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Sept.* 29, 1853.—My life is so uneventful that you must take a letter from me as a morning call from some insipid country neighbour, who begins by talking about the weather. I won't do that, but I must talk about myself, which is still worse.

I thought your criticism on *Ixion* as brilliant as anything in its pages, and was very much gratified by it. I quite forgot to mention, in a little advertisement to the volume, that *Ixion* and the *Infernal Marriage* were written more than twenty years ago. Many of the allusions, now obsolete, require this. Jupiter, for example, was George IV., and Apollo, Lord Byron. So in the *Infernal Marriage* there is a great deal of the politics of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Grey's Government; and Tiresias was Talleyrand, and Mantho, his niece, the Duchess of Dino. I had sketched, some years ago, the conclusion of this masqueraderie, but it was stolen from my chambers, with some other MSS. and property, in my days of solitariness, and I never had heart to undertake it again.

I have scarcely left the grounds since our return; books and writing fill up the tranquil hours, occasionally disturbed by a letter from some statesman out of office, raising the spectre of unsatisfied ambition. If it were not for the point of honor, I would abjure politics, having had my dream, tho' not altogether a very brilliant one. Two living statesmen, however, appeared on Tuesday week last, and stayed till Saturday—Lord Henry Lennox, one of my aide-de-camps, and whom I had the pleasure of making a Lord of the Treasury for ten months; and Mr. Smythe, the eldest son of Lord Strangford, and who, both as to ability and acquirement, is perhaps the most brilliant man of the day, tho' more adapted to social and literary pursuits than the stern business of politics. It was his first visit to Hughenden, tho' not Lord Henry's. Their presence occasioned us a few days of unusual exertion, and I showed them the land around, as you showed me Ugbrook and Berry Pomeroy, and the wooded banks of the Dart. Our country is not so fair and soft, but it has some charms with sunbeams. My nearest neighbour has historic interest of a very peculiar kind. The estate is that famous Hampden where ship-money was refused. Mr. Hampden died 200 years ago fighting *against* Charles Stuart; his considerable estate, descending thro' the female line, is now the property of Cameron of Lochiel, the great Highland Chief, whose ancestor 100 years ago (1740) died fighting *for* Charles Stuart. Such is history, and such is life! Strange things both.

All this part of England is History. The great events of the Parliamentary struggle of 1640, in fact, were confined to the Metropolitan counties—Beds, Bucks, Huntingdonshire, etc.; and you may travel from this place to Kimbolton Castle in the latter county, and mark, the whole way, the seats and residences of the leaders of those days.

What you did me the honor of quaffing at Torquay was not seltzer, but old-fashioned *soda* water. When I called for the former, the landlord was exhausted, and, it being Sunday, he could not replenish his stores. I have myself no faith in soda water, tho' I think it must be free from vitriolic acid. The characteristic of Struve's seltzer is *carbonic acid gas*, which he obtains from marble. Lord Hardwicke told me that, when in 1848-49 he was serving on the Italian coasts, he found large blocks of Carrara marble perpetually shipping to Struve at Brighton, as the finest source of carbonic gas.

How often I wish that next summer may be green and golden, and that you may be under this roof, and a visitant to many places which I think would interest you! and how often I recall, with charm, and often with consolation, the kindness which you have shown to me, and the mysterious sympathy which now binds us together!—Ever yours, D.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 21, 1853.—I fear my despatches will be almost as numerous as those of the Great Powers to the Porte, but, altho' I wrote yesterday on another and graver subject, I must send one line to say that the illustrious characters have arrived at Hughenden Manor, and made as great a sensation as any at the Congress, or Conference, of Vienna, being habited in scarcely less gorgeous costume.

How kind of you to send me so magnificent a gift—and what taste in its selection!

My library is my weak point. It is that of which, of all material possessions, I am most proud and fond. I inherited and I enriched it. I shall place your interesting and gorgeous tomes by some worthy brothers. May you some day see them!

The last present you gave me was a singular—but not a very tender—one. It was a thunderbolt! When you see it again, you will find it set in marble, and forming my principal paper-weight. The inscription on it is *From Ixion in Heaven*.

I will not defend Struve any more.

Galen tells us in an ancient passage, which has influenced me often in life, that we should 'thicken the blood before we slumber.' I remark you do not follow this archaic dogma of health. Something taken half an hour before repose, very nutritious but very light, might charm your eyelids, and make you dream only of your friends.

One scribbles to you now—very hastily—but he is obliged to send to-day a very grave despatch to Paris.—Adieu, D.

I have got the militia[1] quartered here, and am obliged to

[1] In another letter to Mrs. Willyams, Disraeli wrote: 'It is astonishing how quickly the ploughboys turn into martinets.'

give, what Lord Londonderry would call, 'great military banquets.' I want you on my arm to help me. You would be quite at home.

The beginnings of this romantic correspondence have been set forth at some length. For the subsequent ten years, till Mrs. Willyams's death, it is one of the first-hand authorities for Disraeli's life, and will be frequently quoted in this biography. Disraeli wrote whenever he had time, and Mrs. Disraeli took his place when he was too busy. A chronicle of Disraeli's doings, and a reflection of many of his thoughts, were regularly transmitted to Torquay. The correspondence began at a time when that between Disraeli and his sister was failing, and to a large extent fills its place, though it is less spontaneous and more mannered. Politics, literature and society, family affairs and country pleasures—each takes its turn in his letters; sometimes, indeed, they are all blended in one characteristic epistle. The intercourse was almost wholly carried on by letter. There is no reason to suppose that Mrs. Willyams, though often asked, ever visited the Disraelis either at Grosvenor Gate or at Hughenden. After her venture to the Great Exhibition in August, 1851, she seems to have been either too infirm or too home-keeping to pay visits. Once a year, and no more, the Disraelis spent a week, or perhaps a fortnight, at Torquay. For the first four years, 1853-1856, this visit was paid in August or September; for the last six, in the winter. They did not stay with Mrs. Willyams in her villa, Mount Braddon, but they put up at an hotel, spending, however, most of their afternoons and evenings with their friend.

There was an unceasing exchange of presents between Hughenden and Torquay. Not only books, as we have seen, but flowers, were constantly passing to and fro. Roses came from Torquay, and violets from Hughenden. Torquay also sent, year after year, cuttings which were planted at Hughenden, and greatly added to its amenities. Mrs. Disraeli kept Mrs. Willyams supplied with newspapers

containing Disraeli's speeches and articles praising or attacking him. The catch of the Brixham fishermen—turbots, soles, lobsters, and prawns—figured on Disraeli's table in London and in the country; and he passed on to Mount Braddon the venison and grouse that his great friends sent him from the Scottish forests and the Yorkshire moors, adding to them partridges shot and trout caught on the Hughenden estate. There was a never-failing, if somewhat artificial, grace in Disraeli's words when sending or acknowledging these gifts, though, as was perhaps inevitable, there was a frequent recurrence of the same terms. The birds he sent were generally 'flying' to Torquay, the roses he received often reminded him of Cashmere. Here are some extracts from his letters on these occasions:

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *April* 23, 1854.—Your beautiful plants duly arrived here, and were immediately installed in a most fitting situation, where we shall cherish them, as if they were yourself. But my delight this year were the roses which you sent Mary Anne, and which she generously transferred to me. They lived in my room, and on my table, for more than a week. I think I never met with roses so beautiful in form, so lustrous in color, and with a perfume so exquisite—without which latter charm the rarest and the fairest flowers have little spell for me. I really think your roses must have come from Cashmere.

May 15, 1856.—We have been here for some days, almost of unceasing rain. Hughenden is so green that I should fancy I was in the 'Emerald Isle,' only my tenants do not as yet fire at me from behind my trees.

Altho' I have not written to you since I was here last, you have not been absent from my thoughts—that was, indeed, impossible, since you were represented on my table, every day, in the form of the most beauteous flowers that ever adorned a chamber or charmed a 'working man,' which I take a statesman pre-eminently to be.

I am sure that Syon or Chatsworth, with all their acres of gigantic conservatories, could never send their lords a tribute more fragrant and lustrous than I am indebted for to your ever-thoughtful kindness.

Aug. 5, 1858.—The Queen sent me a fat buck yesterday, as I was leaving town, and I sent you the neck, for your own

eating. I would not send you the haunch, as I know you would only then ask some persons to dinner, eat none yourself, and give yourself a great deal of trouble.

Aug. 15, 1858.—There came a covey of grouse this morning, flying from Northumberland. I tried to frighten some away to the neighbourhood of Torquay, and I hope they will reach that pleasant spot, for they are very fresh, and therefore I suppose their wings are very strong.

Oct. 3, 1861.—Where did you get the lobster which arrived for my *déjeûner* this morning? From the caves of Amphitrite? It was so fresh! Tasted of the sweetness—not the salt—of the ocean, and almost as creamy as your picturesque cheese! We are most obliged, and most delighted with your recollection of us. They are most welcome and most *recherché* gifts.

I send you by this train—it had gone off before your charming packet had arrived—a blackcock from Drummond Castle, which reached us yesterday, and a brace of grouse from the same good friend, Lord Willoughby de Eresby. But the magnificent blackcocks are now robbed of their chief beauty, for such is the demand for their splendid tails, in order to furnish black and green and deep dark blue feathers for the young ladies' coquettish hats, that the gamekeepers retain them for their perquisites!

Aug. 7, 1863.—Yesterday a party of Torquay visitors arrived, and were most hospitably received. There was a great entertainment given in their honor, at which no less a personage than our distinguished county member, the Right Hon. B. Disraeli, was, what the reporters call, 'observed,' and his Lady. The rest of the Buckinghamshire guests must be discreetly described by an etc., but the Devonshire party attracted much attention. We are unable to state whether the most conspicuous was an Italian nobleman, Count Janitore, or a member of the famous French family, Jean Doré, or the representative of the ancient English house of Dory, settled for centuries in several of our counties, tho' certainly no branch of it in Bucks. Several members of the highly fashionable family of the Mullets were present; and we were charmed at the tender grace and fascinating freshness of some of the junior members of the highly popular family of Prawn.

Aug. 22, 1863.—We thank you much for your kind recollection. Turbots visiting trout are patricians noticing country cousins.

As the intimacy progressed, Mrs. Willyams was admitted to share the family joys and sorrows, and the

political triumphs and defeats, of her hero. Her sympathy was sought when James Disraeli's wife died in 1857—'a bride, a mother, and a corpse, in eight months'; and when Sarah Disraeli died in 1859, 'I do not like you to know anything from a newspaper,' wrote Mrs. Disraeli, 'which has made us so unhappy.' When Disraeli regained office in February, 1858, he caused a telegram, in days when telegrams were rare portents, to be sent her immediately. A year later he wrote from Downing Street: 'This is the anniversary of our entering office. I thought you would like to have a line upon such a day, though I write from the field of battle and with as many cares upon my shoulders as man can well bear.' And when he left office his final letter was for her:

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

DOWNING STREET, *June* 17, 1859.—I send you my last official letter, as I am now going down to the House of Commons to announce the formation of the New Government, and to-morrow morning I go down to Windsor, to resign my seals to Her Majesty.

I thought you would like to have the last line I write from Downing Street.

In answer to the last line from Downing Street, Mrs. Willyams expressed a wish that, 'instead of wasting breath in the Lower House, you would take a step higher.' Mrs. Disraeli replied: 'He would not, my dear, go to the Upper House for the world, not for many, many years; he enjoys his fame too much in the Lower House. He could not take the red ribbon without being knighted, and that would be dreadful—to be called Sir B. Disraeli. The Queen is all kindness to Dis, and would give him anything.'

What manner of woman was Disraeli's 'benefactress,' as he was proud to call her? Her most striking characteristic was the abnormal development in her of the feminine capacity of devotion. She had worshipped Disraeli, and determined to make him her heir, before she knew him, and acquaintance only intensified her feelings.

She was absolutely wrapped up in her 'dear Dizzi,' and could never be grateful enough to him for giving her, as she quaintly phrased it, a place in his 'domain of peace and concord.' 'My happiest moments,' she told him, 'are when I think of your friendship.' His 'incomparable letters' were her greatest comfort. 'I wish I could give adequate acknowledgment for so much indulgence.' She was full of anxiety whenever she heard that he was indisposed. 'You sacrifice too much to fame. . . . What can be hoped from only three days at Hughenden?' Her confidence in his political genius was boundless. 'Your touch on politics is always harmonious. My idea is that the masses only wait for a rallying cry to rise here and there. My trust is in your prescience!' Devotion such as this appealed powerfully to his affectionate nature; and he paid her in return the compliment, not merely of that somewhat Oriental flattery which he always used with women, but of admitting her into his family circle and making her a sharer of his actions and his thoughts. 'Your constant kind and affectionate thoughts of him,' wrote Mrs. Disraeli to her, 'add much to the happiness of our lives. I never heard him appreciate so highly as yourself anyone, man or woman.'

Though she was a considerable reader, intellectually Mrs. Willyams was rather limited; and her letters hardly justify Sir Philip Rose's high praise of her mental powers. Of this limitation she was herself quite aware. Early in the acquaintance she wrote to Mrs. Disraeli: 'I am sorry to say that my head is my vulnerable point, and that in submission I deny myself of daily papers.' When the Disraelis had taken care that she was duly supplied with the London journals, she wrote: 'I indulge too much in lounging all the finest part of the day with the variety on my table. If ever I am to amend my ways, I must beg you will not be so profuse in treating me with the absorbing news of the day. . . . If I had memory, I might be a tolerable *superficial* politician, but, as it is, I am good

for nothing except to join in a chorus of praise to the unrivalled genius of dear Dizzi.'

Though Mrs. Willyams's mental powers were limited, they were keen enough within their own range. Eccentric she may have been, and was; but she was a shrewd observer of people and things. She had, besides, many interests in common with her friends, especially delight in Nature, in country sights and sounds, and in gardening. Above all, the bond between her and Disraeli was the bond of race. In her will she gave as her reason for leaving him her fortune that it was done 'in testimony of my affection and of my approbation and admiration of his efforts to vindicate the race of Israel, with my views respecting which he is acquainted, and which I have no doubt he will endeavour to accomplish.' She was a Mendez da Costa; he believed himself to be a kinsman of the Laras; both Da Costas and Laras being aristocratic families of Peninsular Jews.[1] So when she wanted to get her coat of arms investigated and regularised by the Heralds' College, he entered eagerly into her project, and gave himself an infinity of trouble, during a space of nearly three years, to settle, satisfactorily to her, a business over which she showed herself rather captious and tiresome. The question was opened when he was in office in 1859, and was not finally closed till March, 1862. Incidentally in the course of the correspondence he explained and justified his own crest and quarterings. A few of his many letters on this somewhat esoteric subject will probably be enough.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *June* 16, 1859.—. . . The last thing I did in office was to receive a communication from the Spanish and the Portuguese Ambassadors here, respecting the arms of the families of Mendez da Costa and Lara, respecting which they had for some time been making inquiries and researches for me. . . .

[1] This was the belief both of Disraeli and of Mrs. Willyams; but Mr. Lucien Wolf claims to have shown that the Portuguese Jewish Laras, with whom the Disraelis were connected, had no connection with the Spanish noble family of Lara.

GROSVENOR GATE, *July* 20, 1859.—I have forwarded to you to-day, by railroad, the emblazonment of the arms of Mendez da Costa. . . . The drawing was taken (from which the shield was emblazoned) from a tomb more than three hundred years old.

The quarterings are singular: the Lion of Leon, and a winged arm, holding a sword in the hand. Was it the arm of an archangel?

People put blocks of ice in their rooms, which produce a refreshing temperature. Try some thirty pounds of rough ice in this fashion. It will revive you—in heat which even the Mendez da Costas in their most fervent days, amid the sierras and skies of Andalusia, could not exceed!

I also (the Laras) quarter the Lion of Leon *rouge*.

GROSVENOR GATE, *July* 23, 1859.—The Spanish families never had supporters, crests, or mottoes. The tower (Castle) of *Castille*, which I use as a crest, and which was taken from one of the quarters of my shield, was adopted by a Lara in the sixteenth century in Italy, where crests were the custom—at least, in the North of Italy—copied from the German heraldry. This also applies to my motto. . . .

CARLTON CLUB, *July* 12, 1861.—The Heralds give me a great deal of trouble, but they are very positive people, and it will not do to make any mistake in their craft. They have promised this morning to give me a correct drawing of your shield on Tuesday next. They say that all your previous quarterings have been wrong—that is to say, that the arms of Legh ought never to have been introduced into your shield, your mother not having been an heiress—but that your own arms of Mendez da Costa ought to have been emblazoned. . . . They were anxious to know how you had obtained them, as nothing is more difficult than correct em blazonments of ancient Spanish arms. I told them that they had been copied from the Queen of Spain's own golden book, which was kept under her own key, which seemed to make their mouths water. I am sorry for these delays, but it will be a satisfaction to you that you will now have everything quite correct—the arms of Brydges Willyams and Mendez da Costa in a lozenge. They have the arms of Brydges Willyams registered, with a Cornish motto; but, as ladies do not use mottoes or crests, this does not concern us. . . .

So keen was Mrs. Willyams's pride in her family, and so convinced was she that Disraeli shared it to the full, that in her will she expressed a wish that he should use and adopt the names and arms of the families of Lara

and Mendez da Costa in addition, or precedent, to the name and arms of Disraeli. In this, however, he disappointed her, being no doubt sensible of the ridicule to which the assumption of these sonorous names by a statesman of sixty would expose him.

Though Mrs. Willyams never saw Hughenden, her memory is closely bound up with it. The correspondence between her and the Disraelis is full of Hughenden. It was there, during the Parliamentary vacations, that he wrote her his longest and most frequent letters. He told her of all his doings there, of the visitors who came, the changes that were made, the growth of the trees, the beauty of the gardens. It was with the object of embellishing the rooms and the flower-beds of Hughenden that she made many of her presents; and she never wearied of hearing the smallest details of its growth and progress. From his letters to her we can largely reconstruct his life in the country, and complete the picture outlined in Chapter VI.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Wednesday* [*Dec.* 26, 1855].—Yesterday there was a ball and a supper at Hughenden Manor, but Mrs. Disraeli and myself were not invited. Our household and their guests were dancing till past five o'clock this morning; you must have heard the fiddle, I think, at Torquay. But this is the reason that my despatch did not go by yesterday's post. They were all too busy, and all the people have gone to their work this morning, without ever having retired to rest. What rural rakes!

Aug. 28, 1858.—. . . I will give you some account of the present condition of some of the many offerings which you have been so kind as to make to this place.

In the first place, the small-leaved rose, trailed over a wire frame, lotus-shaped, has become a considerable bush, and was this season, at one time, the bearer of more than sixty flowers. Its surprising beauty was, I am told, greatly admired, but, alas! not by us, for, while it was flourishing and diffusing sweets, I was laboring to purify the Thames at Westminster. The gardener, however, has succeeded in grafting several very fine specimens from the parent stem, and these are all now alive and brilliant, to greet us with their presence.

The two splendid jars are installed in the chief saloon, each on the top of a cabinet, and have a very excellent effect. The cabinets have long required a crowning decoration of this character.

In the library, on a stand built for the occasion, a number of Gould's *Birds* is always open, and they are really so life-like that, when one enters the room, one is almost tempted to walk on tiptoe, lest one might frighten them away.

The chief business of Mrs. Disraeli, during this residence, has been to adorn her terrace in the Italian style with a beautiful series of vases, which came from Florence, and which sparkle in the sun, their white and graceful forms well contrasting with the tall geraniums and blue Agapantha lilies which they hold. I think you would admire this terrace very much. It has only one fault—that you never walk on it. . . .

With regard to Mrs. Kneller's request,[1] I beg leave to say, that if it would please you that I should endeavour to assist her son, I will make the attempt with sincere gratification; but it will be to please you, and no one else, for I do not care one rush for Lord Bolingbroke, dead or living.

I shall try to send you some violets by this post, if I find any as sweet as some that charmed me a few days back.

Oct. 20, 1858.—. . . We were absent nearly a fortnight, and I find a great difference in the color of the trees—the limes all golden, the beeches ruddy brown, while the oaks and elms and pines are still dark and green, and contrast well with the brighter tints. But not a leaf has fallen; they want the first whisper of the frost, and then they will go out like lamps when the dawn breaks on a long festival. . . .

Aug. 31, 1859.—. . . Here our life is so monotonous that our only incident almost has been a rural fête, which Mrs. Disraeli gave to her schools—a hundred strong, and a hundred neighbours to meet them. They feasted and danced in the park, with my election banners, no longer lawful, to inspire them, and a most capital band. It really was a sight worthy of Watteau, and I preferred it infinitely to the fête given by H.R.H. the Duchess d'Aumale at Orleans House, which we had the honor to attend a few days before we left town, and which was in beautiful gardens, with gondolas on the river, and Princes and Princesses trifling and gliding thro' the berceaus. We had, among many other pastimes, a lottery, in which there were no blanks, there; but such games of chance are only for the heirs of the inheritance of Condé !

[1] Disraeli wrote to Mrs. Willyams from Windsor Castle, Nov. 15: 'I have sent, to-day, a nomination to a clerkship, in the National Debt Office, to the son of Mrs. Kneller.'

Baron Rothschild and all his family came and stayed two days with us. He brought me a dessert from Paris—of the most wonderful pines, peaches, and melons. I gave a dinner to the neighbourhood the second day, that he might meet the notables, and his dessert, *à la Russe*, was grouped round the little lemon-tree which you gave us two or three years ago, and which this year has *eight* fine golden fruit upon it. So, I flatter myself, I beat even the dessert of Paris.

Sept. 4, 1861.—A clear case of sympathy; for while, yesterday morning, you were sending us some of our most favorite delicacy, which are so difficult to get good, and which were in this instance delicious, we were trying to catch you a trout in our stream. The morning, however, was so bright that, after hours, we were unsuccessful; nevertheless, the sport in the bright park, and by the side of rippling waters, was delightful, tho' fruitless. After the arrival of your case, we determined to try again, a little before sunset, and in the first twilight landed a gentleman 4¼ pounds in weight!—pretty well for our little stream, that was dry for three years. I packed him up in the flags among which he was caught last evening, and sent him off instantly from the river-side. You ought to have had him *early* this morning, so he is as fresh as day; and I told them to put a brace of grouse in the basket....

Aug. 21, 1862.—Here I have been 10 days; and meant to have written to you the very first. And yet I have done nothing; but have remained in a state of complete languor and apathy. It is always so. The sudden change and contrast from a life of unceasing excitement acts most strangely on the nervous system, and it takes me some time to acclimatise.

Not that it is *ennui*. For here is a great deal to do. No one could have been absent eight months from his Estate, and find *ennui* on his arrival—but I am incapable of performing what awaits me, and which, in its sort and manner, is also urgent, as much as affairs of State.

I begin, however, to thaw. It is so long since I was here, that even my ancient trees seem to have grown, and the modern conifers have wondrously shot up. . . . As for flowers, all Hughenden sparkles with the Microfolia rose, the numerous and brilliant offspring of the colony you sent from Mt. Braddon. Thus you see how races are propagated and how empires are formed!

But our public buildings are still more striking: a new school nearly finished, and a monument to my father, raised, in my absence, by my wife, and which, both for design, execution, and even material, is one of the most beautiful things not only in the County of Buckingham, but in England. . . .

Private. Sept. 1, 1862.—I am quite myself again, and, as I have been drinking your magic beverage for a week, and intend to pursue it, you may fairly claim all the glory of my recovery—as a fairy cures a knight after a tournament or a battle. I have a great weakness for mutton broth, especially with that magical sprinkle, which you did not forget. I shall call you in future after an old legend and a modern poem, 'The Lady of Shalott'!

I think the water of which it was made would have satisfied *even you.* For it was taken, every day, from our stream which rises among the chalk hills, glitters in the sun over a very pretty cascade, and then spreads and sparkles into a little lake, in which is a natural island. Since I wrote to you last, we have launched in this lake two most beautiful cygnets, to whom we have given the names of Hero and Leander. They are a source to us of unceasing interest and amusement. They are very handsome and very large, tho' as yet dove-colored.

I can no longer write to you of Cabinet Councils or Parliamentary struggles: here I see nothing but trees and books, so you must not despise this news of my swans!

Oct. 14, 1862.—. . . Last night I returned from Quarter Sessions, always a busy scene in our provincial life. It is, in fact, the old assembling of the Estates of a Province, with the Governor, or Lord-Lieutenant, in the chair, and all the notables around him: great debates about little things. In this county there is a regular magistrates' mess, so we don't dine together at an hotel or a pot-house, as in many other counties, but under our own roof, sitting on our own furniture, and drinking our own wines out of our own cellar—all which makes us a little pompous, especially the Wine Committee, who, you would think, were a Council of State.

On Thursday next we open our new school. It is built by the same architect who restored the crypt, designed the two sarcophagus', and also my father's monument, which latter erection is much admired by all the world. It is fifty feet high, and of the Italian style of the Renaissance period, which is, at the same time, rich and graceful. . . .

We are to walk to the school, which is in the village, one mile and a half away—a sort of procession—but, alas! what weather! 'Tis the middle of the equinoctial gales, which are a fortnight after their time. Think of us on Thursday—and pity me—addressing the infant generation under the new roof, probably wet to the skin!

Sept. 20, 1863.—. . . Here we are full of harvest-homes! a novel feature, as now practised, of our English country life. In old days, or, rather, two or three years ago, every farmer,

after the harvest, gave a supper to his hinds, where they guzzled and got tipsy, and resumed their work in the morning with aching heads, after a rural debauch.

Now, instead of an isolated nocturnal revel in a farmhouse kitchen, all the farmers of the parish unite together and give to their collected laborers a festival in a tent, which will hold hundreds, with banners and a band. A day is set apart: all go in procession to the church, which is adorned with flowers and sheaves, the children sing chorales, and everyone has a favor, and a stalk of corn in his buttonhole.

The clergy are at the bottom of this movement: it connects the harvest with religion and the Church. Even a *dissenting* farmer can scarcely refuse to walk in the procession on such an occasion.

Unconsciously, all are reviving pagan rites, and restoring the Dionysian festivals!

Sept. 28, 1863.—You live in the world to what I do, who never see anything but books and trees. When we left Hughenden last year we sent in an architect and suite, and tho' ten months have elapsed, some workmen still linger about. We have realised a romance we had been many years meditating: we have restored the house to what it was before the Civil Wars, and we have made a garden of terraces, in which cavaliers might roam, and saunter, with their ladye-loves! The only thing wanting is that you should see it; but I am going to have in due time a competent artist down, who will photograph the house, gardens, terraces, monument, etc., etc., in every aspect, and these shall be sent, or, I hope, *brought*, to you, for the time is approaching when we must turn our thoughts to the western ocean, the classic waves of gigantic soles and colossal prawns!

All these alterations have prevented our receiving our friends this year, so I have been like a man in a desert island—beautiful, tho' lonely, and free from the despair of a Robinson Crusoe or an Alexander Selkirk, for I have a future—at Mount Braddon!

In making the alterations here, a great number of owls have been disturbed among the yew-trees; but they have been religiously cared for, as if I were the priest of Minerva, and now they have resumed their haunts. Their hooting at night is wilder and louder than the south-west wind, which, indeed, is only the accompaniment to their weirdish arias. And they tap at the windows with their fell beaks!

Not only was Mrs. Willyams keenly interested in Hughenden during her life, but by her own desire she was buried there. She died somewhat suddenly on Novem-

ber 11, 1863. Disraeli's last letter to her was written only on November 5. He was, clearly, quite unaware that she was ill, and was looking forward to his winter visit to Torquay. 'Adieu! we shall soon meet,' he concluded. He hurried to Torquay, but did not arrive in time. So unselfish was her affection for him to the last that, as one who was with her at the end wrote to him, 'she would not have you sent for till too late, as you were a statesman and were not to be disturbed.' 'I have lost a kind and faithful friend,' he wrote to Derby, 'but I have lost her in the fulness of years, and she has made me the heir to her not inconsiderable fortune.' It was her wish to lie in the family vault in Hughenden Church, where her friend and his wife expected in their turn to be buried; but, to Disraeli's disgust, the vault was found to be closed.

To Philip Rose.

Dec. 1, 1863.—What are my rights as to vault in Hughenden Church? My benefactress was to have been buried in my vault there. Mr. Clubbe[1] wrote to me that Interment Act prevented burials in a church, and that the vault in the chancel (which I called, and believed to be, *my* vault) was closed accordingly.

I told him that Burials Act, in my belief, did not apply to country churches, and that the vault ought not to have been closed. It was impossible, however, at such a moment to have a controversy, and I was obliged, by great exertions, to have a vault made in the churchyard, contrary to the express wishes of the deceased, and where neither my wife nor myself will be buried, preferring even Kensal Green to anything so unprotected. . . .

It was found impossible to reopen the family vault, and both Disraeli and his wife subsequently overcame their objection to the site of Mrs. Willyams's grave. All three, benefactress and beneficiaries, now lie together, just outside the east end of the church, and one monument, on the outer wall of the De Montfort Chapel, records the names and legends of them all.

[1] Vicar of Hughenden.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COALITION AND THE 'PRESS.'

1852–1854.

The Coalition which Disraeli anticipated and denounced was formed in December, 1852, with Aberdeen as Prime Minister, but not without many difficulties and searchings of heart. Disraeli wrote to Londonderry on December 21: 'I apprehend that the difficulties of the *personnel*—sixteen Secretaries of State—are minor obstacles compared with the daily, or rather hourly, increasing *émeute* of Brooks's and the Reform; especially the latter, the mainstay of a Liberal Government, and now finding the cake is to be cut up without their having a slice.' It took a week to overcome the difficulties, and the Cabinet, as finally settled, contained six Whigs, six Peelites, and one Radical. As the party support consisted, according to Derby's estimate, of 120 Whigs, 30 Peelites, 150 Radicals, and 50 Irish Brigade, there was an obvious want of proportion in the division of the spoils which must lead to future trouble. For the present, however, all seemed well. The Court, which had worked for some time for this result; the public, who desired a fusion of moderate men; the Press, which saw with satisfaction such an array of administrative talent in office, congratulated themselves on having at last secured a strong and durable Government; and accepted as satisfactory Aberdeen's assurances that the Ministerial measures would be both Conservative and Liberal, and that the country was sick of distinctions which had no real meaning, and which only prevented from acting together men who were able to perform good public ser-

vice. Russell went to the Foreign Office[1] with the lead of the House of Commons, Gladstone to the Exchequer, Palmerston to the Home Office, and Graham to the Admiralty. The Cabinet contained also Lansdowne, Argyll, Granville, Newcastle, Cranworth, Wood, Sidney Herbert, and Molesworth; while Villiers, Cardwell, Lowe, Bernal Osborne, Cockburn, and Bethell, filled important offices outside. Well might Palmerston say that the administration combined 'almost all the men of talent and experience in the House of Commons, except Disraeli.'

To the ejected Conservatives the situation presented a very different appearance. Aberdeen and Gladstone had been protesting during great part of the year that nothing separated them from their old party but Protection. Protection had been abandoned, but Aberdeen, Gladstone, and the rest, at once coalesced with the Liberals. Aberdeen and Palmerston stood for opposite principles in foreign policy, and had been violently opposed within a year. Yet they went now into the same Cabinet. No wonder that Derby in the Lords denounced the arrangement as unprincipled, and held even stronger language in private. It was difficult, he thought, to account for it save by personal hatred of Disraeli. Disraeli took much the same view. As North and Fox had combined to expel Shelburne from office, so it seemed to Disraeli that Aberdeen and Russell had come together through detestation of himself.

Lord Derby to Lord Londonderry.

Dec. 21, 1852.—. . . How it is possible that Lord Aberdeen can carry it on, unless he throws himself into the hands of the extremist parties, I am unable to conjecture. I earnestly regret the course which he has pursued, which is wholly inconsistent with his repeated declarations to me that there was only one subject of difference between us; that, that once removed, nothing would give him greater pleasure than again to act with me; and that, happen what might, no consideration should ever induce him to join the Whigs! I am afraid

[1] In a few weeks he gave up the Foreign Office to Clarendon, retaining the lead of the House of Commons without any portfolio.

that personal feeling has had much to do with this step, and that the course pursued is mainly to be attributed to the jealousy and hatred (the word is not too strong) felt by the Peelite party in the House of Commons towards Disraeli. The breach is now, I fear, wider than ever.

To Lord Londonderry.

Private. GROSVENOR GATE, *Dec.* 31, 1852.—. . . Claren don is not a deep man, and always writes and talks of public affairs as if he were a third-rate partisan.

The existence of the Coalition will be brief, and its end ignominious.[1] It will be followed by the strong Government which it absurdly professes to be. . . .

With respect to public affairs, I keep myself quite aloof; but everybody writes to me, and from all sections. My opinion is that there is coalition, but no fusion; widespread discontent and hourly increasing spirit of vengeance. It is a place-hunting cabal, and they were so rapacious after their prey that they forgot, in their chase after *office*, to settle their *policy*. We had the details of the whole combination long ago, but, to mature their arrangements, it was necessary that we should remain in until after Christmas. This determined our course. . . .

The situation produced somewhat strained relations between Disraeli and Gladstone; and a correspondence, which before its close became unfriendly, passed between them on the question of the furniture in Downing Street, which was taken over by the incoming from the outgoing Chancellor of the Exchequer.

From William Ewart Gladstone.

DOWNING STREET,
Jan. 21, 1853.

MY DEAR SIR,—I owe you many apologies for having made no communication to you at an earlier date on the subject of the furniture belonging to you, and remaining in this house. The cause has been this, that it has been under consideration whether, after the change made by the late Government, it might not be the most convenient arrangement that *all* the furniture in the house should belong to the Crown, with provisions for charging the wear and tear of all except the official

[1] Speaking in the House of Commons on July 13, 1854, Disraeli said: 'When the Coalition Government was formed, I was asked how long it would last, and I ventured to reply, "Until every member of it is, as a public character, irretrievably injured."'

rooms upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Until this was settled, I did not know whether your furniture would be taken over on my behalf or on that of the Office of Works. It has now been settled that it shall be done by the latter, and Sir W. Molesworth has put the matter in train for being despatched forthwith.

There is, I believe, a robe which passed down under some law of exchange from one Chancellor of the Exchequer to another; and I shall be very happy to receive it from you on the ordinary footing, whatever that may be.—I remain, my dear Sir, faithfully yours, W. E. GLADSTONE.

To William Ewart Gladstone.

GROSVENOR GATE,
Feb. 26, 1853.

DEAR SIR,—As I understand you have been for some time residing in Downing Street, I think it would be convenient that our arrangements with respect to the furniture of the official residence should no longer remain unsettled.

On my accession to office I paid to Sir Charles Wood immediately, at his request, for furniture alone the sum of £787 12s. 6d., taking many things which I did not require, but complying with what was represented to me by him as the invariable rule of the office.

This rule having occasioned considerable dissatisfaction among some of my colleagues, the system attracted the attention of the First Ld of the Treasury, who greatly modified it, directing that all furniture in rooms of public reception should be taken by the Crown. In consequence of this arrangement, I received in the autumn a drawback of £479 16s. from the Office of Works, which left a balance in my favor of £307 16s. 6d.

Assuming that you would, under any circumstances, be content with the valuation which was so recently made by Messrs. Overen on the part of Sir C. Wood, and Messrs. Banting cn mine, and that you certainly would not contemplate a repetition of so expensive a ceremony for so comparatively trifling an amount as you will have to pay, I would suggest that your cheque for £307 16s. 6d. would, as between us, properly conclude the business.

With reference to your letter of the 21st ult., stating as the cause of delay that the Board of Works had resolved to take the remaining furniture of the official residence, and that you had not then received the consequent payment, I would venture to observe that such payment is a matter of business between you and the Bd of Works, and that it should not interfere with the arrangement between us any more than

the first interference of the Bd of Works influenced the arrangement between myself and my predecessor.—I have the honor to remain, dear Sir, your obedient servant, B. DISRAELI.

From William Ewart Gladstone.

DOWNING STREET,
Feb. 28, 1853.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter of the 26th was delivered to me last night. Until I received it, I had supposed that the arrangements for the transfer of the furniture, which belonged to you in this house, to the Commissioners of Works had been probably completed. Upon learning that this is not the case, I have made inquiry at the Office of Works as to the cause, and I have been informed that they are waiting in expectation of some communication from you, or from Mr. Banting, who, as he informed me, acts on your behalf. I have now requested that they may so wait no longer, but at once proceed in the matter.

I am afraid I did not make it sufficiently clear in my last letter that there was no longer any question as to furniture to be settled between an outgoing and an incoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, and that the Office of Works was to come into my place relatively to your property here—an arrangement which, as it appeared to the Government, was advantageous on general grounds, and could not be attended with inconvenience to you, inasmuch as the Office of Works, it was presumed, would proceed according to the established custom in the matter, whatever that might be. But I did not, I believe, refer to my not having received any payment from the Office of Works, as that payment will be made to you. I shall be very happy, if there shall now be found any obstacle in the way of an immediate settlement, to do my best to remove it.

I adverted at the close of my letter to the Official Robe, but the allusion to it has perhaps escaped your attention. I remain, dear Sir, faithfully yours, W. E. GLADSTONE.

To William Ewart Gladstone.

GROSVENOR GATE, *March* 6, 1853.—Mr. Disraeli regrets very much that he is obliged to say that Mr. Gladstone's letter repudiating his obligation to pay for the furniture of the official residence is not satisfactory.

When Mr. Gladstone acceded to office, he entered the official residence subject to the same regulations between gentlemen which all his predecessors have recognised. He

was bound to act towards Mr. Disraeli as Mr. Dⁱ had acted towards Sir Chas. Wood.

Any arrangement subsequently made with the Board of Works is between Mr. Gladstone and that office, and not between Mr. Gladstone and his predecessor, and would only affect his relations with his successor.

Mr. Disraeli is unwilling to prolong this correspondence. As Mr. Gladstone seems to be in some perplexity on the subject, Mr. Disraeli recommends him to consult Sir Charles Wood, who is a man of the world.

From William Ewart Gladstone.

DOWNING STREET, *March* 7, 1853.—Mr. W. E. Gladstone has read with regret and pain the note which he received last night from Mr. Disraeli.

He has endeavoured in this correspondence to observe towards Mr. Disraeli the courtesy which was his due, and he is not aware of having said or done anything to justify the tone which Mr. Disraeli has thought proper to adopt.

When the arrangement was decided on which made the Board of Works the purchaser of the remainder of Mr. Disraeli's furniture, as it had already been of the chief part, this was only to give complete application, so far as ownership of the furniture is concerned, to the principle on which the late Board of Treasury had itself proceeded; and it never occurred to Mr. W. E. Gladstone that this further change could be prejudicial to Mr. Disraeli in point either of time, convenience, or pecuniary charge, nor is he at this moment aware that there was reason to apprehend it could signify to Mr. Disraeli whether those effects were valued and taken over by his successor or by the Board of Works.

Mr. W. E. Gladstone, however, without in any degree admitting the justice of Mr. Disraeli's assumptions, does not wish that any proceeding of his in such a matter should be open to doubt or question from any quarter; and he is therefore ready immediately either to appoint a person to value and take over the residue of furniture on his behalf from Mr. Disraeli precisely as Mr. Disraeli took the whole over from Sir Charles Wood, or to take it over, without the delay of an examination by an agent of his own, at the valuation which the Board of Works may (he presumes) have settled with Mr. Disraeli's appraiser, whatever it may be, desiring only to adopt whichever of these alternatives may, according to the state of the circumstances, be most agreeable to Mr. Disraeli.

It is highly unpleasant to Mr. W. E. Gladstone to address Mr. Disraeli without the usual terms of courtesy, but he

abstains from them only because he perceives that they are unwelcome.

It is quite clear that Disraeli was right in the main subject of dispute, though the two months' delay and the display of red tape provoked him to unwonted and hardly courteous acerbity. Gladstone ought to have settled with his predecessor for the furniture on the basis of the system in force when the transfer of office took place. Subsequent arrangements made by the new Government with the Office of Works could only properly apply to the next transfer. But it is amusing to note that, under cover of indignation at Gladstone's conduct about the furniture, Disraeli evades altogether the question of the robe, where he was apparently withholding what in the ordinary course would have been transferred for payment to his successor. The robe descended, or was believed by Disraeli to descend, from Pitt; Disraeli was very proud of the association, and could not bring himself to give Gladstone the option of purchasing what he himself had bought from Wood. He wore it again during his two subsequent tenures of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, and it remains as an heirloom at Hughenden Manor.

Disraeli did not think the Coalition could long hold together; and he began at once to prepare for the future. There was much in his favour. His party was far the largest single party in the House of Commons, three hundred or more in all, though no doubt many of them would be content with the Aberdeen Ministry so long as it exhibited its Conservative side. In spite of the trials of the last few months, the Conservatives were in fair spirits, and there was not so much recrimination as usually follows defeat. Croker was the natural recipient of some grumbles. Lonsdale wrote to him, bewailing Disraeli's excessive confidence in his powers of speech. 'He thinks always . . . he will carry the whole House with him. He has been deceived so often that he ought to be wiser. As a party leader he will be encouraged, but I doubt if there is a single man that would be his follower. He is

our best man, but we have great difficulty in keeping our troops in discipline.'[1] Criticism of this kind was not very serious. It was obvious, too, that the Conservatives might easily find reinforcements. Of the four parties supporting the Aberdeen Ministry, only one, the Peelite group, was really satisfied. The Coalition had rewarded the Irish Tenant Leaguers for their assistance in the crucial division, not by accepting their policy, but by giving office to two of their least respected members, Sadleir and Keogh, and thus disgusting the rest. Gavan Duffy wrote to a subordinate member of the late Government on January 10: 'I hope your friends do not despair in Opposition. Three-and-thirty of the Irish party will sit there along with them, making a majority of the whole House if Mr. Disraeli can keep his own party together.' Irish support, however, as Disraeli had already learnt by experience, was of a very untrustworthy character; as Stanley wrote, the Brigade 'oppose for opposition's sake, and because it is their habitual policy,' not for love of any English party. Again, the Whigs grudged bitterly the excessive toll of places exacted by the Peelites; and one very influential group, the Greys, conspicuous in Russell's Administration, were entirely omitted. They might be disposed in certain circumstances to rally to a national party; and Disraeli, as we shall see, made during the session a serious bid for a Whig alliance. Then there were the Radicals, who had only one representative in the Ministry, and to whom, in his interview with Bright in December, Disraeli had already made tentative overtures. There is no doubt that throughout this session his mind played a good deal round the possibility, if the Whigs proved obdurate, of approximating to the Manchester School. The Ministry were the Mandarins of both parties, the official class who had hitherto monopolised office, whichever party was in power. With the exception of ten months of 1852, there had been no period in the last twenty years when either Russell,

[1] Croker, iii. 257.

Lansdowne, Palmerston, and Wood, or Aberdeen, Graham, Herbert, Newcastle, and Gladstone, had not been holding high administrative posts. Disraeli still retained his youthful preference for intellect and originality over experience and official gravity. He discerned in Bright and his friends a kindred dislike for 'old stagers' and 'red-tapists.'

The question of organisation was pressed on him by Malmesbury, who wrote of the absolute necessity of reforming the *personnel* of the party. 'Had you twice the talent and eloquence you possess, you could do nothing with the incapacity which prevents our details from being properly managed. It is better to fail in orators to back you by words than in men to back you by votes. We lost the election by bad management.' He thought that, if Disraeli did not attend to this, nobody would or could. Disraeli, we know, agreed with Malmesbury in condemning the party management, and there was an opportunity this year for a complete change. Beresford, who had been principally responsible for the management of the General Election, was rather under a cloud owing to the censure passed on him by a Committee of the House, who found a reckless indifference to consequences in his relation to systematic bribery at Derby at the last election. Forbes Mackenzie, the Whip, was unseated for bribery at Liverpool. Disraeli got Sir William Jolliffe, afterwards Lord Hylton, an energetic and popular member, to look after Conservative interests in the House of Commons, and he relied upon his friend and confidential agent, Rose, who had been working under Beresford since 1851, for the chief management of the party outside. But his mind was mainly given to policy. Now he was in opposition again, he was determined to move more decidedly in the direction foreshadowed in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, and to attract public support and Parliamentary co-operation for his party by discarding, at the risk of some dissension and confusion at first, whatever was exclusive and restrictive in its programme. In

this he was warmly seconded by Stanley, and to some extent by Malmesbury, though all of them felt that Derby's sympathy would be imperfect. Stanley wrote on January 20: 'The Captain does not care for office, but wishes to keep things as they are, and impede "Progress." . . . Don't let us plunge into a reactionary course of opposition and suffer political martyrdom for a cause in which we neither of us believe. Your influence is more powerful than that of anyone, as it ought to be. Use it.' The three colleagues exchanged ideas about Reform, and Stanley wrote on January 27: 'You cannot go ahead too fast or too far for *one* of your followers, nor for the official members of our party, generally speaking. But it will be very difficult, and require all your diplomacy, to persuade the squires to consent to any plan of Reform.' Malmesbury wrote on February 3: 'I agree entirely with you that our party is repugnant to the urban taste, and that we should try something to recover the towns' interest, but no operation can be compared in difficulty to it. . . . I trust to your genius to give us a standard and war-cry.'

From Lord Derby.

Private. KNOWSLEY, *Jan.* 30, 1853.—. . . We shall have a difficult game to play. We must to a certain extent keep up the spirits of our party; but we must exercise, and get them to exercise, great patience and forbearance, if we do not wish, by an active and bitter opposition on our part, to consolidate the present combination between those who have no real bond of union, and who must, I think, fall to pieces before long, if left to themselves. You must not build upon any possible union between me and the ultra-Whigs, such as Lord Grey, or the Manchester School. Such an union is simply impossible, and I name it only because I infer from Edward's language that such an idea had passed through your mind. I hardly think it could long dwell there.

It was not domestic policy or the tactics of the Opposition that was to overthrow the Coalition, but foreign policy, and the vacillation resulting from the co-existence in the same Cabinet of incompatible aims in foreign affairs.

When the Derby Government resigned, good relations had been established with France, in spite of the internal convulsions through which she had passed; and the international position of England was clear. If any Power contemplated a policy of adventure in Europe, it would have to reckon with the two western Powers; and any disposition to adventure which Louis Napoleon himself might feel was held in check by the necessity of carrying public opinion in England along with him. The change of Government at once threw doubt on England's attitude. Palmerston was the French Emperor's only friend in the new Cabinet, and he was relegated to the Home Office. Aberdeen had worked cordially with the France of Louis Philippe, but preferred Russia to the France of Louis Napoleon, and was believed to be favourably disposed to the extreme pacificism preached by the Manchester School. It was by no mere coincidence that, within a fortnight of Aberdeen's accession to office, the Emperor Nicholas opened to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg his designs upon the Sick Man, and his hopes of securing the co-operation of Great Britain. Disraeli was guided by a sure instinct when he based his first arraignment of the Coalition on their apparent indifference to the maintenance of a cordial understanding with France. Ever since the *coup d'état* Louis Napoleon had been assailed with unbounded licence in the English Press, and therefore it particularly behoved statesmen who valued the understanding to be careful to give no countenance to this campaign of abuse. Yet Ministers of the importance of Graham and Wood had demeaned themselves to tickle the ears of the groundlings by joining in it themselves. The First Lord of the Admiralty told his constituents that the French Emperor was 'a despot who had trampled on the liberties of forty millions of men.' The President of the Board of Control said to his constituents: 'Take our nearest neighbours. Such a despotism never prevailed in France, even in the time of Napoleon I. The Press gagged; liberty sup-

pressed; no man allowed to speak his opinion.' The ruler of whom responsible Ministers thus spoke had just been twice acclaimed by an overwhelming vote of the French people.

These imprudent speeches immediately worked mischief abroad. Malmesbury, from his knowledge of the foreign situation, was very indignant. He wrote to Disraeli to encourage him to notice them in the House, reminding him that the Derby Government had successfully separated France from the three despotic Powers of the Continent, and that 'when we recognised the Empire there was no one thing she would not have done *for* us and *with* us.' Accordingly Disraeli, in spite of some doubts by Derby, delivered an important speech on Foreign Policy and the Coalition on first going into Committee of Supply.[1] He earnestly impressed on the House the immense importance of a cordial understanding with France, ridiculing the notion of hereditary hostility. He recognised that prejudice had naturally been excited against the Emperor for having terminated a Parliamentary constitution and curtailed the liberty of the Press. 'It is unnecessary for me to say that it is not probable I shall ever say or do anything which would tend to depreciate the influence or to diminish the power of Parliament or the Press. My greatest honour is to be a member of this House, in which all my thoughts and feelings are concentred; and as for the Press, I am myself a "gentleman of the Press," and bear no other escutcheon.' But suppose there was a disputed succession in England; a young Charles Stuart at Breda, or a young Oliver Cromwell at Bordeaux, publishing manifestoes and issuing missives to powerful parties in this country. Or suppose a great revolution here, the monarchy subverted, a centralised republic established by a minority, and then the army called in by the people against that minority. Would liberty of the Press be then enjoyed even here? He respected Napoleon III., but he had sympathised with Louis

[1] Feb. 18.

Philippe. After a long reign of unbroken prosperity, Louis Philippe was rudely expelled from his capital, and was denounced as a poltroon by all the journals of England, because he did not command his troops to fire upon the people. Well, other powers and other princes have since occupied his seat, who have asserted their authority in a very different way, and are denounced in the same organs as tyrants, because they did order their troops to fire upon the people.' What was the moral? 'That it is extremely difficult to form an opinion upon French politics; and that so long as the French people are exact in their commercial transactions, and friendly in their political relations, it is just as well that we should not interfere with their management of their domestic concerns.'

This sentiment was loudly cheered on both sides of the House, and Disraeli proceeded to show that both Russell and Lord Grey a year before had expressed similar views about Napoleon and about the attacks on him in the Press, which they had deprecated. But what was the attitude of Aberdeen's Government? Did Graham express it? Did the Cabinet regard the Emperor as a despot or the French as slaves?

If I had to form an opinion of the policy of the Cabinet from the first declaration made by so eminent a member of it as the First Lord of the Admiralty, I should certainly be induced to suppose that some great change was about to occur. How are we to account for such a declaration? I will not be so impertinent as to suppose it was an indiscretion. An indiscretion from 'All the Talents'—impossible! Can it, then, be design? . . . The present Government tell us that they have no principles—at least, not at present. Some people are uncharitable enough to suppose that they have not got a policy; but, in Heaven's name, why are they Ministers if they have not got discretion? That is the great quality on which I had thought this Cabinet was established. Vast experience, administrative adroitness, safe men who never would blunder—men who might not only take the Government without a principle and without a party, but to whom the country ought to be grateful for taking it under such circumstances. Yet at the very outset we find one of

the most experienced of these eminent statesmen . . . holding up to public scorn and indignation the ruler and the people, a good and cordial understanding with whom is the cardinal point of sound statesmanship.

Wood's punishment followed Graham's on the same lines. Incidentally, Disraeli touched on the Eastern Question—a problem which had always been treated by English statesmen through a cordial understanding with France. As long as France and England thoroughly understood each other on that great question, the peace of the world and the interests of civilisation and humanity were not in peril. Aberdeen had told the House of Lords that there was no need to dilate on the foreign policy of the Coalition, as the same system had been pursued for thirty years. And yet, a year or two ago, Aberdeen had called Palmerston's policy 'abominable,' and Russell, by indicating Palmerston as the Minister, not of Russia or Austria or France, but of England, had implied that Aberdeen was acting in foreign interests. Disraeli added that not only was foreign policy uncertain, but it was uncertain who was Foreign Minister. Inspired paragraphs said that Russell was going to cease to be Foreign Secretary, but retain a room in the Foreign Office. 'Sir, I confess I must protest against this system of shutting up great men in small rooms, and of binding to the triumphal chariot wheels of administrative ability all the fame and genius of the Whig party. I think I have a right to ask the noble lord frankly: "Are you Secretary of State or are you not ?" ' It was only a few days later that Russell gave way to Clarendon as Foreign Secretary.

Disraeli finished up this damaging attack upon the Coalition—an attack which recalled the philippics of seven years before against Peel—with the following peroration:

We have at the present moment a Conservative Ministry and a Conservative Opposition. Where the great Liberal party is I pretend not to know. Where are the Whigs, with their great traditions—two centuries of Parliamentary lustre

and deeds of noble patriotism? There is no one to answer. Where are the youthful energies of Radicalism, its buoyant expectations, its sanguine hopes? Awakened, I fear, from the first dream of that ardent inexperience which finds itself at the same moment used and discarded—used without compunction, and not discarded with too much decency. Where are the Radicals? Is there a man in the House who declares himself to be a Radical? (A voice, 'Yes!') Oh, no! you would be afraid of being caught and changed into a Conservative Minister. . . . We have now got a Ministry of Progress, and everyone stands still. We never hear the word 'reform' now; it is no longer a Ministry of Reform; it is a Ministry of Progress, every member of which agrees to do nothing. All difficult questions are suspended. All questions which cannot be agreed upon are open questions. Now, I do not want to be unreasonable, but I think there ought to be some limit to this system of open questions. . . . Let Parliamentary reform, let the ballot, be open questions, if you please; let every institution in Church and State be open questions; but at least let your answer to me to-night prove that among your open questions you are not going to make an open question of the peace of Europe.

'An open question' was exactly what the Coalition did make of the peace of Europe, and in consequence drifted into war. The speech was a word in season, and not easy to answer. Malmesbury wrote: 'I have been revelling in your speech. . . . Is C. Wood alive?' and Stanley: 'You have put new life into the party, and I don't think there is any harm done among the waverers.' It was naturally treated by Russell in the House as factious,[1] and by Greville in his Journal as 'a speech of devilish malignity, quite reckless and shamelessly profligate.' A newspaper which shared the prevailing Gallophobia called Disraeli 'Louis Napoleon's Attorney-General, *vice* Malmesbury, invalided.' Russell assured the House of Commons that the Government were, and meant to remain, on terms of amity with France, in spite of the 'incautious' expressions of his colleagues. To the charge of want of principle in the Coalition he replied

[1] Some Conservatives, notably Thomas Baring, took the same view, fearing that the speech might increase the mischief already done by the indiscretions of Ministers.

that it consisted of men who had fought side by side for years on behalf of Free Trade against Protection. In other words, it was founded on agreement in the past about a question which was now settled. This was not an answer, but an admission.

To R. Pemberton Milnes.[1]

EAST INDIAN COMMITTEE,
March 4, 1853.

MY DEAR SQUIRE,—I have little to say, and write from the Black Hole of Calcutta, where I have been shut the whole morning.

Everything is very flat, though our friends keep together beyond my hopes. The other day I sounded the bugle, and exercised them a little, and to-night[2] we are to have a regular encounter. India and the Income Tax are the features of the future, and may disturb, though I should hardly think dislodge, the Government. . . .

Vernon Smith[3] came to me yesterday to beg me to choose a day to dine with him, as Ld. Fitzwilliam was so disappointed that he had not met me at Fryston or Burghley (which latter place we quitted the day he arrived) that he had devised these means for our meeting.

Is he to convert me, or the reverse? Or is he, an old Whig, as disgusted as V. S. himself? However, on Tuesday next we are to dine together. Adieu, my dearest Squire.—D.

I have made Annabel's[4] acquaintance, and found her all you prepared me for—most pleasing, and very clever and intelligent.

It was not merely in Parliament that Disraeli meant to carry on the fight against the Coalition. 'A gentleman of the Press' himself, he was not likely to be indifferent to the influence of effective journalism on party prospects. The Conservative party, since the breach with Peel, had received very poor support in the newspapers. *The Times*, which enjoyed a far larger circu-

[1] In the *Life of Lord Houghton*, this letter is wrongly treated as if addressed to Monckton Milnes, the son, instead of to Pemberton Milnes, the father.

[2] On the Clergy Reserves (Canada) Bill.

[3] Nephew of Sydney Smith. He held office in various Whig Governments, and was created Lord Lyveden in 1859.

[4] The Hon. Annabel Crewe, wife of R. Monckton Milnes, and mother of the Marquis of Crewe.

lation than any other journal, and had an authority corresponding to its circulation, was against them, though it generally treated Disraeli with respect; the *Morning Chronicle* was the organ of the Peelites and the *Globe* of Palmerston; the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily News* both supported the Liberals. Against these the Conservatives could only set the *Morning Post* and *Standard*, both at that time of small circulation and importance, and of doubtful loyalty to the leaders of the party; and the *Morning Herald*, which was the original organ of the Protectionists, but which was constantly annoying their leaders, from Bentinck onwards, by its extreme narrowness and bigotry. The only weekly journals of political consequence, the *Examiner* and *Spectator*, were Liberal; *John Bull*, their Conservative rival, had not maintained the position which Theodore Hook, its founder, had secured for it. Consequently, in the correspondence of Disraeli and his friends, we find frequent complaints of the party Press. In November, 1849, Malmesbury wrote indignantly to Disraeli about the conduct of the *Morning Post*, and elicited from him the comprehensive condemnation: 'The state of our Press is deplorable.' In the following year Disraeli began to take steps to supply the want. He was vigorously seconded by the younger Stanley, who shared his liberal sentiments, and was anxious to permeate the party with them. From Stanley's letters we find that there were negotiations in 1850 for purchasing *John Bull*. But the plan that commended itself to both, though it took long to carry out, was to start a new journal. 'What have you effected touching the new journal?' wrote Stanley in October, 1850. In January, 1851, the idea had made progress.

From the Hon. Edward Stanley.

KNOWSLEY, *Jan.* 8, 1851.—. . . What you say about the paper is satisfactory. . . . A good start is everything, new ideas and new men. I have said nothing to our chief, but I know that his opinion of the value of the Press has under-

gone a great change, and I expect to find him favourable. The *Herald* is worse than no paper at all; its dulness reflects on us, while its Exeter Hall articles disgust our High Church supporters. . . . For my own part, I am willing to give all the time and trouble that can be spared from the House. . . .

Nothing, however, seems to have been done in 1851, and it needed the bitter experience of the first Derby-Disraeli Ministry, which was the target of newspaper abuse, and was very inadequately defended in the Press, to compel Disraeli and his friends into action. During the autumn of their year of office, as we have seen from Disraeli's correspondence with Lennox, he was in close consultation on the subject with Stanley, who wrote in September: 'I think we have found a journalist.' This appears, from another letter of Stanley's, to have been D. O. Madden, a competent writer who had served on the *Morning Chronicle*, and who became a regular contributor to the new journal, though he proved not to be of sufficient calibre for the editorship. The circumstances in which the Ministry were defeated gave Disraeli the final stimulus. An unprincipled Coalition, whose only common bond was a desire to be revenged on himself, and who yet were covered with laudation by the Press, must by the Press be exposed and defeated. For that purpose, as well as to raise the level of Conservative journalism, and to propagate his own Tory Democratic ideas, it was necessary to have a definite organ; and he began at once to make serious preparations for the new venture. In the first months of the New Year he applied to his rich friends for support. To Henry Hope, to whom he had dedicated *Coningsby*, he wrote: 'I am thinking of starting almost immediately a weekly journal of a somewhat peculiar character. . . . As the paper, though Tory, is of a very progressive and enlightened design, I can neither ask nor desire general aid from the party, and am forced therefore to appeal to private sympathy.' Other friends, with whom he was less intimate, Disraeli approached by circular:

Circular about the Press.

[? *March*, 1853.]—The state of the Press as regards our party has become so intolerable that we think of making a great effort to terminate a condition of affairs which exercises a very bad influence on our prospects. It seems that the whole ability of the country is arrayed against us, and the rising generation is half ashamed of a cause which would seem to have neither wit nor reason to sustain and adorn it.

Experience has shown that propping up obsolete organs is a mere waste of energy and capital. We require something which will produce as striking and as rapid an effect on opinion as the *Anti-Jacobin* when it was started by Mr. Canning, or the *Edinburgh Review* when it first rose.

A plan has been matured which, if carried into effect, might, we believe, produce this result, and bring an amount and variety of brilliant talent to bear on opinion which has rarely been equalled; but it demands not only funds, but considerable funds, for the launch and the maintenance of the organ for the first year.

My friends have requested me confidentially to ascertain whether the necessary support can be secured.

It is desirable to obtain the amount from as small an area as is consistent with not unduly pressing on any individual. It is recommended that there should be no shares, no annual subscription, and no project of refunding.

Some members of the late Cabinet have largely contributed, and I have taken the liberty, after reflection, to lay the circumstances before your lordship for your best consideration.

The new journal was to be issued weekly, and to be called the *Press*. Sufficient support was obtained to make a beginning. Samuel Lucas, a distinguished Oxford man, who had quitted the Bar for literature and journalism, and was for many years a well-known writer on *The Times*, was appointed editor, and early in March was engaged in collecting his staff, mainly under Disraeli's direction. Disraeli proposed to write regularly himself, and so did Stanley; Disraeli's brilliant friends, Bulwer Lytton and George Smythe, were immediately enlisted. The writers mostly belonged to the forward school, or left wing, of Conservatism. Among the contributors to the early numbers were Shirley Brooks and Tom Taylor, successively editors of *Punch*; Henry Longue-

ville Mansel, the metaphysician, afterwards appointed, on Disraeli's recommendation, Dean of St. Paul's; Sir James Emerson Tennent, traveller and author, who had held subordinate office in the 1852 Ministry; Lord Maidstone, who was something of a poet as well as a politician, and (wrote Disraeli) 'full of humour,' afterwards eleventh Earl of Winchilsea; Augustus Stafford, recently secretary of the Admiralty, who had been one of the 'Young England' party;[1] Isaac Butt, the Conservative Home Ruler; and a versatile barrister and *littérateur*, who in later life became notorious as counsel for the Tichborne claimant, Edward Vaughan Kenealy. Disraeli, who had a high opinion of Kenealy's abilities, was anxious for his co-operation, and explained his ideas to him in a personal interview on April 13. Kenealy wrote an account of what passed while it was fresh in his memory. He found Disraeli greatly changed since he had last seen him in 1846, and thought him old and thin, restless, and with a House of Commons mannerism.

> We plunged at once *in medias res*. He said, from his knowledge of my great learning, classical tastes, and peculiar genius, he was led to mention me as one of the confraternity of supporters who were to bring out the new weekly paper; that it was intended to be highly classical in its style, and quite the opposite of the barbaresque style of composition which at present prevails, making the daily newspapers absolutely unreadable; that the master-minds of the eighteenth century were to be the models, and that a combination of sound political philosophy with Aristophanic pleasantry was what was most desired; . . . that Lord Stanley, of whom he spoke highly as a young man of solidity and great skill, and pointed him out as probably a future Prime Minister, and Smythe, late of Canterbury, were others of the brotherhood on whom he depended.
>
> The *Anti-Jacobin* was to be, to a certain extent, the model; and those who, like myself, had political tendencies, would find this one of the best modes of advancing them. The Coalition was to be attacked, and the true principles of the Tory party were to be put forward. The Tories were at present a great mass, but destitute of ideas, and the *Press* was to furnish them with these. . . .

[1] See p. 593.

The political leaders in the new paper are to be first-rate, like *The Times*, and Canning and Frere would be the models for those of lighter nature.[1]

Kenealy's connection with the paper, in spite of Disraeli's obvious anxiety to secure and retain him, was very short. He wrote several squibs for the first few numbers, but then withdrew, as he could not brook any sort of editorial control.

The *Press*, which was published every Saturday morning, price sixpence, was both a newspaper and a review. It contained a shortened report of the Parliamentary proceedings of the week, and many of the familiar news features of a daily paper—law and police reports, obituary, naval and military information, ecclesiastical and University news, Court and fashion intelligence, and the latest despatches from foreign capitals—as well as leading articles on home and foreign politics, and critical estimates of literature and the arts. In size and shape, it resembled the weekly reviews of to-day, such as the *Spectator*; but it was slightly broader, and had three columns instead of two to a page, except on the two central pages of the normal twenty-four, where some letter or poem or burlesque, to which special importance was attached, was displayed in double column, followed by the curious facetiæ and squibs which were in fashion at the time. The serious political articles occupied the front and early pages, the first leading article, which dealt with the political situation at the moment, appearing as a rule without a heading.

The first number, which was published on May 7, opened with a leading article on 'Coalition,' which was written by Disraeli himself, and which explained the standpoint of the new journal. 'The state of political parties in England at the present moment,' it began, 'is very peculiar, and, with a prosperous and tranquil surface, not without considerable danger. The administration of our affairs is carried on by a Coalition of individuals who have avowedly no opinions in common, except upon a

[1] E. V. Kenealy's *Memoirs*, ch. 7.

subject which is no longer a matter of public controversy, the principles of our commercial system.' The Coalition was based, it was pointed out, not even on a compromise, but on 'a mere suspension of principle.' The Government 'administer affairs, but they represent no opinion. The excellence of representative government, however, is that it should represent opinion.' This was done through party or political connection. But parties were now dissolved. 'It is conveniently maintained that, in consequence of the abrogation of the protective principle in commerce, the distinctive characters of the two great parties in the country no longer exist.' This absurd tenet was turned into ridicule, and the article concluded in the right Disraelian spirit:

> Why has the constitutional habit of the realm been disturbed and discontinued? Why is the country governed neither by the Liberal nor by the Conservative party? From personal and petty causes only. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, professing high Conservative opinions, will not, from a personal feeling, combine with the leader of the Conservative party in the House of Commons. The morbid vanity of Woburn Abbey must be represented without an interval in the royal councils. The Whigs may perish, but the Duke of Bedford must be satisfied. To accomplish these noble ends, to gratify a prejudice, and to pander to an oligarch, an austere intriguer, without any following in the country, and without any lustre of career, is installed in the high place. Around him are clustered a motley crew of statesmen, who, magnanimously forgetting careers of recrimination, and veiling their mutual aversion with sinister frankness and affected cordiality, devote their heterogeneous energies to the service of a perplexed Sovereign and an amazed country.

The most striking feature of the early numbers of the new journal was a lively series of 'Letters to the Whigs,' signed 'Manilius,' reproaching the leaders of that historic party with coalescing with Peelites, Radicals, and the Irish Brigade, instead of with those who were more nearly allied to them in political opinion, the Conservative Opposition. These letters, owing both to their style and to their sentiments, have been unhesitatingly attributed to Disraeli himself by competent critics; by

Mr. Walter Sichel, in his suggestive *Disraeli, a Study in Personality and Ideas*, and by Mr. William Hutcheon, in his interesting volume of Disraelian by-products, *Whigs and Whiggism*. Undoubtedly there is internal evidence to support this attribution; but it so happens that we have first-hand testimony to the contrary. In the bound copy of volume i. of the *Press*, preserved at Knowsley, Stanley, who, after the editor and Disraeli, was in the best position to know, has entered in his unmistakable handwriting the names of the contributors at the end of all the principal articles in the first eleven numbers; and the 'Letters to the Whigs' are ascribed in each case to Bulwer Lytton. This brilliant piece of journalism is therefore a feather in Lytton's cap and not in Disraeli's; and 'Manilius' was not putting the curious off the scent, but correctly indicating his own political position, when he described himself as one standing 'somewhat distinct from the ordinary relations of party, and altogether remote from the interests of official ambition.' But, as the two men were at the time in very close political agreement, as similar sentiments to those of 'Manilius' were expressed in Disraeli's speeches during this session, as the letters were given the most prominent place in the centre of the paper, and as the copy apparently reached the editor through Disraeli's hands, we may confidently assume that the ideas were Disraeli's as well as Lytton's, and that Disraeli was particularly anxious to impress them upon the political world.

The main theme was that the nation was divided between two great parties, the supporters of Cobden and Bright and the supporters of Derby and Disraeli, and that the Whigs must make their choice. They must realise that their day of power was past, and that they could only continue to enjoy that office, which they regarded as their appanage, either by merging themselves in the Radicals or by allying themselves with the Tories. The argument indicated a change of attitude towards Disraeli's old opponents, the Venetian oligarchy. But

the change had been gradual, and was foreshadowed in a letter to Manners nearly seven years before, when Disraeli intimated that there must 'ultimately be a fusion between the real Whigs and us.'[1]

'Manilius,' speaking for Disraeli as well as for Lytton, wished now for a 'manly alliance' of Whigs and Tories 'upon the broad understanding that reforms are to cement the foundation of monarchy, and not attempt the anomalous paradox of uniting democratic institutions to a defenceless throne.' This would give the Whigs 'electoral numbers,' and strengthen 'the liberal disposition of Lord Derby's partisans' by giving them what they wanted—'colleagues experienced in office and eloquent in debate.'[2] Lytton and Disraeli had penetrated, with real insight, into the heart of the political situation; and the Whigs would have been driven at that time either to merge themselves in the Radicals, or to ally themselves openly with the Tories, but for the influence of one dominating personality. Palmerston, who rose to the first place during the Crimean War, and retained power, with one brief interval, till his death, succeeded, by pursuing a Conservative policy at home and a Liberal policy abroad, in combining under his banner Whigs and Radicals without any fusion, and in disarming Conservative opposition. When Gladstone took the place of Palmerston, the disintegration began, but its progress was delayed owing to personal and party antagonism to Disraeli. After Disraeli's death it proceeded apace, till it culminated in the Liberal-Unionist secession of 1886. Consequently the Whig houses of Cavendish, Grosvenor, Fitzwilliam, Fortescue, Elliot, Dalrymple, Fox, Wood, and many more, have formed that 'manly alliance' with the Tories which Disraeli desired. The Russells, the Leveson-Gowers, the Petty-Fitzmaurices, and the Greys are divided, but in each case the elder branch has left the Liberal party; only a few, such as the Spencers, the Harcourts, and the Caringtons, remain in their old party connection,

[1] See above, p. 826.

[2] *Press*, June 11.

and these have ceased to exercise any perceptible Whig influence on policy.

From Lord Stanley.

Private. ST. LEONARDS, *May* 17, 1853. — I hear [the *Press*] everywhere well spoken of in general, but everywhere with one qualification. They say we are too much of an essay, and too little of a newspaper; that we do not give a sufficient quantity of news, and are rather too exclusively political. I have mentioned this to Lucas, but, as you are in fact the manager of the machine, I report it to you. . . .

Disraeli contributed to all the early issues. Out of the eleven numbers where we have Stanley's authority to guide us, Disraeli wrote the first leading article in ten, Stanley taking his place in the issue of July 2. He sometimes wrote also a subsidiary article, and contributed occasionally skits, making game of his political adversaries, in the shape of 'Imaginary Conversations of Eminent Men,' or Imaginary Bribery Commissions, with Ministers giving evidence.[1] He exercised, moreover, a continual supervision over the whole production; but he was very careful to keep his newspaper activities a secret. Even to Kenealy, one of his contributors, he wrote shortly before the issue of the first number, in which the leading article was from his own pen: 'I am so very much engaged at the present moment that I can only give Mr. Lucas

[1] The following is a complete list of the articles attributed to Disraeli by Stanley in the first eleven numbers of the *Press*:

No. 1. Leading article, 'Coalition.'
No. 2. Leading article; article, 'The Budget as a Whole.'
No. 3. Leading article.
No. 4. Leading article; 'Meeting of the Special Commission under the New Act to inquire into the Practices by which Her Majesty's Ministers obtained their Present Seats.'
No. 5. Leading article; article, 'Ministerial Finance'; 'Adjourned Meeting of the Special Commission,' etc.
No. 6. Leading article.
No. 7. Leading article; 'Adjourned Meeting of the Special Commission,' etc.
No. 8. Leading article; 'Imaginary Conversations of Eminent Men.'
No. 9. Special News about the Eastern Question.
No. 10. Leading article; 'Special News about the Eastern Question; 'Alarming Rumour of the Resignation of Lord Aberdeen.'
No. 11. Leading article; Memorandum on the Relations between the Governments of England and France during the Administration of the Earl of Derby.

and his enterprise my good wishes;' and in the second number he criticised his own Budget speech of December as, 'in our opinion, much too long, and savouring somewhat of the Yankee school of rhetoric.' Lucas wrote to Disraeli in March: 'No one will be able to say through me, "I know the originators and inspirers of this organ to be so-and-so," for I shall stand firmly and impenetrably between you and the public;' and in October: 'I invariably *myself* destroy *your* copy.' Stanley also was writing constantly for the paper, lengthy reviews of serious books, as well as political articles, and at the beginning of the recess, on August 20, asked: 'Does Lucas want regular assistance? or has he filled up our places with other contributors?'

The attack on the Coalition, begun with vigour on the first page of the first number, was continued persistently, not only in serious articles, but in squibs, burlesques, and pasquinades. Disraeli conducted the attack in the main himself. His serious writing in his journal was, as ever, vigorous and effective, if somewhat highly coloured for modern taste; but it must be confessed that the savour has almost entirely departed from his lighter pieces. The following quotations are taken from his leading articles:—'Those whom an intrigue has placed in present power represent nothing, and have made up their minds to nothing'—a charge with much truth in it; Aberdeen was 'qualified to be the Minister of a second-rate German State.'[1] 'We live in an age of great events and little men. The star of England pales. . . . Something ignominious is impending.'[2] In the fifth number there is a specially pungent article, in which Aberdeen is treated in the most merciless fashion:

> His mind, his education, his prejudices, are all of the Kremlin school. Now that he is placed in a prominent position, and forced to lead English gentlemen, instead of glozing and intriguing with foreign diplomatists, not a night passes that his language or his demeanour does not shock and

[1] *Press*, May 21. [2] *Press*, July 9.

jar upon the frank and genial spirit of our British Parliament. His manner, arrogant and yet timid—his words, insolent and yet obscure—offend even his political supporters. His hesitating speech, his contracted sympathies, his sneer, icy as Siberia, his sarcasms, drear and barren as the Steppes,[1] are all characteristic of the bureau and the chancery, and not of popular and aristocratic assemblies animated by the spirit of honour and the pride of gentlemen.

If war break out—*and the present prospect is that war will break out*—this dread calamity must be placed to the account of this man, and of this man alone.[2]

The *Press* was started, as this extract reminds us, at the moment when the Eastern Question was beginning to assume a menacing aspect; and the subject, treated under Disraeli's direction with special knowledge and acumen, soon took the leading place in its columns.[3]

The principal domestic question of the day, Parliamentary Reform, was discussed in a liberal spirit. In the third number it was laid down, by Disraeli himself, that, in regard to Reform, 'there are two men in England who occupy intelligible positions, and only two. They are both Liberals, both Reformers, and both Lancashire men; and these are Lord Derby and Mr. Bright.' Derby's prominent share in the passage of the Great Reform Act was recalled. Derby was a disciple of progress as much as Bright; but Derby's was English progress, in the spirit of the English Constitution and the national character, while Bright's was American progress, in the spirit of the American Constitution and the American character. Derby would effect change by a wise management of traditionary influences; Bright by means of a tyrant majority. 'Between these two intelligible systems the people of this country must, sooner or later, choose.'[4] The subject was developed in a more conservative sense in July. 'The principal depository of power should be the land—the only basis of a free and

[1] Disraeli wrote to Lucas on June 3: 'Alter, in the leader, "sarcasms meagre and barren as the Steppes" to "sarcasms drear and barren," etc.'

[2] *Press*, June 4. [3] See below, Ch. 15. [4] *Press*, May 21.

genuine aristocracy.'[1] 'The possession of land has at all times brought with it as much of duty as enjoyment, and it is the only property in which all men take an interest. They willingly accord power, and even privilege, to that which, in the very necessity of things, must be held for the common good.'[2] These are very Disraelian sentiments, which constantly recur in his speeches and writings. Later in the year Reform was taken up again in a somewhat different spirit, the writer this time being Stanley. The idea of 'representatives of education' having been discussed and rejected, 'we are,' it was said, 'thrown back upon the stern, simple elements of property and population.' The conclusion finally arrived at was certainly a sweeping one.

> It is the duty of statesmen . . . to bring within the pale of the Constitution everyone whose admission cannot be proved dangerous. Is this policy, at once conciliatory and conservative, practicable? Can the franchise be placed on such a basis as, while giving to intellectual and social superiority their due weight, to admit all, save the actually houseless and pauper, to some participation in its privileges? We do not positively answer 'Yes'; yet the possibility merits inquiry; the object all must acknowledge to be good; the means may fairly be discussed hereafter.[3]

This article, which Disraeli did not see till after publication, somewhat fluttered orthodox dovecotes. It was called by so whole-hearted a supporter of Disraeli's as Mandeville 'a regular Radical article.' Mandeville probably made a shrewd guess at the author. 'If our party,' he wrote, 'objected to Stanley's pamphlet on Church rates, as you know, they will object, and with much more reason, to this article on the Franchise.' Disraeli no doubt felt his young colleague had gone too far, for in the next week's issue it was suggested that the Conservative party should for the present hold aloof, and wait to see the Government proposal.[4]

[1] *Press*, July 23. [2] *Press*, July 30.
[3] *Press*, Nov. 5. [4] *Press*, Nov. 12.

The great difficulty of the *Press* was, as always with a new publication, the financial one. In October it was losing £90 a week; but Disraeli was ready himself, with his wonted disregard of pecuniary considerations, to spend from his own very moderate means to keep the journal afloat.

From Lord Stanley.

KNOWSLEY, *Aug.* 24, 1853.—. . . It is all we could expect—2,000 and upwards in less than three months. If we go on to 3,000 in the next three months we ought to be landed.

Next session will decide the fate of the party and that of the paper.

Circulation—Total Sales : May 7, 807; July 30, 2,039.
Advertisements : May 7, £53 17s.; July 30, £10.

KNOWSLEY, *Monday, Oct.* 10, 1853.—. . . This, then, is our position: Present deficiency; probable but not certain solvency at the end of a few months, so far as paying our way, but no prospect of getting back from the profits of the paper any portion of the original outlay; funds exhausted; resources from subscriptions nearly at an end; and yourself, as I understand, responsible for the deficit. . . .

You and I at least, and probably some others, are known to all London as having been concerned in the affair: and our own failure, besides the general injury to the party, will tend to throw us back again into the hands of the ultras from whom we have separated, and who will never receive us except with suspicion, even if we could join them with satisfaction to ourselves. In other words, if the *Press* breaks down it will be inferred, and reasonably, that the opinions of the Conservative party are those of the *Herald*. This must not be, if it can be helped. . . .

My father . . . I have no hope of his helping us in any way. . . .

Anything is better than that you should injure your private fortune in pushing party interests. Parties, like nations, have no gratitude. . . .

To Philip Rose.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 30, 1853.—I have completely examined the accounts of the *Press*, which make the matter entirely clear to me.

Considering all things, and provided energy and judgment are now exercised, I think the result may be satisfactory.

The weekly expenditure must be cut down to £100, which in round numbers will be a weekly loss of £50—*i.e.*, £200 per month.

If the whole number printed (say 3,000) be absorbed by a real sale, and the advertisements be doubled, the paper would then pay; and I think, if an effort be made at the meeting of Parliament, we may count on these results when it has completed about its twelfth month (May, 1854).

Our resources must be devoted to the inner page and the staff. Amateur correspondents may be encouraged, but not paid, and all little features, which occasion expenditure, terminated.

The success of the paper will now depend upon its authentic intelligence, the spirit of its inner page, and the vigor of its leading article. Hitherto it has fought its way, without any great policy to advocate; but that will come, and if such a time arrives, and finds a journal of this description with a prepared sale of 2,000 or 3,000, it may mount to considerable position.

I beg your earnest attention to the enclosed. I send also a cheque for £1,000 for the *Press*.

The sale of the paper slowly increased, and at the end of 1853 was 2,250. It was, however, still run at a loss, though Disraeli felt justified, after a year's experience, in giving a favourable report to the friends who had assisted him. The following letter, which is printed from a draft among the Beaconsfield papers, was probably circulated to all who gave financial support:

To Lord Bath.

GROSVENOR GATE,
March 30, 1854.

MY DEAR LORD,—As you were one of the earliest supporters of the *Press*, I think it may not be uninteresting to you to see the result of the effort.

Its success has justified our best expectations. Launched at a moment when the party was disorganised and depressed, and not sufficiently encouraged at its commencement, it has greatly contributed to the subsequent rally, very much affected opinion, has been referred to in both Houses of Parliament, given a tone and cue to the country's journals, and in ten months secured a genuine sale exceeding that of the *Spectator* and *Examiner*, which have been established for twice as many years.

Nevertheless, there is, and must be for some time, a loss

upon its production. We must remember that in this undertaking, as commercial profit is not contemplated, the most expensive article is given at the cheapest rate, and that it would require another year before that force of advertisements could be obtained which may prevent loss.

It is possible to curtail the expenditure, but that would be at the cost of progressive influence, and of destroying the school of writers which we have with difficulty and by a wise liberality created.

Very little dependence can be placed on amateur writing; and although one or two of our friends have done more than was ever contemplated, it is as an habitual exertion found incompatible with their other duties.

At the same time it seems to be of great importance to the party, that this organ should be maintained and pushed until it is self-supporting, which at its present ratio of increase may be counted on in the course of another year!

Either because of the lack of financial success, or because a better man was available, Disraeli and his friends changed their editor at the close of the first year. On May 11, 1854, Rose wrote to Disraeli: 'Lucas has resigned very peaceably;' and it was arranged that he should continue to write for the paper. The new editor, David Trevena Coulton, had some years previously founded and conducted a paper, the *Britannia*, with much the same aims and objects as inspired the *Press*—to extend and popularise the principles of Conservatism; but he had retired for seven years from active journalism to a farm in Kent, and his only writing was done for the *Quarterly Review*. He was a delicate man, and yielded reluctantly to the importunities of Disraeli and others; but having yielded, he threw himself into the work with great vigour and energy, and three years later (May, 1857) died at his post. Disraeli conceived, and retained, a very high opinion of him. Eight years after his death, he wrote of him to Rose: 'Coulton was a powerful political writer, a true man of letters, and of signal integrity. He was not a hireling, but wrote from conviction, and was always animated by a high sense of duty. He died in harness, writing the best articles in the *Press* newspaper, which,

had he lived, would, I think, have been established as a powerful organ.'

While Lucas was editor, Disraeli seems himself, as a rule, to have written the principal leading article. Coulton took this labour off Disraeli's shoulders, without any loss of inspiration for the paper. He used to go, Mr. T. E. Kebbel tells us, to the House of Commons on Friday nights, to be primed by Disraeli with the latest information and the freshest arguments, and then return to the office to reduce his notes into the form of leading articles. Besides the writers already mentioned, the staff included, then or subsequently, Richard Holt Hutton, editor of the *Economist*, afterwards editor of the *Spectator;* John Robert Seeley, author of *Ecce Homo* and of *The Expansion of England;* F. W. Haydon, Benjamin Haydon's son, who acted as subeditor; and Mr. Kebbel,[1] the sole survivor[2] of a noteworthy group. At a still later period the paper enjoyed the services of Mortimer Collins, the novelist, and Edward Pember, the Parliamentary counsel. In its best days it seems to have had a circulation of from 3,000 to 3,500—quite a considerable figure for a weekly journal at that period, and one which compared favourably with that reached by most of its rivals.

Down to February, 1856, the communications between Disraeli and the editor were constant, and the paper evidently closely reflected his views. Subsequently his interest slackened, and he left its management, along with other party and personal matters, to Rose, who wrote on October 5, 1857, that the finances of the journal were, on the whole, satisfactory. 'The ship is therefore afloat. My chief difficulty now arises from occasional insubordination among the crew, which has too much Irish material in its composition.' A few months afterwards, on acceding to office in 1858, Disraeli sold the paper; and eight years later, in 1866, its brief,

[1] All students of Disraeli are under obligations to Mr. Kebbel for the light he has thrown in many published works on Disraeli's career, and especially for the admirable collection of *Selected Speeches*.

[2] In 1914, when this was first published.

but at first brilliant, career came to an end. It could, however, at least boast that it had long survived that Coalition which it was its original mission to expose and to destroy.

The Coalition, in spite of their popularity with the country, fared in the early months of 1853 rather indifferently in the House of Commons, where they were defeated on minor points three times in one week. But their credit was restored by Gladstone's Budget, one of the financial landmarks of the century. Like Disraeli, he based himself upon direct taxation, but in a different fashion. He proposed to renew the income tax for seven years, gradually diminishing the rate during that period, with a view to the extinction of the tax at its close; and, like Disraeli, he proposed to extend it to Ireland, and to incomes of £100 a year. But he constructed an elaborate argument to show that it was impossible to correct its anomalies and injustices, and his authority sufficed for more than fifty years to prevent an obviously just distinction being drawn between earned and unearned incomes. For further direct taxation he proposed a succession duty on land, in addition to the existing legacy duty on personalty; he also proposed to increase the Scottish and Irish spirit duties. By these means, in addition to the large surplus which his predecessor had bequeathed him, Gladstone calculated that he would have on the current year over £2,000,000 available for remissions of taxation. He took over Disraeli's proposal for the gradual remission of the tea duty; he repealed the soap duty; lowered the advertisement and newspaper duties; reduced the assessed taxes; and reduced or repealed a long list of customs duties. By the boldness of his scheme, the ingenuity of his argument, and the loftiness of his tone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer produced a great effect on the House and on the country.

'We cannot cling to the rags and tatters of a protective system' had been a protestation of Disraeli's earlier in the session. Accordingly, he rather congratulated the

Chancellor than condemned his Budget; indeed, he was able to boast,[1] with considerable justification, that not only was there similarity in several details, but that many of the principles of Gladstone's Budget were identical with those of his own two Budgets of the previous year.[2] Financial policy had been assimilated with the new commercial system; new taxes had been imposed to supply the deficiency created by remissions; provision had been made for dealing with the finances of more than one year. These were all principles which Disraeli had recommended, but which the combination that overthrew him scoffed at and protested against. But he maintained that there were two great blots in the Budget—the renewal of the income tax for seven years without any mitigation of the inequalities of assessment, and the injustice shown to the land.

With regard to the income tax, Disraeli shrewdly declined to believe in its abolition at the end of seven years or at all. Those who kept their eyes open and marked the signs of the times must recognise that the income tax would take a perpetual place in the revenue; but, if it was to be a permanent item in our finance, it ought not to be extended to new classes and countries without an attempt to mitigate its injustices and inequalities. With regard to the land, he pointed out that it was proposed to leave the malt tax unmodified while the tea duty was reduced, and at the same time to increase the burdens on land by a succession duty. The Budget thus aggravated the pressure of indirect taxation upon the British producer, while it imposed a fresh direct tax on the possessor of the soil; yet when those interested in the land complained, they were met with taunts and jeers—told they must take this measure or they would get worse.

Disraeli hoped the old feud between town and country was over; there was no longer any difference of material interests between them. The greatness of the country consisted in its national character created by its institu-

[1] May 2.

[2] 'The Budget as a whole is a caricature and exaggeration of Mr. Disraeli's financial projects and speeches' (Disraeli in the *Press*, May 14).

tions, which had their root in the soil. The owners of the soil were no exclusive class; why, then, this hostility to the land? Should the representatives of the towns remain still alienated from the agricultural interest, and 'proceed in their illusory progress, they may perhaps arrive at the goal which they contemplate, they may perhaps achieve the object they have set before them; but I believe they will be greatly disappointed in the result, and they will find they have changed a first-rate kingdom for a second-rate republic.' This was a phrase that Disraeli had used before, and expressed his strong conviction of the tendency of the Manchester School. So long as Palmerston and Russell were the leading figures in Liberal politics, this tendency was checked; but under Gladstone it had for some years free scope, and the influence of Great Britain in the councils of the world suffered a steady and lamentable decline, till it was restored by Disraeli himself in his great Government.

The principal features of the Budget were carried by majorities of seventy, and it went through with comparatively little change. One change Disraeli was largely concerned in effecting. Before the Budget was introduced, Milner Gibson had proposed, and with Disraeli's aid had carried against the Government, a resolution for the repeal of the advertisement duty. Gladstone only proposed to reduce it; but he was forced in Committee to accept the decision of the House against it. Disraeli had before protested against taxes on knowledge, and he told the House that the repeal of the advertisement duty had been decided on in principle by the Derby Government, and only abandoned owing to the increase in expenditure. The Budget of 1853 was one of many evidences of the incurable optimism which permitted the Coalition to drift into war. It postulated continuity of financial policy, neither fresh remissions of taxation nor fresh additions to expenditure, and, above all, peace. With the coming of war the gradual diminution and final extinction of the income tax went by the board, and there was no oppor-

tunity for financial schemes on a large scale till Gladstone returned to the Exchequer in 1859.

Distinctions which he valued came to Disraeli this year. He presided in May over the anniversary of the Royal Literary Fund, and was warmly welcomed by his brother craftsmen. He told them that literature and politics were like night and morning; each had its alluring charm and dazzling attributes, and he declined to give a decision in favour of either. The appreciation of generous youth was even dearer to him than that of men of letters, and he had it in full measure from the Oxford undergraduates in June. Derby had succeeded the Duke of Wellington as Chancellor of the University, and he included Disraeli in the list of his recommendations of distinguished men for honorary degrees at his installation. 'We shall have to run the gauntlet of the public opinion of the undergraduates,' Derby wrote to him, adding, 'I do not think, however, that we have much to apprehend on that score.'

In spite of Derby's assurance, there is ground for thinking that Disraeli was nervous about his reception; but he found himself, as *The Times* said, 'the lion of the solemnity,' even though persons so considerable as Derby himself, Macaulay, Gladstone, Bishop Wilberforce, Grote, Bulwer Lytton, Aytoun, Samuel Warren, and Judge Haliburton, were present. Never before, except perhaps when the Duke of Wellington was installed, was there such an enthusiastic welcome in the Sheldonian Theatre as on his appearance. Pale, stoical, and impassive, save that his lips slightly quivered, he walked up to the Chancellor, while the theatre was ringing with plaudits; and, in answer to the formal question, *Placet-ne vobis, Domini?* the undergraduates in the gallery shouted, *Maxime placet! Immense placet!* Fraser noted that after, 'with a considerable lighting up of his face,' he had moved to his seat, he looked with his eyeglass along the ladies' gallery, caught sight of his wife, and kissed his hand to her. Further evidence of his popularity was given after a

Christ Church banquet to Derby which he attended. The undergraduates assembled in Tom quadrangle, in spite of the rain, to cheer 'Dizzy' as he left the hall, and escorted him to the gate with what is described as a 'spontaneous shout of enthusiasm.' 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'within these classic walls I dare not presume to attempt to thank you! but, believe this, never will I forget your generous kindness.'

At this period Disraeli wanted all the sympathy of his admirers, for the India Bill, now the principal measure before Parliament, brought out into the open the dissatisfaction of many of his followers. The Government of India at that period rested with three powers: the Governor-General in India; and at home the Court of Directors of the East India Company on the one hand, and on the other the Board of Control, a department of the British Administration with a Cabinet Minister, the President, at its head. It was a compromise between Company Government and Cabinet Government, in which the Cabinet had the last word, and, in its present form, it dated from 1833. The Act in operation expired in 1854, and had to be either renewed for a term or altered. Disraeli's experience, on a Committee of the House of Commons which had investigated the system of Indian Government, had convinced him that this complicated arrangement ought not to continue, and that the time had come for more direct assumption of authority by the Crown and Parliament. Ministers proposed, however, substantially to prolong the present arrangement with modifications in the Court of Directors, introducing, indeed, at the same time the important principle of unlimited competition for Indian appointments, and thus obtaining the warm commendation of Macaulay. The Bill did not at all satisfy Bright, who was the principal advocate of radical change in the Indian Government, and who desired to have Indian affairs continuously subject to the interference of Parliament. Disraeli, while not prepared to go so far as the Manchester

School, was opposed to passing in a hurry, at the end of a session, a Bill which perpetuated most of the anomalies of the existing system;[1] and under his influence Stanley put down an amendment to the second reading, recommending delay and reconsideration with a view to the attainment of a final and permanent settlement.

From Lord Derby.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *June* 20, 1853.—I am sorry to say that I find among our own friends a great division of opinion on the subject of Stanley's motion on Thursday, and an amount of discontent which requires very careful handling to prevent its breaking out into open mutiny in the camp. Tom Baring's[2] opinion we knew before. Henley has to-day been with me, and reports, as his own view as well as that of Herries, that it is not desirable to interfere to prevent legislation in the present Session; and I have received a message from Lonsdale that the members on whom he exercises some influence have a strong feeling on the subject, as I was aware that he had himself. I have begged that all will attend the meeting to-morrow; but to me it is abundantly clear that we have no chance of carrying with us anything like the united strength of our party, and that I must be very guarded in the language which I hold.

I should not do my duty by you and by the party if I did not frankly express to you my opinion that a considerable portion of the dissatisfaction which has shown itself is attributable to an uneasy feeling among our Conservative friends as to a supposed understanding, and to a certain extent combination, between yourself and the Manchester School; and to an apprehension that under the cover of delay there may be sought to be introduced changes very agreeable to that sort of gentlemen, but not reconcilable with the safe administration of our Empire in India; and they are unwilling, apparently, to unite with men of whose intentions they entertain no favourable view, for the purpose of over-

[1] An article in the *Press*, July 9, on 'The Crown or the Company,' expressed Disraeli's view; it was written by Stanley. 'A feeble despotism is a political impossibility. . . . The question is not between bureaucracy and representative government; it is between bureaucracy ably conducted, openly acknowledged, answerable for its acts to Parliament; and bureaucracy which excludes ability, disavows responsibility, works in the dark, and, receiving no ostensible pay, pays itself (with permission of the authorities) in the corrupt use of patronage. Which of these two is the preferable alternative? or, rather, which of these two is the lesser evil?'

[2] Baring had been the chairman of the Indian Committee.

throwing the Government. I confess that I share this latter feeling, and should be sorry to see the Administration displaced by a vote produced by a junction of the most conflicting elements, when the means of forming a new Government are not very obvious, and when the country is involved in very serious external difficulties.

I ought to add, speaking with entire unreserve, that the impression which I have mentioned of your understanding with Bright and Co. has been heightened, and the discontent of our supporters in the House of Commons aggravated, by the friendly terms in which you spoke of Keogh the other night, and by your abstaining from throwing a shield over Naas, who was placed in direct collision with him.[1] I have also heard strong comments on the fact of your having left the House the other night just before the division on the ballot, and upon your absence from any of the divisions or discussions which have taken place on the succession duty.

In short, I cannot conceal it from you that there is reported to me to be a growing fear, and the Government Press does its utmost to keep up the opinion, that you are gradually withdrawing yourself more and more from the Conservative portion of our supporters, and seeking alliances in quarters with which neither they nor I can recognise any bond of union. And I think it is to this feeling more than anything else that is to be attributed the division which at present prevails, and which I am confident will manifest itself to-morrow. If it does, as I expect it will, my language must be that of stating my own views, but not urging them strongly in a party sense. I see no other mode of escaping a signal defeat, in the most mortifying way, by the defection of our own followers—the result of which would be not only the present strengthening of a Cabinet which has no elements of strength in itself, but the permanent disruption of our party in the House of Commons. Personally, I should look on this result with great indifference; but I think it would be unfortunate for the country, and therefore I have not shrunk from pointing out to you the nature and the causes of the danger which I see; and I trust that, in opening to you my whole mind, I have not done it in a way to cause you personal pain, though I know that I must have given you some annoyance. Can you call here at eleven to-morrow to talk it over?

Disraeli was not to be moved from his course either by Derby's representations or by the grumbles of his party. His imagination, like Burke's, had been power-

[1] Disraeli, as leader of the Opposition, had endeavoured to smooth over and compose a bitter personal dispute, instead of being content to espouse his late colleague's side.

fully affected by India, and he was resolved to do his best to make his countrymen realize their responsibilities towards their Eastern Empire. He told the House frankly that he had the misfortune to differ on this question from many of his political friends for whom he entertained, not only great respect, but personal regard; but he could not approve a measure continuing a system of Government for India which was cumbrous, divided, tardy, and deficient in clear and complete responsibility. The Constitution established in 1833 had failed, because there were the same complaints in 1853 as there had been in 1833—'constant wars; constant deficits; no education; few public works; maladministration of justice.' The small alterations which the Bill made he ridiculed. The existing Court of Directors, numbering thirty, was to choose fifteen of its own number to be the future directors. The proposal reminded Disraeli of a subject in which the Indian Government had greatly distinguished itself—the putting down of Thuggee.

> The House, I am sure, knows what a Thug is. A Thug is a person of very gentlemanlike, even fascinating manners. He courts your acquaintance, he dines with you, he drinks with you, he smokes with you; he not only shares your pleasures, but even your pursuits. Whatever you wish done, he is always ready to perform it. He is the companion of your life, and probably a member of the direction of the same joint-stock company; but at the very moment when he has gained your entire confidence, at the very moment when you are, as it were, reposing on the bosom of his friendship, the mission of the Thug is fulfilled, and you cease to exist. I confess I shall be curious to see who are the fifteen Thugs. I want to know who will be the first innocent victim to be selected.

The speech, of which Lady Waldegrave (*née* Braham), who was in the Ladies' Gallery, said that it made her proud of her race, contained other characteristic passages. He said that no one had defended the Bill (though many were not going to vote for the amendment) who was not in office; there was Macaulay, to be sure, but he ought to have been in office. Macaulay's speech was 'one of those

bursts of conversation which would have charmed the breakfast or cheered the dinner table.' With regard to the proposal to have an Indian Budget in the House of Commons, Disraeli uttered a prophecy which has been amply fulfilled:

> Is anything more dreary than a financial statement? What is it that at all excites attention, but the desire to know how much we are going to receive, how much we are going to pay? But we are to have an Indian Budget when we can receive nothing, and cannot control the expenditure. The powers of the Government to maintain a House are remarkable, but I think that their House-collecting, or House-containing, powers will be taxed to the utmost on the night when the Indian Budget . . . is coming on.

The Government had invited attention to the state of the Near and Far East as a reason for haste. It was said 'that Austria was in a state of uncontrolled fanaticism—that the position of the Turkish Empire was most perilous and critical. . . . I was very sorry to hear that the Coalition had brought things to such a pass in the Levant. But I have heard it laid down as a rule of law that no man has a right to take advantage of his own wrong, and it is no argument for misgoverning India that you have misgoverned your foreign affairs.' He thought the Government might very well have suggested delay themselves; they had only been in office a few months, and had had much else to do. But Disraeli's arguments had no effect on Ministers, who merely made game of the divisions of the Opposition. He was supported by only 140 votes in the lobby, against 322, and the Bill was carried. The form of Government thus established lasted only five years. The Indian Mutiny came in 1857, to show that Disraeli's pessimism was better justified than the official optimism; and in 1858 Disraeli, as Leader of the House, presided over the transference of India from the Company to the Crown, thus effecting himself that complete change which he had pronounced in opposition to be necessary.

Disraeli was educating his party, but the momentary effect was to throw their affairs into more confusion than ever. The success of Gladstone's Budget had placed the

Government in a much stronger position, and the blunders of Coalition diplomacy in the Eastern Question were as yet either not known or not realised to be blunders. Accordingly the session ended favourably for the Government, and badly for their opponents. Parties in opposition have a tendency to fall foul of their leaders. One section of the Conservatives appealed to Lonsdale to help to depose Disraeli, laying great stress on the Liberal votes that had been given by his friend Stanley. Pakington, who had apparently not been admitted to Disraeli's councils in opposition, was suggested as a possible successor. Many Conservatives looked to Palmerston, who was supposed to be uncomfortable under Aberdeen, as their future leader. There were others who held, as Rose wrote to Disraeli, that nothing could be done while Derby remained leader, and that many of the Whigs, who would never join Derby, would be content to follow Disraeli. Malmesbury wrote to Derby, September 8: 'I believe nothing can rally us but the greatest personal exertions on your part in seeing and talking over individuals who possess influence over sections of the House of Commons; in coming to a clear understanding with Disraeli respecting his language and conduct, and insisting on his riding to orders; and, lastly, in laying before the party (as far as it can be done) a programme of our plan for the Session.' Malmesbury apparently had rallied to Derby's views, and deserted Disraeli and Stanley, with whom he was working in the spring, and whom he had helped to found the *Press*.

From Lord Malmesbury.

ACHNACARRY, FORT WILLIAM, *Sept.* 18, 1853.—. . . When Protection went by the board we were lighter by a heavy spar, but that spar was our mainmast. We brought a new army into the field, one-half of which were recruits, or fine-weather soldiers, and the army was defeated in our first pitched battle. We, the leaders, then ran away, and in our flight and subsequent retreats and skirmishes we have only found the old guard firm—namely, those men who had fought with us for five years. Put them at 150, and you have got all you can trust to. . . .

Disraeli was not seriously dispirited. He wrote to Ferrand at the beginning of the vacation: 'Politics are quite dead, and the chicken-hearted are all despairing; but I am an orthodox believer in the resurrection of the factions, and am too old a stager ever to give up the game.'

With the end of the session came the retirement of an old colleague, Herries, and the election to Parliament for Stamford in his place of one who was to be the severest of Disraeli's Tory critics and the intimate ally and successor of Beaconsfield. In making the announcement, Herries wrote: 'I understand that Lord Robert Cecil will be a valuable accession to the Conservative party in the House of Commons.'

To John Charles Herries.

Aug. 11, 1853.—I received your letter of the 8th inst., and read it not without emotion. The close of a public career so honorable and distinguished and of such duration as your own is an incident which must interest all your friends, and must touch more nearly those who have had, however adverse the circumstances, the honor of being your colleagues.

I confess I am not surprised at your determination. Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the condition of the Tory party. It is, perhaps, the necessary result of a false position; but whatever the cause, the consequence is certain, and your successor may well be a young man, if he aspires to witness the triumph of his confederation.

Lord Derby had not prepared me for your communication. Goodwood and the gout have prevented my seeing him of late. . . . I trust that repose and the resources of the beautiful scene to which you have retired will renovate your health and insure you many years of enjoyment and honor.

The new member for Stamford made his maiden speech against the Oxford University Bill in the next session. It was praised by Gladstone in the House of Commons, and by Disraeli in a letter to his late colleague, Lord Robert Cecil's father. 'I have no hesitation,' Disraeli wrote, 'in saying that if he will work—and he has a working look—I will soon make a man of him.' 'It is a very great satisfaction to me,' Salisbury replied, 'that Robert's first attempt has met with your approbation. I am afraid that your praise may be a little increased by the friendship which I hope you entertain for his father.'

CHAPTER XV.

'A Coalition War.'

1853–1855.

Disraeli had no responsibility for the Crimean War. He was in office neither during the diplomatic negotiations which led up to it, nor during any part of its actual progress; and he always maintained that the war was the disastrous result of a Coalition in which two opposed principles of foreign policy were struggling for ascendancy, and that it would never have happened but for the defeat of the Derby Ministry. 'We are as a people fond of facts,' wrote the *Press* under his inspiration on September 24, 1853, 'and this one fact is too significant to be passed by unnoticed. The formation of the Aberdeen Ministry was the signal for the Cabinet of St. Petersburg to commence its attack on the independence of the Porte.' Nearly twenty years afterwards, in a speech at Manchester,[1] he repeated his view in the most categorical terms:

> The Crimean War need never have occurred. . . . There was not the slightest chance of a Crimean War when we retired from office; but the Emperor of Russia, believing that the successor of Lord Derby was no enemy to Russian aggression in the East, commenced those proceedings with the result of which you are familiar. I speak of what I know—not of what I believe, but of what I have evidence in my possession to prove—that the Crimean War would never have happened if Lord Derby had remained in office.

We may accept Disraeli's hypothesis, without being able to understand what evidence could have absolutely proved it. It is at least certain that the Derby Ministry spoke with one voice in foreign policy, and the Aberdeen

[1] April 3, 1872.

Ministry with two; and that by the change of Government the close understanding with France, which was then the necessary preliminary to a firm policy in the Near East,[1] was placed in jeopardy, only to be restored after serious delay. Clarendon, Aberdeen's Foreign Minister after Russell's retirement from the post, told Greville over and over again, in the spring and summer of 1853, of the great difficulties of his task in the Cabinet, 'standing between and mediating between Aberdeen and Palmerston, whose ancient and habitual ideas of foreign policy are brought by this business into antagonism. . . . He is therefore obliged,' was Greville's comment, 'to take a great deal upon himself, in order to prevent any collision between Palmerston and Aberdeen.'[2] As Aberdeen was Prime Minister, and Palmerston had been relegated to the Home Department, what wonder that the Emperor Nicholas should have supposed that Aberdeen would guide English policy, and should have pushed forward with confidence, only to find that, after all, the resolve of the English people was expressed by Palmerston, and not by Aberdeen?

As Disraeli had no responsibility, his biographer is spared the task of repeating, save in the briefest outline, a familiar story. There was a secular quarrel between Latin and Greek monks about the guardianship of the Holy Sepulchre and the other Sacred Places in Palestine. One Church relied on France, the other on Russia, while Turkey was the Sovereign of the country. France meant Louis Napoleon, who was on his probation; Russia meant the Emperor Nicholas, who thought the 'Sick Man' was near to dissolution. Louis Napoleon, anxious to gain a reputation both for Catholic zeal and for power, obtained from Turkey by pressure certain privileges for the Latin Church in the way of keys to the Holy Places. This was bitterly resented by Nicholas, who despised Napoleon III. as an upstart, and who took very seriously

[1] 'England and France are the two policemen of Europe, and they can always keep the peace.'—Disraeli in the *Press*, May 28.

[2] Greville, under date June 22, 1853.

his own headship of the Greek Church. He sent Prince Menschikoff in the spring to Constantinople, ostensibly to demand a satisfactory settlement in regard to the Holy Places, but in fact to extort from the Porte an engagement to give Russia the definite protectorate of the Christians in Turkey, and thus to bring Turkey under Russian control. He would not believe that Aberdeen could possibly push resistance to such a policy to the point of war; and Aberdeen and Clarendon, on their part, accepted the Emperor's assurances, through his Ambassador, Brunnow, that he had no hostile or sinister intentions, and that Menschikoff's mission was of a very limited scope. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, British Ambassador at Constantinople, understood Nicholas better. His authority with the Porte was exceptional, and under his influence the question of the Holy Places was isolated and a settlement readily arranged, but the Russian demand for a protectorate was rejected. Menschikoff left Constantinople towards the end of May; and Nicholas sent his troops across the Pruth, and occupied the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia[1] early in July, declaring that this was not an act of war, but merely in order to obtain security for the Sultan's compliance with his views. Clarendon's confidence in the Emperor was now shaken, and he inclined to Palmerston rather than to Aberdeen. The English and French fleets came up to Besika Bay, just outside the Straits, to support the Sultan, France being more forward in aggressive movement than England.

Public feeling, however, was rising in England. British policy had been for some time, on the one hand, to support the integrity and independence of the Turkish Empire, as a necessary make-weight in Eastern Europe; but, on the other hand, to press for internal reforms and better treatment of the subject Christian races. The two aspects of British policy, the first represented at this time by Palmerston, and the second by Aberdeen, have

[1] Now united into independent Rumania; then under the suzerainty of the Sultan.

not always been easily reconcilable. But in this case there was a justifiable doubt whether any benefit whatever would accrue to the Christian inhabitants of the Balkan provinces by exchanging the yoke of a Mohammedan Sultan for that of the Christian ruler of an empire itself only slowly emerging from primitive conditions, and with its society still on a servile basis. The policy, which has since proved fruitful and successful, of encouraging on the Danube and in the Balkans the creation of Christian States independent both of Russia and of Turkey, was quite impracticable till after Russian ambitions had been curbed. The fundamental principle of British foreign policy seemed to be challenged by Nicholas's aggressive tendencies and his commanding influence in the councils of the German Powers, coupled with Russia's apparently inexhaustible resources—the principle, namely, that England could not, with due regard to her own safety, permit any single Power absolutely to dominate the Continent of Europe. In bringing, or appearing to bring, diplomatic pressure to bear on Russia, Austria and Prussia were ready to unite with France and England; and, with a view to peace, the four Powers drafted at Vienna a note to be addressed by Turkey to Russia, which might placate the latter without endangering the interests of the former. Maladroitly, they only secured the assent of Russia, and not that of Turkey, to the note; and it was discovered that Russia meant to construe it in such a way as to give her that protectorate over Christians in Turkey which she demanded. Turkey sent an ultimatum requiring the evacuation of the principalities, and on its rejection by Russia war broke out between these two Powers. The English and French fleets came through the Dardanelles to Constantinople, and on November 30 the Russian fleet attacked and destroyed the Turkish in Sinope Harbour. After the indignation caused in England by this achievement, there was little hope of keeping out of the war.

Throughout the session Ministers deprecated debate,

and put off questioners by reassuring replies, minimising Menschikoff's mission and the ominous proceedings of Russia. Disraeli contented himself with asking questions, though he viewed the diplomacy of Ministers with ever-increasing distrust, and exposed, through the *Press*, their hesitations and inconsistencies. The gravity of the situation was insisted upon from the third number[1] onwards, and the Ministers responsible for the failures of our diplomacy were mercilessly scourged. The violence of Disraeli's attacks on Aberdeen in the *Press* may surprise those who have learnt, owing to the publication of contemporary memoirs and correspondence, how many high qualities Aberdeen concealed under a repellent exterior, and how greatly he was esteemed by those admitted to his confidence. But he had not the qualities necessary for the Prime Minister of a Coalition in a troubled time. He had, indeed, the patience to suffer discordant colleagues even to an extreme degree, but not the vigour to dominate them; and he was so self-sacrificing as to remain in office to carry out a policy which he abhorred and had unsuccessfully resisted. Moreover, owing to a bad Parliamentary manner, he had no personal hold on Parliament—a strange position for a Prime Minister under a Parliamentary Constitution.

> Lord Aberdeen seems paralysed with the responsibility of action, and Lord Clarendon only whimpers and wrings his hands. . . . The curse of 'antiquated imbecility' has fallen, in all its fulness, on Lord Aberdeen. His temper, naturally morose, has become licentiously peevish. Crossed in his Cabinet, he insults the House of Lords, and plagues the most eminent of his colleagues with the crabbed malice of a maundering witch![2]

In the seventh number Disraeli gave a timely warning:

> We are on the eve of great events; and it is just as well that the people of this country should be prepared for their occurrence. . . . A single blunder in the conduct of our foreign affairs may cost us as much as a series of bad harvests. . . .
>
> The designs of Russia are to be resisted by a vigilant and skilful diplomacy, resting on an assured basis of material

[1] *Press*, May 21. [2] *Press*, June 11.

power; nor is there, in general, any fear of Russia attempting to advance those projects which British policy deems so dangerous, except at periods when she finds our diplomacy napping, and the administration of our affairs in the hands of incompetent persons.[1]

After the event the Foreign Secretary himself realised how well-founded was this line of criticism. Clarendon wrote to Aberdeen on November 4 that the point of danger then reached might have been avoided by firm language and decided action at the outset.[2] When the Russians crossed the Pruth, Disraeli in the *Press* summed up the futile proceedings of four months thus:

> We have had . . . stout declarations by Ministers in both Houses of Parliament; bold notices of motions given and withdrawn by docile members of the same; we have had both the English and the French Cabinets nearly broken up, and the Turkish Cabinet quite changed; we have had endless despatches, protests, ultimatums, proclamations; notes, parting, explanatory, and circular; orders for admirals to act and to be inert; combined fleets and contradictory allies;—and what have we done? Why, we have recommended the Sultan not to consider the invasion of his dominions by a foreign army as a *casus belli*. A *casus belli?* Why, it is no longer a question whether it is a case for war; *it is war*, and war the most triumphant and successful.[3]

Disraeli, it is not surprising, thought the time for debate had now arrived, and on July 13 he pressed on Russell to give a day for a motion which Layard had had for some time on the paper. In this reasonable request, Greville, whose pages teem with Clarendon's confessions, nevertheless could see nothing but wanton mischief-making. Russell pleaded successfully the Vienna negotiations as a reason for further postponement; and no regular discussion took place in the House of Commons until the eve of prorogation in the middle of August, nor did Disraeli himself speak even then. But his feelings and judgment throughout were with the Palmerston section of the Cabinet. He and the Opposition leaders generally realised the meaning of the Menschikoff mission, to which

[1] *Press*, June 18.
[2] Maxwell's *Clarendon*, vol. ii., p. 8.
[3] *Press*, July 16.

Clarendon and Aberdeen were blind. 'A palsied hand,' wrote the *Press* on September 3, 'was fumbling with the reins of empire.' Malmesbury's policy was expressed laconically on September 18: 'To stop the modern Attila is a great and sound game.' Disraeli agreed that Nicholas must be stopped, but he did not regard him as a Hun. In 1849 he had described him in Parliament as 'a man of intellectual power who had upon the whole exercised his influence with a due regard to his duties, and was in advance of the people he governed'; and he always held similar language, in the *Press* as well as in the House of Commons.

To Lord Londonderry.

Confidential. HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Sept.* 26, 1853. — Altho' we may differ on Russian politics, we do not differ as to the abilities of the Czar. What is occurring is what I foresaw and mentioned, tho' it is occurring under aggravated circumstances of British incapacity. Such conduct as that of the English Government cannot, however, be accounted for by mere want of ability. It is one of the inevitable consequences of a coalition between statesmen of totally different systems.

I do not agree with you about Napoleon. Altho' personally, from the first, he was disinclined to war, he has behaved towards us most honorably. True it is, that Drouyn de Lhuys and Walewski were both of them warlike, but he would soon have thrown them over, had he wished to have left us in the lurch. Against his own feelings and immediate interests he was prepared to act, for the sake of the English alliance; but the conduct of our Government to him has been so inconsistent, and often so mistrustful, that we have absolutely encouraged him to leave us in the lurch.

As far as I hear, whether it be at St. Petersburg or at Paris, it ends by all agreeing that Aberdeen is not up to the mark. What will come of it, I pretend not to predict, but that there are dissensions in our Cabinet is, I think, evident.

Your 'strong Derbyite friend' must have been indulging in a little romance.[1] Statesmen do not much meddle with politics in September, and my despatches from Knowsley have only taken the shape of haunches of venison; but I don't think the present aspect of affairs is exactly one to induce a

[1] Londonderry's Derbyite friend had told him that the 'Chief [Derby] has thrown up his cards, and the troops turned to the right about, all to peg on to the Thane [Aberdeen] if they can, or to Palmerston.'

Minister out of office to 'throw up the cards.' With a fall of ten per cent. in consols since we retired, an European war at hand, mainly, if not entirely, occasioned by the vacillation and mutual jealousy of our opponents, much commercial and financial difficulty impending, precipitated and aggravated by the singular imprudence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I don't think Ld. Derby would feel it consistent either with his duty or his inclination to retire from the scene: tho' a mere reproduction of the late Government is impossible, nor was it ever contemplated. . . .

Writing to Mrs. Willyams on October 10, Disraeli says: 'I have sent Lord Henry Lennox on a secret mission to Paris, and his despatches are very curious and exciting.' Here is one of them:

From Lord Henry Lennox.

PARIS, *Oct.* 6 [1853].—. . . I went to see the Pss. Lieven. I found her seated on a low sofa, surrounded by a screen which was amply provided with *abat-jours* to conceal the ravages of time and anxiety. She was extremely depressed, and frequently burst out during our interview with, 'Mais c'est embêtant, ça; c'est détestable, et tout pour a few Grik Prists ! !' She told me her news was of the worst, and that she had now *almost* given up the last ray of hope. She considers the thing has been mismanaged by all, and in some degree even by the Russians. 'La diplomatie à Vienne n'a pas brillé,' she said. The next observation was, 'They tell me the Derby party are willing to support Palmerston and a war Ministry; I cannot believe it, but as you are *très lié* with Mr. Disraeli you can tell me your *avis*.' I replied that I really knew not—that such a contingency had not been talked of while I was in England, and added, by way of drawing her out, 'Fancy Aberdeen *after all* finding himself at the head of a Ministry which declares war against Russia and his old ally Brunnow !' She did not hear me to the end, but in the most excited manner protested against the possibility of it. 'Mais moi, je vous dis que ça n'arrivera pas; *je sais* qu'Aberdeen ne consentira jamais à déclarer la guerre contre la Russie.' I then tried her again by saying, 'How annoying it would be to Ld. Aberdeen to go out *alone*, and at such a crisis !' She rose again and firmly protested that certainly S. Herbert and Newcastle would never leave him. . . .

A woman, a friend of mine, saw Pr. Jérôme yesterday; he said that the French Emperor had *quite made up his mind*, and that he only waited for us to do so, that he might declare

war against Russia and carry it out, added Jérôme, *corps et âme*. This is authentic. . . .

Lennox's mission in Paris was to act as a kind of Special Correspondent of the *Press*, which kept up during the autumn a sustained attack on the Government, and in particular on the Prime Minister. 'The truth is that, amidst professions of peace, we are sacrificing its reality to its shadow;'[1] 'the time has come when grave pomposity can no longer pass for wisdom, or moroseness for courage;'[2] 'Lord Aberdeen has precipitated the convulsion, and is, at the same time, alike unfit and unprepared to control the storm;'[3] 'he will betray the honour and the interests of our country—it is the law of his nature and the destiny of his life.'[4] Certainly most and probably all, of these sentences were written by Disraeli himself. It is hardly surprising that Aberdeen should have turned on his tormentor in the House of Lords in the following spring and denounced 'a publication which is supposed to enjoy great authority; at all events, from its malignity and misrepresentations, the origin of it is not perhaps very difficult to discover.'[5] Disraeli retorted in the *Press* that 'malignant misrepresentations' was 'a splenetic misnomer for "inconvenient truths."'[6]

Mrs. Disraeli was seriously ill in the autumn of 1853. She was 'greatly suffering,' her husband told Londonderry, 'from a state of nervous debility.' 'As she is the soul of my house, managing all my domestic affairs, it is, irrespective of all other considerations, a complete revolution in my life. Everything seems to me to be anarchy.' It was not until the middle of November that her health sufficiently improved to allow the Disraelis to leave Hughenden for a little visiting. They went to Merstham in Surrey to stay with the Jolliffes, to Wimpole to stay with the Hardwickes, and to Heron Court to stay with the Malmesburys; and between these last two visits Disraeli went, for

[1] *Press*, October 1.
[2] *Press*, October 15.
[3] *Press*, November 26.
[4] *Press*, December 16.
[5] March 31, 1854.
[6] *Press*, April 8, 1854.

the first time, as a guest to his chief's house at Knowsley. The two leaders had corresponded but little during the recess. The course which Disraeli had thought it best to take in the House of Commons had not commended itself to Derby, and both probably felt that the less said the better. Besides, the gout was particularly persistent in its attacks on Derby this autumn. Disraeli was the first to break silence.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 28, 1853.—I have not troubled you all this time, notwithstanding events, because I thought you must be sick of us all, and would like, for a while, to forget party and politicians; but a rather restless letter from Malmesbury a few days ago makes me feel that you might misinterpret my silence, and suppose it to arise from indifference to our fortunes, for which I should be sorry.

I need not say I should like very much to know your general opinion as to affairs, and I give my own rough impressions in sincere deference to them.

I collected from Fremantle at Q. Sess. that the Government flatter themselves that they shall still weather the storm and meet Parliament with peace. This does not accord with what reaches me from the Continent, either from Paris or from my mysterious correspondent, Prince Frederic,[1] who is now in Germany. Madame de Lieven said some ten days ago that there were two things 'certain.' First, that the Emperor would not quit the Principalities. Secondly, that Lord Aberdeen would never declare war against Russia.

So much for war. As to Finance, I doubt whether the *malaise* be so profound as it appears. . . .

The third point of importance is the Reform Bill. I have pursued my researches and calculations which I made in 1851 on that question, adapting them to the new Census, and testing them by it. The result is a triumphant case for the territorial constitution. . . .

The state of the party is the fourth point which I would notice. I cannot help believing that there is more anarchy, in that respect, in the Houses of Parliament than in the country. Jolliffe, who, I hope, will be here in a few days, seems to have found a very general, and on the whole satisfactory, response to his circular respecting the registration, and is immersed in a very extensive correspondence. I have no doubt his sedulousness, tact, and courtesy, have worked

[1] Of Holstein.

well at the juncture, and that the new organisation we established is quietly but efficiently operating. I don't care so much for the personal feelings of Parliament if the people out of doors are true. A single motion, often a single speech, at the right moment, in either House, will clear the skies.

The result of all this is that I have felt, generally speaking, we could not be too quiet. . . .

Derby was too ill to reply until November 14, when he somewhat deprecated Disraeli's optimism about the state of the party. The effect of 'a single motion,' or 'a single speech at the right moment,' was, he thought, only temporary. 'The clouds will gather again, unless there is in the party a strong foundation of personal confidence, which must be maintained by constant attention, and even by some indulgence to the prejudices of those whom we lead.'

Before Disraeli reached Knowsley, rumours of Cabinet dissensions and of Palmerston's dissatisfaction with his colleagues became more rife than ever, and worried the Conservative leaders. Stanley sent Disraeli, on November 28, a sketch of his own and his father's preoccupations: 'Supposing resignations, Palmerston becomes master of the situation; will he be content to play a secondary part? Will he lead the Commons under my father? And in that event, you co-operating with him as joint leader, what becomes of Gladstone? G. and his follower, S. Herbert, are to all appearance very strongly bound by personal ties to Palmerston. Can that connection be broken? Or, supposing P. to take the command in person, what will be our position? It is evident to me that few of our friends would oppose *him*, consequently that our *rôle* as an Opposition will speedily become absurd.' Disraeli refused[1] to believe in any such "mortifying decomposition of our friends.' And he asked Derby not to be offended 'if I take the liberty of saying what I once said to George Bentinck in his darkest hour, that "come what will, we will stand or fall together."'

Disraeli's visit to Knowsley lasted three days, from December 9 to 12; and, according to Malmesbury, who

[1] Dec. 2.

was a fellow-guest, his arrival 'bored' Derby, as it obliged him to turn from translating Homer to talking politics, and to hold at least one 'Cabinet Council' of the ex-Ministers staying in the house—Disraeli, Malmesbury, and Hardwicke. Disraeli's own impression of Derby's humour was that he was anxious to obtain office again and 'full of fight.'

To Mrs. Disraeli.

KNOWSLEY, *Dec.* 12, 1853.—This place is remarkable: a wretched house, yet very vast: an irregular pile of many ages: half of it like St. James' Palace, low, red, with turrets: the other like the Dutch façade of Hampton Court. It appears to me that, like many other old great places, it has been built originally on the road-side, with the park behind; so that now all the lands, through which you approach the residence, have a bare and comparatively modern look, as made up, which was doubtless the case, of fields, while behind the house is a park almost as large as Windsor, and with great beauty. I think it is a circumference of more than ten or twelve miles, with red deer, as well as fallow deer, oak forests, a splendid lake, great undulation, and in the moorland, or, as it is called in Lancashire, moss, the landscape is all rhododendron on a large scale.

Our party, the Ossulstons, who have come over from Chillingham with Lady Malmesbury to meet my lord, Lord Hardwicke, Anson, and some other men.

Lord Derby looks very thin and pale, but I think improved: he looks so very young.

Palmerston's resignation, about which there had been so much speculation and so much prophecy, was announced on December 16, and remained effective for just ten days, when it was withdrawn and everything went on as before. Dissatisfied as he was with much of the Aberdeen and Clarendon diplomacy, it was not on the Eastern Question, but on Russell's Reform proposals, which he found too Radical,[1] that he actually resigned; but as he returned on the entreaty of his colleagues and the assurance that the details of the Reform Bill were open to discussion, and as public opinion had treated his presence in the Cabinet as indispensable, his influence

[1] Disraeli told Lady Malmesbury that the Bill was a 'slashing' one; 'every town in which there was a statue of Peel was to have a member.'

was rather increased than diminished by the episode. The hopes and fears of the Conservative party were naturally much excited. Disraeli, writing on December 18, told Pemberton Milnes that Palmerston was 'furious that his resignation should be solely, or even mainly, placed upon Parliamentary Reform. He resigned on the broad grounds of "Antiquated Imbecility."'[1] Stanley drew the proper moral from what had happened, and rescued for us a prediction of Disraeli's which was abundantly justified, when he wrote to him on December 29: 'It really looks as if your prophecy were coming true: "a war and no Reform."'

To Lord Derby.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Dec.* 19, 1853.—. . . The Government have no root in the country. Their plan of reform is an attack on the aristocracy, while at the same time it disgusts the working classes, while from their Puseyism the Cabinet cannot excite any enthusiasm among the middle classes. A clique of Doctrinaires, existing as a Government by Court favor, cannot last in troubled times like these—irrespective of the unpopularity which the management of their foreign affairs has brought to them.

What gladdens my heart is that the tactics we followed in resigning last year, and in which our friends had lost all faith, if they ever had any, have proved to have been founded on a deeper knowledge of men and things than our critics gave us credit for.

I apprehend you will not be much troubled any longer with grumblers in our party. I fancy, from some letters I have received and from some receptions which have greeted me, that 'confidence' is wonderfully restored. . . .

But the most funny thing of all, and the most delightful, is that Palmerston has contrived to land the Peelites with the Movement party. Remember Gladstone's Conservative peroration this time last year. I have no doubt myself, looking to the character of the man, his extreme caution as to acting alone, etc., that he did not make the *coup* until he had felt his way with, or probably been egged on by, most of the principal Whig houses; and although Lord Lansdowne has withdrawn his withdrawal, the moral effect of the first step remains. . . .

[1] 'It is true that the policy of Lord Palmerston has, in the main, been followed, but it has been always followed too late' (*Press*, Dec. 17). 'Antiquated imbecility' was a phrase which Palmerston had used of Aberdeen's principles when he and Aberdeen were opposed.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HERON COURT, CHRISTCHURCH, *Dec.* 30, 1853.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—We are here on a visit to Lord and Lady Malmesbury, in a very wild scene; a land of four rivers, a true Punjaub, abounding in every species of wild-fowl, and the finest sport. I have sent you some of mine for your New Year's dinner. . . .

The Government seem to have had a paralytic stroke, but they have administered cordials to the patient, and it will linger on awhile. Its alternative is Reform or War. This is a pleasant choice. . . .

Writing to Lennox on January 13, Disraeli said: 'I am disgusted with the silly *Herald* and the stupid *Standard* mixing themselves up in the mud. There were plenty of scavengers among the *canaglia*.' The mud in which the *Herald* and *Standard* were dabbling was a violent and unjustifiable attack begun by the Radical Press, but continued by these Conservative journals, against the Prince Consort, charging him with improper and unconstitutional interference in public affairs, and in particular with influencing British foreign policy in the interests of Germany and Russia. The Conservative leaders exerted themselves to stop, so far as they could, these libels in papers professing Conservatism, but did not entirely succeed in their object or in avoiding the unfounded suspicion of encouraging them. When Parliament met, the spokesmen of both parties severely reprobated the campaign of falsehood.

To Lord Ponsonby.

Jan., 1854.—I received your letter last night, and read it with astonishment and some sorrow. That 'very many people' should 'suppose' that I should in any way sanction, or not earnestly prevent, had I the power, attacks upon the Prince Consort, justifies on my part both feelings.

Having had the honor to serve Her Majesty, and having experienced from the Court always candor and courtesy, such conduct on my part would not be merely disloyal or dishonorable—it would be infamy. Irrespective, however, of these considerations, the opportunity which office afforded

me of becoming acquainted with the Prince filled me with a sentiment towards him which I may describe without exaggeration as one of devotion. Nothing will induce me to believe that the Prince, with his knowledge of character and power of calculating conduct, has ever given credence to the insinuation you mention, or to recognise it as anything else but a malignant manœuvre of party.

But this accusation is not merely false; it happens to be absurd. Far from having 'much influence' over the papers you mention, I not only have none, but they are my secret or my avowed foes, and have several times attacked me with acrimony. Notwithstanding the unceasing assaults which in every form are levied against me from the Peel school,[1] you will never observe any formal defence of me in any of these journals. It is right, however, that I should state that other leading members of the party, whom one would think were more advantageously placed with respect to these journals, have made the most earnest representations of the injustice and folly of the course which they are pursuing with respect to the Prince, and entirely without effect.

The truth is, great errors exist as to the influence of party leaders over what are esteemed party journals. Where a party is the proprietor of a newspaper or assists it with a subvention, as in the instance of the *M[orning] C[hronicle]*, no doubt they can do what they like; but that is not the case with the journals you mention. Holding them by no proprietary tie, and indebted to us for no pecuniary aid, they look only to their circulation, and will follow up any cry which they believe tends to increase their sale.

With regard to the second point of your letter—namely, the elevation of Palmerston or his union with myself, which are assumed to be the secret objects of these attacks—I need not, happily, trouble you at any length. I have never seen Palmerston or heard from him directly or indirectly during all these events. Indeed, I very much doubt whether I have spoken to him since he joined the administration of Lord Aberdeen. What may be his objects I pretend not to decide, but I doubt whether they be as towering as his enemies fear or his friends hope. He does not appear to me to be a man capable of availing himself of a great occasion.

My letter has spread to such a length that I will say nothing

[1] These attacks culminated this month in the publication, by a publisher of repute, of an anonymous volume entitled, *The Right Honourable Benjamin Disraeli, M.P.: a Literary and Political Biography addressed to the New Generation*. It was an elaborate arraignment, running to over 600 octavo pages, of the whole of his career; and it solemnly found him guilty of high political crimes, such as unscrupulousness, immorality, and infidelity.

about politics in general. You know I am of a sanguine temperament, but I admit to you now that the state of affairs in this country is serious. We are instantly menaced with war and domestic revolution; and neither of these calamities has arisen from the necessities of things, but has been produced by the incompetence or the short-sighted ambition of second-rate men.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 23, 1854.—The Captain kept me so late at work in St. James' Sqr. on Saturday that I missed the post, so that I could not thank you for your magnificent present,[1] which will come very apropos to a Parliamentary dinner, which he insists on my giving on the 30th.

I am not at all 'depressed,' tho' I have got the prevalent catarrh, which is eno' to crush anybody. I think the Government is in great straits, and I am not at all afraid of Portal's[2] men in buckram, tho' I am sorry to lose such a nice young fellow as himself. Adhesions come in from all quarters, and so far as numbers are concerned, it will be the most powerful Opposition that ever met Parliament.

Parliament was to assemble on January 31, and more elaborate preparations were made by the party than usual, dinners being arranged both at Derby's and at Disraeli's for the eve, and a great meeting at Derby's for the actual morning. To the meeting, on Disraeli's suggestion, all Conservatives, and not merely Derbyites, were invited, so as to attract Peelites who disliked the Coalition into which their leaders had entered;[3] and Disraeli had other plans, detailed in a well-known letter to Malmesbury, for heartening his followers in the Commons.

To Lord Malmesbury.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 24, 1854.—It is said that everything depends on a great muster at the Captain's on the morning of the 31st. A great muster will be better for us at this moment than a great division.

[1] Of truffles.

[2] M.P. for Hampshire. Lennox had reported him as saying that there were fifty men he knew of in the party who would vote to keep Gladstone in rather than that Disraeli should return.

[3] The most eminent anti-Coalition Peelite was Sir Stafford Northcote, who had been Gladstone's private secretary, but who was not to enter Parliament for another year. He has left it on record that he 'always abhorred' 'that miserable Coalition.'

To insure this, all his men ought to be asked to dine with him. He has offered only three dinners; the cards are out, they will only include ninety of his followers. There wanted nine dinners. The cards should all be out; if the dinners took place a month hence it would not matter. What they want is to be asked to their leader's, and to have their cards meeting them on their arrival in town.

You must remember this is a new Parliament, full of *new men who have never entered his house*, for last year *he gave no dinners at all*, from domestic circumstances.

Those who understand these things have all been to me to say how critical this is; every man who is not asked is offended. I cannot mention these matters to him; you are the only person who can.

Lord Salisbury also should be asked to invite the men. His dinners last year did great good, when our fortunes were darkest.

I have given the *Press* another £500, which will keep them till the end of March; during the interval we must consult as to the course we ought to pursue. The sale increases greatly, and its influence: but the expenses do not much diminish. You had better keep the subscriptions you have received till we meet and consult on this.

The enclosed will show you that the *actual sale* has increased six hundred per week since I left Hughenden in November.[1]

To Lord Londonderry.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Monday, Jan.* 30, 1854.—I never heard of your illness[2] for a long time, living in the country, and, like Mr. Roebuck, 'reading only *The Times*.'

I first saw the paragraph reproduced in a weekly journal in town one day, but I learnt, at the same time, on the authority of one of your most intimate acquaintance, that there was no truth in it, and that you were, happily, quite well. I am most grieved to hear that all this was inaccurate.

As for the D[israeli]s, tho' not utterly defunct, they have been nearly so. We stopped in town, at the end of the year, coming from Heron Court, for my wife to consult Dr. Ferguson, and on a debilitated frame she caught the London Influenza in its most aggravated form. We got down to the country as soon as we could, but she has been reduced to the

[1] In *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister* this letter is wrongly dated 1853. The references to the *Press*, which was only started in May, 1853, and to the meeting of Parliament on Jan. 31, show that it was written in Jan., 1854.

[2] Londonderry died on March 6. This was apparently Disraeli's last letter to him.

last extremity, and tho' she has wonderfully rallied, at one moment the physicians hardly gave me a hope.

To complete my troubles, tho' myself extremely well, about ten days ago or so, I caught the disorder from her, for it is an epidemic; and tho' my attack has been comparatively light, it has nevertheless been very depressing, and rendered me almost incapable of business.

In such a state, and with such gloomy, uninteresting materials, I could not venture to attempt to write to Lady Londonderry; she deserves a happier subject and a brighter pen.

I am most annoyed and vexed, that you do not dine with Ld. D. I have to receive the Commons to-day for the first time at his especial desire; but I am in poor cue for a host.

I know very little about politics, except that the Cabinet are all at loggerheads.

Her Majesty was very gracious indeed to Ld. D.

I fancy to-morrow will be quiet; when much is expected, nothing occurs. It is impossible to ask the opinion of Parliament on affairs, with papers unread.

As for the Prince, I should think it will all blow over. . . .

Parliament did open quietly. The grave words of the Speech from the Throne about the necessity of supporting British representations by augmented naval and military preparations were presently emphasised by a declaration made by Clarendon, that the country was 'drifting towards war,' though Aberdeen continued to ingeminate peace. In spite of the threatening aspect of foreign affairs, Ministers proposed a full programme of important legislation, including a Reform Bill. Disraeli protested on the first night. He could not conceive, he said, that a body of statesmen who believed they were about to embark in a great European struggle would have asked Parliament to reform the Civil Service, the Ecclesiastical Courts, the Poor Law, and the House of Commons. 'I thought we were going to make war upon the Emperor of Russia. I find we are only going to make war upon ourselves.' Because the Government had been formed on the principle of the necessity of Parliamentary Reform, they were going to do what in existing circumstances was little short of madness. In spite of protests, Russell brought forward the Reform Bill in the early days of the

session. It is unnecessary to consider here the details of a measure which should never have been introduced, and the consideration of which was first postponed, and then, after the declaration of war, abandoned. These strange proceedings gave Disraeli abundant opportunity for sarcastic comment. On the motion for postponement,[1] he asked whether it was for the public advantage that a Minister should always be laying siege to the Constitution? That the most eminent man in the House of Commons should announce that he disapproved of its character, and thought it should be materially changed, and yet, though unable to pass any measure of the kind, should remain Minister? The whole difficulty arose from the Coalition; 'a large measure of Parliamentary reform,' in Graham's words, was the talisman that brought Ministers together. When the Bill was withdrawn,[2] Disraeli, with some compliments to Russell, whose character and career were, he said, precious possessions of the House, reinforced his previous arguments. A Reform Bill, he pointed out, was a measure to change the principal depositary of power in the State. If it was produced by a Minister, and not proceeded with, disaffection was created in the minds of those who would have obtained political power under it, and dislike among those whose power it would have taken away; the constituted authorities and established institutions of the country were weakened and enfeebled. There had been far too much levity, for party purposes, in dealing with questions of organic change in the Constitution. Russell and the Government had embarrassed themselves by pledges, and he hoped they would learn the lesson. Reform could only be carried by a great preponderance of public opinion.

To Lady Londonderry.

COVENTRY, *Feb.* 11, 1854.—. . . Public opinion—that, if Russian aggression must be resisted, it has been occasioned by English infirmity; as for Reform, if Lord John proceeds,

[1] March 3. [2] April 11.

all agree the Cabinet will break up, and the general conviction is that he will proceed.

Thus, you see, affairs are so critical and capricious that, unless you come to town, it will be impossible to convey an accurate idea of them to you.

Lord Derby is well and sanguine—our party in good heart—a large number of the Whigs disaffected. . . .

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Feb.* 27, 1854.—. . . Affairs here are smouldering: much in the same way as you left them: threatening spontaneous combustion to such a degree that, some days, I consider it inevitable. One hardly knows what a day may bring forth![1]

Let us hope the best. I am all right with the Prince again, and am working with him. . . .

March 14, 1854.—. . . 'The Hounds' are damaged daily: but I don't see the turning of the lane yet. If Johnny can be kept to Reform, it is all up with them: but that seems a poor chance. . . .

A motion by Layard gave Disraeli early opportunity of defining the attitude of the Opposition towards Ministerial diplomacy and the approaching war. He devoted the greater part of a long speech[2] to a minute examination of the voluminous Blue Books which had been presented to Parliament. This was received with some impatience by the majority, who were in the humour expressed by Graham when he deprecated 'pottering over Blue Books.' Disraeli maintained that the vacillating course which British diplomacy had pursued must have been due either to credulity or to connivance. If to credulity in believing Russia's assurances, there might be a long and severe war, but one carried on for great objects, which might end in great public benefit. 'You may have a war which may restore Bessarabia to the Porte, may convert the Crimea into an independent country destined to flourish under the guarantee of the Great Powers, a war that may make the Danube a free river, and the Euxine

[1] To Malmesbury Disraeli wrote on Feb. 28: 'My conclusion is that the Cabinet is in convulsions; whether it may be soothed by any Daffy's Elixir remains to be proved, but, at the best, it's a poisonous remedy.'

[2] Feb. 20.

a free sea.' But if the vacillations of our diplomacy were due to connivance with the policy of bringing the independence and integrity of Turkey to an end, it would be a timid and vacillating war, ending with some transaction similar to Menschikoff's note or to the arrangements of the Vienna Conference. The first result would be welcome, the latter entirely unsatisfactory, to the British people. Look at the vacillating orders given to the fleets, first sent into the Black Sea and then brought back. 'When I heard of the return of our squadron to Constantinople, I could not help recalling the words of a great orator when he was addressing an assembly not less illustrious than this, when he said: "O Athenians, the men who administer your affairs are men who know not how to make peace or to make war."' So much for the diplomacy which had brought the country to the brink of war; but at this crisis the Opposition would not hamper the Government.

Whatever might be our opinion of the conduct of the Government in the management of those transactions which have led to this terrible conclusion, I cannot suppose that on these benches there could be any difference of opinion as to the duty which we have to fulfil—to support our Sovereign and to maintain the honour of our country. I can assure the noble lord that, so long as the Opposition benches are filled by those who now occupy them, he will at least encounter men who will not despair under any circumstances of the resources and of the fortunes of their country. . . . I cannot but believe that the noble lord must have drawn his opinion of those who sit opposite him from his recollection of other and preceding Oppositions. I do not know whether on the part of the noble lord it was an impulse of memory or of remorse. But this I can say, I can answer for myself and for my friends, that no future Wellesley, on the banks of the Danube, will have to make a bitter record of the exertions of an English Opposition to depreciate his efforts and to ridicule his talents. We shall remember what we believe to be our duty to our country; and however protracted may be the war, however unfortunate may be your counsels, at least we shall never despair of the Republic.

Patriotic support for the war combined with a persistent exposure of the vacillation of the Ministry was the note

of Disraeli's speeches through the session. In a speech[1] on the Budget, he put very clearly his view of the responsibility of the Coalition for an unnecessary war:

> The war has been brought about by two opposite opinions in the Cabinet. Those conflicting opinions have led to all the vacillation, all the perplexity, all the fitfulness, all the timidity, and all the occasional violence, to which this question has given rise; and I must say that if the noble lord the leader of this house [Russell]—I speak my solemn conviction—had remained Prime Minister of this country, or if the noble lord the Secretary of State [Palmerston] had been Minister of this country, or if Lord Derby had continued Minister of this country, nay, if Lord Aberdeen—I wish to state the case fairly—had been Minister of this country, with a sympathising Cabinet, there would have been no war. It is a coalition war. Rival opinions, contrary politics, and discordant systems, have produced that vacillation and perplexity, that at last you are going to war with an opponent who does not want to fight, and whom you are unwilling to encounter. What a mess for a great country! And all brought about by such distinguished administrative ability! . . .
>
> And then they say, if we criticise their policy, we are bound immediately to come forward and propose a vote of no confidence in them. I tell them again I will not propose a vote of no confidence in men who prove to me every hour that they have no confidence in each other.

When war was actually declared, Disraeli, in supporting an address to the Crown,[2] fixed the responsibility for what had happened more particularly on the Prime Minister, Aberdeen, who was hampered by the understanding which he, as Foreign Secretary, had come to with the Emperor Nicholas in 1844, that the future of Turkey should be decided by Great Britain and Russia, the interests of France being ignored. Nicholas had presumed on Aberdeen's acquiescence, and the Cabinet had not frankly warned him, at the time of the Menschikoff mission, that they would act with France, and would not permit the partition of Turkey. Had they met him in that way, the Emperor, 'a Prince of great sagacity, shrewdness, and ability,' would have drawn back. But

[1] March 21. [2] March 31.

British opposition to Russian policy in Turkey was thoroughly justifiable. 'We oppose the policy of Russia,' Disraeli said, 'because, if she succeeds in getting possession of Constantinople, we believe she will exercise such a preponderating influence in European politics as would be fatal to the civilization of Europe, and injurious to the best interest of England.'

Disraeli did not consider that support of what he tersely described as 'a just but unnecessary war' bound the Opposition to support without question the financial expedients which Ministers resorted to in order to raise money to carry it on. Gladstone's first Budget, introduced on March 6, before the actual declaration of war, provided for an increase in income tax to pay for the expenses of the expedition to the East. To this Disraeli made no opposition, though he did protest against the doctrine that all coming emergencies should be met by enhancements of direct taxation. Gladstone had laid it down that war expenditure ought to be met out of income, and that recourse should not be had to loans save in the last extremity. Even when proposing in his second Budget, on May 15—in addition to a further increase of the income tax and to increased taxes on spirits and malt—to issue Exchequer bonds, 'that is to say,' as Northcote puts it, 'loans in advance of taxes,' the Chancellor expatiated on Pitt's 'miserable policy,' of 'loan, loan, loan.' Disraeli's rebuke was well merited. He advised Gladstone to 'give over these unworthy sneers levelled at the reputation of a great Minister,' one 'still dear to the people of England,' and confine himself in future to self-glorification. 'Let him remember that Mr. Pitt, whatever may have been his failings, held with a steady hand the helm when every country but Great Britain was submerged in the storm; and when he taunts Mr. Pitt with courting bankers and moneylenders, he might also remember that that Minister owed to a grateful country an eleemosynary tomb.'

Disraeli opposed the increase of the malt tax on the

ground that, as it had been to the patriotism of the territorial class that Ministers had particularly appealed for war service, this should not be the class specially singled out for increased taxation. Throughout the session there were constant attacks upon Gladstone's finance, in which Disraeli took a prominent part.[1] The glamour with which the Chancellor of the Exchequer's success of the previous year had invested him had largely disappeared. Several of his minor proposals had failed; and the reproach of having proposed a great peace Budget in 1853, on the eve of war, tarnished his reputation in spite of several fine fighting speeches which he made in his defence. But, whatever members may have thought of the merits of his new financial measures, a House of Commons determined, and rightly determined, to prosecute the war to a successful issue, voted them all by considerable majorities.

The war, in fact, was this session the salvation of Ministers; and Malmesbury records that Disraeli was 'furious' with it for this reason. On all other matters they suffered constant defeats and humiliations, and, but for the war, could not possibly have survived. They had to withdraw their Reform Bill, and to modify in several most important particulars their Oxford University Bill; and they were even defeated on their Parliamentary Oaths Bill, though in other sessions Russell had never any difficulty in carrying in the Commons his Jewish relief measures. Failure also attended Ministerial attempts to legislate on the Law of Settlement, Scottish Education, Civil Service Reform, and Bribery Prevention. When the Attorney-General announced the withdrawal of his Bribery Bills on May 29, Disraeli took occasion to review the blunders of the Government and to point the moral. They enjoyed, he said, the inestim-

[1] Incisive and elaborate criticism of the proposals and the Parliamentary behaviour of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was a marked feature of the *Press* during this year. He was charged with a want of public morality, want of strict accuracy, and want of temper. He was described as 'unable, from the ambidextrous constitution of his mind, to make a candid statement'—a phrase that reads like Disraeli's own.

able happiness of having affairs conducted by men of remarkable ability who had made enormous sacrifices for their country—and for themselves. No man had made greater sacrifices than Russell. He had thrown overboard all his old friends and colleagues, who were banished to invisible corners of the House, and he sat surrounded by a coterie of public men who had spent their lives in depreciating his abilities and decrying his career. What compensation had been received by the House for the breaking up of parties and departing from the spirit of the Parliamentary constitution? They had been told that, though the Government had no principles, it had all the talents; and yet they had never had those well-digested and statesmanlike measures they had been led to anticipate. These sarcasms brought Russell to his feet. Other Ministers, he said, had been disappointed about their Bills. Disraeli himself had brought forward a financial measure which he failed to carry. It was true that Disraeli resigned, and the present Government did not. But, then, Disraeli had never ventured to propose, in regard to the war, a vote of want of confidence in the Government, and its supplies had been granted by majorities of a hundred. There was little in this part of the speech which needed an answer. But at the close Russell unwisely and ungenerously permitted himself to taunt Disraeli with insincerity in his support of the Jewish cause because of his recent vote against the Oaths Bill.

This taunt, undeserved as we have already shown[1] it to have been, stung Disraeli to a warmth of reply unusual with him. An eyewitness described him as trembling with passion when he rose to speak, and as discarding his wonted *persiflage* and irony for the most fiery eloquence. He towered, we are told, above the whole House in the fulness of his superb indignation. He was not surprised, he said, at Russell's not resigning. He knew he would govern on sufferance. He had seen him submit to the most humiliating and disgraceful defeats with a

[1] Ch. 3.

patriotism or pertinacity most admirable.' He amended his charge against the Government, that in their Eastern diplomacy they had been actuated by either credulity or connivance, into a charge that their conduct could only be accounted for by both credulity and connivance. Then he attacked Russell for his factious conduct to the Derby Government, instancing his opposition to the Militia Bill and the Bill for Chancery Reform. Another measure which the Derby Government brought forward, for disposing of the vacant seats, was opposed by Gladstone's 'sanctimonious rhetoric,' on the plea that a Government on sufferance could not be permitted to deal with Parliamentary Reform. 'I suppose the vision of a perfect Reform Government passed before the prescient and prophetic glance of the right hon. gentleman. Yet what have you got in the way of Parliamentary Reform from the Government of All the Talents?' When the financial measures of the Derby Government failed, they resigned. 'Whatever others may consent to do, I will never be a Minister on sufferance.' Russell had broken up his party and parted from his friends in order to carry great measures dealing with reform, education, and religious liberty. All these measures had failed, yet he still retained his post. And what a post it was for the most eminent statesman of this country to hold—a subordinate office under his ancient and inveterate political opponent, whom only four years ago he denounced as a conniver with foreign conspirators! 'And now the noble lord comes down and tells me that this vote the other night, which he admits was an overwhelming defeat, was caused by my being false to the principles which I profess in this House!'

Disraeli easily vindicated his sincerity on the Jewish Question. Russell did not dispute the vindication, and justified his own acceptance of office in the Coalition by reference to Lansdowne's and Macaulay's opinion, that acceptance was his plain duty. For Disraeli the whole evening was a triumph. Bright enforced his argument

about the powerlessness of the Government, and the lack of confidence generally felt in them. Walpole and Pakington defended their leader with cordiality and success, and an attempt by Bernal Osborne to support the charge of insincerity broke down completely.

The one measure of importance which the Government succeeded in passing, in however mutilated a shape, was the Oxford University Reform Bill. The freedom of local government, as opposed to a centralised bureaucracy, was always Disraeli's ideal. Accordingly, though he did not directly oppose the second reading, in one of the debates he expressed his dislike of a policy which, in his opinion, struck a fatal blow at the self-government and independence of the University. Moreover, the Bill outraged the principle of prescription, on which English institutions depended, for the sake of removing a few anomalies and imperfections. England was ruled, as he had written in *Lord George Bentinck*, by traditionary influences, the Universities being not the least considerable of them. He would accord authority to the Universities, if they wished it, to increase their power and enlarge their sphere of action; but he objected to placing them under the control of the State. Happily, the reform of Oxford and Cambridge has, so far, respected to a large extent the principle laid down by Disraeli; but some modern educationists do not conceal their impatience of an independence which mars bureaucratic symmetry. Disraeli could report in July to Mrs. Brydges Willyams that it had been 'on the whole a satisfactory campaign. The Opposition has become consolidated and powerful; the Government, though still a Government, is broken and infirm. The two bodies have changed their relative positions since last year.'

Disraeli was much struck, during the session of 1854, with the strong Protestant feeling of the House of Commons. The spirit roused by the Papal Aggression in 1850 was still powerful, and showed itself in resistance to any modification of the Parliamentary oath, in motions

for inspection of Roman Catholic monasteries and nunneries, and in attacks on the Maynooth grant. In the closing days of the session, in a debate raised by Spooner on Maynooth, Disraeli appealed to the Government to settle all questions of the kind in a comprehensive manner, taking up much the same line as he had taken on the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. He asked:

> Have we or have we not a Protestant Constitution? If we have a Protestant Constitution, what does it mean? Let Government come forward; let it declare by legislation what are the functions, what the attributes, what the influence, and what is the bearing, of that Protestant Constitution. Let every man, whether he be a Protestant or a Roman Catholic, clearly understand what are the rights and privileges which he enjoys under that Constitution, what he may do and what he may not do.

Russell, he thought, was in the most happy position for effecting a settlement; he was the champion of civil and religious liberty, and himself both a supporter of Roman Catholic emancipation and the promoter of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. No one could better vindicate the Protestant Constitution. Russell, however, declined the delicate task; and, indeed, it is easier to see that the request was very embarrassing to a Government which depended equally on the writer of the Durham letter and on Peelites inclined to Puseyism, than it is to conceive what kind of legislation could possibly satisfy the conditions. The speech made Disraeli for a time the Protestant hero, and letters and addresses poured in upon him. He was a little uneasy in the part, and so were some of his friends. Stanley wrote in the autumn: 'In the summer of 1852 you repeatedly told me that our chance at the elections had been ruined by our taking up high Protestant politics. I agreed with you then, as I do now. Shall we gain in 1854 by repeating the mistake of 1852?' And again: 'I fear you will burn your fingers with that infernal "Protestantism."' Walpole also wrote very sensibly: 'It would hardly do for us to *originate* a motion or measure of that kind in time of war, as they would accuse

us (unjustly !) of making differences or disunion among the people, when there ought to be nothing but concord and harmony.' But it may be doubted whether Disraeli ever contemplated action on the part of the Opposition. In an answer which he wrote to a Protestant Association in Lancashire which promised him support 'to their utmost power in the maintenance of a sound Protestant policy,' there is more evidence of a desire to make the Coalition ridiculous, and secure a little party capital, than of any intention seriously to take in hand and settle the relations between emancipated Roman Catholics and a Protestant Constitution. It was, indeed, an 'admirably ironical epistle,' calculated 'to outdo the famous Durham letter.'[1]

To the Rev. Christopher Robinson.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Sept.* 16, 1854.—. . . I beg you to offer the Association my thanks for this mark of their approbation, which I value. Public men in this country depend upon public confidence. Without that they are nothing.

Far from wishing to make the settlement of this all-important question a means of obtaining power, I would observe that I mentioned, at the same time, in my place, the various and eminent qualifications which, I thought, Lord John Russell possessed for the office, and my hope that he would feel it his duty to undertake it.

In that case I should extend to him the same support which I did at the time of the Papal Aggression, when he attempted to grapple with a great evil, though he was defeated in his purpose by the intrigues of the Jesuit party, whose policy was on that occasion upheld in Parliament with eminent ability and unhappy success by Lord Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Gladstone.

I still retain the hope that Lord John Russell will seize the opportunity which he unfortunately lost in 1851, and deal with the relations in all their bearings of our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects to our Protestant Constitution. But, however this may be, there can be no doubt that, sooner or later, the work must be done; with gravity, I trust, and with as little heat as is possible in so great a controversy, but with firmness and without equivocation; for the continuance of the present state of affairs must lead inevitably to civil discord, and perhaps to national disaster.

[1] Madden's *Lady Blessington*, vol. iii.. ch. 4.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.[1]

CARLTON CLUB, *July* 19, 1854.—. . . The Government in a dreadful state, but will, I suppose, hold on a little longer. On Monday they received official intimation that Austria would not enter the principalities or otherwise act against Russia, and recommending revival of Vienna Conference: Clarendon in despair, and said that nothing could be worse.

They have been trying it on very strongly with the Château,[2] as to your friend,[3] and H.M. much harassed.

At Duchess of Gloucester's infantile assembly it came out; the Prince of Wales said, *Papa is going to France.* Upon which there was a hush, and Rev. Gibbs put his finger to his lip, and somebody else her hand on his R.H.'s mouth; but the murder was out. Lady Jersey and Co. caught the flying words. It seems the Prince is to go in September, but I believe alone.[4] This will hardly satisfy your friend, who naturally wants someone else. . . .

It began to be realised in the summer of 1854 that the allied armies of France and England, so long as they remained in the Balkan Peninsula, could deal no decisive blow at the enemy, who had evacuated the principalities; and the two Governments, impelled by public opinion, resolved on further aggressive action.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

Strictly confidential. HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Aug.* 7, 1854.—. . . The Government have staked their future on an autumn campaign in the Crimea, with the hope of re-establishing their position. The prospects are not good, and the chances are that we shall make a fiasco.

I am not myself very anxious to precipitate affairs. I have received from the highest quarter an intimation that, if things take their due course, the next and, I hope, very lasting Tory Government may be under a head which I never contemplated. I hardly know whether I should consider the intimation a gratifying one. I already feel, in the position I now occupy, the want of sufficient fortune. There are a thousand things which ought to be done which are elements of power, and which I am obliged to decline doing or to do at great sacrifice. Whether it be influence with the Press, or organisation throughout the country, everyone comes to me, and everything is expected from me. Tho'

[1] Now a widow. [2] Windsor Castle. [3] Napoleon III.
[4] Prince Albert paid a visit to the Emperor at Boulogne, Sept. 4-8.

so many notables and magnificoes belong to the party, there never was an aggregation of human beings who exercised less social influence. They seem to disregard or to despise all the modes and means of managing mankind.

As for our chief, we never see him. His house is always closed; he subscribes to nothing, though his fortune is very large, and expects, nevertheless, everything to be done. I have never yet been fairly backed in life. All the great personages I have known, even when what is called 'ambitious' by courtesy, have been quite unequal to a grand game. This has been my fate, and I never felt it more keenly than at the present moment, with a confederate always at Newmarket and Doncaster, when Europe—nay, the world—is in the throes of immense changes, and all the elements of power at home in a state of dissolution. If ever there were a time when a political chief should concentrate his mind and resources on the situation, 'tis the present. There cannot be too much vigilance, too much thought, and too much daring. All seem wanting. — Alas! and adieu! always your attached D.

This is an extraordinarily interesting letter. The statement that Disraeli had received an intimation 'from the highest quarter' that he, rather than Derby, would be asked to form the next Tory Government, seems almost incredible when we consider not only the point which he mentions himself, the insufficiency of his personal position, but the great ascendancy which Derby's talents, character, experience, and station had given him in the party, and also the disposition of the Court towards the two men. It is probable, indeed, that increased knowledge of Disraeli may have already modified in some degree the original distrust of him felt by the Court; and the Prince Consort, absorbed as he was himself in his delicate constitutional duties, would probably discover in the long run that he had more in common with the persistent watchfulness of Disraeli than with the intermittent brilliance of Derby. But there had as yet been no sufficient time, and no sufficient opportunities of association, to effect a change. Moreover, when an attempt was made to form a Tory Government in the following year, there was no manifestation of any such dispo-

sition on the part of the Court as Disraeli's language implies. The only explanation which occurs to the bewildered student, other than the assumption of a complete misapprehension on Disraeli's part, is that the Court may have believed that the constantly recurrent and increasingly severe attacks of gout to which Derby was now subject had rendered him incapable of serving the Crown again as First Minister. If so, the mistake was comparable to that of Derby and Disraeli themselves, six months later, in treating Palmerston, on the threshold of his ten years' domination of English politics, as a worn-out Pantaloon.

Apart from this point, the letter throws a flood of light on Disraeli's relations to the 'magnificoes' of the party, and to his chief. It is a repetition, in a much more accentuated form, of the criticism hinted in his letter to Malmesbury at the beginning of the session, when his immediate object was to get Derby to give a comprehensive series of Parliamentary dinners.[1] The notables were glad enough to make use of Disraeli's services, but were disinclined to put their own shoulders to the wheel, or even to turn to due account on behalf of the party those social influences which they wielded so easily, but which meant so much to others. Of Derby himself, Disraeli's complaint is much the same as Bentinck's was. Whereas men like Peel, Russell, Palmerston, Aberdeen, Bentinck during his last three years, Gladstone, and Disraeli, whatever other interests they might have, treated politics as their serious profession, Derby in politics was always the brilliant but incalculable amateur. Strenuous and keen as he could be for a period, Derby was only too apt to lose sight of the whole political struggle for weeks together while he devoted himself entirely to other pursuits, it might be racing or shooting, Homer or local interests. It was especially difficult to secure his attention for politics when he was in opposition, and when office did not appear to be imminent. Such being his disposition, it testifies all the more to his amazing aptitude for that sphere of

[1] See above, pp. 1348, 1349.

action which he treated so lightly, that he should have been regarded during the Reform Ministry as the inevitable heir to Whig leadership; and then for the rest of his life, after he had quitted the Whigs and joined the Tories, as the indispensable leader, on Peel's defection, of his new party.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN, *Aug.* 21, 1854.—I have been here ten days, and should have earlier advised you of my removal, had not that happened to me which has happened every year for the last quarter of a century, and which, every year, always takes me by surprise—namely, that, tho' I left town quite well, I had not been eight and forty hours before I found myself in a complete state of nervous prostration, and quite unable to write the shortest letter on the most ordinary business. I suppose it is the sudden cessation of excitement, too complete and abrupt for our mortal frames; but, whatever the cause, the result is undoubted and most distressing. However, I will not dwell upon such egotistical twaddle. I am a little better, and this is my first attempt at a recurrence to the interest of existence—that is, to write to you. . . .

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 3, 1854.—. . . The elements seem always to save the Russians. A correspondent of mine, who had seen Madame Lieven, about a month ago wrote to me that she was *au désespoir*, and that he had got out of her that the Emperor had only 30,000 men in the Crimea, and ought to have had at least 100,000. Indeed, he never expected war, and had made no fitting preparations. The defence at Bomarsund seems hardly superior to that of the Chinese forts, and it is likely that Sebastopol would have fallen; affairs, however, may be very different next year, even if Austria does not wind up the business in the interval.

I have been reading here, with infinite delight, Ségur's Memoirs. He was French Ambassador at the Court of Catherine the Great, and accompanied her on her great expedition to the Crimea. Did you ever read them? I once did years ago. If you never came across them, I know no book more exactly in your way. It is all about what we are all thinking and talking of. Never was a Court painted in more lively colors, or more authentically; and the charming circle surrounding the Empress in her voyage, Potemkin, the gay Prince de Ligne, the high-bred, melancholy Fitz-Herbert, Ségur himself, the King of Poland, and Momonoff, live as the characters do in Boswell's Johnson.

The Disraelis paid in September and October a series of visits in the West of England, staying with Lady Rolle, the Palks, the Yarde Bullers, and others, and spending several days with Mrs. Willyams at Torquay. In his social occupations Disraeli seldom entirely forgot politics. 'We passed a delightful month in Devon and Cornwall,' he wrote to Lennox; 'and where, so far as political prospects are concerned, I was greatly satisfied. The Whigs throughout the West of England have entirely renounced the Coalition.'

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Dec.* 2, 1854.—. . . [Lord Derby] seems to be full of his ancient spirit, and which dealing with 'producers and consumers' appeared to have cowed.

The present men are in a great mess, and the country is beginning to hate them: but unless there be some mutual drinking of Brighton waters, or some similar beverage, I don't foresee change. Mere criticism will not upset even a Coalition Ministry, but their rapidly increasing unpopularity may stimulate new formations. In the meantime, 'Heaven is above all.' . . .

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN, *Dec.* 6, 1854.—We have had very absorbing and sad times since I last wrote to you. We have lived here quite alone, reading only the ensanguined newspapers, and learning, each day, of the loss of our dearest friends. What tragedies!

My Parliamentary staff has suffered more than that of any of the Generals of Division. I think I told you that the chief of my staff, Sir William Jolliffe, had lost his eldest son in the Guards, before Sebastopol, of cholera; and that his second, and prime hope, charged with Lord Cardigan at Balaclava, and after a fortnight's terrible existence under the telegraphic bulletin, that reported the whole of the light cavalry as destroyed, turned up as one of the three officers in his regiment of Dragoons who was unscathed; but the father looks ten years older than he did last session. Colonel Hunter Blair, of the Scotch Guards, one of my most active aide-de-camps, and really invaluable both as a partisan and a friend, [was] shot in the tenderest part and died in awful torments. This is a severe loss to me. My second aide-de-camp, Lord Mandeville, writes to me that he has had four cousins killed and one severely wounded.

In the midst of all this, Parliament is called suddenly together, and the pressure on me for the last week has been very great. We go up to town to-morrow, for, to complete our troubles, our house is full of workmen, and yet on the morning of the 12th I must contrive to receive two hundred members of Parliament! . . .

It was time that Parliament should meet. The invasion of the Crimea had turned out a larger and more difficult business than a sanguine people and an eager Press had foreseen. Disraeli had had his misgivings from the first. On September 4 he wrote to Mrs. Willyams: 'We seem to have fallen into another Walcheren Expedition, and in my opinion the Ministers ought to be impeached.' On October 25 Walpole wrote to Disraeli: 'I am as clear as you that the expedition to the Crimea was a great mistake. As long as we stood on the high moral grounds of right and justice, we were invincible; the moment we attempt either the humiliation or dismemberment of Russia, no one can conjecture to what extremities we might be driven.' What was the position at the beginning of December? The allied forces had won victories at the Alma and at Inkermann, and in these battles and at Balaclava the British soldier had shown all his old steadiness and heroism; but the losses had been very severe, Sebastopol had not fallen, and the armies were settling into winter-quarters for the siege. Meanwhile, in published narratives and private correspondence, there came terrible revelations of mismanagement and incompetence, of cholera and scurvy, of troops without food and clothing, with food and clothing rotting hard by on the beach. Letters to Disraeli from Lady Londonderry, whose son, Lord Adolphus Vane, had gone to the front, show what the mothers of our soldiers were feeling.

From Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

Nov. 26, 1854.—Surely there must be an hour of reckoning for this hateful Government who go to war without providing an army. It is actual murder to let this little heroic wreck of an army fight those hordes and masses of barbarians who reinforce by tens of thousands while we hardly do so with

hundreds. And that wintering in the Crimea, without comforts, habitations, hardly provisions, etc.—it is all heart-breaking. . . . I think of nothing else even in my sleep, and if I were younger I am sure I should seize on the idea of *The Times*, and get a yacht and go there. It seems so dreadful to sit at home and do nothing.

Dec. 20.—I have deplorable accounts—floating encampments on mud, no fresh meat even for the officers, pork and biscuit, horses dying all round, and none to be got even to bring up the supplies taken out. There seems neither care nor thought, and a total indifference as to what becomes of the wreck of this fine army, and the brave spirits who seem tasked beyond human endurance.

The *Press*, on November 25, added its voice to the chorus of indignation in the newspapers:

This is no time to mince words, or to seek for emasculated paraphrase, in place of honest English. The nation knows that the army has been abominably treated, and that its condition at this moment is one of peril and suffering. Public indignation demands that every exertion be instantly made for the succour and solace of the troops now sentenced to a Crimean winter. Hands, hearts, purses, are all open if the Government will do its duty. There is nothing which the nation will refuse to the Administration—except confidence.

The line of the Opposition in the forthcoming debates was discussed in a letter from Derby to Disraeli on November 28. 'Of course,' he wrote, the Government 'will introduce no debatable matter into the Address; of course we must have no amendment; of course we must support them in the vigorous (?) prosecution of the war; and equally of course we must give them the benefit of our unreserved opinion of the way in which they have mismanaged and starved it. This last topic may lead to divisions, as well as debates, in your House, if Gladstone adheres to his absurd crotchet of paying for the war within the year. . . . As to the past, I think our chief topic should be want of foresight, every step being a "leap in the dark," and every measure adopted too late.' But Derby did not seem to contemplate that the revelations of mismanagement might upset the Government. Disraeli was more clear-sighted, and, with a view to the formation

of an Administration capable of extricating the country from its enormous difficulties, tried, but without success, to strengthen the Opposition by overtures through the Duke of Richmond to Lord Fitzwilliam and the old Whigs. His growing influence with his own party was shown by his holding, for the first time, a meeting of the Conservative members of Parliament in his own house at Grosvenor Gate on the morning of the opening of the session. Hitherto party meetings had been held at Derby's house, for Commoners as well as Peers. Derby congratulated him: 'I rejoice in the necessity in which you find yourself, of thus taking the lead of the Commons at the commencement of the session.'

The Queen's Speech announced that Parliament had been called together at an unusual period in order to take measures for prosecuting the war with the utmost vigour and effect; and the feeling of Parliament, with the exception of the small minority represented by Bright, was entirely in harmony with the spirit of the Speech. But there was a strong conviction, which Newcastle and Sidney Herbert, the Ministers principally responsible, did not succeed in dispelling, that the Government had so far shown little prudence or vigour. Of this conviction Disraeli made himself the exponent. When Ministers declared war, he pointed out, they did so in most favourable circumstances. They had had a unanimous Parliament and people, unlimited supplies, an overflowing Exchequer, and the most powerful ally in the world; and yet what had they accomplished? 'I now ask the House,' he said, 'for a moment to turn round and consider, not whether there were sufficient nurses or surgeons at Scutari, not what was the number of pots of marmalade which should be sent out to the support of our starving troops, but I ask the House to consider what have been the results which this Ministry with these enormous advantages have obtained.' The great armada which had been despatched to the Baltic with Graham's benison and under the command of a 'true Reformer,' Sir Charles

Napier, had done nothing but destroy the fortifications of Bomarsund. In the Black Sea, an army of 20,000 or 30,000 men had been sent against a fortress as strong as Gibraltar; it was sent at the wrong time, and no provision was made for its maintenance or reinforcement. Why was not the militia embodied when the war began? Ministers had managed to bring the country into a state of war with the greatest empire of the world, because they were a Coalition, each with an *arrière pensée*, no two of them ever of one mind. They expected that their negotiations would end in peace, and that they would never be called upon to act: from the first they flattered themselves with the belief that the circumstances they had now to encounter would never happen during their lives. They had done everything unexpectedly and everything too late. Now they were relying on an alliance with Austria. What assistance did she propose to give? France had acted. Would Austria act? Or merely watch the game and profit by it in the end? Disraeli's scepticism as to the value of the Austrian alliance was justified, as Russell had to admit that the treaty which had just been signed only bound Austria to act in certain eventualities in the future.

It was an unpleasant surprise for Parliament and the country to find that the principal measure introduced by Ministers, in this December sitting, for the more vigorous prosecution of the war, was a Bill to enable the Government to enlist 10,000 foreigners in the British army, to be drilled in this country. This Foreign Enlistment Bill was felt to be very wounding to the national pride; and here, again, the Opposition, led by Derby and Ellenborough in the Lords, and by Disraeli in the Commons, undoubtedly represented popular opinion in their protest. The Bill was only carried by majorities of 13 in the Lords, and of 39 and of 38 in the Commons. Disraeli said that he had no objection to our countrymen fighting by the side of foreigners who were our allies, but he did object to their fighting by the side of mercenaries—the *condottieri* of

modern Europe. Wellington's correspondence showed that no dependence could be placed on the fidelity of foreign mercenaries whose political sympathies were not engaged. The measure would therefore prove ineffectual; but it was also impolitic, as the world outside would draw the inference that our recruiting capacity was exhausted, and at home the power of the Government would be paralysed and the spirit of the country depressed. Why had not the necessary preparations for a great war been made in time? Even now they should have confidence in themselves and their own resources, and should not, in this situation of danger, doubt, and anxiety, 'bring in a Bill in order to enlist foreign mercenaries to vindicate the fortunes of England.' The only answer of Ministers, and perhaps the sufficient answer, was that they must obtain the command of numbers at once, and by all available means.

Parliament, which met on December 12, adjourned on December 23 for the Christmas holidays. 'I hear from all quarters that the ten days' campaign has set us up greatly in public opinion,' wrote Stanley on January 1. That was Disraeli's own view; 'the Ministers were much shaken, and their prestige is destroyed,' he told Mrs. Willyams. To Lennox, on January 11, he wrote of the Ministry: 'I hear that the cement consists entirely of a postponement of decision on all points, whether political or financial, at present; they are to meet Parliament, trusting that some event may occur which will give a preponderance to either of the rival systems. If war on a great scale is in the ascendant, then Aberdeen and Co. will retire, and there is to be an attempt at a Whig Government, which I should not be sorry to see.' The news of the Crimean winter that came from the front intensified public feeling against Ministers, and there was a growing movement in the Tory party that formal expression should be given to this feeling directly Parliament reassembled. Derby demurred. He feared that a vote of censure might be defeated, that it would only

consolidate the Government, and prevent the Opposition from obtaining reinforcements. When the House of Commons met,[1] the matter was at once taken out of Conservative hands by a Radical, Roebuck, on the mere notice of whose motion for a Committee of Inquiry into the war Russell resigned. He had never been content with his secondary position in the Coalition Government, and had frequently threatened the desertion which he now carried out. The cement had given way, and it was with difficulty that after this blow the Cabinet were brought to consent even to meet the debate in office. 'Appearances are,' wrote Disraeli to Lady Londonderry on January 23, even before Russell's resignation was known, 'that the Government will not survive the next ten days or so.' At the same time Derby was writing in quite an opposite strain to Disraeli—that he concluded that Roebuck's motion must be supported; 'but whether meant in earnest or not, I think it will do the Government good, and regret it accordingly.' But it soon became evident that Disraeli was right. Russell's resignation rather than face inquiry, and his condemnation of Newcastle's administration of the war, appeared to be conclusive arguments in favour of Roebuck's motion. When Lytton said in the debate, 'Dismiss your Government and save your army,' it was felt he was rightly interpreting public opinion. Even Derby was driven at last to admit that the Opposition must take the responsibility of a direct attack on the Government. At 9.40 p.m. on the final day of the debate (January 29) he wrote to Disraeli: 'The case has now grown to such importance that I think *you must* speak—but not till the last moment; if after Palmerston, so much the better.' Gladstone, not Palmerston, was the Government mouthpiece, and Disraeli followed him. His predictions of Coalition incompetence had been verified; the world now recognised what he had pointed out two years before. There was no valid answer to his peroration.

[1] Jan. 23, 1855.

There is no stain upon the character or honour of public men, or inconvenience to the public service, in statesmen, however they may have at one time differed, if they feel themselves justified in so doing, acting together in public life. All that the country requires of public men when they do so act together is, that they should *idem sentire de republicâ*—that upon all great questions they should entertain the same views, that in subjects of policy, whether foreign or domestic, they should be animated by the same convictions and the same sympathies. But with regard to the existing Government—all have seen that, during their career, it does not appear that upon any great question, whether domestic or external, they have been animated by the same spirit and sympathies. It is to that circumstance that we must attribute the fact that they have been so unsuccessful in carrying their measures or prosecuting their policy. . . .

Sir, I have no confidence whatever in the existing Government. I told them a year ago, when taunted for not asking the House of Commons to ratify that opinion of mine, that, as they had no confidence in each other, a vote of want of confidence from this side of the House was surplusage. I ask the House of Commons to decide if twelve months have not proved that I was right in that assumption, although its accuracy was then questioned. What confidence has the noble lord, the late President of the Council, in the Minister for War? What confidence have this variety of Ministers in each other's counsels? They stand before us confessedly as men who have not that union of feelings and of sympathy necessary to enable them successfully to conduct public affairs.

Conservatives, Russellite Whigs, and Radicals went together into the Opposition lobby; and Roebuck's motion was carried by 305 to 148 votes, a crushing majority of 157 against Ministers. They immediately resigned; and thus fell unregretted, after little more than two troubled years, that Coalition from which the Court and the public had hoped so much. 'The country was governed for two years,' writes Disraeli in *Endymion*,[1] 'by all its ablest men, who by the end of that term had succeeded, by their coalesced genius, in reducing that country to a state of desolation and despair. "I did not think it would have lasted even so long," said Lady Mont-

[1] Ch. 100.

fort; "but, then, I was acquainted with their mutual hatreds and their characteristic weaknesses. What is to happen now? Somebody must be found of commanding private character and position, and with as little damaged a public one as in this wreck of reputations is possible."'

Two men stood out prominently before their countrymen at the moment as fulfilling in the main Lady Montfort's conditions—Derby and Palmerston. Aberdeen, the head of the fallen Administration, and Russell, the previous Whig Prime Minister, were both discredited—the first as responsible for the failures in foreign policy and war, the second by his desertion of his colleagues at a critical moment. From the general condemnation of the Coalition Ministers, Palmerston was exempted. He had filled an office, that of Secretary of State for Home Affairs, which gave him no direct influence on foreign policy or military administration; and the public believed that if he had been at the Foreign Office our diplomacy would have been more resolute, and if he had been at the War Office the breakdown in our military arrangements would have been impossible. Derby was in a still better position. Many believed, with Cobden and Bright, that, if his Ministry had remained in office, the Crimean War would have been honourably avoided. At any rate, he had no responsibility for the half-hearted policy and feeble administration which had brought the country into such peril, and, while criticising Ministerial blunders, he had been careful to maintain a patriotic attitude towards the war. He had a lieutenant in the Commons, Disraeli, whose position was equally favourable. The names of Derby and Palmerston were thus in everybody's mouth; that one of them, and if possible both—one leading the Lords, and the other the Commons—should take office was the general desire. 'The great necessity of the country at this hour,' wrote the *Press* on January 27, 'is a War Cabinet, constituted with the single purpose of prosecuting hostilities with energy, of repairing past errors, of saving the remnant of our army,

of sustaining the reputation of our arms, and of grappling with our foe till he confesses himself vanquished and sues for peace.' 'Ask any intelligent politician of the Continent,' it maintained three weeks later, 'what Administration would prove most formidable to Russia, and he would reply: "Lord Derby, Lord Ellenborough, Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Disraeli."'

Derby was sent for by the Queen, as his party 'was numerically the strongest, and had carried the motion.' Disraeli at once facilitated his task by showing the same abnegation as in 1852—an abnegation all the more praiseworthy as his leadership was now a matter of considerable duration and notable success. He would gladly act under Palmerston's direction, and hoped that his surrender would promote the accession of Palmerston's friends, who might not be willing to act under himself. 'There was only one feeling in the Conservative party,' as was explained in the *Press* on February 3—'namely, to resign all individual claims for the sake of giving the country the advantage at this critical period of a strong Government.' Disraeli has, unfortunately, left no memorandum describing this crisis and his own share in it. But we know that in his judgment it was an occasion which should have been boldly seized; and he must have cordially agreed with Ellenborough's appeal to Derby not to leave Her Majesty's room without kissing hands. The bold course was not taken. The Queen offered Derby the Government,[1] but his acceptance was of a conditional character, recalling very much his attitude at his first audience in 1851. The Queen's memorandum[2] of January 31, 1855, shows what his views were:

> He owned that his party was the most compact—mustering about two hundred and eighty men—but he had no men capable of governing the House of Commons, and he should not be able to present an Administration that would be accepted by the country unless it was strengthened by other combinations; he knew that the whole country cried out for Lord Palmerston as the only man fit for carrying on the war

[1] Jan. 31. [2] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

with success, and he owned the necessity of having him in the Government, were it even only to satisfy the French Government, the confidence of which was at this moment of the greatest importance; but he must say, speaking without reserve, that, whatever the ignorant public might think, Lord Palmerston was totally unfit for the task. He had become very deaf as well as very blind, was seventy-one years old, and . . . in fact, though he still kept up his sprightly manners of youth, it was evident that his day had gone by. . . . Lord Derby thought, however, he might have the lead of the House of Commons, which Mr. Disraeli was ready to give up to him.

For the War Office, Derby considered there were only two men—Lord Grey, with whom, however, he disagreed in general politics; and Lord Ellenborough, whom the Court thought almost mad. 'To be able to meet the House of Commons,' he wanted men like Gladstone and Sidney Herbert; for Foreign Affairs he would return to Malmesbury, who had done well before. But 'should he not be able to obtain strength from the Peelites, he could not be able to form a creditable Government; he must give up the task.' Only after the Queen had tried every other quarter would he 'be ready to come forward to the rescue of the country with such materials as he had, but it would be "a desperate attempt."'

Derby thus in advance, at his first audience, pronounced himself incompetent to form a creditable Government out of the resources of his own party, and refused even to make the attempt until all other combinations had been tried. Malmesbury suggests that Derby believed that neither Russell nor Palmerston could succeed in forming a Government; that he would then come in on his own terms, and be 'a most powerful Minister.' A note among Disraeli's papers makes the same suggestion:

After the break-up of Lord Aberdeen's Government, Lord John Russell and Lord Derby both made great mistakes in the course they took—the latter almost a ruinous one; both said and acted on the belief that 'Lord Palmerston could not form a Government.' Yet Lord Russell and Lord Derby were two of the most experienced men in our public life then existing.

But Derby's language to the Queen is hardly compatible with the belief that a final resort to himself was inevitable; nor, indeed, is the speech in the House of Lords in which he explained his action and disparaged his party. The theory reads rather like an excuse put forward after the event, when Derby came to realise that he had made an irreparable mistake.

To endeavour to secure Palmerston, the only undamaged reputation in the Coalition, was obviously Derby's right course in the circumstances, whatever may be thought of overtures to the Peelites. Directly he left the Queen, Derby went to Palmerston, to whom he offered the presidency of the Council with the lead of the House of Commons. Palmerston was asked to sound Gladstone and Sidney Herbert, and promised to do so; but he said the new Government must be a Coalition, and not only the taking in of one or two persons, and suggested that Derby should endeavour to retain Clarendon's services at the Foreign Office—a suggestion which Derby naturally found unpalatable, but which he afterwards told Malmesbury he would have adopted if thereby he secured Palmerston.

In spite of these observations, Derby's impression from his interview was that Palmerston was inclined to join, provided that Gladstone and Herbert would accompany him; and so he told the Queen and his principal colleagues. Disraeli wrote to Lady Londonderry on that afternoon that Derby had 'accepted the mission to form an Administration, and Lord Palmerston has agreed to act under him on certain conditions as regards his colleagues—difficult to comply with, but I think not insuperable.' Ellenborough accepted the Ministry of War, and Malmesbury the Foreign Office. To the latter Derby 'appeared in high spirits and confident of success; and when I told him I should like to go to Heron Court for forty-eight hours to settle my private affairs, he consented, saying: "Make haste back; you will find everything settled by that time."' So confident was Malmes-

bury that a Derby Government was in process of formation that he wrote from Heron Court to Disraeli making suggestions for many appointments, some quite minor ones. 'I write to say I hear Sir E. Dering would take office with us. If Canning held what he has got, and came in with us, it would be a stone out of the Peelite wall and bring us four or five peers. I find Hardwicke was much liked at the Post Office. . . . Would Bentinck do as Secretary of Admiralty? . . . Have you thought of Blandford? What Naval Lords of A. have you?' That Palmerston seriously thought of a combination with Derby at one period of this eventful January 31 seems clear; but it may be doubted whether he did not contemplate throughout being himself, rather than Derby, First Minister. He knew that he would have the effective backing of Napoleon III., our ally, with whom it was essential that the British Government should act harmoniously.

From George A. Hamilton.

20, CHESTER SQUARE, *Wednesday*, 4 *o'clock* [*Jan.* 31].—A friend of mine whose *veracity* may be relied upon, and who is an intimate friend of the Palmerstons, saw Lady P. this morning on some family matter. She told him Lord Derby had been sent for, questioned him a good deal about the feeling of the Conservatives towards Lord P., intimated that, if Lord P. should be sent for, 'it would be delightful if Lord Derby should have the management in the Lords.' She said no one party was strong enough to carry on the affairs of the country, that she saw no reason why Lord D. and Lord P. should not act together, and she left the impression on my friend's mind that Lord P. would serve *under* Lord D.

My friend is known to be a strong adherent of our party, and this conversation must have been intended to be made known.

By the time that Palmerston saw Gladstone, which was about four o'clock, it is clear that he had realised that, if Derby failed, his own opportunity would come. He told Gladstone that he felt disinclined to accept, 'but that if he refused it would be attributed to his contemplating another result, which other result, he

considered, would be agreeable to the country.' Gladstone, on the other hand, represents himself as having been disposed to join,[1] if he could obtain Aberdeen's approval, rather than that Derby should give up the commission. But neither Gladstone nor Herbert would join without Palmerston; and Palmerston, after consulting Clarendon, who was resolutely opposed to the arrangement, definitely made up his mind to refuse. He wrote that, on reflection, he had come to the conclusion that he would not, by joining the new Government, give to it that stability which Derby anticipated; but he promised support to any Government which would carry on the war and maintain our alliances. Derby, who had been waiting hopefully all the afternoon, received the note at dinner-time.

From Lord Stanley.

Private. Jan. 31, 11.30 *p.m.*—Bad news needs no messengers. You will have heard that P. declines. His note arrived about 9.30.

My father thereon wrote to the Queen. . . .

I don't give up the game yet: if it is lost, *vendetta* must be our consolation—and of that we shall have enough.

From Lord Derby.

Thursday, 8.50 *a.m.* [*Feb.* 1, 1855].—I have received the combined letters—civil, but distinct refusals on the part of all three. I sent Palmerston's down to the Queen late last night, and shall go down with the others myself this morning. I will call on you on my way soon after ten.

Gladstone added to his refusal some encouraging words: 'Any Government owing its origin to the late vote of the House of Commons, and honestly endeavouring to do its duty, must have peculiar claims to support in connection with the great national interests involved in the questions of War and Peace. On public grounds I am dis-

[1] Lennox, however, reported to Disraeli on Feb. 4 that he heard on good authority that 'the Derby Coalition hung fire on account of G. and S. H. being determined not to sit in the Cabinet with the "Peel-smasher."'

posed to believe that the formation of a Government from among your own political connections would offer many facilities at this moment, which other alternatives within view would not present: and unless where my opinions might not leave me a choice, it would be my sincere desire to offer to an Administration so constructed under you an independent Parliamentary support.' Herbert gave similar assurances. He was convinced, he wrote, 'that any Government now to be formed is entitled to that liberal construction of its acts which is necessary to a fair though independent Parliamentary support.' These two letters—Gladstone's particularly—were rather markedly cordial in their tender of support to a Derby Administration; and we can well believe that Disraeli pointed this out and urged Derby to proceed, notwithstanding the impossibility of obtaining extraneous aid. But Derby was resolved to abandon the task. 'As to the independent support' proffered by the Peelite leaders, he told the Queen 'it reminded him of the definition of an independent member of Parliament—viz., one that could not be depended upon.'[1]

Even the most loyal of his colleagues doubted the wisdom of his course. Almost alone, Stanley was clear that his father was right, and that the ball must come again to his feet before long. Pakington wrote to Disraeli: 'I think Lord D. was, on the whole, right in his late difficult decision; but I feel the force of what you said about the probable effects upon our own party; and if we go on treating Ministers like ninepins—only bowling them down to set them up again—we shall be bowled down ourselves.' Ellenborough's opinion has already been quoted. Malmesbury, who was woke up next morning at Heron Court at four o'clock by George Bentinck to hear of the collapse, has recorded his judgment in his diary that Derby showed a want of nerve and courage, and missed a great opportunity. To Derby himself he made the best of the situation.

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

Lord Malmesbury to Lord Derby.

HERON COURT, *Friday* [*Feb.* 2, 1855].—I was just getting into my carriage to come up by the earliest train this morning, when I got a note from Stanley informing me of the state of things, so I shall put off my journey till Monday. I think your conduct must stand before the country in a very favourable contrast with that of the public men who oppose us, and if it has not its effect on the nation, I for one don't deem it worth governing.

I believe that we could have gone on with the *old lot* by attaching to them Ellenboro', Lytton, etc., for a time, but that your present game is the best.

As to Gladstone, much is to be said. This is the third time he shies at us, and I am certain that he is so hated by some of our best friends that he would lose us several votes. He is looked upon as a Tartuffe, and we have already one man whose eloquence is his only respectable quality. I cannot say, therefore, that I regret him.

Malmesbury's strange outburst against Disraeli, with whom he was then on very friendly terms, suggests that the critical situation had got on the nerves of more than one of the leaders. Disraeli's own feelings were undoubtedly bitter. Lennox wrote to him: 'S[tanley] asked me whether "our friend" were not much annoyed, to which I replied that, knowing what you had sacrificed of time, labour, and talents, I concluded you must be utterly disgusted.' As Lord Morley says, Disraeli 'beheld a golden chance of bringing a consolidated party into the possession of real power flung away.' Malmesbury, in his diary, writes of him, after Derby's explanation in the House of Lords, as being 'in a state of disgust beyond all control; he told me he had spoken his mind to Lord Derby, and told him some very disagreeable truths.' It seemed to him a failure in political courage—a quality which had once particularly distinguished Derby before he had become such a martyr to gout, and which was one of Disraeli's own characteristic virtues. It so happened that an old friend of his, the Ambassador Lord Ponsonby, who was now near his end, had just been exhorting him to show this quality, and in his last letter pointed to the present conjuncture as the right moment for its display.

From Lord Ponsonby.

Jan. 14, 1855.—You, I am certain, will know that, when I give you an opinion, I am moved by my desire to be of use to you towards the acquisition by you of a commanding position in this country. . . . I hope that you may now be disposed to take the bull by the horns, to be yourself the Antagonistes. You must command, not solicit, power; you have the abilities that are needful, if you have the courage to exert them. I have no such opinion of those who are with you as coadjutors. The world may not be as favourable to you, from inclination for you, as you might like it to be, but it is ready to submit to your pre-eminence if you will assume that position and bid your will avouch the deed. All animals follow the most daring individual of their race. Man is not a whit better than the ass or the goose, and the mass will obey you if you assert your *natural* right to authority. Look around you and observe what a crowd it is of poor talking creatures they are who have authority enough to play the miserable part they fill! You had best speak out and act audaciously: our people will follow you if that be your game. Our people are looking for a leader. They are tired of rhetorical humbuggers in speaking and writing, such as those for the most part are who occupy our Senate with palaver and our Sovereign with twaddle. . . .

Believe me to be one who likes you very much as well as has the highest opinion of your intellectual powers, and is merely very much *inclined* to believe in your political courage.

Feb. 1, 1855.—Seeing your courage successful will make me quite well. The game *is yours*, if you *resolve* to win it.[1]

'Resolve' as he might, if he could not stir Derby into action, Disraeli was for the moment helpless. Derby could not, indeed, manage the party in the Commons without Disraeli, but without the prestige of Derby's name and fame Disraeli could not at this time have collected a sufficient following for any purposes of government. He could only pour out his heart to his close friends.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

Confidential. CARLTON CLUB, S.W., *Feb.* 2, 1855.—I was so annoyed and worn out yesterday that I could not send you two lines to say that our chief has again bolted!

[1] His last letter to Disraeli. He died February 21. See below, p. 1388.

This is the third time that, in the course of six years during which I have had the lead of the Opposition in the House of Commons, I have stormed the Treasury Benches: twice fruitlessly, and the third time with a tin kettle to my tail, which rendered the race almost hopeless. You cannot, therefore, be surprised that I am a little wearied of these barren victories, which, like Alma, Inkermann, and Balaclava, may be glorious, but are certainly nothing more.

What is most annoying is that, this time, we had actually the Court with us, for the two Court favorites, Aberdeen (of the Queen) was extinct, and Newcastle (of the Prince) in a hopeless condition; and our rivals were Johnny in disgrace and Palmerston ever detested. The last, however, seems now the inevitable man; and though he is really an impostor, utterly exhausted, and at the best only ginger-beer, and not champagne, and now an old painted pantaloon, very deaf, very blind, and with false teeth, which would fall out of his mouth when speaking, if he did not hesitate and halt so in his talk, here is a man which the country resolves to associate with energy, wisdom, and eloquence, and will until he has tried and failed.

What then? John Russell, they say, has lost his character, but he is one of the few men who can do without that necessity, having the D. of Bedford always to go bail for him.

The Queen is in town, the flag flying at the Palace; but I know nothing authentic. . . .

The party generally were profoundly disappointed. Their only consolation was that the Peelite leaders, whom they completely distrusted, had not returned to the fold. 'The Carlton is frenzied with rage,' wrote Lennox; 'all at D[erby]'s final decision, and part at his attempted Coalition. . . . Hoping for better days! Worse cannot be!' The party held that Derby had acted a timid part; and many were disposed to give in their allegiance, as one of them wrote, 'to Lord Palmerston, who has the courage to face difficulties before which Lord Derby succumbs.' For Palmerston's anticipations proved correct. Russell endeavoured to form a Ministry, but found his friends generally unwilling, after his recent escapades, to enlist under his banner; and Palmerston became Prime Minister, and even succeeded for a few weeks in retaining the

services of all the leading Peelites except Aberdeen and Newcastle. Then Graham, Gladstone and Herbert resigned because the House of Commons persisted in prosecuting Roebuck's inquiry. Not altogether unfairly, the public were inclined to take the view which Sarah Disraeli expressed to her brother on February 11: 'As to the wretched Peelites, miserable as administrators, they are now shown to be selfish intriguers.'

Derby had plenty of the courage that faces and mollifies angry followers; and he justified himself successfully to a party meeting.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

Feb. 20, 1855.—The meeting was very large, and on the whole very successful: more than 230 persons, including however, fifty peers. I never heard a finer speech than Derby's: the ablest he ever made. It met everything except the chief point—namely, that we did not accept office because we were afraid and incompetent. However, all were satisfied, and even enthusiastic, and we must hope the best, though we deserve little.

Derby 'met everything except the chief point.' It was difficult to meet that successfully, and both Derby's biographers, Mr. Kebbel and Mr. Saintsbury, have given up the attempt. Gladstone, too, held that 'Lord Derby's error in not forming an Administration was palpable, and even gross. . . . Had Lord Derby gone on, he would have been supported by the country, then absorbed in the consideration of the war. None of the three occasions when he took office offered him so fine an opportunity as this; but he missed it.'[1] It was clear that the Minister who brought the war to a successful end would win the gratitude of the people. It was equally clear that, though the Conservatives were in a minority in Parliament, the constituencies would not have tolerated intrigues by a discredited Coalition against a Ministry honestly endeavouring to extricate the country from its difficulties. Palmerston, who was nearly as conservative

[1] Morley's *Gladstone*, bk. 4, ch. 6, where there is an interesting examination in detail of this whole political crisis.

as Derby in home politics, seized the occasion, and was, with a brief interval, Minister for the rest of his life. In 1855 the Opposition leaders were stronger in *personnel* than in 1852. In the first place, the majority of them now had enjoyed and profited by official experience, and Disraeli himself, Malmesbury, Pakington, St. Leonards, and others, had shown official aptitudes; and, next, they had some promising recruits—Ellenborough, of great abilities, but more doubtful judgment, in the Lords; and Bulwer Lytton, a versatile and accomplished politician, in the Commons Moreover, Stanley, who was too young to be more than an Under-Secretary in 1852, was now qualified for high office, as he showed in 1858. And, if Derby had been quick to appreciate rising talent, he would have seen in Lord Robert Cecil, who now sat for Stamford in Herries's place, a notable acquisition for the front bench. The only one of Derby's pleas, in his defence of his *gran rifiuto* in the House of Lords, that carries much weight is his statement that the country was demanding the leadership of Palmerston. There was undoubtedly a movement of the kind, but there was also one in favour of Derby; 'it is difficult to make it understood,' writes Fraser, 'how vehement was the feeling in his favour at the time.' Confirmation of this statement is found in the Beaconsfield papers. A friend reports to Disraeli that men of all parties were saying during this winter: 'Lord Derby is a man of resolution, energy, and spirit; with him there would have been no divided counsels and no want of promptitude.' Had Derby succeeded in doing what Palmerston did, he might well have rallied most of the Peelites naturally to his banner, and at the next General Election won that Conservative victory which was delayed till 1874, after his death.

Disraeli at least had nothing to reproach himself with. He had brought the Coalition into hopeless discredit. He had led his troops to victory in the House of Commons. He had once again shown his disinterestedness by waiving his claims in favour of Palmerston. He had done his best

to put heart and audacity into his chief. He had loyally upheld Derby's course in the *Press*, allowing no sign of his own disapproval to appear. Now that the matter was over, he was prepared to regard it in a philosophic spirit, and look out for fresh occasions which a Ministry, apparently with a very insecure tenure of office, could hardly fail to afford. In the *Press*, on February 10, he recommended the Conservative party to be patient but vigilant. Office was not their object, nor yet a personal triumph. They might control, if they did not direct, the course of public affairs. 'Your time will not be long delayed; justice will be done you by the people.'

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Feb.* 25, 1855.—Since I last wrote to you, events have made weeks as long as months. The political volcano has not been content with a single eruption. It has groaned, and heaved, and vomited forth streams, which are not yet cool, and are even still glowing. The surrounding earth is covered with corpses and fragments and ruins. Every day there are fresh victims or new portents. Nor is it probable that even the present form of affairs will long continue.[1]

Whether Lord Derby was justified in declining the task imposed on him, time can alone satisfactorily prove. Our acceptance would certainly have prevented some political scandals, but, on the other hand, a strong and permanent Government must, in the present, or rather late, unnatural state of parties, be preceded by a period of Parliamentary anarchy and spasmodic weakness.

Let us try to think of more agreeable matters. You have presented us with an aviary, without any of the inconveniences of that receptacle of the feathered race, and with almost all its beauties. Never was there so interesting and so magnificent a present. It never palls, for it is full of nature: faithful, picturesque, strange, and animated. I often

[1] In the first edition of *Haworth Churchyard*, dated April, 1855, Matthew Arnold scathingly described the political eruption of this spring as

> This ignominious spectacle,
> Power dropping from the hand
> Of paralytic factions, and no soul
> To snatch and wield it.

Palmerston did snatch and wield it, and Arnold expunged the lines.

delight myself in turning over its pages when I have a quiet evening, and thank you very heartily for companions who seem always to bring me messages of friendship and affection from Torquay. . . .

The great hero of London at present is Lord Cardigan, who relates with sufficient modesty, but with ample details, the particulars of his fiery charge at Balaclava, to willing audiences —as often as they like.

Amid all the strange events of this marvellous period, the most singular appears to be the now accredited incident of the departure of the Emperor Napoleon for the Crimea.[1] He is to take Sebastopol. His absence agitates the funds and disquiets statesmen.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Feb.* 25, 1855.—I have been wishing to write to you every day, but have fallen into one of those fits of prostration which follow excitement, and which are sometimes both the consequence and the refuge from a surfeit of pusillanimity and incompetence.

The political volcano still heaves and vomits forth its lava. In a month's time Aberdeen, Newcastle, John Russell, and now the whole of the Peelites, have been overthrown, and the well-accredited rumour of yesterday was that the Special Envoy[2] was telegraphed back again, and, climax of all degradation, had agreed to take office under Palmerston, and sit as his subordinate, in his presence, in the House of Commons, as Secretary of State for the department which S. Herbert has just vacated, before the returning officer's signature was dry.

Others believe that Palmerston will go to the Upper House, which it is supposed may best suit his years, though still First Minister; while friends of both parties opine that if this be the case John Russell will trip him up by Easter.

The Cabinet, they say, is formed, but its elements are doubtful. Whether a man of the people, in the shape of Baines as Chancellor of the Exchequer, is to be included, for popularity, or whether it is to be exclusively Whig and family-party, by the promotion to that post of Cornewall Lewis, Clarendon's brother-in-law, is doubtful.[3] In this latter case, Layard, Lowe, Laing, Horsman and Co. are to have all the highest of the subordinate posts by way of hedge. If Layard, whose exclusion from office the Peelites made a condition of their precipitate adhesion to Palmerston, on account of his attacks on Aberdeen, be placed, and highly placed, and John

[1] The Emperor was, fortunately, dissuaded by Clarendon from this resolve.
[2] Russell had accepted a special mission to Vienna.
[3] Cornewall Lewis was made Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Russell return to the Treasury Bench, it will not be long before the seceding members are at open war with their late colleagues.

There is a strong belief in the best quarters that peace is impending—some think will even be immediate.

Poor Lord Ponsonby has gone, and I follow his remains on Wednesday. His death was at last very sudden. He was only seriously indisposed for a day, and his intellect clear until the last hour, when the ruling passion was strong, and his last words were : 'Write instantly to the Queen, and tell her that if she trusts Palmerston she is ruined. . . .'

It was mainly due to Disraeli that the House of Commons determined, in spite of Aberdeen's fall, to appoint the Committee which it had voted on Roebuck's motion. Palmerston asked the House to let the Government be its Committee; but Disraeli insisted that, after Russell's resignation and admissions of maladministration, the House would stultify itself if it did not proceed with the inquiry into the mysterious disappearance of one of England's finest armies. Palmerston gave way; the Peelites resigned; and their places were taken by Whigs, Russell consenting to hold the Colonial Office under his old subordinate. The Committee's report, which was presented in June, justified Disraeli's criticisms, though it must be admitted that the most decisive sentences were only adopted by the casting vote of Roebuck, the Chairman:

Your Committee report that the sufferings of the army mainly resulted from the circumstances under which the expedition to the Crimea were undertaken and executed. The Administration which ordered that expedition had no adequate information as to the amount of the forces in the Crimea. They were not acquainted with the strength of the fortresses to be attacked, or with the resources of the country to be invaded. They hoped and expected the expedition to be immediately successful, and, as they did not foresee the probability of a protracted struggle, they made no preparation for a winter campaign. . . . Your Committee will now close their report with a hope that every British army may in future display the valour which this noble army has displayed, and that none may hereafter be exposed to such sufferings as have been recorded in these pages.

APPENDIX A.

BENTINCK'S LAST LETTER TO DISRAELI.

(PAGE 929.)

In the final chapter of *Lord George Bentinck,* Disraeli gives the following description of Bentinck's occupations on the last morning of his life, before he started on the afternoon walk to Thoresby which proved fatal:

On the 21st of September, after breakfasting with his family, he retired to his dressing-room, where he employed himself with some papers, and then wrote three letters—one to Lord Enfield, another to the Duke of Richmond, and the third to the writer of these pages. That letter is now at hand; it is of considerable length, consisting of seven sheets of notepaper, full of interesting details of men and things, and written not only in a cheerful, but even a merry mood.

In December, 1849, the Duke of Richmond stated at a public meeting that the main purport of Bentinck's letter to him was an expression of the regard which the writer entertained for Disraeli, and of the great obligations which the whole party were under to him, for the display of unrivalled talent, undaunted courage, and firmness of purpose. Here is Bentinck's letter to Disraeli:

From Lord George Bentinck.

WELBECK, NEAR WORKSOP, NOTTS, *Sept.* 21, 1848.

MY DEAR D.,—I got your interesting letter from Wynyard yesterday. Peel takes a different view from Graham in respect to the payment of the Irish Roman Catholic Priesthood. My brother-in-law Evelyn Denison[1] met Peel at Nuneham in July. The party consisted of Sir Robert and Lady Peel, Gladstone and his wife, Norreys and Lady Norreys, E. Denison and my sister, and SHIEL. . . .

Peel talked frankly about Ireland, and specially to *Shiel,* observing that *now* was the time to settle the question of the Irish Church; that the time was come when it was no longer possible to leave the Irish Roman Catholic Priesthood in their

[1] Afterwards Speaker of the House of Commons, and eventually Viscount Ossington.

present position; that the present moment was, in his opinion, peculiarly favourable; that the extreme poverty, the absolute state of starvation, of the Irish Priesthood would be favourable to their assent to some arrangement; that a deep religious feeling, on the other hand, was spreading over the public mind, and was working a desire to see some religious education and provision made for the Irish People, and therefore he thought the opportunity on every account favourable for some settlement of the question.

Shiel upon this observed: 'Well, Sir Robert, you have settled two great questions: why should you not be the man to come in and settle this great question?'

Peel smiled and smirked, and freely replied: 'I am too old to do it, but it must be done. I don't say but that any Government that attempted to settle the matter might be overthrown in the attempt; but, whatever might be the Government that succeeded to them, that Government would find the impossibility of refusing to settle the question.'

Upon this Evelyn Denison put in his word, observing that the People of this country would not suffer the Roman Catholic Priesthood to be paid out of the consolidated fund, and asking Sir Robert Peel whether he had not been a little struck by the presentation by Law of a Petition signed by 3,000 Protestant Clergymen against any payment of the Romish Priesthood.

Peel answered: 'I was very much surprised. Still, when the time comes for the payment of the Roman Catholic Priesthood, *means will be found for that purpose.*'

My conviction is that the Whigs will not attempt the settlement of this question, but Peel will; he will find the means, and will find himself not too old.

When all is said, the Irish Poor Rate in but a single Union equals 5s. 11½d. in the £1, and averages somewhere about 2s. (Connaught, 2s. 0¾d.; Munster, 2s. 8¾d.; Leinster, 1s. 7¼d.; Ulster, 1s. 7¾d.). This produces £1,300,000 a year. One shilling additional in the £1 would make a very handsome provision for the Irish Roman Catholic Clergy; it would give £240 a year to 2,500 Priests, and leave £50,000 a year to be distributed among her Bishops.

Then there would be Churches and Glebe Houses to be built; 2,500 of these at £5,000 a piece would be £1,250,000—at 4 per cent. would be £50,000 a year more to be provided for; that would be about ¾d. in the £1 more.

John Bull would rather enjoy seeing the Irish Landlords fleeced a little; but I have no doubt but that, when once a Priesthood were arrayed on the side of order and industry, Irish Estates would be increased in value far more than 1s. 0¾d. in the £1.

Graham humbugged your wife about his obligations to me; I am not conscious that I ever obliged him in any way further than sticking to him and Stanley when they seceded from the Whigs.

Will Graham join in the assault upon the Household Troops? Does the Court care about them? It is rather a difficult case to defend.

The British Army would 'make soup' or 'cook bullocks' if those duties were required of them. I dare say the army is ill provided with marching and fighting equipment just now, but these would soon be forthcoming. As regards railways, the defending army must derive a mighty advantage from them, and would easily prevent their being broken up.—Ever yours most sincerely, G. BENTINCK.

E. Denison thinks the Government, and Ld. John specially, very weak, and that Peel's party look confidently to a new Government of which *Peel's party is to be the* PIVOT. . . .

Sir William Symonds (late Surveyor of the Navy) is here, and declares that the greatest benefit that could be conferred on the Navy would be *to disfranchise* the Dockyard men. There are 13,000 of them, and he declares half the number would perform the same duties; but, being almost all of them voters, every idle, inefficient, worthless fellow is kept on, for fear of his vote being turned against the Government candidate.

APPENDIX B.

METTERNICH ON CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP.

(PAGE 950.)

From Prince Metternich.

BRIGHTON, *ce* 25 *Janvier*, 1849.

MON CHER DISRAELI,—J'ai reçu votre lettre du 13 de ce mois! Je vous rends, par les mots de satisfaction et de frayeur, l'impression que votre lettre, et la prière que vous avez bien voulu y joindre, ont produit sur moi. Le premier de ces sentiments tire sa source de la justice que vous rendez à la pureté de mes intentions; le second est la conséquence de la gravité du sujet sur lequel porte votre expédition et de la distance qui existe entre mon individualité et les éléments dont se compose la situation. Tout homme qui est appelé à donner un conseil, doit, pour pouvoir répondre à l'objet, chercher son point de départ dans la conscience, d'être maître de la matière qui forme l'objet de la consultation. L'étoffe me manquant à cet égard et désirant, d'un autre côté, vous prouver combien je suis sensible à la preuve de confiance que vous me donnez, je m'attacherai à l'élément qui toujours est à la disposition des hommes doués d'un esprit droit—à l'examen de la situation.

Celle dont il s'agit se présente à ma vue sous l'aspect suivant:

Dépouillée de tout fard et réduite à sa véritable valeur, la question est celle de soutien de la raison dans la lutte qui généralement est engagée aujourd'hui entre les partis conservatif et destructeur. Il est dans la nature de ces partis, que celui conservatif a, pour avoir de la force, besoin d'être discipliné, tandis que celui destructeur peut avec plus d'impunité se passer de cet élément de salut. *Tout* n'est point propre à la conservation ni à la construction, pendant que *tout* peut être employé à l'œuvre de la déstruction. Aussi l'embarras qui fait le sujet de notre entretien réside-t-il sur ce champ. Le Leader du parti protectioniste est mort, et ce parti est dès-lors à la recherche d'un conducteur nouveau.

J'arrive ici à une question, qui ayant déjà été effleurée par moi dans notre dernière rencontre ne vous surprendra pas. De quel parti s'agit-il; est-ce de celui *conservatif*, ou de celui *protectioniste?* Il s'agit du sécond et ce fait même renferme une faiblesse et un embarras. L'une et l'autre sont davantage propres aux questions *spéciales* qu'à celles *générales* qui s'élévent à la hauteur d'une cause, dans la nature desquelles se trouve l'avantage de ne point pouvoir mourir. Ce ne sont en effet que les questions de détail, qui dans leur réunion acquièrent la valeur d'une cause impérissable, qui peuvent, selon les temps et les circonstances,

perdre de leur importance relative. Tel, si tout ne me trompe, est le cas du parti *protectioniste*, et celà non parceque le sujet dont ce parti porte le nom se serait effacé, mais parcequ'il ne renferme plus la matière réquise pour justifier sa dénomination. Le sujet s'est fondu dans la cause générale, dont la protection due aux intérêts agricoles forme sans contredit l'un des éléments les moins périssables. Je vous ai déjà dit que je croyais que le parti protectioniste ferait bien de renoncer à son titre. Une conséquence naturelle du fait serait celle de placer le parti de Manchestre en face *de la cause* conservative toute entière et de changer ainsi la lutte, qui entre ce parti et celui protectioniste porte le caractère *d'un combat singulier*, en une *opération de guerre* contre les principes de conservation. Tout *parti* perd de sa force par un changement de position pareil.

Il y a, à mon avis, un autre avantage attaché à ce qui à mes yeux aurait la valeur d'une utile fusion *d'un parti dans un grand tout*, et cet avantage serait celui, d'élargir le champ pour les combattants pour une même cause. Il est dans la nature des dénominations particulières, de restreindre ce champ par l'appel qu'elles font aux rivalités particulières entre ceux qui, en dernière analyse, veulent la même chose.

Ces remarques, mon cher Disraeli, peuvent être taxées d'être entachées d'une polémique qui ne conduit pas à une solution de la question posée. Je dois convenir que la remarque ne manque pas de fondement; n'en cherchez pas la raison en moi mais dans la nature de l'objet et dans la condition dans laquelle je me trouve placé à son égard, dans la pire des conditions dans laquelle puisse se trouver placé l'homme consulté, dans celle d'un manque de connaissances réquises pour répondre consciencieusement à la demande qu'un ami lui adresse. Lord Stanley a des scrupules que d'autres de vos amis ne partagent pas; ce en quoi toutes les opinions se rencontrent, c'est dans la justice qu'ils rendent à vos grands capacités. Vous de votre côté êtes également dans le vrai en tenant compte de ce que des conditions, contre lesquelles *nul ne peut*, peuvent amener à leur suite. Dans une situation de choses pareille ce n'est que vous-même qui devez vous placer à l'aiguille de la balance et pondérer le pour et le contre de la situation et arriver au prononcé de la chance qui a le succès en sa faveur. Ce qu'en tout état de choses vous ne pourriez mettre en doute, c'est la sincérité des vœux que je forme en faveur des bonnes chances. Je suis né et j'ai vécu défenseur de la cause conservative, et je mourrai dans les rangs des soutiens de cette cause. La base pratique que vous devrez soumettre à la pondération des chances, c'est la somme du secours dont vous aurez à vous regarder comme assuré et cela en évaluant à la fois la force qui réside en vous-même.

Restez en tout cas fidèle à la cause, qui déjà vous a valu des succès incontestés et dont vous êtes dans mon intime conviction un défenseur aussi habile que déjà puissant. Vous savez que mon opinion à cet égard date de longue main; je ne sais pas en former à la légère.

Mille sincères et affectueux hommages.—METTERNICH.

APPENDIX C.

THE PLAGIARISM FROM THIERS.

(PAGE 1211.)

From Disraeli's Speech, November 15, 1852.

It is not enough to say that [a great general] must be an engineer, a geographer, learned in human nature, adroit in managing mankind—that he must be able to fulfil the highest duty of a Minister of State, and then to descend to the humblest office of a commissary and a clerk; but he has to display all this knowledge and to exercise all those duties at the same time, and under extraordinary circumstances. At every moment he has to think of the eve and the morrow—of his flank and of his rear—he has to calculate at the same time the state of the weather and the moral qualities of men; and all those elements that are perpetually changing he has to combine, sometimes under overwhelming heat, sometimes under overpowering cold—oftentimes in famine, and frequently amidst the roar of artillery. Behind all these circumstances there is ever present the image of his country, and the dreadful alternative whether that country is to welcome him with laurel or with cypress. Yet those images he must dismiss from his mind, for the general must not only think, but think with the rapidity of lightning; for on a moment more or less depends the fate of a most beautiful combination—and a moment more or less is a question of glory or shame. Unquestionably, Sir, all this may be done in an ordinary manner, by an ordinary man, as every day of our lives we see that ordinary men may be successful Ministers of State, successful authors, and successful speakers; but to do all this with genius is sublime.

To be able to think with vigour, with depth, and with clearness, in the recesses of the cabinet, is a great intellectual demonstration; but to think with equal vigour, clearness, and depth, amidst the noise of bullets, appears to me the loftiest exercise and the most complete triumph of human faculties.

From 'La Revue Trimestre' of 1829.

(Quoted by the Hon. George Smythe in the 'Morning Chronicle,' July, 1848.)

An engineer, a geographer, a man of the world, metaphysician, knowing men, knowing how to govern them, an administrator in great things, a clerk in small—all these things it is necessary to be, but these are as yet nothing. All this vast knowledge must be exercised on the instant, in the midst of extraordinary circumstances. At every moment you must think of the yesterday

and the morrow; of your flank and of your rear—calculate at the same time on the atmosphere and on the temper of your men; and all these elements, and so various and diverse, which are ceaselessly changing and renewed, you must combine in the midst of cold, heat, hunger, bullets. . . . Farther off, and behind them, is the spectacle of your country, with laurel or with cypress. But all these images and ideas must be banished and set aside, for you must think, and think quickly: one minute too much, and the fairest combination has lost its opportunity, and instead of glory it is shame that awaits you. All this, undoubtedly, is compatible with mediocrity, like every other profession; one can also be a middling poet, a middling orator, a middling author; but this done with genius is sublime. . . .

To think in the quiet of one's cabinet, clearly, strongly, nobly, this undoubtedly is great; but to think as clearly, as strongly, as nobly, in the midst of carnage and fire is the most perfect exercise of the human faculties.

From Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

1, PARK LANE, *Sunday* [*Nov.* 21, 1852].

MY DEAR DIS,—From what I accidentally pick up in the gossip of clubs, etc., I think it possible some such direct reference may be made to the Wellington speech as may oblige you to speak. I have well thought over the matter, and it occurs to me that you can easily get out of it. If you are at home, shall I step up to you with my ideas? If not, shall I send them to you in writing?

[*Later on, the same day.*]

I send you a rough sketch of my idea. Spoken well and boldly, I think it would bring you out with credit. Of course you will dress up the general idea in your own way. . . .—Yours ever,

E. B. L.

[ENCLOSURE.]

Begin anyhow.

Certainly I did not plagiarise from any extracts from the *M. Chronicle* in 1846. But it did so happen that, when I was very young, in 1829, I read an article in a French review in which there was a summary of the intellectual capacities necessary for a great general, that struck me forcibly and retained a strong hold on my memory. Subsequently, in the course of my reading, I found that this summary comprised or resembled passages in some of the most celebrated classical authors, who have treated of the Art of War. It was, in fact, a résumé of brilliant sayings by great authorities, amassed by scholarship and vivified by genius. And what if afterwards I discovered that the writer of this article (then unknown to me) was M. Thiers? What more natural than that, when I, a Civilian, was called upon by the post which I had the honour to hold in this House to pass a deserved eulogium upon our greatest military Chief—what, I say, more natural than that I should make the very historian of the times and the wars in which that Chief had attained his renown become, out of his own lips, the witness of the events to which

in his history M. Thiers never appeared to me to have rendered sufficient justice? True that M. Thiers had concentrated all his eloquence and learning on a third-rate French general, of whom, perhaps, some of us never heard. St. Cyr has passed out of date, but the manner in which the contemporaries and countrymen of the Duke of Wellington received that summary of the requisite capacities of a general really great showed that every sentence, enriched by that learning and adorned by that genius, illustrated the actual character and imperishable services of him we mourned.

It was not to be expected that I could quote from a writer so eminent as M. Thiers upon an occasion of interest so universal as that of the funeral obsequies of the D. of Wellington—but what I must be aware that the charge of plagiarism now made would be brought against me. And I was prepared for it. If the natural and decorous spirit of national pride forbade the French people to send to the Funeral rites of the Conqueror of Waterloo their military delegates, at least we had present one of their greatest statesmen, their most popular historians, their most eloquent writers, himself unconsciously to bear witness to that rare combination of qualities which the world may not acknowledge in St. Cyr, but which all England recognised in Wellington.

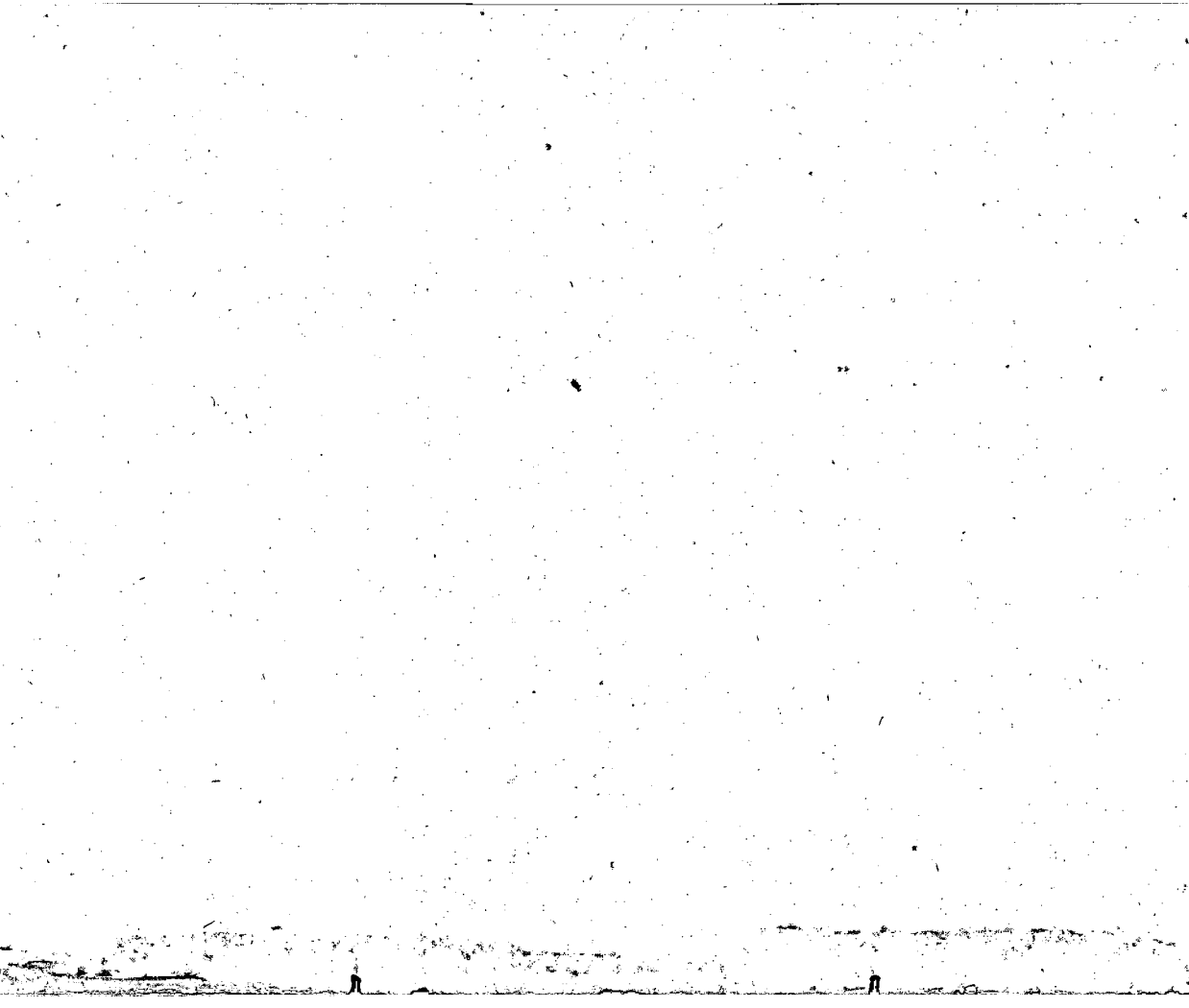
The House, Sir, may thus divine my motive. Whatever my faults and deficiencies, I humbly presume that I should be scarcely deemed wanting in the ordinary invention of a man of letters, or the ordinary fluency of a Parliamentary debater. Easier for me to say something of my own than to quote or to plagiarise from another. But I was not thinking of myself. I was thinking how best to honour the illustrious subject of our grief and our eulogies; and thus I left half of his funeral oration to be uttered, through my feebler lips, by the historian of the Consulate and Empire.

If I have erred in this, it was not through design nor through negligence; it is one of those matters of criticism and taste which we can scarcely discuss in this House, and which I must be contented to leave to the acquittal of those who may well conceive that I would desire to enforce any panegyric of my own, by all which classical erudition and the practised analysis of military achievements could supply to the Historian who has immortalised those noble armies, which it was the destiny of our Wellington to encounter and subdue.

IV

Chapters I.–VII.: 1855–1859

BY GEORGE EARLE BUCKLE



PREFACE

Since the publication of the third volume, the biography of Disraeli has sustained a heavy loss by the death of the principal Trustee of the Beaconsfield estate. The son of a personal friend, and a personal friend himself, sprung, moreover, from the same ancient race, Nathaniel Lord Rothschild, in addition to his other many-sided activities, carried on a great Disraelian tradition. Not only did he inherit a store of information about Disraeli's younger days, but he was directly conversant with some of the important transactions of the Beaconsfield Government; and so was able, of his own knowledge, to supply Mr. Monypenny and me with valuable material, and also to assist us in clearing up doubtful points in Disraeli's career. Throughout the work his time and his judgment have always been at our command; nor have his encouragement and confidence ever failed us. He has been, and will be, greatly missed; but happily there are others of his name and family to take his place, and to them, and to Sir Philip Rose, it is my pleasant duty to offer grateful acknowledgments.

Now that a time has been reached in Disraeli's life when his growing influence in the State brought him into ever nearer relation with his Sovereign, my obligations to His Majesty the King have largely increased. Halfway through this volume the period covered by *The Letters of Queen Victoria*[1] comes to a close; and I tender my dutiful thanks to the King for graciously permitting me to

[1] The reference is to the First Series of the *Letters of Queen Victoria*, published in 1907. The Second Series was not published till 1926 (the two first volumes) and 1928 (the third volume); the last volumes of the original edition of the *Life of Disraeli* having appeared in 1920.

publish Royal documents relating to affairs in the years between 1862 and 1868, similar to those whose publication King Edward sanctioned for the years from 1837 to 1861. The correspondence interchanged between the two chiefs of the Conservative party is a main feature of this volume as it was of the last; and I desire again to express my sincere gratitude to Lord Derby for allowing me to make free use of his grandfather's papers. I thank, also, the many others who have assisted me either by giving advice or information, or by permitting the publication of letters. I am once more indebted to Major Coningsby Disraeli for most of the illustrations; to Mr. Murray for a critical reading of the proof-sheets; and to my wife for the index and much besides.

G. E. B.

Christmas, 1915.

CHAPTER I.

War and Peace.

1855–1856.

Lord Derby's refusal to grasp the helm in 1855 gave Lord Palmerston his opportunity, and thereby determined for many years the course of Disraeli's career. It doomed him, now a man of fifty, to spend the maturity of his unique political talent, not, save for brief interludes, in translating his ideas directly into action as a Minister of the Crown, but in endeavouring to impress them upon a reluctant House of Commons as the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition. Except Sir William Wyndham, who gallantly but ineffectually strove to make head against Walpole, and Charles Fox, who waged an impetuous, if intermittent, war against Pitt, no politician ever had so prolonged and so continuous an experience of that post. For more than twenty years out of the five-and-twenty between 1849 and 1874 he sat facing the box on the Speaker's left hand, during long tenures of office by Russell, Palmerston, and Gladstone. The business of an Opposition is to oppose; consequently it is impossible for an Opposition leader to escape the reproach of being factious, and it is beyond human nature for him not, once and again, to deserve it. Disraeli certainly has no claim to exemption in this respect from human weakness. But that he incurred the reproach in comparative moderation, and that he deserved it but seldom, is one of his many titles to fame. His conduct is all the more striking when we remember how easily statesmen so worthy of honour as Russell and Palmerston fell, in their

brief spells of opposition, into obvious faction, both of them in 1858-59, and Russell also previously in 1852. But, though by general consent Disraeli's leadership of Opposition was in a high degree both patriotic and effective, these years of watching and waiting and criticising had their tragic aspect. His genius, abundant as it was on the critical side, was at least as much creative as critical; yet, when it was at its height, its creative side, so far as politics, his chosen sphere, was concerned, was starved, and the critical side abnormally developed. The marvel is that, when, in his declining years, he came tardily by his own, sufficient original faculty should have persisted, to enable him to leave an imperishable mark on the history of England and of the world.

Disraeli had hoped, early in 1855, to be a leading member of a Government formed vigorously to prosecute the Crimean War. Derby's timidity had deprived him of that prospect, and had left to him and to the Conservative party apparently only the humiliating function of supporting their opponents in carrying out a policy the burden of which they had shrunk from shouldering themselves. This was a function most uncongenial to Disraeli's temper; and it is no wonder that his mind soon turned towards the possibilities of an honourable peace. His first tentative movements in this direction, while Sebastopol was intact, were decidedly premature; but in the autumn after its fall he seized the propitious occasion, and began, in the teeth of a hostile public opinion, a peace propaganda which eventually culminated in the Conference and Treaty of Paris.

Palmerston had been placed in office, after the collapse of the Coalition, as a war Minister. But he inherited, as a legacy from the Aberdeen Government, an inchoate policy of peace. Before the close of the preceding year negotiations had been begun at Vienna between the Allies and Austria, and four points had been laid down to form the basis of *pourparlers* with Russia. Though the Emperor Nicholas had no intention of accepting the

third and apparently most important point, the termination of Russian preponderance in the Black Sea, he was anxious to humour Austria, and therefore agreed to be represented at a Conference to be held in Vienna in March. To safeguard British interests at the Conference, Palmerston appointed as plenipotentiary no less considerable a person than Lord John Russell, whose recent attitude in the Aberdeen Ministry had been that of a stiff opponent of Russian claims; while at the same time the Prime Minister applied all his own energies to remedy the grave deficiencies of the army in the Crimea, and to bring its numbers and equipment to a satisfactory level. He did not believe that, at the present stage of the war, Russia would agree to any terms with which the Allies could reasonably be content. But Cobden, Bright, and the peace party generally, were hopeful; and the consent of Nicholas to negotiate, the readiness of Russell to undertake a mission which a statesman of his eminence would hardly have accepted unless he thought there was a fair prospect of a favourable issue, and the unpopularity of the war among the French people, led even Disraeli to think that peace was impending. He said on February 24 that it was not a satisfactory prospect if Russell had gone to Vienna 'to be the promoter of peace with a foregone conclusion in favour of war'; but that, if the country believed that 'peace with honour'—a phrase he was to use with telling effect more than twenty years later—could be secured, the Ministry might count on the earnest support of the House. His conviction was strengthened by the sudden death, on March 2, of the Emperor Nicholas, whose overweening ambition had been so largely responsible for the war. The *Press*, at this time still under Disraeli's personal direction,[1] wrote, on the very next day, as if it anticipated a speedy arrangement;[2] and, a week later, attributed a pacific disposition to the new Emperor, Alexander, and recommended an immediate armistice in view of the opening of the Conference.[3] The

[1] See III., ch. 14. [2] *Press*, March 3. [3] *Press*, March 10.

first, second, and fourth of the Vienna points, which Russia was known to be ready to accept, involved very material concessions—the cessation of the Russian protectorate over the Principalities and over Serbia, the free navigation of the Danube, and the abandonment of the Russian claim to any rights over the Christian subjects of the Porte; and the *Press* evinced a disposition not to insist upon the apparently vital third point respecting the Black Sea.

> Restrictions as to the amount of naval force to be maintained by a sovereign power are at the best but illusory guarantees, and it is difficult to believe that Europe will engage in war for the sake of obtaining a particular gradation of such an equivocal security. . . . The impending peace will be one mortifying for the Allies, but not humiliating. . . . Russia has escaped an immense retribution. She was in a vice; but the hands of the workmen were paralysed.[1]

How illusory such guarantees were was shown, it may be noted, in 1871, when Russia announced that she refused any longer to be bound by the Black Sea clauses of the Treaty of Paris.

To Lord Henry Lennox.[2]

March 27, 1855.—. . . . The members of the Congress are sworn to secrecy, and the Emperor of the French confers only with Drouyn:[3] so nothing can be learnt at Vienna or Paris: but it oozes out a little from Berlin: and the general belief, among the cognoscenti, is that peace is imminent: the *Press* alone, among the journals, however, has taken this line: and some of its last Nos. have made much sensation. . . .

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.[4]

GROSVENOR GATE, *May Day*, 1855.—But what a May Day! No maidens, no flowers, no songs, and no sun! The sky is like an Indian ink drawing, and the north-east blast withers everything. I hope you have escaped, tho', instead of being on the heights of Braddon, you ought to be on the warm

[1] *Press*, March 31.
[2] See p. 1198.
[3] Drouyn de Lhuys was the French plenipotentiary at the Vienna Conference.
[4] See III., ch. 13.

borders of your bay. Everyone here is suffering, and everyone is gloomy, in body or in mind.

The imperial visit[1] was the exception. It was brilliant, exciting, successful, and never flagged. We had the honor of a royal invitation to some of the festivities, and, when I was presented, Napoleon came forward, and shook hands with me cordially, and spoke some gracious words. Our Queen was on his right, the Empress next to her—Prince Albert on the left of the Emperor, then Duchess of Kent, and Duchess of Cambridge and Princess Mary—so one had to make seven reverences!

Altho', years ago, I had seen the Emperor, and not unfrequently, I was very much struck by the smallness of his stature. He did not seem taller than our Queen. I understand he enjoyed his visit very much, and greatly captivated Her Majesty, once so much prejudiced against him. There was immense embracing at the departure, and many tears. When the carriage door was at length closed, and all seemed over, the Emperor re-opened it himself, jumped out, pressed Victoria to his heart, and kissed her, on each cheek, with streaming eyes. What do you think of that?

I was greatly disappointed with the Empress. For me she had not a charm. She has Chinese eyes, and a perpetual smile or simper which I detest.[2] I understand she is very natural—too natural for a sovereign, and that Napoleon looks sometimes as if he would be pleased with more reserve and dignity. She was always playing with the royal children, who doted on her, and was sometimes found sitting on the edge of a table! What do you think of that? The courtiers were horrified.

Lord John has come back. He made his appearance in the House of C. last night. Everything looks very bad, but I do not entirely despair of peace. I understand the siege is certainly to be raised, but what are the new plans of campaign I know not. Scarcely promising, I should think, or Napoleon would not have given up his expedition to the Crimea, on which he was quite bent. This makes me believe in peace, as nothing but that would justify his relinquishment of his announced project. He would otherwise be ridiculous, which he cannot afford to be. . . .

Disraeli had been too sanguine. The Third Point had proved an insuperable obstacle; Prince Gortchakoff, the Russian plenipotentiary, entirely declined to give

[1] The Emperor and Empress of the French paid a state visit to England, April 16-21.

[2] For a more favourable impression of the Empress, see below, p. 1456.

way. But, though the fact was not revealed for some months, not only Drouyn de Lhuys, but even Russell, approved a compromise suggested by Austria, under which Russia would limit her fleet in the Black Sea to its strength before the war, Austria engaging to join with the Allies in enforcing this covenant. As the Austrian proposal, instead of terminating, would perpetuate and legalise Russian preponderance in the Black Sea, it was rejected by both the British and the French Governments. Drouyn de Lhuys was recalled, and he thereupon resigned; but Russell, in spite of the repudiation of his advice, nevertheless consented to remain in Palmerston's Cabinet. Though Russell's action was not known at the time, the breakdown of the negotiations on the Third Point was palpable; and Disraeli persisted in maintaining in his newspaper the comparative unimportance of the difference. The *Press* wrote on May 19:

> To make European peace or war depend on the point of whether Russia is to maintain a few ships more or less in the Black Sea is a conception more worthy the statesmen of Laputa than of practical England. The negotiation should never have been opened on the basis adopted, or should never have been broken off on so trivial a difference.

Ministers had failed to make peace. Could they be trusted to make war with vigour and success? To the Opposition the Government appeared, after the Peelite defection,[1] to be merely the old feeble Whig combination of 1846-1852, with Palmerston and Russell transposed, and with no additional strength save Clarendon at the Foreign Office, Molesworth at the Board of Works, and Cornewall Lewis at the Exchequer. 'We have replaced a Cabinet of All the Talents by a Cabinet of All the Mediocrities,' wrote the *Press*.[2] Was this the strong Government, so superior to Derby and Disraeli and their friends, which the country needed at a critical time? Palmerston, indeed, septuagenarian as he was, was a host

[1] See pp. 1384, 1388.

[2] Aug. 11. By that time Russell had again left the Cabinet.

in himself, and the country, with a just instinct, put its trust in him. But the Opposition leaders believed that he was quite past his work; 'totally unfit,' 'his day had gone by,' Derby had told the Queen;[1] 'utterly exhausted,' 'an old painted pantaloon,' Disraeli had written to Lady Londonderry;[2] 'you may see the breed, but the action and power are gone,' was Disraeli's language to Bright.[3] The apparent vacillation between peace and war was attributed to Palmerston's slackness in holding the reins. His language was somewhat ambiguous. It was not clear, from a speech which he made at a City banquet on May 19, whether the Government were looking forward to 'peace with honour' or 'war with victory.' Russell had been back from the Conference for some weeks, but no explanations were given by Ministers; there had been a long delay in laying papers, and a great unwillingness to have a discussion. The Whitsuntide recess was approaching, and Disraeli determined to elicit something definite from the Government before the House separated. On May 24 he brought forward a motion condemning their 'ambiguous language and uncertain conduct,' and censuring them for slackness in carrying on the war. His position was a somewhat difficult one, as, though he had made no announcement in his own name to that effect, he would, we know, have been prepared, however reluctantly, to make peace at Vienna on the terms which Russia would concede—agreeing in this with Russell and with the peace party; and also, it soon appeared, with Graham and Gladstone, who, having as Ministers approved of the Four Points, were now, as simple members of Parliament, ready to abandon what was regarded as the most important point, the Third. The two great parties and public opinion generally would, however, have scouted such an arrangement; and, the Government having refused to entertain it, the opportunity was now past. That being so, the only

[1] Page 1376. [2] Page 1383.
[3] Trevelyan's *Bright*, Journal, Feb. 20, 1855.

possible course was a vigorous resumption of hostilities, as Disraeli's journal pointed out. It was no longer any use maintaining the 'farce of negotiation'; we must say, 'Our part is taken, our terms are known; we have confidence in the justice of our cause and the might of our arms, and we dare the last dread issue . . . the appeal to battle.'[1]

In his speech Disraeli called attention to Russell's disqualifications as Special Envoy to a Peace Conference. Russell had been one of the most bellicose of Ministers, and his last exploit before going to make peace for his country was to destroy a Cabinet because the Prime Minister was not earnest enough in prosecuting the war. 'This was the dove sent out to the troubled waters of Europe.' Was there to be peace, or was there to be war? Had the Conference concluded, or was it still sitting? Nobody knew, and Ministers differed in their statements. Disraeli added that it was a mistake to depart from the policy of protecting Turkey and adopt that of invading Russia; but that was over and done. An end should be put to the vicious double system, by which they had so long carried on an aggressive war and a protective diplomacy. The issue before the House was a simple one: 'Will you put an end to this diplomatic subterfuge and this Ministerial trifling?' The tone of the debate was very hostile to the advocates of immediate peace, and Palmerston showed himself responsive. He said that Russia had refused the fair conditions offered her, and, since England was fully prepared, the war must be carried on; the nation was in earnest and would support the Government. Disraeli exulted over what he called Palmerston's change of front, as a justification of the motion. His object had been to prevent war and negotiations from proceeding simultaneously, and now Palmerston had come out as a war Minister.

Neither those who were for war nor those who were for peace desired to turn Ministers out for the benefit of a

[1] *Press*, May 26.

party which had acknowledged itself incompetent for office four months before; and therefore Disraeli's motion was lost by a large majority. After Whitsuntide the general debate was resumed, and eventually the Government received without a division[1] an assurance of the support of the House in the prosecution of the war. On the last night Disraeli, in an elaborate oration, impressed on Ministers the necessity of having a definite idea of the object for which they were struggling, and of the means by which they could accomplish it. A passage as to the responsibility of a majority in the House of Commons in matters of foreign policy is as applicable to-day as when it was spoken. In domestic policy the mistakes of a Parliamentary majority might be set right by another Parliamentary majority afterwards. But, in foreign affairs,

> Every step that you take is an irretrievable one, and the consequences of your conduct are immediate and palpable. A false step in such a case cannot be retraced; you cannot, as you do on domestic questions, rescind your policy, calculate the loss you have sustained by the unwise system you have pursued, and console yourselves by thinking that for the future you will shun a policy proved to be injurious. If you make a mistake in your foreign affairs; if you enter into unwise treaties; if you conduct campaigns upon vicious principles; if the scope and tendency of your foreign system are founded upon want of information or false information, or are framed with no clear idea of what are your objects and your means of obtaining them, there is no majority in the House of Commons which can long uphold a Government under such circumstances. A majority under such circumstances will not make a Government strong, but will make this House weak.

The object of the Conservative party, said Disraeli, was to check the preponderance of Russia as against Turkey, and preserve Constantinople to the Porte. He

[1] June 8. Disraeli had expected a division, and wrote that morning to Lennox: 'We divide to-night. I think we shall cut down the majority half; and if our fellows were only steady, I have little doubt that before July was past a further parallel might be advanced into the enemy's camp: but I am vexed, every moment, with sad stories of crotchety idiots.'

did not himself attach special value to the Third Point; he thought the object might be secured by neutralising the Principalities, and fortifying the Bosporus and the eastern frontier of Turkey.

Russell, in these debates, had used very bellicose language, had treated the Russian proposals as futile, and, in particular, had insisted that a limitation of Russian naval power in the Black Sea was indispensable to the security of Constantinople. This naturally provoked Count Buol, the author of the Austrian compromise; and he published official papers which revealed to the world Russell's readiness at Vienna to accept what he now repudiated. Public indignation was deservedly roused in England at such extraordinary inconsistency. Russell defended himself lamely[1] by distinguishing between his position as plenipotentiary and his position as Cabinet Minister. As plenipotentiary he gave his advice; as Cabinet Minister he accepted the decision of his colleagues overruling it. Disraeli took full advantage of so legitimate an opportunity for Opposition criticism. Russell, he said, had in his own mind secured satisfactory terms of peace, and then, when his colleagues in the Cabinet refused to accept them, quietly pocketed his own opinions, and remained 'in a Cabinet of war a Minister of peace.' 'Lax as have been the rules and regulations in recent Cabinets with regard to open questions, I certainly cannot conceal my surprise at learning to-night from high authority that peace and war are open questions in the existing Administration.' How could the Government prosecute the war vigorously without losing Russell as a colleague? 'Is this the end—that even peace and war have become mere party considerations, that the interests of the country are sacrificed to the menace of a majority, and that the turbulent assemblies of Downing Street are to baffle all the sagacity of all the conferences of Vienna?' The debate was especially gratifying to Disraeli by reason of a candid confession made by Cobden. 'I look back,' he

[1] July 6.

said, 'with regret on the vote which I gave on the motion which changed Lord Derby's Government. I regret the result of that motion; for it has cost the country 100 millions of treasure, and between 20,000 and 30,000 good lives.'

The Opposition leaders determined to push their advantage. Bulwer Lytton, on their behalf, gave notice of a vote of censure on Russell's conduct; and they looked forward—Disraeli eagerly, Derby with reluctant acquiescence—to a vote of the House of Commons which should displace the Government.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Wednesday*, 6 *o'clock* [*July* 11, 1855].—Affairs very critical—the Cabinet sitting. Palmerston having put off supply for Friday, in order to prevent Bulwer coming on, I have given notice of a motion for to-morrow, which will secure Bulwer for Friday, if carried, and I think it will be.

Eighteen Irish members went up to Palmerston this morning and announced that, unless he proposed the restoration of the Retrospective clause to the Irish Tenant Bill, and agreed to support it with all the influence of Government, they should vote for Bulwer. Palmerston agreed to their demands immediately.

I have Seymour[1] in hand—who is bitter against the Government. He said to me to-day: 'Nothing can save them.' . . .

From Lord Derby.

KNOWSLEY, *Wednesday* [? *Thursday*].—. . . Matters seem critical indeed, and I am living almost in dread of a telegraphic message. I think the present state of things cannot go on. Palmerston may be able to save himself for a time by throwing Johnny overboard, but it will be only for a time. I expect to hear of his (Johnny's) retirement, which would put an end to Bulwer's motion; but the shifts of putting off Supply from day to day, merely to evade it, shows the extremity to which they are driven. . . .

[1] Lord Seymour, Whig M.P. for Totnes, but a personal friend of Disraeli. On January 6 of this year Disraeli had written to Malmesbury: 'I fear that Seymour will be going to the House of Lords, which I regret, as I always looked to the possibility of his taking a leading part in the reconstruction of parties.' Seymour succeeded as 12th Duke of Somerset in November, and was First Lord of the Admiralty in Palmerston's and Russell's Administrations, 1859-1866.

One thing only could save the Government—Russell's resignation; and that was forced upon him by pressure from his party, and by representations even, as Palmerston told the Queen, of 'those members of the Government who are not in the Cabinet.'[1] The announcement was made on July 16,[2] and Lytton's motion was withdrawn, but not until after a debate which gave Disraeli an opportunity for further sarcastic comment. Russell had spoken somewhat bitterly of his desertion by some of his friends; Bouverie, the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, had explained to a mocking House with what reluctance those friends had acted; and Palmerston had expressed his readiness to retain Russell and vindicate his proceedings, while at the same time protesting that there was no division of opinion in the Cabinet on the war. Disraeli dilated on the tempting theme of friends and friendships. Friendship was the gift of the gods, and the most precious boon to man. It had long occupied the thoughts and consideration of essayists and philosophers, who had analysed its various degrees. There was, for instance, 'the devoted friend who stands or falls by one,' like Palmerston, though, to be sure, Palmerston was neither standing nor falling, but sitting on the Treasury bench. But there was also another kind of friend, immortalised by an epithet unfit for ears polite. For a 'damned good-natured friend,' ready to tell one anything disagreeable—'candid and not bad-natured friend' were the terms he actually used—commend him to Bouverie. Palmerston had accused Lytton of being either deliberately insincere or grossly ignorant, and talked of 'much ado about nothing.' Serious criticism, retorted Disraeli, should not be met by 'this patrician bullying of the Treasury bench.' It was not fitting that Palmerston should attempt to stop discussion by language not to be expected 'from one who is not only the leader of the House of Commons, which

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters*, July 12, 1855.
[2] Russell was succeeded at the Colonial Office by Molesworth.

is an accident of life, but who is also a gentleman.' Rather than meet debate, the foremost of their statesmen had mysteriously disappeared. Palmerston, who did meet debate, had shown that night, 'by his language and by the tone of his mind, that if the honour and interests of the country be any longer entrusted to his care, the first will be degraded, and the last, I believe, will be betrayed.'

Twice again during the session did Disraeli advance to the attack on the question of the war, and in each case the Government had some difficulty in avoiding defeat. Roebuck moved, as the logical sequel of the damnatory report of his Committee on the conduct of the war,[1] a vote of censure on the Aberdeen Cabinet. The Palmerston Government, several of whose members were implicated, feared that the House would not support them in meeting the motion with a direct negative, and so took shelter under the Previous Question—a Parliamentary device for avoiding the expression of an opinion either way. An amendment of this kind was obligingly moved and seconded by two of their opponents, Peel's brother, General Jonathan Peel, and Lord Robert Cecil, who probably represented public opinion in deprecating any motion that might look like vindictive personality, or might tend to weaken the Executive in time of war. This evasive amendment was carried by a considerable majority.[2] Disraeli, however, contended that, though from a party point of view the Conservatives might well be content with the admission involved in the Government's acceptance of the Previous Question on a vote of censure, the country had a right to call upon the House to express an opinion one way or another on the Report of the Committee. This was no party motion; Roebuck had voted against the Conservative vote of censure in May. There was force in Disraeli's final sentence:

After two nights' discussion in this House, after the laborious efforts for months of the Committee upon a most important

[1] See p. 1388. [2] July 19.

subject, with some of our most eminent statesmen appealing to the House for justness and frankness in our conduct, and with the whole country looking with interest to our decision to-night, we are coming to a vote which can confer honour and credit upon no body of men, and no individual member of this assembly.

The other attack was made on the following day, when the Government only succeeded in carrying by a majority of three a resolution for a joint guarantee with France of a Turkish loan of £5,000,000. Ministers did not come for authority to the House of Commons till the Convention with Turkey had been signed, and the French Chambers had signified their approval. Disraeli joined Gladstone and Cobden in resisting a policy which should have been submitted, he maintained, to Parliament at an earlier stage, and which should not have been entered upon at all without absolute necessity. The appointment of Anglo-French Commissioners to see to the appropriation of the loan was an arrangement pregnant with political difficulties and danger. We should give Turkey much more assistance if, instead of sending English capital to Turkey, we employed it ourselves in the vigorous prosecution of the war. The arguments against the guarantee were very strong, and the Government only just saved themselves by pleading that the honour of the country was at stake. It certainly appears to have been somewhat factious and unpatriotic of Disraeli to carry opposition to the loan to a division; and some of his friends, particularly Malmesbury, were shocked. Disraeli's own explanation of his vote to Count Vitzthum, the Minister of Saxony in London, was that he knew perfectly well what he was doing. It was of importance to him 'to give a hint to those in Paris, and let them know that Palmerston was standing on weaker legs than they supposed, and that the war party had lost ground in Parliament.'[1]

The violence of the Opposition during this summer, of

[1] Vitzthum's *St. Petersburg and London*, Vol. I., p. 190.

which this vote was a striking instance, was partly due to resentment at Palmerston's refusal to join Derby when Derby tried to form a Government early in the year—a refusal dictated, they thought, rather by self-interest than by public spirit. When even so cold-blooded a politician as Stanley could write that '*vendetta* must be our consolation,'[1] the feelings of warmer and more impetuous natures may be conjectured. The events of the session, at any rate, effectually cured Disraeli of his illusions about Palmerston's being in his dotage. With little help from any colleague, and supported, as Disraeli scornfully said, by 'majorities collected God knows how, voting God knows why,' that virile septuagenarian had successfully repelled a series of furious attacks by the Opposition, and had shown himself, as the *Press* confessed, 'a Triton among the minnows.' He had laid himself open, however, to criticism of a different kind by his levity on the most serious occasions. 'To be angry with such a farcical person would be absurd,' wrote the *Press*. It called him 'a sort of Parliamentary grandpapa,' 'a great Parliamentary quiz.' It talked of 'the jolly tone in which our Prime Minister laughs at the public and both Houses of Parliament, and even himself'; and of 'the rollicking air with which he performs his cajolery.' He was a 'comic Premier,' with a 'wallet of small pleasantries of an excruciating kind.' Conservatives, it said, found it hard to take part against 'a gay old Tory of the older school, disguising himself as a Liberal, and hoaxing the Reform Club.'[2]

'A gay old Tory, disguising himself as a Liberal'—there was the rub. Disraeli had failed, in spite of all his efforts and all his readiness to yield the first place, to bring about that permanent junction between Derby and Palmerston which the general similarity of their opinions rendered natural; and he now had to face the dreary prospect of an uphill fight in opposition against a nominally Liberal Prime Minister whom many of the

[1] See p. 1379.

[2] *Press*, Aug. 18.

Tory rank and file considered a better Conservative than himself, and who, far from showing signs of failing powers, appeared to grow younger every day. The situation frequently led Disraeli into common action with the Radicals, at which some of his colleagues looked askance.

From Lord Malmesbury.

HERON COURT, *July* 22, 1855.—. . . You have done two great deeds this year; for to you we owe the suffocation of the Peelites and the abasement of Johnny. Speaking to you openly, as I always shall, I think our error has been giving the lead in great questions to Radical personages. . . . If you permit or encourage Gibson, Roebuck, *et id genus*, to take a lead to which they are not entitled, we lose importance in the country and power in the House. This I am sure is the principal cause of the apparent want of unity in our ranks. . . .

An interesting specimen of Disraeli's table talk at this time—the end of July—is given us by Count Vitzthum, who sat next him at 'a luncheon party of friends of peace,' including Bright.

I have always thought Gladstone, Bright, and myself, the three most energetic men in the House. I have watched Gladstone very carefully, and am convinced that his strength of will is inflexible. Bright is sometimes blunt, but his eloquence is most powerful. He has not the subtleness of Cobden, but he has far more energy, and his talents are more practically applied. The session is at an end. Old Palmerston has taken the hint we gave him recently, and shook my hand yesterday so warmly that I am disarmed until November. When that time comes, the position will have become clearer, and public opinion shaped itself; and we shall then see what is to be done. Thus much I can say, that our Ministry is prepared: a strong Government, which will astonish the world. The men who are now at the helm cannot wield it any longer. It will not be necessary to upset them; they will fall by themselves. With the exception of old Palmerston, who for a man of seventy still displays astonishing energy, the present Cabinet has neither an orator nor a debater. But the old man is a desperado, who clings convulsively to power, because he feels that he would have no prospect of ever coming in again if he were now ousted.[1]

[1] Vitzthum, Vol. I., ch. 6.

Meanwhile the war in the Crimea, where the Allied forces had been augmented by an Italian contingent, was drawing towards its culmination.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

ROYAL HOTEL, TORQUAY, *Aug.* 21, 1855.—. . . I fear the news is not so good as it seems on the surface. With the exception of the move on the Tchernaya, which is still obscure, the affairs seem to have been got up for the royal visit;[1] at least, have that appearance. I doubt whether Sweaborg is more than another Odessa, and the revival of the bombardment of Sebastopol seems to contradict the prevalent idea, that the enemy was about to vacate the south side. The Allies would never incur the expense, to say nothing of any other consideration, of a bombardment, if there were a chance of the foe retiring. Every shell costs £2, and 25,000 may easily be fired in a short morning. No destruction of stores at Sweaborgs and Odessas can ever pay for the *cost* of destruction.

However, God is great—and much may happen in the next three months. I should think the French visit will end in renewed negotiations.

I trust an ignominious peace is not impending over our country!

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 2, 1855.—. . . There is a great pause in public events, and I see little prospect of anything happening. Lady Londonderry is in despair about her son, Lord Adolphus Vane, who is now in the trenches. The trenches are so near the enemy, that we lose forty *per diem* by casualties! *Casualties*, she says, and truly, what a horrible word to describe the loss of limb and life! Thank God, we are neither of us there, and that the only heights we have to scale are Mount Braddon and the Chiltern Hills.

Sebastopol fell on September 8, and the immediate objective of the Allied Expedition to the Crimea was thus at last attained. But Russia showed no disposition to conclude a peace; and public opinion in England supported Palmerston in a policy of energetic offensive till the enemy should be brought to his knees. Disraeli,

[1] The Queen and the Prince Consort, with the Prince of Wales and the Princess Royal, paid a visit to the Emperor and Empress of the French at Paris, Aug. 18-27.

however, saw that Great Britain had now secured all that could be obtained without a struggle of indefinite duration and uncertain issue, and before the close of the month he initiated in the *Press* a vigorous movement for an early peace. To Vitzthum he described his policy of this autumn as one of 'scaring the Ministers into a more pacific line of conduct, by holding up the bugbear of an understanding with Gladstone and Bright.' The articles seem to have been written by Coulton, the editor, with perhaps occasional assistance from Stanley, but unquestionably under Disraeli's direction and inspiration, though to people outside, such as Greville, he disclaimed responsibility.[1]

> The present moment is critical. The aspect of the war is changing. It is passing into a new phase, and the country needs the guidance of its natural leaders. . . .
>
> We can now say that every object for which the war was originally undertaken has been conceded by negotiation or won by arms. Russia no longer claims those exclusive privileges which placed her in perpetual antagonism with the Turkish Government. She has resigned her claim to the guardianship of the Greek subjects of the Porte, and to the protectorate of the Principalities. She is willing to admit Turkey into the European system—a point in itself of vital importance—and to guarantee, in accord with the other contracting Powers, the independence of its Government and the integrity of its territory. She is also disposed to place the free navigation of the Danube under the superintendence of collective Europe. One obstacle only remained—the supremacy of Russia in the Black Sea. That supremacy is now destroyed. The last Russian ship has been sunk or burnt, and Sebastopol is in ruins. . . .
>
> England and France have no longer an object in maintaining the war. They entered on it reluctantly, and for a specific purpose—the defence of the Turkish Empire. That purpose has been attained. Circumstances may render it absolutely necessary for them to continue the contest; they cannot force Russia to make peace, but their policy must be, if they remain true to their original cause and professions, to prosecute war only till satisfactory terms of peace can be obtained. The reduction of the Russian Empire was assuredly never contemplated when their alliance was formed. . . .

[1] See Greville's *Journal* under date Nov. 12, 1856.

The statesmen of this country have never been favourable to wars of extremity or wars of aggrandisement. Our policy from the first was not to overthrow, but to maintain, the balance of European power.[1]

The theme was pursued week after week; but there was no attempt to disguise the hostility of public opinion, within as well as without the Conservative party. Bright, writing to Cobden on October 5, said of the *Press*: 'I wish it represented the large party who sit opposite to us in the House, or the Tory party in the constituencies.' Not that Disraeli lacked influential support from the outset of the movement; but the support came from isolated individuals, and the rank and file clamoured for war, along with many of the leaders. Lennox was staying at Knowsley in October for Crimean festivities in Liverpool, and reported on the 15th: 'Derby's speech of last night was the old roar of the British Lion! . . . Young Morose[2] is for peace in the Crimea, but certainly there is nothing in his manners to promote it in his Lares. He is more morose than ever.' He had seen Walpole: 'He is ultra-Peace.' One of the most promising of the younger Conservatives, Sir Stafford Northcote, who had been returned for Dudley at a by-election in March, made a speech in this sense in the late autumn. On the other hand, Bulwer Lytton sent to Disraeli earnest and affectionate remonstrances against peace propaganda 'in the present state of the struggle, and the determined temper of the public.' 'Pause, pause, pause, I entreat you again, my dearest fellow,' he wrote on October 15, 'before you lend your name to any of those argosies gone astray in the Pacific.' And in November: 'The proper position for us to take seems to me, not that of Fox in the French war, but that of Pitt *versus* Addington. Treat Palmerston as Pitt treated Addington—outwar him.'

On October 31 Lennox reported to Disraeli that there was great indignation at the Carlton over the articles

[1] *Press*, Sept. 29. [2] Lord Stanley.

in the *Press*. He added: 'Have you ordered the first number of the new weekly journal, the Saturday's Political Review?[1] Of course you know it is in the hands of Layard and Public Morality Harcourt.'[2]

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Nov.* 1, 1855.—I am always delighted to hear from you, and admire your courage in even alluding to politics.

'There is another and a better world!' for which it becomes the numerous members of the Conservative party to prepare. The Conservative party is entombed in the same sepulchre as that Protectionist party at which it used to sneer.

It will not even conserve the map of Europe!

I had not heard of the Saturday Journal, or anything else. . . .

There is not a more independent paper in existence than the *Press*. . . .

Derby was as much disturbed as Lytton or the old Tories of the Carlton, but he did not in the first place remonstrate with Disraeli directly. He confided his dissatisfaction to Jolliffe, the Whip, who was to spend a week-end at Hughenden.

Sir William Jolliffe to Lord Derby.

MERSTHAM, *Oct.* 23, 1855.—. . . Disraeli was in high health, but, I think, I found him very dejected over the prospect of our party, and left him less so; but I, at any rate, find it difficult to contend against his arguments, that it is impossible for a party to exist without a policy, and still less possible for an Opposition to be of the same policy as the Government to which it is opposed.

At his request I read to him your letter, and, as far as I was able to commit them to memory, he used words to this effect: 'That a party that had shrunk from the conduct of a war, particularly under the circumstances which we did, were bound to prepare the public mind for a statesmanlike peace; that a war Opposition and a war Ministry could not coexist; that stimulating the war, after we had shrunk from the responsibility of conducting it, degraded us to the level of the mob who will huzza Lord P. through the City on the Lord Mayor's day. Nothing can save the party but representing

[1] The *Saturday Review*.

[2] Afterwards Sir William Harcourt and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

a policy.' Such was the burden of his song, and though uttered in strict confidence, finding he did not propose to write to you himself, I told him I should reply to your letter, and endeavour to convey to you the substance of what he had said; and you will perceive that to a great extent he approves of the writing of the *Press*, but he tells me it is not his own, that it has proved very beneficial to the paper. . . .

From Lord Derby.

KNOWSLEY, *Oct.* 25, 1855.—. . . I am not prepared to deny that our position as a party is one of extreme difficulty, and that it requires no little patience on all sides to keep any party together without some definite object to aim at; but I cannot admit that we shrunk from *conducting the war*. On the contrary, the existence of the war, and its general popularity with the country, would have given us our best chance of carrying on the Government. Whether we ought to have undertaken it, it is now too late to inquire; but having been, in common with the country at large, parties to entering into it, and having blamed previous Governments for want of vigour in carrying it on, we cannot with honour, or even with regard to party interests, constitute ourselves a peace Opposition, merely because we have a war Ministry, and I will never consent to weaken an Administration to which I am opposed, by increasing their difficulties in carrying the country through what has become an inevitable war. . . .

I am not insensible to the danger of a further extension of the range of war . . . but I always recur to the one overpowering consideration that, in the present temper of Russia, the greater the anxiety we show for peace, the less our chance of obtaining it. I am not desirous of saying or doing anything to 'stimulate' or embitter the war, but I hope that neither you nor any of our friends would desire that for party purposes we should seek to discourage the country, and increase the difficulties of those who are charged with bringing the war to a satisfactory conclusion. I wish I could think we were approaching such a conclusion, but I own I do not; and I must own further that, until we do, I think our position as a party—that is, our chance of office—is materially worsened. With me, indeed, the latter consideration does not weigh perhaps as much as it ought to do; but I hope I am led by higher motives in determining not at this moment to make a peace cry the means of attacking the Government, still less of making it the basis of any new political combination. If the Conservative party cannot be kept together on any other grounds, it is time that it should fall to pieces, or at least that

I should retire from the scene. I write to you most unreservedly, as I should be sorry that there should be any difference of opinion between us on a point of such vital interest; and I should be more distrustful than I now am of my own judgment, if I found it were opposed to yours. . . .

To Lord Derby.

HATCH BEAUCHAMP, TAUNTON, *Nov.* 7, 1855.—I learn from Jolliffe, this morning, that you expected to have heard from me. I should be sorry if you supposed for a moment that I ever neglected your wishes or your interests. . . .

I understood your letter as an answer to the remarks on my part, reported by Jolliffe, and therefore anything further from me would not, according to my feeling, have been a reply, but a rejoinder, and I did not think that a controversy between us was desirable or could be agreeable.

I must candidly say that your letter has not convinced me that my reported remarks were unfounded. Granted that we are not a party who have shrunk from the responsibility of conducting the war: the world, unfortunately, thinks so, and it comes to the same thing. My own opinion is that, in the dilemma in which we find ourselves, silence and inertness are our wisest course, and for this reason I have refrained from saying, doing, or writing, anything which should bring my views, or even name, before the country.

I do not know what is taking place, tho' I have spared no means or exertions to obtain the knowledge. Had anything authentic reached me, I should have communicated it to you. Perhaps next week may somewhat unveil the mystery.

What Disraeli particularly dreaded was the opening of a fresh campaign which should commit the country to conquering the Crimea, and driving Russia back from the shores of the Black Sea. If any such attempt were made, a prolonged and obstinate struggle was inevitable. If peace were not practicable after the fall of Sebastopol, it would not be practicable, he thought, for years. He made, however, little progress in converting his chief and his party, and still less in 'scaring' Palmerston or impressing English public opinion. Fortunately for him, the logic of events had more effect in France than in England, and it was found in November that Napoleon III. was of entirely the same opinion as Disraeli. The

Emperor took the opportunity of the close of the Paris Exposition to express in public his desire for a prompt and durable peace; and he was already engaged in negotiations at Vienna with that object.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN, *Nov.* 18, 1855.—. . . There has been a great stupor over affairs since we parted, or since I last wrote, but there are now indications of events. The Emperor of the French is wearied with the war, and is pressing our Government to accede to terms of peace which he considers satisfactory. Lord Palmerston will not listen to these overtures, and the consequences may be critical. If Lord Palmerston succeed, the war may last as long as the Peloponnesian, or the Thirty Years of Germany. The war expenditure of France is one million and a half sterling per week—that of England, one million and a quarter! This is a large sum for distant objects and somewhat equivocal success.

As you read the *Press* newspaper, I would recommend to your notice a very curious paper in the No. of yesterday, signed 'E. S.,' on war interests and passions. It is written by Lord Stanley, who, tho' not thirty, has recently refused the office of Secretary of State, as you know.[1]

On Friday we dined with Lady Londonderry, at Holdernesse House, which is quite dismantled, to meet her son, Lord Adolphus, who is on leave for a month from the Crimea. Her boudoir was the saloon, and an antechamber the *salle à manger*, but she contrived to collect and feed ten agreeable persons.

I am very well, and hope you are. The future is dark and anxious, but difficulty and care are what I thrive on. . . .

The Emperor's peaceful disposition was ascertained by Malmesbury at first hand in Paris, and reported by him to Derby and Disraeli. Malmesbury was anxious to exploit the situation in the interests of the Conservative party. To Derby he wrote on November 25: 'It is quite on the cards that Palmerston will be forced by France into a peace before February. If he is, and we

[1] On Sir William Molesworth's death, towards the end of October, Palmerston offered the Secretaryship of State for the Colonies to Stanley, who declined the offer. The article referred to, which evinces the abhorrence of war that distinguished Stanley throughout his career, sufficiently accounts for his reluctance to join Palmerston at such a time.

choose to condemn it, *we* can do so consistently and with popularity; but then Disraeli must not prate peace beforehand. He will perhaps save Palmerston, as it is, by the opinions already put forth in his cursed *Press*.' To Disraeli his language was naturally more moderate, but to the same effect; he suggested specifically that Disraeli and Stanley and their friends who were in favour of ending the war at once should not open their lips till the session. Disraeli had no intention of speaking on the subject; but he made use of the *Press* to explain his position to the party, so that there should be no misunderstanding whatever about his opinions and intentions.[1] Taking advantage of an attack on Disraeli in a French journal, the *Press* of December 1 wrote: 'Mr. Disraeli is not an unqualified partisan, or a partisan at all, of the Peace-at-any-price party. He is as much opposed to that party as to the War-at-any-price party—alike to the dreams of Mr. Bright, and to the ensanguined practices of the Kossuths and Mazzinis.'

> This country will recognise that throughout he [Disraeli] principally of our public men has best understood the question at issue; and that in first counselling war, and then recommending peace, on condition that the object of the war should be accomplished, he has alike shown the energy of a patriot and the sagacity of a statesman.

Urged by the French Emperor and by Austria, Palmerston and the British Government, sorely against their will, agreed to an ultimatum which was despatched by Austria to Russia on December 15. It demanded the acceptance by Russia, within five weeks, of the famous Four Points, the third, which had before proved the stumbling-block, now taking the form of the neutralisation of the Black Sea; and, in addition, the cession to Moldavia of a portion of Bessarabia. Though Palmerston thought

[1] Disraeli told Malmesbury: 'We are off the rail of politics, and must continue so as long as the war lasts'—a condition of things due to 'the fatal refusal to take the reins last February, which lost us the heart and respect of all classes.'

the terms much too favourable to Russia, yet he was apparently convinced that she would reject them; and both he and the British public hoped that the negotiations would break down. Disraeli's point of view was powerfully expounded in every issue of the *Press*.

> The difference between the policy which the *Press* has advocated, and that proclaimed by some speakers and writers professing to represent Conservative sentiments, amounts to this—that we believe a solid and satisfactory peace may now be effected by treaty with Russia, while they believe it can only be effected by the annihilation of her power. Reason as we may, the difference returns to this. They have no faith in those principles of policy and those mutual guarantees and engagements upon which the division of European power and the integrity of the boundary lines of States depend. A treaty is with them but a bit of paper, a seal but a morsel of wax.[1] We believe, on the contrary, that it is those principles and guarantees which preserve the peace of the world; that without them there would be perpetual war; that the progress of civilisation is towards a more solemn recognition and sacred maintenance of treaties; and that as they extend wider and take in outlying nations (as, unhappily, Turkey has been until this day), and as they are joined in by a greater number of States, there is less probability that they will be invaded, and stronger assurance that the State which attempts to violate them will be promptly restrained in its aggressive course.[2]

At the beginning of the New Year the prospects of peace appeared to be gloomy. Russia's first answer was to accept the Four Points, but reject the cession of any part of Bessarabia, and the Allies replied by holding a Council of War in Paris. The *Press* still stood alone among the Metropolitan newspapers in its pacific line; the organs of the Government openly exulted in the belief that the proposals which Ministers had put forward would not be accepted. But at the last moment the Emperor Alexander yielded, and Lennox was able to write confidentially to Disraeli from Paris on January 16: 'Russia has within the last forty-eight hours intimated to the Allies her readiness to accept the whole ultimatum

[1] An anticipation of Bethmann-Hollweg's 'scrap of paper.'
[2] *Press*, Dec. 22.

without reserve, provided the Allies treat directly with her and not through the medium of Austria.' The *Press* of January 19 announced triumphantly that peace was resolved on.

> Lord Aberdeen's Peace Government, against its will, drifted into war, and Lord Palmerston's War Government, equally against its will, has drifted into peace. . . . We forced Lord Aberdeen to engage in a war necessary to the honour of England and to the security of Europe; we have forced Lord Palmerston to agree to peace now that the objects of the war are accomplished.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

GROSVENOR GATE [*Jan.*, 1856]—The country is sulky: just come from the City, where I have seen all the great people. Even those favorable to the peace announce the above.

You have shown great energy and talent. It must have been an exciting scene.

The last Cabinet Council was on the Seebach[1] propositions: they were favored by France, and the majority of our Ministers supported them: Pam and Clar[endon] forced their rejection, and wished and believed that 'another campaign' would be the inevitable consequence. 'Another campaign' was Pam's *policy*. You may conceive his surprise! He told my informant, after the Cabinet, or at least somebody did as good, that 'another campaign' was now *inevitable*.

All this you may rely on.

I am too exhausted to write more, but would send one line to thank you. I am glad you have made Lytton's[2] acquaintance: study him, and tell me what you think of him. I saw little of him, but am in his favor from what I saw.

Palmerston and the war party were very restive; but now that Russia had, to their chagrin, accepted, the determination of the French Emperor to end the war left them no choice. Accordingly, when Parliament met,[3] 'the Government renounced all the designs which have been attributed to it in its own organs, and by its most eager supporters.'[4] With the Opposition, too, Disraeli's

[1] Count Seebach, Minister of Saxony in Paris, brother-in-law of the Russian Chancellor, Count Nesselrode, exerted himself behind the scenes to bring Russia and the Allies together.

[2] The 1st Earl of Lytton, afterwards Viceroy of India.

[3] Jan. 31.

[4] *Press*, Feb. 2.

policy prevailed; and the temptation to adopt Malmesbury's and Bulwer Lytton's advice, coalesce with Roebuck, Layard, and the war party, and 'outwar' Palmerston, was resisted, though in the existing temper of public opinion the overthrow of the Government might possibly have been thereby achieved. Disraeli's speech was a model of good feeling. He welcomed the prospect, which the Queen's Speech held out, of 'a safe and honourable peace.' He deprecated the continuance of the war for the sake of adding lustre to our arms. The abstract principle that we should continue a war, after attaining its objects, to gratify the vanity or support the reputation of a community was exceedingly questionable. But in any case it did not apply, as the lustre of our arms had not been dimmed. It was monstrous to say that nations should never engage in war unless they were certain to achieve great victories that would figure among the decisive battles of the world. That would degrade us from being the vindicators of public law into the gladiators of history. He ended with the patriotic assurance that, if, unfortunately, the peace negotiations should fail, which he did not anticipate, Her Majesty might appeal with confidence to her Parliament to support her in a renewed struggle. Disraeli gave an amusing and instructive account of this debate and of his own policy to Vitzthum:

> The war party is dead. Roebuck has made a fiasco with his declamations, and Layard, who came to the debate on the Address with a whole library under his arm, never ventured to deliver his carefully prepared speech. All this because I did not neglect to take in hand the conduct of the debate from the outset, to calm down passions, and to deprive Palmerston of any excuse for coming forward with a warlike rodomontade about the honour of England, and so forth. The Premier had nothing left but to thank me for my moderation, and to declare as mildly as a lamb his entire concurrence in my views. Thus I forced him to separate himself at the very commencement of the sitting from his own most bellicose followers, and induced the Liberal party to believe that the Ministry had gone over bodily to our camp.[1]

[1] Vitzthum, Vol. I., pp. 190, 191.

The Peace Conference met very shortly afterwards in Paris, and did not separate till the Treaty had been signed.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Easter Monday* [*March* 24], 1856.—I wrote my last letter to you from this place on the eve of my departure to London, and I write you the first on my return.

Two months we have had, and more, of great interest and excitement, tho' apparently calm and tranquil—with the question of peace or war always in the balance, and the first at length secured in the teeth of an unwilling Ministry.

What would have happened in France if peace had not been secured I tremble to think; a financial convulsion, worse than that of Chevalier Law, occurring with a pestilence in the French army in the Crimea, must have brought about political convulsions of which a general European struggle would probably have been the ultimate consequence. Even for the signal blessing of retaining the services of Lord Palmerston, it was scarcely worth this sacrifice.

The Emperor of the French has just pulled up in time, and, with his usual good fortune, the birth of a son seals the wind-up with public sympathy and approbation.

We dined at Ld. Jersey's on the Saturday of the expected imperial birth; the state of the Empress had been announced by telegraph in the morning. I sate next to the French Ambassador, who expected every servant who entered the room would bring him the anxiously expected bulletin. Lady Jersey counted on the event making her dinner an epoch. Hours flew on, Comte Persigny grew every moment more absent and disturbed. At length, at 12 o'clock, we all separated: I had ordered my servant to go to the Embassy on the following morning by 8 o'clock for news: but at half-past 6 o'clock in the morning (Sunday) a messenger arrived with a letter from the Ambassador, and an autograph letter, informing me of the great news; a child, and a man child! I shall preserve this epistle in my family papers. I knew the Ambassador when he was the faithful friend and attendant of Louis Napoleon in adversity, and had been in prison with him seven years in Ham.

On this occasion, on his return from the Jerseys', he did not retire to rest. The birth of the Prince occurred at Paris at 3.15 in the morning of Sunday; it was known at the French Ambassador's in London by 4 o'clock.

It was telegraphed to the Queen of England, who had given directions that she should be roused at any hour, and replied immediately by telegraph to Paris.

Our Sovereign is very well. We had the honor of dining at the Palace a short time back, when she said that she never had been better, and that from the life she led, rising early, taking cold shower baths every day, and being frequently in the air, she had almost come to defy *catching cold,* which Prince Caraccioli called the English complaint. . . .

The Treaty of Paris was signed on March 30. Its terms which were in accordance with the December ultimatum, corresponded sufficiently with those which Disraeli desired for him to regard it as on the whole satisfactory. Most of his political friends, however, considered it a decidedly inadequate return for our sacrifices, Derby even describing it in the Lords as the Capitulation of Paris. But Disraeli was able to restrain his party from taking any more serious Parliamentary action against it than the support of a very reasonable proposal (which was not even pressed) to substitute, in the Address to the Queen, 'satisfaction' for 'joy,' as the fitting word to express the emotion with which Parliament received the news. He did not speak himself on the treaty at all; but he encouraged a well-merited, though unsuccessful, attack on the Government for their desertion of the heroic General Williams, the defender of Kars; and on that occasion remarked incidentally that he would express no opinion 'except to say in general terms that peace is a great blessing where war has been carried on so inefficiently; and that, for my part, after all I have seen, I should be disposed to welcome any peace which is not disgraceful.'

This peace was certainly not disgraceful, though it was not, and hardly professed to be, a permanent settlement. 'Nous avons fait une paix,' said Clarendon, 'mais pas la paix.' What it did was to stop the precipitate solution of the Eastern Question, which Russia had endeavoured to force, to give Turkey a respite and breathing time, and incidentally to afford the Christian races an opportunity of showing whether they possessed the vitality to win their independence of both their would-be protectors. Russia's ambitions were curbed,

but she was in no way humiliated; there was no serious obstacle erected to friendly relations between her and her late foes. If, as Lord Salisbury said many years afterwards, we 'backed the wrong horse' in the war, we were wise enough to 'hedge' in the peace. One result, which should have been, but hardly was, anticipated, was that Russia's energies were largely diverted from Europe to Asia, and that her policy received an impulse which brought her eventually into collision with Japan and into critical relations with British India.

In promoting, and preparing the national mind for, a reasonable peace, Disraeli undoubtedly rendered public service of a notable character. This movement was, it may be added, the last enterprise which the *Press* carried through under his immediate inspiration. Mrs. Disraeli wrote to Mrs. Willyams on March 18: 'Dizzy says he always forgets to tell you that the *Press* newspaper has for some weeks past ceased to be under his control; perhaps therefore you may prefer some other paper.' Hitherto he had been the managing director, and, so to speak, super-editor, and the paper had taken no step of importance without his sanction. Now he left the direction to Coulton, the editor, and Rose, his personal and political agent, though he remained a proprietor for two years more. He may have felt that the venture was now fairly launched, and that there was no need for him to add the burden of its management to his other heavy work. But it is quite likely also that this peace campaign, and the discord raised in the party and among the leaders by the articles in the *Press*, may have convinced him that it was very anomalous and inconvenient for the party leader in the Commons to be also the leading party journalist. Had he not been such an expert 'gentleman of the press' himself, it would probably never have occurred to him that the two positions were properly compatible. He seems to have been just as careful to conceal his relinquishment of control as he had

been to conceal his assumption of it. Malmesbury, with whom his relations, owing largely to the articles in the *Press*, were not so close as they had formerly been, was clearly unaware of the change, as, both in April of this year and in March of the next, when commenting in his diary on the growing tendency of the *Press* to exalt Disraeli at the expense of Derby, he treats Disraeli as responsible.

In truth, while Disraeli was in regular control, Derby was supported in the *Press* with steady loyalty, even when he made his great blunder of 1855. When, however, Disraeli's restraining hand was removed, it was natural that a body of writers whom he had himself collected, and who had sat at his feet for two years, should work for the substitution of their own chief, who had long done the drudgery of leadership, in place of one who had so bitterly disappointed his party at the crisis, and had shown so little activity since. Moreover, Derby's notorious indifference, amounting almost to dislike, to the political press—an indifference which Malmesbury deplored[1]—was not likely to conciliate the good opinion of political writers. Disraeli does not seem himself ever to have countenanced any movement of the kind, though often urged by enthusiastic followers in Parliament to put an end to what one of them called about this time 'the farce of a Derby leadership.' He was throughout loyal to Derby, after they had joined forces, as he had been in earlier days to Bentinck; he acted up to his own sincere but theatrically expressed protestation: 'Come what will, we will stand or fall together.'[2] But he claimed and exercised a large liberty of initiative as leader of the party in the House of Commons. Uncongenial as were their temperaments, and clearly as each saw the other's deficiencies, neither Derby nor Disraeli at any period of their association lent himself to an intrigue against his colleague. Each was necessary to the other, and both knew it.

[1] *Memoirs*, under date June 29, 1857.

[2] See p. 1343.

CHAPTER II.

Administrative Reform.

1852–1856.

Among the qualities most desirable in a statesman are capacity for, and interest in, administration. These qualities the world in general has seldom credited Disraeli with possessing, and few even of his admirers have claimed them for him. Certainly, in the conduct of Treasury business—and the Treasury is the only public office over which he ever presided—he would as a rule content himself with laying down principles, and leave the general course of administration and the working out of detail almost entirely to subordinates. Yet there is no doubt that his first term of office infected him, at least temporarily, with administrative zeal; and he devoted considerable time and thought, both then and at the period of the breakdown of public departments during the Crimean War, to the question of administrative reform—a phrase which he claimed to have been the first to use in the House of Commons. He called Derby's attention to the subject when the Ministry of 1852 were preparing for the autumn session:

To Lord Derby

Private. Grosvenor Gate, *Oct.* 28, 1852.—I submit to you a confidential memorandum drawn up, at my request, by Mr. Anderson, of the Pay Office, a first-rate man of his kind, and who with Trevelyan,[1] and a man named Bromley, in the Audit Office, appear to me masters of administration,

[1] Sir Charles Trevelyan, permanent head of the Treasury.

and may be turned to great account. The memorandum opens the great field of administrative reform in a practical method. I wish you to consider whether I should advert to this specific subject in the statement of the 26th November, and announce our intention of bringing forward the question in exposition when the measures of financial reform are carried.

In my opinion, such a course would not only secure the session, but as many sessions as you wish, for we should then have taken possession of the only questions which really interest the country, which is progressive, but prosperous, and therefore not favorable to political change. ... .

Derby expressed interest, but urged caution, so as 'not to sacrifice material and real advantage, either to the object of enabling departments to make a good show as to economy, or of giving our Government the means of evincing their readiness to allow all their accounts to be open and aboveboard.' Disraeli pressed the matter forward. He recognised that great changes were required in all the departments of the public service, and he was convinced that in promoting efficiency he would secure economy, and so be able to obtain that large surplus which his contemplated revision of taxation required. He appointed Lord Chandos, then a Lord of the Treasury, afterwards chairman of a great railway company, to overhaul and revise the Irish departments, with the result of an increase of efficiency and an immediate saving of 25 per cent. After the success of that experiment, the Government determined, if they survived the Budget, to bring the whole question before the House of Commons, with a view to the appointment of a Royal Commission. Two reforms Disraeli had matured and was prepared to introduce at once: one for the better administration of the Customs, and another securing for the first time the payment into the national Exchequer of the gross income of the country. The defeat on the Budget cut short this excellent work. The two detailed reforms had to be left to be carried through by the succeeding Government, and the comprehensive Royal Commission was never appointed.

Two years later the breakdown of the military departments in the Crimea forcibly directed public attention to a matter which had been regarded with indifference when Disraeli, in his speeches on the December Budget,[1] first broached it. An Association for Administrative Reform sprang up, and during the summer of 1855 there were several interesting, but somewhat confused, discussions in Parliament. The point most hotly debated was that of open competition by examination for the Civil Service, then a close preserve of patronage. Ministers resisted the introduction of the competitive system, which was pressed upon them by Gladstone, who had converted the Aberdeen Government to it in theory, and by Northcote, who had at Gladstone's instance drawn up, with Sir Charles Trevelyan, a report in its favour. Disraeli went a long way with these reformers. He expressed the opinion[2] that admission to the Civil Service should not be obtained by favouritism, but should be the result of substantial tests of fitness; that the service should be better rewarded, and be made a distinct profession; that the higher posts should be reserved as a rule for its members, who, having entered by merit, would naturally rise by merit; but that the selection inside the office must be left to the Minister in charge, and not be decided by any fanciful system of competition. It was, however, with larger changes in the public departments that Disraeli was especially concerned. The *Press*[3] explained that his object was threefold: first, to secure more talent in the Civil Service; secondly, to render the working of public departments more efficient; and, thirdly, by a judicious classification of offices, to economise expense wasted on superfluous posts.

One of the eminent Civil Servants whose names Disraeli had mentioned in his letter to Derby, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Richard M. Bromley, was an enthusiast for administrative reform, and had communicated some of his enthusiasm to Disraeli. He kept up correspondence on the subject

[1] See pp. 1249, 1262. [2] June 18. [3] June 23.

with his late chief in opposition, and, now that public interest had been roused, urged him to take it seriously in hand. The Crimean War had led to one important administrative change—the separation of the War Department from that of the Colonies, and the creation of a Secretaryship of State for War, to whose office the Commissariat, hitherto under the Treasury, was also assigned. But even this change, necessary as it was, had not prevented the mismanagement which, by shocking the country in the preceding winter, had led to the replacement of Aberdeen by Palmerston. The new Ministry had taken the consequential step of amalgamating the offices of Secretary at War and Secretary of State for War, and had also, with very doubtful wisdom, suppressed the Ordnance Department, but appeared to contemplate no further substantial change; and so Bromley was encouraged by Disraeli to draw up a paper working out his plan in detail. It was of an ambitious character, and could be made, he assured Disraeli, 'in your hands . . . a popular reform and reorganisation far exceeding that brought about by Mr. Burke in 1780.' The scheme was completed in the middle of November, and for a month was discussed between its draftsman and Disraeli, who, when the draft had been settled to his satisfaction, forwarded it to Knowsley with a warm commendation.

To Lord Derby.

Private. HUGHENDEN, *Dec.* 18, 1855.—. . . These papers contain the cream of a great and practical measure of *Administrative and Departmental Reform.*—There is a third part, but it does not involve any principles, and is a consequence of the preceding portions, and therefore I have spared myself the vile pain of copying. What I have forwarded will convey a clear idea of my views; what remains refers to the analysis of offices in detail. Intimated occasionally on the MS. you have . . . the institution of an Audit Office as independent as the Queen's Judges, etc., etc.

If the principles are accepted by the Captain, I should propose that, when the details are well matured, the whole should be thrown into a *Bill for the more efficient Administra-*

tion of the Public Affairs of this Realm, or some similar title, and that we make it the groundwork of our policy.

I have not been able to give any of the reasons which have induced me to adopt any of these methods—it was totally impossible to attempt that. I assume—I more than assume, I know—that you are master of the subject in all its aspects and bearings. It is the subject of the age, so far as English politics are concerned, and we, fortunately, at present may have it. It will be taken by the other party if we do not appropriate it. There will be squatters on our common. Perhaps John Russell means to ride into power on this matter. He has settled so many things; this only remains. A Govern ment will never dare to act, except on their immediate accession to power for the purpose. If anything is done, it should be bold and complete. You know, or should, that the Ad. Reform Society has given notice, in its address issued since the prorogation, of a Bill to be introduced, at the reassembly, for the nomination of clerks by competition. I hear also that *Napier will immediately bring in a Bill to terminate Admiralty* Board. These are straws, but they show, etc.

I should like that we should take the lead of all. Everything, however, depends upon the Captain, and I shall await with interest his decision.

I may be wrong, but I think there is an opportunity of putting the party in a commanding position, and of doing our country some real and lasting service. . . .

In the enclosure which Disraeli forwarded, the object of the plan was described as 'to establish a thoroughly efficient administration of public affairs in a manner consistent with our Monarchical and Parliamentary Government'; and its principle was explained at the outset.

It is founded on the principle of individual responsibility. Therefore, in the first place, it abolishes all Commissions and all Boards. It admits of no sinecure office. It arranges the business of the country under particular departments, [so] that each Minister is charged with a due amount of responsibility. It makes every Minister a member of the Cabinet, and it provides that the salaries as well as the duties of these Ministers shall, in amount, be [as] nearly as possible alike. In some instances, it will be found that I propose to blend the administrative functions of one office with that of another, by placing them in charge of one Cabinet Minister, but, in doing this, I always propose to place a Parliamentary officer, subordinate to the Minister, over every such department. The effect of this will be, of course, to reduce the number of Ministers, and

to permit them all to have seats in the Cabinet, with salaries equivalent to their official labor and responsibility. It will also have the effect of training a number of subordinate Parliamentary officers for the higher charge of State, by allotting to them specific duties of such importance as will thoroughly test their qualifications for State business.

The Boards of Treasury, Admiralty, Trade, Control, Poor Law, and Public Health, and the Committee of Council on Education—all these, and others of the same kind, were to disappear, and the responsibility in each department was to be fixed on an individual Cabinet Minister. Disraeli proposed to limit the number of the Cabinet to ten, to be composed of the following Ministers:

I. Lord President of the Council (Prime Minister).
II. Lord Chancellor.
III. Chancellor of the Exchequer.

And seven Secretaries of State,

IV. Minister for Home Affairs.
V. Minister for Foreign Affairs.
VI. Minister for the Colonies.
VII. Minister of War (Army, Navy, and Ordnance)
VIII. Minister for Education.
IX. Minister for Trade, Navigation, and Public Works.
X. Minister for India.

Several of these Ministers were to assume duties hitherto assigned to separate departments, and effective administration was to be secured by the creation of a number of Parliamentary Secretaryships, subordinate to the Ministers. Thus, the Prime Minister was to be not only President of the Council, but also Chancellor of the Duchy and Privy Seal, with Parliamentary Secretaries under him for the two latter departments. The Postmaster-Generalship was to be abolished, and the duties transferred to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was to be assisted by a Secretary of the Post Office. Education was to be taken from the Lord President, and constituted a separate Ministry. The Education Minister was, however, to be responsible also for all public registrations, from those for designs to those for births, marriages,

and deaths, and was to be assisted by two Secretaries, one for Education, and the other for Registration. The most sweeping changes proposed were in the Home Office and the War Office. The Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland was to be abolished, and the Home Secretary was to have under him five Parliamentary Secretaries—for Ireland, Scotland, Justice and Police, Public Health, and the Poor. The War Minister was to have a still more comprehensive control, as he was to be responsible, not only for the regular army and the militia, and for the ordnance, commissariat, and transport services, but for the navy and its administration as well. In this gigantic task he was to be assisted by three Secretaries, one for the Navy, one for the Army, and one for Transport. The Board of Admiralty was to be replaced by a Council of Naval Officers. The Prime Minister was to have £6,000 a year, the Lord Chancellor's salary was to remain as before, all the other Ministers were to have £5,000, and the Secretaries £2,000, a year. 'The effect of these changes,' Disraeli wrote, 'will be no inconsiderable saving to the country, but I do not now dwell on that point. They have not been planned with reference to economy, solely to efficiency. But I have mentioned more than once in the House of Commons: the true parent of economy is efficiency.'

The second part of Disraeli's scheme referred to the Permanent service of public affairs, as distinguished from the Parliamentary. It had two main features: the condemnation of the growing system of semi-independent Boards and Commissions; and the introduction of competition, but in a very limited form, for the Civil Service.

The general feeling of public departments, as hitherto constituted, has been to disown work: that is, not to admit of any increase of business differing from their routine.

The result has been to create new departments at very considerable cost, but, still worse, without any immediate Minister to refer to, or permanent departmental officer to advise with. Hence the necessity to create Boards or Commissions, in order that three or more persons may be brought

together to do the work, which should be done by *one* permanent head officer, with the advice and assistance of a Minister of State and his Permanent Secretary.

Discussion and delay are the result of this ponderous and expensive system, as in most instances persons are appointed members of a Board without business habits, or any knowledge whatever of the details required to be controlled. . . .

All nominations of writers, clerks, and other functionaries, to a department to be made by the Minister of State, subject to the following conditions and restrictions:

When a vacancy occurs, the Minister shall either nominate an individual, who will be referred to a Board of Examiners, and be subject to a minimum test to be settled by the heads of departments, or he shall send in the names of not less than three candidates, who shall be subjected to competition based on the minimum test.

However appointed, the successful candidate shall be subject to a probation of not less than twelve months, and the confirmation of his post shall rest with the permanent head of the department.

Disraeli's scheme had some conspicuous merits—a smaller Cabinet, abolition of Cabinet sinecures, clearer allocation of responsibility. It was undoubtedly right to give greater precedence to the First Minister, and the Presidency of the Council was in many ways his natural office. 'The records of the Privy Council, being the acts of the Sovereign in Council, should,' Disraeli submitted with some force, 'be in the custody of the Prime Minister.' The Treasury should be nominally, he thought, as well as really, under the control of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But the breach with history involved in discarding the famous title 'First Lord of the Treasury' seems unnecessary; and in 1905, by King Edward's command, proper precedence was at last accorded to the office of Prime Minister, though Mr. Balfour, then in power, provided that the change should only take effect on his successor's appointment. The equalisation of Ministerial salaries which Disraeli advocated was effected in 1915 by private arrangement in Mr. Asquith's Coalition Cabinet. In proposing to make Education a separate Cabinet department, Disraeli anticipated a reform which was delayed for nearly half

a century. To bring the Poor Law into proper Ministerial subordination was obviously desirable, and has since been done; and the Scottish department which Disraeli suggested was established in an extended form thirty years afterwards. But his Home Office would have been hopelessly overloaded, and his plan for insuring the harmonious co-operation of Navy and Army by putting them both under one Minister was clumsy and impracticable. The same object has been promoted in recent years in a happier way by the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Derby was on the whole favourably impressed by the scheme, though he did not concur in the abolition of the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, and took strong exception to the proposal to amalgamate the Admiralty with the War Office. In the course of a memorandum which he drew up on December 26, he wrote:

> The scheme is bold and comprehensive, and capable of being worked into a system, which, if honestly acted on, may produce a great effect in the public service. If he will take the further trouble of embodying his propositions in a Bill, to be confidentially printed, it will well deserve the serious consideration of our friends; and I should approach the subject with a strong prepossession in its favour: but I should anxiously deprecate a hasty promulgation of a not fully matured plan, more especially if it could be held to commit a party who have a full right to be previously consulted. No supposed risk of rival projects from other quarters can counter balance the evil, in every point of view, of such a hasty step

As a result of Derby's conditional approval, Stanley came to Hughenden to confer with Disraeli.

Lord Stanley to Lord Derby.

HUGHENDEN, *Jan.* 5 [1856].—Disraeli and I had yesterday a five-hours Cabinet on his scheme—the result, I think, satisfactory. Removing all that you most strongly object to, there would remain — (1) First Lord; (2) Lord Chanc.; (3) Chanc. of Ex.; (4) Home, (5) Foreign, (6) Colonial, Secretaries; (7) Minister of War; (8) Admiralty; (9) India; (10) Trade and Works; leaving the Cabinet with ten members, and leaving as offices of the second rank — (11) Education;

(12) Board of Health; (13) Poor Law; the two last cut off from his overgrown Home Office, which he seems to admit is beyond one man's control.

If it were important (I don't think it is so) to have all the heads of departments in Cabinet, and of equal rank, the inclusion of the three above-named would give only 13 Ministers. And two (Education and Health) are subjects of first-rate importance. There is no great harm in making one man, the Minister of Poor Laws, a rather more important personage than he need be.

I object quite as strongly as you to the union of Army and Navy. That must not be thought of. D. does not seem to have much to urge in its favour. . . .

We are both anxious to introduce the competitive system to the full extent into this plan, as regards the permanent Civil Service. I will not discuss it now—but my opinion, formed after long hesitation, is decided for it. We should, by adopting this principle, gain support out of doors, and within the H[ouse of] C[ommons] still more: and certainly double our chances of success, whatever they may be. D.'s fear was lest you should be hostile to competition as a principle: I don't believe you are so! . . .

Sunday.—Further conferences—more agreement. D. concedes the two points most in dispute—the union of the services and the concentration of power in the H[ome] O[ffice].

LONDON, *Jan.* 8.—. . . My feeling about D.'s plan, after full and careful examination of it, is that, as regards the Parliamentary service, his changes, as now modified, are desirable, but not important: what relates to the permanent service is more material, and will be valuable if, as is quite possible, you and he adopt competition as a basis. But that principle is the only one involved in the scheme: and there is nothing else about it that will excite the slightest degree of popular enthusiasm. . . .

It was certainly rather an emasculated plan which issued from these elaborate consultations. Though it still contained excellent features, and, indeed, had been stiffened in regard to the principle of competition, the mutilation it had undergone had probably damped Disraeli's ardour; or he may have become alive to the futility of assuming the initiative, when in opposition, in so essentially Governmental a question as administrative reform. At any rate, though he lived to see several of the improvements which he desired carried into effect,

he never took a prominent part in the work, save by the establishment in 1858 of a Secretaryship of State for India, and by the very practical step of confining his own Cabinet of 1874 to twelve persons. Palmerston's Government made a beginning themselves in the session of 1856 by creating an Education Minister, in the characteristically English and clumsy guise of a Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education; and, in spite of their resistance to the principle in the previous year, announced their intention of introducing, gradually and cautiously, open competition for the Civil Service. But no comprehensive remodelling of British administration, such as might well have been undertaken by Disraeli had he attained real power in the full vigour of his energies, has ever been attempted.

Disraeli recommended Bromley for the K.C.B. in 1858, and used him during the Government of 1858-59 for much confidential work. But Bromley's enthusiasm for administrative reform outran his discretion, and he ended by wearying the statesman whom he had for long impressed.

To Sir John Pakington.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 18, 1864.—I should keep very shy of B[romley].

Nothing can ever satisfy his ravenous egotism. He used to send me, some years ago, many plans of administrative, and, especially, Admiralty reform: but I found out that the object of all his changes was to advance the permanent at the expense of the Parliamentary officials. Such reform is not our 'métier,' as the Emperor Joseph said to the first French Republicans.

B. wants to turn clerks into Privy Councillors. He had energy and organising ability, but he has been over-rewarded and over-promoted, and, tho' still restless, is, I think, used up. . . .

CHAPTER III.

Tory Demoralisation and Defeat.

1856–1857.

Disraeli had an exceptionally representative gathering at his Parliamentary dinner on the eve of the session of 1856, and he took it, somewhat prematurely, as evidence of the union of the party in general in his support. The *Press* drew special attention to the assemblage. 'Never before did the banquet of any Opposition leader in the Lower House at the opening of the session exhibit such an array of names, representative of rank and property, and associated with proud historical associations.' A list was paraded, somewhat similar to that given, in *Lord George Bentinck*, of the old guard who refused to follow Peel;[1] and the presence was specially noted of Lord Robert Cecil, 'on whom so many eyes are fixed as a future chief, and who bids fair to uphold his great English name.' The article[2] boasted that even Peel, at the head of 'the gentlemen of England,' had never met Parliament with a more united party in the Lower House.

The unity of the party under Disraeli's leadership was nothing like so complete as his buoyant optimism conceived it to be. We have the evidence of two new members who were eventually to be among his most trusted colleagues. Gathorne Hardy, who entered the House at a by-election in February, found the party seething with intrigue against him; and Northcote wrote in April of 'indecisive manœuvring,' 'our people's imbecility,' and the 'hash' they were making, and reported a friend as having given in disgust

[1] See pp. 799, 800.

[2] *Press*, Feb. 2.

'formal notice that he would no longer attend meetings of the party or answer their circulars.'[1] Moreover, Robert Cecil, so flatteringly referred to in the *Press*, took a very independent line, and before long was a centre of disaffection to Disraeli's leadership. Another constant detractor was George Bentinck, member for Norfolk from 1852, a distant cousin of Lord George's, and known familiarly at Westminster as 'Big Ben.' Bentinck set, or popularised, the fashion, among the anti-Disraeli Tory clique, of always calling their leader 'the Jew.' A leading member of the clique, though he was not in the House during this Parliament, was Alexander Beresford Hope, Robert Cecil's brother-in-law; a man of artistic tastes and High Anglican opinions, founder and proprietor of the *Saturday Review;* who claimed in 1867 that he had jeopardised his political career by refusing to 'fall down and worship the golden image set up in the deserts of Arabia,' and whose journal was conducted in the spirit exemplified by this outburst.

The session of 1856 was rather a barren one, with much promised in the Queen's Speech, and but a poor harvest at the close. The Peace, its preliminaries and its consequences, absorbed attention. In July Disraeli repeated the experiment which had had such brilliant results in 1848[2]—a review of the session, exposing Ministerial shortcomings. This time he had no such striking success. It was rather a laboured performance. His main point was that Palmerston's Government was really a Conservative Government carrying out a Conservative policy, and so was in a false position. The truth is that it was a period of transition, and all parties were in false positions. Graham told Greville on April 2 that there was not one man in the House of Commons that had ten followers, 'neither Gladstone, nor Disraeli, nor Palmerston.' He added that Disraeli appeared to be endeavouring to approach Gladstone, and a confederacy between those two and Stanley was by no means an improbability.

[1] Lang's *Northcote*, pp. 88, 89.

[2] See III., Ch. 4.

Disraeli's letters to Mrs. Willyams, which show that he had been taking his share of social and Court festivities in this bustling season after the Peace, show also that he was seriously occupied with negotiations to bring back to the fold that incalculable body, the Peelites, now merely a scattered group of leaders, with hardly any followers, and more distrustful of Palmerston than even of Disraeli. In this work Northcote, a reconciled Peelite himself, was the principal agent. He wrote to his wife early in May: 'I have been acting as a sort of go-between to the Peelites and our own side, and I am sure there is an excellent feeling springing up between us.' But in June he was less hopeful: 'The reconstruction of the Conservative party goes on at about the pace of the Tertiary formation.'[1]

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *May* 15, 1856.—. . . We are returning to town to-day instead of next Monday, as we anticipate great disturbances in Hyde Park from the stoppage of the bands playing to-morrow (Sunday). This Sabbatarian controversy is likely to become very serious.[2] What a great man Moses must have been, to have invented a law which should agitate the 19th century, with all its boasted progress!

We had a very brisk and bustling season during the six weeks that elapsed between Easter and Whitsun, and there is a prospect of still greater gaiety, especially if the Prince of Prussia[3] comes to claim the hand of the Princess Royal. . . .

Negotiations have been going on for some time to effect a reconciliation between the two sections of the Conservative party, and a reconstruction on the former extensive basis. Tho' there are many difficulties to be overcome, my opinion is they will be successfully combated. In this case, very great changes will, in due time, take place in the world of politics, and, between ourselves, it is not at all desirable that any change of Government should take place until this great reconstruction is arranged and *matured*. However, these are State secrets—and it is possible that the effort may fail, but I think not, because it seems to me to be a necessity. If it

[1] Lang's *Northcote*, pp. 89, 90.

[2] The First Commissioner of Works arranged that bands should play in the London parks on Sunday, but the Sabbatarians raised a great clamour, and the Government stopped the bands.

[3] Afterwards the Emperor Frederick.

happen, Lord Derby will have a good chance of carrying on the administration of affairs as long as he could well desire. . . .

GROSVENOR GATE, *July* 7, 1856.—. . . The season is approaching its end; it will be a *coup de grâce*. The town is quite mad—fêtes and festivities night and morn. Never were there so many balls and banquets. No roof so hospitable this year as the Palace itself. Two young Princes reconnoitring young Princesses will account for this.

The Prince of Prussia, *fiancé* to our Princess Royal, is well informed, and appears able—but more like a German student than a Prince.

Prince Oscar of Sweden, tho' he is a Scandinavian Prince with a Scandinavian name, is a veritable grandson of Bernadotte; dark, with glowing cheeks, and sparkling eyes—a veritable Gascon. I have not conversed with him. He came over to make his bow to the Princess Mary of Cambridge,[1] but appears to be less absorbed in her society than is desirable; and, it is thought, he will quit us without making the most important speech which a man can in this world.

The new ball-room is opened at the Palace this year. It is a colossal chamber, but of fine proportions—much decorated in the German style, and much criticised—but all must agree that the English Court was never before assembled in so fine a chamber. We were there at a ball some weeks ago, with more than 1,500 guests; but the other night, last Wednesday, Her Majesty did us the honor of inviting us to a full-dress concert, held in this same ball-room, where there is a permanent organ. There were only 500 invited, and all in costume. It seemed to me that I had never seen before in England anything which realised my idea of a splendid Court.

The orchestra was very strong; there were 125 performers—among them Johanna Wagner. All the music was German, and the second act, entirely consisting of the 'Walpurgis Night' of Mendelssohn—Goethe's poetry wedded to such wild harmonies—made a whole of supernatural splendor.

I enjoyed myself very much, being fond of German music, but at the same time I can't help fancying that one cause of my satisfaction was that I had a seat. In the old concert-room the space was so limited that gentlemen were never seated. This was very wearisome. . . .

GROSVENOR GATE, *July* 31, 1856.—. . . . This has been the gayest season, Mr. Gunter assures me, since 1851—that of the great Exhibition. As for politics, altho' it is abused by

[1] Who married eventually the Duke of Teck, and became the mother of Queen Mary.

the million as an uneventful session, I do not think it so, but hold rather that a broad and deep foundation is laid for future action, so far as the Conservative party is concerned.

The Queen really talks of going to Lisbon; H. Majesty is always in motion; and I suppose movement and air are the great sources of health and happiness.

If ever you want a book to read, try Lyell's 'Principles of Geology.' It is quite in your way: full of science and the observation of nature, but most entertaining as well as instructive. I should like to know whether you think he makes out his case, that the great changes which have taken place in our globe are not the consequence of vast, sudden, and spasmodic changes, but the result of that continual change, thro' countless ages, which is now, as it always has been, going on. This philosophy is entirely founded on Induction, the only safe basis. . . .

The approximation of Peelites to Derbyites continued during the autumn, being assisted by Palmerston's vagaries in foreign policy, which particularly disgusted Aberdeen. Lennox in October reported Aberdeen as saying that never was there a pilot in whom he had so little confidence as 'Pam,' and that the Conservative party must at once be consolidated.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 26, 1856.—. . . I know nothing of public affairs, tho' I can easily understand the feelings of the Peelites. They and the Derbyites are like the two Bourbon factions playing at fusion: they have delayed the process so long that there is someone in possession who cries 'A plague on both!' . . .

Foreign policy had given Disraeli some opportunity during the session of escaping from Court festivities and party manœuvring into those wider problems with which he delighted to deal. The impetus given to change in Europe by the Revolution of 1848 had been increased by the Crimean War; and during the ten years of Palmerston's predominance foreign policy was, again and again, more of a preoccupation than domestic affairs with British parties and statesmen. Italy was in the making;

Germany was in the making; France had not yet found a constitution to her mind, but was restlessly trying yet another of her many experiments in government since 1789; Russia had been rudely awakened, and was stretching herself. To difficulties in the Near East were succeeding mighty problems in the Far East. Across the Atlantic a young nation was beginning to feel its strength, and, though torn by acute domestic conflict, to call somewhat loudly for external recognition. All these movements touched either the interests or the sympathies of Great Britain and her worldwide Empire; with all of them Disraeli dealt, from time to time, in penetrating and philosophic fashion.

In his review[1] of this session of 1856, he laid it down that in foreign affairs there were three great questions on which it behoved British statesmen and British parties to have precise and clear ideas—the Russian Empire, the Austrian Empire, and our relations with the United States of America. France he did not mention, because at that time the French alliance was acknowledged by all parties to be the basis of our foreign policy. With regard to Russia, Disraeli's views had been sufficiently shown during the recent movement for peace. He was opposed to all idea of the dismemberment of Russia; it could not be attained without a fatally prolonged and exhausting war; and, when it was attained, we should find the balance of power in Europe altered to our disadvantage.

Disraeli was opposed also to the dismemberment of Austria, holding that the Austrian Empire was necessary to the independence, the civilisation, and even the liberties, of Europe. Though the doctrine sounds strange to us now, this had been hitherto the general opinion of European statesmen, with the exception of the partisans of revolution. France and Russia were regarded as explosive forces; and without the presence of a strong central Power, such as Austria, with its lingering traditions of the old Holy Roman Empire, it was thought that

[1] July 25.

European peace could not be preserved. In the interests, however, of unemancipated Italy, a hostile feeling to Austria was growing up among the Liberal party, of which Russell, now in a position of independence, made himself the mouthpiece. Disraeli deprecated the encouragement that was given, in the protocols of the Treaty of Paris, to Sardinia to persist in her efforts for the liberation of Italy—encouragement which was strangely simultaneous with the signature of a tripartite treaty between England, France, and Austria. Had we played our cards so badly in the late game of diplomacy that we were at the same time pledged to support both Austrian authority and Sardinian regeneration? Russell seemed to think that the contest in Italy lay between worn-out dynasties and constitutional reformers, ignoring that danger from secret societies which Disraeli was one of the few statesmen of the day to appreciate at its proper value. These societies, which were spread like a network over Europe, did not desire votes or constitutions; they wanted to change the tenure of land, to drive out the present owners of the soil, and to put an end to ecclesiastical establishments.[1] Disraeli, therefore, deprecated very strongly any policy of active adventure in Italy, reminding Parliament of the unfortunate results of meddling in the forties; of 'those scenes of popular tumult which, excited by English influence, were deserted by English power—a desertion remembered to this day on the Continent with anguish and indignation.'

Disraeli's hopes were justified. Palmerston, strengthened by his support, resisted the movement of Russell and the Radicals for active intervention, if not in arms, at least by diplomacy, against Austria in Italy, and did not go beyond general expressions of friendship for Sardinia and sympathy with Italian aspirations. That sympathy Disraeli, who also had profited by experience, no longer withheld. But, while giving eloquent expression to it, he wisely reminded Parliament that a nation that would

[1] July 14.

be free must work out its own destinies, and not rely for emancipation upon the good offices of others. This truth Italy was herself to recognise: 'Italia fara da se.'

I feel a deep interest in the future of Italy, and sure I am that there is no honest man in this Empire who does not look forward with delight to the day when that immemorial land to which we all owe so much shall take her proper place among the nations, and be again one of the leading communities of the world. But I for one base my hope of that consummation on my faith in the genius of the people and the resources of the country. Time, the great reformer, will save Italy; but if there can be anything that will throw her back in her career, anything that will baffle her destinies, it will be the intrigues of politicians who are not Italians, and who, for the sake of getting an impulse and support which otherwise they might not command, trifle with the fate of a great people, pander to the lusts of secret societies, pretend to sympathy they do not feel, and, for the love of popular applause and a momentary success, compromise the destiny of a great and gifted nation.[1]

If Disraeli's treatment of the Italian question was at once sympathetic and conservative, so was his treatment of British relations with the United States. These relations were at this time somewhat strained, owing to American expansion and to difficulties arising out of the ill-starred Foreign Enlistment Act.[2] Disraeli did what he could to ease the situation. England should recognise that the United States, like all the great countries of Europe, had a policy, and that they had a right to have a policy.

There are those who view with the utmost jealousy, and regard in a litigious spirit, the progress of the United States of America; who think that any advance in their power, or any expansion of their territory, is opposed to the commercial interest, and perhaps also to the political influence, of England. But I am not of that opinion. I am of a contrary opinion. . . . I cannot forget that the United States, though independent, are still in some sense colonies, and are influenced by colonial tendencies; and when they come in contact

[1] May 19, 1856. [2] See pp. 1370, 1371.

with large portions of territory scarcely populated, or at the most sparsely occupied by an indolent and unintelligent race of men, it is impossible—and you yourselves find it impossible—to resist the tendency to expansion; and expansion in that sense is not injurious to England, for it contributes to the wealth of this country.[1]

Disraeli expressed himself confident that, when once the United States saw that England was no longer jealous of their legitimate development, all these disputes and angry discussions between the two countries would cease. It was, he maintained, the business of a statesman to recognise the necessity of an increase in American power.[2] Surely a thoroughly statesmanlike attitude! Disraeli was, indeed, one of the few public men of the day who displayed constant tact and good feeling in his treatment of the United States. If he never courted America, he never ruffled her susceptibilities.

At the beginning of August, directly the session was over, Disraeli, who had been suffering from nervous debility, started with his wife for a course of treatment at Spa. They told no one where they were going, and only took their friends into their confidence just before their return.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

SPA, *August* 30, 1856.—When I crossed the Channel, I had been ordered to go to Vichy or Spa—and fortune or the humor of the moment brought me here. I have experienced the greatest benefit from the waters and mineral baths. Both are tonic in a high degree, and as, tho' suffering generally from nervous debility, I have never had recourse to such remedies, their beneficial effect upon me has been remarkable. I feel entirely renovated. Nevertheless, I am about to direct my steps homeward, *via* Amsterdam, which I have never seen. . . .

This place, Spa, is extremely pretty; a valley, tho' 1,000 feet above the ocean, very green, with brushwood of dwarf oak and spruce and silver firs; a picturesque village of hotels; walks of linden-trees; ponies and carriages of all forms, cantering and coursing about from spring to spring, and making

[1] July 25. [2] June 16.

the tour of silver fountains shrouded in sunny woods. The ghost of the eighteenth century seems to haunt its favorite watering-place, where Sovereigns and Ministers of State settled once the affairs of Europe as they walked before breakfast to drink a sparkling glass of the renovating element, or hazarded some *louis d'ors* at the Redoute, still open, and much frequented.

Spa was nearly dead, having been eclipsed by its modern rivals, the German bathing-places, when a railroad of late years revealed it to the 19th century, and now it is fuller than in the days of the Prince de Ligne, when it was the resort of the whole European world. But tho' there are four or five thousand visitors here, and an unceasing round of balls, concerts, colossal riding-parties, and rural festivals, you may live, as we do, in profound solitude. And what is most agreeable, without entering into gaiety, you may command and enjoy that rarest of all things—society—the conversation of a few congenial spirits and cultivated minds.

I have not seen a newspaper, in any language, for more than a month, and I did not tell our own household where we were going, so that we have not received a single letter. This complete breaking of the perpetual chain of public circumstances and the cares and trouble of business has perhaps done me as much good as the waters of Pouhon. . . .

The only persons we know here are some Devonshire people (London friends), Lord and Lady Poltimore, and the Prince and Princess of Capua, whom we have met again after many years of their adventurous life of strange vicissitudes. . . .

A week later Disraeli wrote a very similar letter to Lady Londonderry. By this time the fashion of repeating phrases, and indeed whole passages, in letters to different persons written at the same time, had grown into a settled habit with him.

The Disraelis returned to England in the middle of September, and, after paying their annual visit to Mount Braddon,[1] spent a quiet six or seven weeks at Hughenden.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Nov.* 6, 1856.—. . . We have vegetated here since we left Torquay—planting and pruning, and almost in perfect solitude. Lord[2] and Lady Villiers came

[1] See p. 1277.

[2] M.P. successively for Honiton, Weymouth, and Cirencester; 6th Earl of Jersey from Oct. 3 to 24, 1859.

here, and Lady de Rothschild, the only persons we have seen; and we have refused all invitations. I have myself been much engaged with the new Rural Police, which is to be established forthwith in this county. The magistrates at Quarter Sessions appointed a Committee for this purpose, who chose me as chairman, and I have been as busy this autumn as if I were in the House of Commons. As I have no railroad to Aylesbury, I am obliged very frequently to travel by road between 30 and 40 miles a day, which in the decline of the year is not agreeable; but I have always risen not later than seven o'clock.

All this, however, is now going to change, for in a very few days we shall proceed to Grosvenor Gate *en route* to Paris. I am now sorry to depart; the weather is so beautiful, the evergreens so bright, and planting so interesting and creative; but go I must. Affairs are very perplexed, and, as I told you at Torquay in confidence, there is someone who wants to see me, and whom I have promised to pay my respects to. . . .

The mysterious friend in Paris was, of course, Napoleon III., with whom, in his period of exile in England, Disraeli had had considerable acquaintance, and who owed his prompt recognition as Emperor to a Government of which Disraeli was a leading member. Disraeli was anxious about the relations between England and France, which, since the differences between the two Governments about the Peace, had not been as cordial as was desirable in the interests of both countries and of the tranquillity of the world. He had laboured in the forties to improve those relations in audiences of Louis Philippe; he was ready to do the same now with Louis Napoleon. He was also particularly anxious to remind the Emperor that there were other statesmen in England prepared to work in cordial unison with him, besides Palmerston. He had intended, in any case, to spend the winter in Paris, and a letter just received from Lennox opened a direct channel of communication with the Emperor.

From Lord Henry Lennox.

Most private. HAMILTON PALACE, *Oct.* 29, 1856.—. . . An opportunity has arisen by which you can convey direct to

the French Emperor any views you have direct and privately to His Majesty. . . . The Dss. of Hamilton is Napoleon's cousin,[1] and in constant correspondence with him. Two days ago she received a letter from him, complaining of *The Times* and other papers, and saying that he was deeply annoyed, and expressing his hope that at all events the Conservative organs would rebuke licentiousness of Press, and support him and the alliance. One phrase in the letter is remarkable. He says: 'The moment that I feel called upon to refuse to go full length with the English Govt. down come these slanders of me and my Govt., as though England was to be all in all and France as nothing to me.' . . .

The Dss. under a solemn promise of secrecy showed me the letter, and asked if I could write to any Conservative Powerful; if so, she would be grateful, and would ask permission to forward the answer direct and privately to Nap. . . .

Disraeli availed himself of the suggested channel of communication, and wrote Lennox a letter, which was forwarded by the Duchess to the Emperor.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 31, 1856.—Your letter, from Hamilton, arrived here this morning. I had previously written to you, directed to Portland Place, informing you of my plans; that I should be in town early in November, *en route,* probably after some little time, for Paris.

I have long watched, with great anxiety, the circumstances to which you allude. They are symptoms of a deep disorder in the relations between the two Governments, but are also, in my opinion, the inevitable consequences of the narrow, and narrow-minded, basis, on which Lord Palmerston has rested the alliance. An alliance with England may be of great importance to the Emperor, but an imperial policy is not less so. It is indispensable, for the welfare of both countries, that they should be combined; but this Palmerston, much from his temperament, and partly from ancient pre-

[1] The Duchess of Hamilton, wife of the eleventh Duke, was the Princess Mary of Baden, youngest daughter of Charles Louis Frederick, reigning Grand-Duke of Baden. Her mother was Stéphanie de Beauharnais, daughter of Claude de Beauharnais, whose youngest brother, Alexandre de Beauharnais, was first husband of the Empress Josephine, and father, by her, of Hortense, Queen of Holland, mother of Napoleon III. The Duchess was therefore Napoleon's second cousin.

judices, will never understand. With all his rodomontade, his diplomacy is of the age of the *blocus continental.*

I think, if the present state of things becomes chronic, and it has a tendency that way, great disasters may occur. No effort should be omitted to prevent them. But partial and precipitate attempts will not be remedies. I will deeply consider—indeed, I have deeply considered—the subject, and I do not despair that, during the next session of Parliament, a healthy and decided feeling will animate the Conservative party on this all-important head.

Unfortunately, some persons of influence, who call themselves Conservatives, while they abuse Palmerston, and affect to sympathise with the Emperor, are carrying on Orleanist intrigues. I made some curious discoveries on this head, at Spa, this year.

With respect to our alliance with France generally, my opinions are upon record: in detail, even so late as 1853.[1] I inherited them from Lord Bolingbroke, and the changes in the world, subsequent to his time, only confirm his prescience. With regard to the Emperor personally, there are many private as well as public reasons why I should wish to serve him.

I shall hope to see you in London, but altho' I have received communications, this autumn, from all persons and all quarters, I am anxious in the present state of things to keep aloof. And this is one reason why I am going to Paris—to get rid of the *châteaux.*

The Disraelis were warmly welcomed by the Court and by society in Paris, but the political mission for long made little progress.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

PARIS, *Dec.* 26, 1856.—. . . Now to business: I should have written, but there has been nothing to say—anything would have misled you. It is not hopeless; it is not absolutely unfavorable; all that has occurred, or transpired, is good. I am supposed to be, and perhaps am, in high favor: banquets from Fould, Walewski, etc., etc.—all the diplomatists on their knees; all secrets told from all sides: and Cowley confidential: but nothing from the all-commanding mind definite: it is still brooding in its unfathomable recesses.

[1] See pp. 1300, 1303.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

PARIS, *Jan.* 1, 1857.—I wish you a happy New Year from the Imperial City. It is the first letter that I have written this year, and I will accept it as a good omen that it is addressed to Mount Braddon.

Ten years, as long as the siege of Troy, since I found myself last in this place: Troy could not be more changed in the time. Everything squalid has been pulled down, or driven out of sight—a city of palaces and glittering streets, and illimitable parks and pleasure-gardens, statues and gondolas, and beautiful birds and deer. The Tuileries and Louvre joined form a kingly residence worthy of Babylon: the Rue de Rivoli, with its bright arcades, extends from the Place de la Concorde and the Elysian fields to the Hôtel de Ville and Notre Dame: the old Bois de Boulogne is converted into a Paradise, compared with which, in extent, all the Parks in London, together, would form an insignificant section.

Paris is a beautiful woman, and London an ugly man; still, the masculine quality counts for something.

Our reception here has not turned our heads, but has tried the strength of our constitutions; once we dined out eleven days running. The Ministers here live in palaces, with appointments and service, quite as gorgeous and stately as our own Court—very different from the position of English Ministers. Nevertheless, I don't think English gentlemen would ever feel easy under roofs which were not their own, however splendid. They would think they were too much like the Lord Mayor.

Our most interesting dinner was, however, certainly at the Tuileries, for my wife sate by the Emperor, and I sate by the side of the beautiful Empress. I have seen such faces, often, among the ladies at a bull-fight—and I dare say many a Mendez da Costa has worn such. Round her swanlike neck she wore a necklace of emeralds and diamonds such as might have been found in the cave of Aladdin; and yet, tho' colossal gems, for her they were not too vast. After this I will tell you no more: the curtain should fall amid the brightest fire.

Send me, if only one line, a word to say you are well, to Grosvenor Gate, and it will reach me. Mrs. D. sends you more than a word—1,000 kind thoughts and wishes.

Disraeli has left little in his papers to show exactly how his political mission fared. There is one short memorandum, which does not tell us much, except that

he entirely failed to persuade the Emperor that he would do wisely to transfer his confidence from Palmerston to the Conservatives.

In 1856-57 (Dec.-Jan.), at the Tuileries, the Emperor said to me: 'I have always thought that the principle of the Anglo-French Alliance was this: that France should assist England in her policy, and the converse; but Lord P[almerston] seems always to think that the first condition of the alliance should alone prevail.' When I left the T. that day—farewell audience, the Emperor having entered into every point, and I having reiterated my opinion previously expressed, that the then English Government would not stand (Lord P.'s first Government, which was placed in a minority a few weeks after, shortly after the meeting of Parliament, dissolved it, obtained a triumphant majority, and yet was turned out by their own Parliament the succeeding year)—I saw the Emperor was quite sceptical as to my opinion, and was entirely with Palmerston. His Majesty said to me: 'Lord Derby has no men.'

To Vitzthum, three years later, Disraeli gave the following account of these conversations:

The Emperor Napoleon will remember my having warned him some years ago against throwing himself into the arms of Palmerston. He declared then that we Tories were his hereditary enemies, and that he had, therefore, no choice in the matter. I denied it, and assured him we would go with any Government in France which respected treaties, but not with any that did not. Palmerston would make many promises, but keep none of them, because he had not the power to do so. He had a few followers, but no party.[1]

Disraeli apparently did not impress the Emperor so much as he wished to do, and perhaps thought he had done. At any rate, Louis Napoleon, a couple of months later, told Malmesbury that his opinion of Disraeli was that he 'has not the head of a statesman, but that he is, like all literary men, as he has found them, from Chateaubriand to Guizot, ignorant of the world, talking well, but nervous when the moment of action arises.'[2] A singu-

[1] Vitzthum, Vol. II., pp. 40, 41.
[2] *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, under date April 19, 1857.

larly inept judgment, which shows only the Emperor's want of insight.

Before leaving for Paris, Disraeli had arranged with Jolliffe that a serious attempt should be made to get the magnificoes of the party, and particularly Derby, to bestir themselves, and by personal exertion, organisation, and subscriptions, to bring the chaotic and dispirited Conservative party together, and fit it for the possibility of office. One of the difficulties was Disraeli's own unpopularity. Malmesbury, discussing the 'destitute condition' of the Tories in a letter to Derby on December 7, 1856, wrote that their best men reported 'that you are supposed to be tired of politics and no longer ambitious of office, and that this impression and the unpopularity of Disraeli are distracting our party.' Derby replied, on December 15, in an interesting letter printed in full in the *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*: 'As to Disraeli's unpopularity, I see it and regret it; and especially regret that he does not see more of the party in private; but they could not do without him, even if there were anyone ready and able to take his place. For myself, I *never* was *ambitious* of office, and am not likely to become more so as I get older; but I am now, as I have been, ready to accept the responsibility for it if I see a chance, not only of taking, but of keeping it.' These confidences of Derby and Malmesbury about Disraeli accord very ill with Disraeli's own impression of his position, based on the representative attendance at his Parliamentary dinner in the spring. But it is apparent from his correspondence that, beyond his personal friends, Disraeli—following, it may be said, Derby's example—made little or no attempt at this period to cultivate, and exchange ideas with, his followers, or even his colleagues; and, of course, his recent policy with regard to the Peace had been resented none the less because it had prevailed. He knew himself to be necessary, and felt that popularity would come with success. He, at any rate, was not open to some of the reproaches cast upon Derby. Lennox spent a

week with Derby in a country-house this winter, and reported to Disraeli his impressions of the 'Captain.' 'As a leader of a party, he is more hopeless than ever —devoted to whist, billiards, racing, betting. . . . Bulwer Lytton came to Bretby for three days, and was in despair! Not one word could he extract from Derby about public affairs; nothing but the odds and tricks.'

In spite, however, of this appearance of frivolity, Derby had proved more amenable than usual this winter to the earnest representations of colleagues and Whips.

From Sir William Jolliffe.

HEATH HOUSE, PETERSFIELD, *Dec.* 27, 1856.—. . . My letter to Malmesbury, written soon after I had last the pleasure of seeing you, has appeared to have had all the effect that I could desire, and far more than I expected; it has led to consultation and conference in high quarters, and appears to have set the wheels agoing. We shall attempt a subscription with an offer of handsome contribution from the Chief; we are to have more consultation in a small Cabinet formed from both Houses; I believe Pakington and Walpole have been asked to Knowsley; some much required encouragement has been given by old Lyndhurst to his Lordship; he has heard from me that you are *all right,* and will cordially second him, so I think things are really looking up.

'Of course, it is doubtful what can be done with the Peelites, but I have heard that Gladstone has (of course in a round-about way) conveyed his wishes to Lord D. . . .

Unfortunately, the two objects which Derby—in complete accord with Disraeli—was pursuing were incompatible. No hearty consolidation of the rank and file was possible while the leaders were endeavouring to win back the Peelites, and to make arrangements for harmonious working in opposition first, and eventually in office, with politicians so thoroughly distrusted by the party. Malmesbury wrote in his journal on February 3, 1857: 'The Duke of Beaufort, one of our staunchest adherents, told me at Longleat that, if we coalesced with the Peelites, he would leave the party, and I remember

in 1855, when Lord Derby attempted to form a Government, and offered places to Gladstone and Herbert, that no less than eighty members of the House of Commons threatened to leave him.' Jolliffe reported to Disraeli from Burghley on January 29 in the same sense: 'Chief and I are both taken sadly aback at having Burghley and R. Knightley [1] both saying that they will never submit to a junction with Gladstone; and the latter told me to-day, out shooting, that he was not speaking only for himself when he said he would give a bitter opposition to any Government which included Gladstone.'

While these winter manœuvres were in full progress, Disraeli returned from Paris to make preparations for the session. As if the internal difficulties of the Conservatives were not already sufficient, he found himself immediately threatened with a breach with the most intimate of his colleagues, his political pupil and personal friend, in conjunction with whom, in council, Parliament, and the *Press*, he had endeavoured to educate and liberalise his party. He had sent out invitations to his principal colleagues and followers for a political dinner on the eve of the session. Stanley declined, giving no reason except that 'it is probable I shall not be in London on that day. I delayed my answer, hearing you were still at Paris.'

To Lord Stanley.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Friday morning* [*Jan.* 23, 1857].—Your letter this instant received greatly afflicts me.

Certainly, if I had contemplated your refusal, I should not have ventured on soliciting the presence of the chief followers of your father; for I am quite sure that your absence under such circumstances would injure him much more than the gathering, however numerous and influential, of others would bear him benefit.

I wrote to you and three more persons before I sent out the general invitations. They answered me by return of post; I still waited a week, and, as no reply came from you, I con-

[1] Sir Rainald Knightley, of Fawsley, M.P. for Northants 1852-1892, afterwards Lord Knightley.

strued your silence favorably, and consonant with your declaration to me last year, that so long as your father maintained the position, which he now occupies, your presence on such an occasion might be counted on.

With respect to requesting your reply to be sent to Grosvenor Gate, that was not because it was held unimportant, but because, my letters being opened by the French Post Office, it was necessary that they should be forwarded to me, which they were regularly by Rothschild's couriers.

These few words as to the political considerations which your letter calls forth. Grave as they are, they are slight compared with the sad impression that its tone involves a sentiment of personal estrangement. As I am not conscious that I have ever been wanting in that feeling of deep attachment and high appreciation which I have now for many years entertained for you, I cannot conceal that my feelings are deeply moved. My friendships, though I have to deal with many men, are rare, and notwithstanding the many circumstances, public and private, which might for the moment modify or diminish our intimacy, I had such confidence in the depths and stability of your character that I have ever contemplated that during the remaining years of my life you would form an important element of my existence.

Stanley replied in a lengthy letter which fully set out the difficulties of his political position. He first explained that his delay in replying was due solely to reluctance to make an unpleasant communication, and then continued:

From Lord Stanley.

Private. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Jan.* 27, 1857.—. . . You will probably believe my earnest assurance that of personal estrangement between us there exists, and has existed, none, so far as I am concerned. From your conversation I have learnt more of practical politics than from that of any other person; and the recollection of pleasant days passed together at Hughenden long ago is one which will never leave me. An unreserved interchange of ideas on almost every subject; a general agreement in tastes, habits, and modes of thought; the ready recognition on my part of an intellectual superiority on yours founded at once on genius and experience; and the kindness which, as a young man, in the course of our earliest intercourse, I have always received from you, could not but leave behind them a very real, a lasting, and, I hope, a still subsisting, intimacy.

If within the last two years any semblance of alienation has arisen between us, it has been a semblance only, produced by causes which were intelligible enough to need no explanation, and which were and are consistent with the most friendly feeling.

The causes to which I allude are political, turning on the state of public affairs and the relations of parties.

I need not tell you that, both from personal feeling and from considerations of what a family owes to itself, I shall never, during my father's public life, connect myself with any party opposed to his. Had I entertained such a desire, the opportunity was offered 14 months ago. To withdraw from party politics is for me simply to retire into obscurity. So much for the possibility of being actuated by motives of self-interest.

Neither need I remind you of what since February, 1855, has been abundantly clear—the impossibility of your and my father's taking office, except in coalition with other leaders, and at the head of a larger following than your own. That in such a coalition all moderate politicians might join, I see no reason to doubt. Permanent separation between us, therefore, there need be, and I hope there will be, none.

But in the meantime, between 1852 and now, many measures have been discussed in Parliament on which I have had the misfortune to differ from the great bulk of those whom you represent: I don't say from you individually, because it is impossible for me not to distinguish between what I must imagine to be your private convictions, and those in which your position compels you to acquiesce.

Church rates, religious tests in Parliament, religious tests for the Universities, the repeal of the newspaper stamp, the constitution of the army, the constitution of the Civil Service, Irish education, English education, are all topics which more or less call into play those deep-lying differences of temperament and opinion on which the more superficial differences of party are based. On all these questions I have been in a small minority, on some I have stood alone, among the members who sit by or behind you. . . .

The question I have now to ask myself is this: Can I with truth consider myself as a representative of agricultural Conservatism? If not, and if nevertheless I continue to hold the ostensible position of one, those who dissent from my views have just cause of complaint. . . . I came last year to the conclusion that a seat on the front Opposition bench was inconsistent with the political position into which I had gradually and half unconsciously passed: the same reason which made me leave that bench prevents my return thither.

I must be free to judge (though, of course, your opinion will carry no slight weight with it) as to the course to be taken about the Income Tax: Pakington's education scheme I am pledged to support: and if, as is likely, fresh debates on the purchase system arise out of the Report of the Commission on that subject, I fear I shall again find myself opposed to nearly all your supporters. It seemed to me that to receive as a *political* guest one thus circumstanced would embarrass more than it could either help or gratify you Hence my refusal.

If, knowing these things, and understanding that they must be so, you renew your invitation, I need not say that I shall accept it with personal pleasure. . . .

Disraeli, who shared many of Stanley's opinions, was able to reassure him as to the amount of agreement implied in the acceptance of an invitation to a political dinner. Stanley consented to come, expressing his great satisfaction at being relieved 'from the most disagreeable of all sensations—that of a misunderstanding between friends.'

Disraeli was threatened with another secession from his political dinner-table. Pakington had an education policy of a liberal character which was supported by Disraeli and Stanley and Lytton, but bitterly opposed by a section of the 1852 Cabinet, headed by Henley. If National Education could not be treated as an open question among the Conservative leaders, Pakington wrote that he would have to retire from the front bench, and assert his opinions from another seat. Disraeli was able to placate him. 'I am opposed,' he wrote, 'to all secessions from the front bench of an Opposition. They never are happy in their results, and are always imputed to unworthy motives or looked on as a *coup de théâtre*.' The affair was not urgent, and even if it were the *cheval de bataille* of the party, he should deprecate giving any immediate notice. 'I shall count,' he concluded, 'on your presence on the 2nd, particularly as under my roof you will never meet the grim visage of our amiable colleague, Henley.'

To Derby, Disraeli was more outspoken about what he regarded as Pakington's inopportune persistence. Disraeli was full of his own schemes, and impatient of the alarums and excursions of others.

To Lord Derby.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Jan.* 28, 1857.—. . . I cannot bring my mind to Education at present. I am as sick of it as the country is. Nobody wanted it to be mooted till a new Parliament. The public wants to digest all the perplexities of recent debates, and John Russell's resolutions[1] were the climax of confusion, and there the curtain, for the present, ought to have fallen.

CARLTON CLUB, *Wednesday.*—I wrote this morning. I now return Pakingtoniana. I really have no head, at present, for this subject, so uncalled for and so inopportune.

Jolliffe, whom, I hope, you will see to-day, will give you, for your musing, my sketch of the campaign. If you adopt it, the Government will, probably, not be alive this day month; and even if we be defeated, we shall have got out of the mud of 1855, and, at least, be at the head of a powerful and popular Opposition. . . .

Disraeli's plan of campaign was in the main of a two-fold character, and calculated, in both its aspects, to attract Peelite support. He proposed, on the one hand, to attack the Government on their foreign policy, as turbulent and double-dealing; and, on the other, in concert with Gladstone, to insist on retrenchment, and especially on a reduction of income tax, on the principle that taxes granted for military purposes in time of war ought not to be levied in time of peace. He developed both lines of argument in the debate on the Address.[2] On foreign policy, he contrasted the expectations entertained when the Peace of Paris was signed with 'the wars and rumours of wars' which pervaded the Queen's Speech. There was a difficulty with Russia over the

[1] Russell had introduced, in the previous session, twelve resolutions as a basis for a system of National Education. They had rather a mixed reception, and in the course of the debates he surrendered the most characteristic portions of his scheme. He was advised by Disraeli to withdraw the remainder, but refused, and was beaten by a majority of over a hundred.

[2] Feb. 3.

treaty owing to a blunder of Clarendon's; a difficulty between Prussia and Switzerland over Neufchatel, in which a 'firebrand Minister' had nearly embroiled Europe in war; Canton was blazing; Persia was invaded. But his main attack was on Ministerial policy towards Italy and Austria. Reverting to the raising of the Italian question in a sympathetic fashion in the protocols of the Peace, he startled Parliament by revealing the existence at the time of a secret treaty with Austria.

> Will it be believed that all this time, while Lord Clarendon was listening to the passionate representations of Count Cavour, in which he impeached the very existence of Austrian rule in Italy—at the time when the noble lord, unable to extricate himself from some fatal engagement into which he had entered with Sardinia, found it necessary to commence those protocols which have led to so much excitement, from which so much was expected, and on which were wasted, I may say, six months of the attention of the people of this country—will it be believed that at this very time a secret treaty was in existence guaranteeing to Austria the whole of her Italian dominions?

The guarantee, said Disraeli, was given by France, and given not merely with the sanction and approval of Palmerston and the British Government, but by their advice and at their special instance. The Power that gave the guarantee was the Power that was to aid Palmerston in the great plan for the emancipation of Italy. What had happened in consequence of this ruinous imposture on the credulity of the country? Ruthless assassinations, unsuccessful insurrections, the death of many excellent and of some brave and distinguished men, and an aggravation of the evils complained of. The whole affair was a great hoax—for the people of England. 'Generally speaking, the noble lord extricates us from the embarrassments he has himself created, and that is his great claim to the public approbation.'

Palmerston, in reply, twitted Disraeli with his powers of imagination, and said that his statements about foreign

policy were mostly pure romance. He had been imposed upon by the *gobemouches* of Paris, and had discovered a treaty of which the Government had never heard till that moment.

> So far are we from having advised the adoption of such a treaty that, if we had been consulted with reference to its conclusion, we should certainly have given advice in a precisely opposite direction. That treaty is entirely a romance —totally without the slightest foundation; except this, that I believe in the early part of the war with Russia, when the question was raised what line Austria should take in reference to the contest, communications did pass between the French Government and the Austrian Government with respect to the course which France might take if, after Austria should have joined the Allies, an insurrection were to break out in Italy, and the Government of France, I believe, then stated that they would in that case take no part against Austria, but would leave her in the complete possession of her Italian dominions. But there was no treaty entered into by France with respect to the Italian possessions of the Austrian Empire.

It is difficult to decide whether, in thus (as Disraeli said) treating a grave subject with 'ribald ridicule,' Palmerston was boldly bluffing, or whether his memory had failed him. Disraeli rejoined, a week later,[1] by giving the date on which the treaty was signed—December 22, 1854—and by repeating that the British Government were privy to, and counselled, the whole of the negotiations, and were formally advised of the treaty. Palmerston, again, in Greville's words, 'flatly contradicted him, and with great insolence of manner,' but he had to make some substantial admissions. It was, he said, perfectly true that, about December, 1854, it was hoped that Austria would join offensively and defensively with England and France. The French Government did inform that of Austria that, as an honourable ally, it would not take advantage of any disturbance or insurrection in Italy; and, if such disturbance should break out, any French force in Italy at the time would act in concert with the Austrian forces there in putting down insurrec-

[1] Feb. 10.

tion. This arrangement was known to the English Government, and the reply of France was fit and proper under the circumstances. The arrangement was embodied in the shape of a convention, but it was doubtful if it was ever signed at all.'

Thus, as Lytton, with 'the affectionate and, if I may say so, brotherly interest I take in all that concerns you,' pointed out in a letter to Disraeli, Palmerston had already admitted two facts he formerly denied: 'first, that there was a treaty (or, to use Palmerston's expression, a convention—viz., a convention for a treaty); secondly, that the Government knew it, and if not at their "instance," as you said, at least it had their approval.'

Palmerston had to make a still further retractation. In Greville's words, 'two nights after,[1] Palmerston came down to the House, and in a very jaunty way said he must correct his former statement, and inform the House he had just discovered that the convention *had been signed*. Great triumph, naturally, on the part of Disraeli,' who insisted that the document was a treaty, and not, as Palmerston described it, a mere military convention, and that it had been extensively acted upon. Thereupon Palmerston completely lost his temper—'a rare occurrence with him,' wrote Malmesbury, 'and which makes me believe that he felt himself in a scrape'—and talked absurdly about Disraeli's 'vapouring.' This time the Minister did not impose even upon his own party, and Disraeli was seen to have sufficiently proved his contention. Though, however, he obtained a personal success, it was felt at the time, and is clearly evident now, that he greatly exaggerated the import of the treaty which he had unearthed. It was an arrangement—and an unsuccessful one—to secure the desirable object of Austria's aid to finish off the Crimean War; and though it placed Palmerston and Clarendon in rather an equivocal position towards their Italian friends, Italian movements against Austria could hardly expect active English

[1] Feb. 12

sympathy while the war was in progress. The attitude of both France and England at the Conference of Paris showed that they did not consider the secret treaty to be in effective force after the war was over.

Disraeli's elation in penetrating a mystery must have affected his sense of proportion. His information was, of course, the result of his visit to Paris. But it was not, as Malmesbury imagined, derived from Walewski or from any French source. It will be remembered that the diplomatic world of Paris was specially warm in its welcome to Disraeli; 'all the diplomatists on their knees; all secrets told from all sides.' There was at that time in the British Embassy at Paris a very clever, attractive, and well-informed young man, with political ambitions and Tory sympathies, who proceeded at once to make himself useful and agreeable to the distinguished visitor. Ralph Earle attracted Disraeli in the same sort of way that Lennox had attracted him; but Earle was an abler man than Lennox. Confidential relations were soon established between the young diplomatist and the Opposition leader. Earle shared that taste for intrigue in high politics which was part of Disraeli's Oriental equipment; and he it was who furnished Disraeli with information about the treaty. Between the end of January and February 10, while the debates were in progress in the House of Commons, he wrote to Disraeli from Paris as many as half a dozen letters, several of them of considerable length, either unsigned or signed mysteriously 'X.,' supplying him with a constant series of facts and arguments on the subject. His conduct, as a member of the diplomatic service, in furnishing the Opposition leader with confidential material for a Parliamentary attack on the Government cannot be defended, though it may be excused on the ground of his youth; and Disraeli showed some lack of scruple and of delicacy in availing himself of such help. The political intimacy established in this way lasted for ten years, during which Disraeli forwarded Earle's political ambition, and Earle

placed his abilities and devotion at Disraeli's disposal, and was employed by him in many services of a delicate and confidential character.

Disraeli's absorption in the secret treaty and its Parliamentary fortunes somewhat annoyed Derby, who estimated more justly than its discoverer the true diplomatic and political value of that instrument, and who was himself strongly bent on the second branch of Disraeli's plan of campaign, the movement for retrenchment, which was to bring Gladstone into line with his old party. There had grown up a considerable agitation in the country against what was called the 'War Ninepence,' that being the amount which had been added to the rate of income tax to pay for the war. It was feared that the foreign difficulties, the Persian and Chinese wars, might serve as an excuse for keeping the tax at a high figure. Disraeli adopted, in his speech on the Address—and maintained as the basis of his financial policy, in opposition and in office, for the next few years—the policy of Gladstone's great Budget of 1853, which, it may be remembered, he had claimed at the time to be largely founded on the same principles as his own Budget of December, 1852.[1] A leading feature of Gladstone's Budget was the reduction of the rate of income tax by successive stages, with a view to its final extinction in 1860. During the war this scheme had perforce been abandoned, and income tax had been raised, not lowered. Now that the war was over, Disraeli proposed that the settlement of 1853 should be resumed and adhered to. He regarded that settlement as a 'compact'—though Gladstone would not admit that it amounted to more than a 'pledge'—under which, in return for the prospective abolition of income tax, Parliament consented to a succession duty. He gave notice at once that he would move resolutions against the continuance of war taxes in time of peace, and in favour of adherence to the settlement of 1853. If his resolutions should be carried, 'I

[1] See p. 1323.

think we shall give a great impetus to salutary economy, and shall in a most significant manner express our opinion that it is not advisable that England should become what is called "a great military nation."'

'This policy was admirably calculated to attract, and succeeded in attracting, the support of Gladstone, whose communications with Derby culminated on February 7 in a four hours' conversation of a cordial character. It was also to some extent favoured by Russell, who maintained the soundness of the time-honoured system of Great Britain, to keep up low establishments during peace. But Cornewall Lewis's Budget, which proposed to reduce the income tax from sixteenpence to sevenpence, thus taking off the War Ninepence, rather spiked the Opposition guns. The joint wisdom of Tories and Peelites found some difficulty in drafting a satisfactory resolution; and the motion ultimately proposed by Disraeli, which demanded reduced expenditure in order to insure the abolition of income tax in 1860, was resisted by Russell and Francis Baring for the independent Whigs, by Bentinck and Tyrell for the independent Tories, and by Cardwell as an independent Peelite, and was lost on a division by eighty votes. Gladstone's attack in the debate was felt to be too passionate and undiscriminating to be effective; and there was sound sense in Lewis's argument that, as the arrangements of 1853 were based on the assumption of peace, they could hardly be regarded as holding good now that war, and all the consequences of war, in the shape of increased debt and increased annual charge, had intervened. Even Lewis's provision for the defence of the country was meagre, at a time when Continental nations were laying the foundations of the gigantic national armies which we see to-day; and there was a regrettable recklessness in the manner in which Disraeli and Gladstone, in order to restrain Palmerston from a 'turbulent and aggressive policy,' pressed for wholesale retrenchment. It was Palmerston's application of his doctrine that was at fault; the doctrine itself

was sound. Our army, as he said in the debate on the Address, must be more than a domestic police. It must be at least sufficient to protect us at the outset from insult and attack. 'Depend upon it, for a country great and rich to leave itself without the means of defence is not a method to preserve peace in the long-run.' 'It is the duty of a responsible Government, having determined the amount of army and navy which is essential for the safety and interest of the country, to present to Parliament the result of the conclusions at which they have arrived;' and, he might well have added, to resign office if Parliament refuses the supplies asked for. Disraeli would throughout his public life have subscribed cordially to these sentiments; but in the course of his long opposition to Palmerston he sometimes seemed in practice to ignore them.

Neither of the branches of Disraeli's plan of attack had proved particularly successful, save in strengthening the relations between the Conservative leaders and Gladstone. Derby now took command of the strategy of the party, and, in spite of Disraeli's hesitation, insisted on a course of action which, while productive of apparent initial success, reduced in the end still further the Conservative forces in Parliament.

There had been high-handed proceedings by British representatives in China. At Canton—a port which, in breach of the Treaty of Nankin, the Chinese refused to open to commerce—a mandarin had arrested, on the charge of piracy, the Chinese crew of the lorcha *Arrow*, which was apparently flying the British flag, though its right to do so was very doubtful. In reply to British protests, the prisoners were released, but apologies were refused, whereupon Canton was bombarded. By way of reprisals the Chinese Governor offered rewards for the heads of Englishmen. In return the British fleet inflicted further punishment on the town and the forts, and a local war with China began. Palmerston's Government upheld the action of its servants in the East, but among

independent men there was widespread disapproval. Peelites, especially Gladstone, and Radicals, were very indignant; and there was an obvious opportunity, which Derby, who shared their indignation, determined to seize, of defeating the Government. Disraeli, though he agreed that the proceedings were indefensible, advised caution. He had not forgotten how a similar combination, seven years before, against another high-handed proceeding, the Pacifico affair, had only strengthened instead of weakening Palmerston's position. He must have feared that the result would be the same now, and that, if Palmerston were driven to the country, the popularity which he had earned during the Crimean War would give him a triumph at the polls. Of that popularity, Greville wrote on February 27 that it was 'a fact beyond all doubt or cavil,' while 'every one of the other public men who have been, are, or might be, his rivals are absolutely unpopular. Nobody cares any longer for John Russell; everybody detests Gladstone; Disraeli has no influence in the country, and a very doubtful position with his own party.'

Disraeli was overruled. Derby led the attack in the Lords in one of his finest speeches, and subsequently intimated to his reluctant party that he was prepared to join with Gladstone or with anyone else with a view of ousting the existing Government and forming a Conservative one. In the Commons Cobden was the protagonist, and he was supported by almost all the leading men in the House—Russell, Gladstone, Graham, Sidney Herbert, Milner Gibson, Lytton, and Roebuck—and by such rising politicians as Robert Cecil and Roundell Palmer. Disraeli was at first unwilling to speak, but, when he had yielded to the persuasions of his friends, did not let his disapproval of the party tactics affect the vigour of his eloquence. Palmerston, who had, in his half-century of political life, 'professed almost every principle and connected himself with almost every party,' had talked of an unprincipled combination against

him. But, said Disraeli, 'it will not do, the instant that the blundering of his Cabinet is detected, and every man accustomed to influence the opinion of the House unites in condemning him, to complain to the country that he is the victim of conspiracy.' Thus had he covered 'a weak and shambling case,' but he had laid down no principle on which our relations with China should rest. Disraeli, according to his wont, did consider those relations in a sober and philosophical spirit. He maintained that something more than energetic action was required of England in the Far East.

> This country must dismiss from its mind the idea of dealing, as barbarous and uncivilised, with States with which Powers like ourselves [*e.g.*, Russia and the United States] have sympathies; and we must habituate ourselves to the idea of extending to countries like China the same diplomatic intercourse that we adopt with other nations. You cannot do that in a moment; it must be a work of time. . . . You are dealing with a country of immense antiquity. You have been reminded in the debate that China enjoys a civilisation of twenty-five centuries. In point of antiquity, the civilisation of Europe is nothing to that. But the result of those ancient habits and customs is an existence of profound ceremony and formal etiquette; and yet you expect that such a country will not be startled by the frank and occasionally, I am sorry to say, the brutal freedom of European manners. With a policy of combination with other powerful European States in attempting to influence the conduct of the Chinese by negotiations and treaties, it is my belief that ultimately, slowly but surely, we may attain our end.

When Disraeli spoke, on the last night of the debate, it was known that Government would be beaten, and it was anticipated that, if beaten, they would dissolve. However little he might like a prospect which others had rendered inevitable, at this stage boldness was the only possible course. Accordingly, he wound up his speech with a challenge to Palmerston to appeal to the country on a programme, as a Liberal leader, of 'No Reform! New Taxes! Canton Blazing! Persia Invaded!' Palmerston, who was defeated in the House by a majority of sixteen, took him at his word, with results

by no means satisfactory to the Conservative party. To bully China was found to be as popular as to bully Greece had been. Palmerston, in his address to the electors of Tiverton, described the provocation we had received in picturesque language: 'An insolent barbarian, wielding authority at Canton, had violated the British flag, broken the engagement of treaties, offered rewards for the heads of British subjects in that part of China, and planned their destruction by murder, assassinations, and poisons.' That form of appeal proved more attractive than Disraeli's denunciation, in his election address, of a 'cruel and double-dealing policy,' or his not undeserved criticism of the Prime Minister:

> Lord Palmerston is an eminent man, who has deserved well of his country; but as Prime Minister he occupies a false position. He is the Tory chief of a Radical Cabinet. With no domestic policy, he is obliged to divert the attention of the people, from the consideration of their own affairs, to the distraction of foreign politics. His external system is turbulent and aggressive, that his rule at home may be tranquil and unassailed. Hence arise excessive expenditure, heavy taxation, and the stoppage of all social improvement.
>
> His scheme of conduct is so devoid of all political principle that, when forced to appeal to the people, his only claim to their confidence is his name.

But it must fairly be said that Palmerston had other claims to confidence than his name. His readiness to assume responsibility at a critical moment of the Crimean War, and his prosecution of the war to a successful close, were the real grounds of his political strength. In the rough, but on the whole just, judgment of the country, Derby, Russell, and the Peelite chiefs—in fact, every possible leader except Palmerston, as Disraeli had loyally associated himself in public with Derby—had all failed in one way or another when put to the test. The General Election of 1857, therefore, resolved itself into a *plébiscite* for Palmerston. All his principal opponents of the peace party—Cobden, Bright, Milner Gibson, and W. J. Fox—were defeated at the polls. So was Layard, who made

the mistake of being more warlike even than Palmerston, and so was a prominent Peelite, Cardwell. The one General Election since the Repeal of the Corn Laws in which the two wings of the old Conservative party worked in harmony, though not in coalition, resulted in a serious weakening of the Conservative forces. The mere fact of combination in any form with the distrusted Peelites diverted Conservative votes from Derby to Palmerston; and the Peelites themselves were dissolved as a party, only a few disconnected leaders reappearing in Parliament. Palmerston's popularity proved to be unbounded, and he returned with a personal following of 370 in a House of between 650 and 660.

Disraeli's own election was unopposed—'a bloodless victory, but not less a triumph,' he told Mrs. Willyams. He was returned as the advocate of a policy concisely expressed in his address as one of 'honourable peace, reduced taxation, and social improvement.'

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *March* 23, 1857.—. . . When all the hubbub is over, and men have settled down to their right position in the new Parliament, I suspect it will be found that there is little difference in the relative strength and influence of parties, and that the same situation will be reproduced. Identical elements, in due time, will produce the same results. However, a man must be very prescient who foresees the consequences of 650 popular elections. An election, a play, a race, a speech, to a certain degree, are always a chance.

Public appeals made in favor of a *name*, and not a *policy*, are convenient, but at the same time deceptive. A man returned pledged to support Palmerston really means nothing, for there is always the proper mental reservation, when Palmerston, in his, the pledger's, opinion, is not wrong. It is not like a specific measure, the ballot, etc., which admits of no shuffling. . . .

Buoyant as ever, Disraeli refused to be cast down by the result of the elections. He had expressed the hope, in the House of Commons, that, inasmuch as party was the best guarantee for public and private honour, Par-

liamentary parties would become more defined, and members would be returned with definite opinions. That he considered had, in fact, happened.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *April* 13, 1857.—. . . I am by no means dissatisfied by the results of the General Election, strange and startling as they have been. They realise what I foretold: we shall now have a House of Commons with two parties and with definite opinions. All the sections, all the conceited individuals, who were what they styled themselves, 'independent,' have been swept away, erased, obliterated, expunged. The state of affairs will be much more wholesome, and more agreeable.

The Conservative party have got thro' the ordeal very well. Tho' numerically a little lessened, they are much more compact and united, and even as regards numbers, when a due occasion offers, will bring a larger force into the field than in the last Parliament. Altho' we had then 280 and more on the muster-roll, still, when the hour of battle arrived, we never could count on more than 220, the rest absent, or worse, against us. Now we have, I am assured by Sir William Jolliffe, the chief of my staff, 260 good men and true, fresh and not jaded by the mortifying traditions of the last Parliament.

Enough of all this. How are you, and your sweet and silent companions, roses and violets? We were nearly paying you a visit, but must postpone it for a while, to go thro' a series of county visits which are the inevitable consequence of a General Election, and being returned Knight of the Shire.

To-morrow we go to Norman Court, Mr. Thomas Baring's, for two or three days, long promised, and then to the north of this county, to the Pauncefort Duncombes, of Brickhill Manor, who proposed me in 1847, and then to Colonel Hanmer of Stockgrove Park, who proposed me in 1857; then to the Chesters of Chicheley, and to the Lovetts of Liscombe, and the Dayrells of Lillingstone Dayrell, and a great many more, all of whom, by their ancestors, came in with the Conqueror, tho' Colonel Hanmer had an ancestor, or something like one, I find, much more interesting, for he married a Miss Ximenes, a descendant of Cardinal X., and yet a daughter of Israel notwithstanding, so I think he must have been quite gratified proposing me as member for Bucks. . . .

These visits to the territorial aristocracy who supported him in his own county gave Disraeli, the squire of Hughenden, immense satisfaction.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *April* 29, 1857.—. . . You won't be amused by the visits we have been paying to some of my principal supporters in the north of this county during the last few weeks: people you never heard of before, yet living with a refinement and splendor quite remarkable. Nothing more striking than some of your English gentry with châteaux, parks, and broad domains; greater men by a good deal than many German Princes, and yet utterly unknown in London society: among these one of our greatest Bucks squires, a Mr. Pauncefort Duncombe, whose home was really radiant, and contrasted very much with Woburn Abbey, which he took me over to see, larger, but the most gloomy and squalid palace that you can conceive.[1]

One day we went to see Mentmore, which one of the Rothschilds is building, or rather has built, in the midst of the Vale of Aylesbury, a hunting palace, which will be to this county what Belvoir is to the vale of that name. But all that even *you* can recall or fancy of interior taste, splendor, and magnificence and curiosity of art, can give you only a faint idea of the reality of this gorgeous palace. I have been told, for more than fifteen years Rothschild has had agents in every part of Europe, regardless of cost, collecting its contents, but the taste of their distribution is as remarkable as their curiosity and costliness. The hall appears to one the masterpiece of modern art and decoration, glowing with colour, lit by gorgeous Venetian lamps of golden filigree that once were at the head of Bucentaurs. Such chairs—Titian alone could paint them, such clocks of lapis lazuli, such cabinets of all forms and colors, such marble busts of turbaned Moors, such a staircase of polished marble from this vast central saloon, for such it really is, glittering with its precious contents, and yet the most comfortable and livable-in apartment in the world. . . .

Since Palmerston had been at the head of affairs, Parliamentary Reform, which had been taken up by Russell as a Cabinet question after his defeat on Locke King's motion in 1851, had been again laid aside. This was natural enough during the war; but its absence from the Government programme of legislation both in 1856 and in 1857 had been conspicuous, and was no doubt rightly attributed to the very tepid affection with which

[1] But see Vol. II., p. 155, for a more favourable verdict on Woburn.

it was regarded by the Prime Minister. Palmerston was faithful to what Disraeli at the end of the session of 1856 had called 'the Conservative principle which, without blind or bigoted adherence to the doctrine on all possible occasions, believes that tampering with the suffrage is a great evil to the State.' Disraeli, in these circumstances, conceived that the moment had now come when the Conservatives might take up, with advantage to the country and to themselves, a question which, at least ever since 1848, he had protested against regarding as the peculiar property of the Liberals. Accordingly, in his speech on March 31 on the hustings at Aylesbury—a speech which attracted special attention as a first attempt to substitute for the usual claptraps of hustings oratory such serious treatment of current politics as was usual in Parliament—he devoted considerable space to Reform, and offered his audience suggestions of which they might 'chew the cud.' He was opposed to 'bit-by-bit' reform, so dear to the Whigs, as he invariably found that it ended in a job; the Reform Act, for instance, put an end to the close boroughs of the Tories, but preserved those of the Whigs. If a large Reform Bill were brought forward by the Tories, the injustices of that Act might be remedied, and he should look at any great change in representation with no prejudice, though it was not advisable that the two parties should bid against each other. But he was opposed to two proposals of earnest reformers—electoral districts and the ballot. Disraeli followed up his speech by a letter to his chief, who had been laid up with a bad attack of gout during the election.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. HUGHENDEN MANOR, *April* 21, 1857.—I hope you have quite recovered. . . . I wish you would think over this state of things very much. As Conservatives, it was not for us to disturb the settlement of 1832, but that settlement is disturbed, and, so far as 'true reformers' are concerned, is to be disturbed in a sense still more unjust than the existing arrangement.

I don't think the country, dinned to death with the unjust

representation of large towns compared with small ones, has the slightest idea of the real state of affairs: and nothing but discussion in Parliament in an authoritative manner can enlighten them. I suggest to you whether a juster apportionment of M.P.'s may not be the question on which a powerful and enduring party may be established: whether we should not at once originate such a discussion by a resolution something like the following (or by other means): 'That in the opinion of this House, in all measures for improving the representation of the Commons in Parliament, it is expedient that there should be a juster apportionment of members to counties and boroughs than at present exists': whether a notice of 'a resolution on the subject of Parliamentary Reform' should not be given the first night of the session: and that, whether the Queen's Speech refers to the subject or not. In either case it might convey to the Government the spirit in which we wish the reform should take place, and prove the strength of the Conservative view on the subject.

Also consider whether a reform, in such a spirit, would not be extremely beneficial to the Conservative party, as the present arrangement, which leaves the balance of power in small boroughs, which are ruled by cliques of Dissenters, seems fatal to the maintenance of the present aristocratic and ecclesiastical institutions.

I think it highly inexpedient that, if such a motion is made, we should at all meddle, at present, with the question of the suffrage; we should confine ourselves to the point expressed in the resolution.

But the question of the suffrage may be dealt with extensively, but in an eminently conservative manner.

If fifty members were added to the counties, by reducing the small boroughs to one member, and every ten-pound householder in the county population were annexed to a borough constituency, you would add much to the constituency of the boroughs, and greatly increase the Conservative power at the same time.

There are 10,000 other things to say, but I have roughly jotted down these materials for reflection. Our party is now a corpse, but it appears to me that, in the present perplexed state of affairs, *a Conservative public pledged to Parliamentary Reform*, a bold and decided course might not only put us on our legs, but greatly help the country and serve the State. But I am for beginning mildly—in a conciliatory spirit—giving the Government credit for justice and patriotism, and placing our case before them, that they and Parliament may not otherwise become pledged to a further development of the present unjust and injurious system. . . .

Remember the great effect produced by statements which I made in H. of C. in 1852 (on Hume's motion for Parliamentary Reform—*i.e.*, giving more members to great towns, and disfranchising small ones) as to the injustice of counties like N. Lincolnshire, etc., with 200,000 or 300,000 inhabitants, exclusive of separate town population, having only two members, when a lesser boro' with 20,000 or 30,000 inhabitants had the same number.

Lord J. R., when he introduced his R. Bill in 1853-54, referred to this view of the case, and acknowledged its justice. The more extensive view appears still more telling.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. KNOWSLEY, *April* 24, 1857.—. . . The elections have undoubtedly given Palmerston a large majority, though rather of a heterogeneous character. He has at present the game in his hand, and our object must be to make him play it in our sense. The Peelite and Manchester parties are obliterated, but it would be a mistake to say that the House is divided into two parties only; among the Liberals there are two divisions, the differences between whom must shortly become more marked than they are at present. The old Whigs are far less numerous than the Radicals, and are proportionably afraid of them. Pam has ousted Johnny from the command of the Whigs, and the necessities of the latter's position will make him bid for the support of the Radicals, with whom, however, he will never obtain a cordial acceptance.

Palmerston, on the other hand, would not be sorry to see him take this course, and, if he finds him committed to it, will take the line of great moderation, and lean upon Conservative support. To encourage this tendency on his part, if it exists, and to foment divisions and jealousies between the discordant elements of the Government majority, must be our first object; while we should carefully avoid multiplying occasions for their voting in concert, in opposition to motions brought forward by us. Among our own friends there are many favourably disposed to Palmerston, and among the Palmerstonians proper there are as strong Conservatives at heart as any in our ranks; and, looking to Palmerston's age and increasing infirmities, the oftener these can be brought into the same lobby, in opposition to Radical moves, the better for us and for the country. This should be, I think, the leading principle of our policy during the present session; to avoid attacks on the Government, and especially on Palmerston individually; to profess a readiness

to consider candidly measures of internal improvement which he may recommend; and to intimate, rather than profess, our readiness to support him in resisting violent counsels forced upon him by his colleagues or supporters.

This leads me to the particular question of Reform which is discussed in your letter. My own opinion is that we shall have *no* Reform Bill this session, but that Palmerston will try to turn John Russell's flank by compelling him to show his cards, and then promise to bring forward the subject of Parliamentary Reform, after mature consideration by the Government, in the session of 1858. If he takes this line, I think we ought to support him in it. . . .

With the knowledge that there are two rival chiefs in the field, and the probability that the question will be adversely discussed between them, I think our obvious policy is to wait till both of them have opened their budget, or at all events committed themselves to some course; and on this account I own I should deprecate the giving of any notice from our side of the House, on the subject of Reform, on the first day of the session, especially if it be not noticed in the Speech from the Throne. We must, after all, look to our own adherents, and I do not think it would please them to see us apparently anxious to take up the question, however they may acquiesce in the prudence of meeting it with great forbearance, if brought forward by our opponents.

When we come to discuss the principles themselves which we should lay down, I do not think there will be found much, if any, difference between you and me. . . .

I think our two principles should be, adherence to the present franchises for county and town respectively, and approximation to a just proportion between the number of representatives allotted to each. We ought to resist lowering the franchise, abolition of rate-paying clauses, and the ballot. . . .

Derby thus damped down, as on so many previous and so many subsequent occasions, his lieutenant's ardour for a 'bold and decided course.' He was already showing a disposition towards that policy of keeping Palmerston in office as on the whole a Conservative Minister which he erected after 1859 into a regular system, and which incidentally obliged Disraeli to spend some of the best years of his life in leading an Opposition which did not seriously oppose. It is impossible to deny that there was good sense in Derby's reasoning on this occasion;

and Palmerston adopted very much the course he anticipated, omitting Reform from the Queen's Speech, but promising a Bill for 1858, and thus shelving, so far as he could, debate for the present. Disraeli, as Derby objected to his taking the initiative, preserved a dignified silence on the Address, but could not prevail on Malmesbury, who was acting in the Lords for the gout-ridden Derby, to do the same. On this question of procedure Disraeli displayed a characteristic contempt for the opinion of the mediocrities among his late colleagues in Cabinet.

Lord Malmesbury to Lord Derby.

LONDON, *May* 4, 1857.—. . . I saw Disraeli, and showed him your letter, but I could not prevail upon him to call together our usual knot of Councillors to go over the Speech. . . .

D. said it was sufficient for *him* and *me* to agree upon what was to be done. I would not, however, take that responsibility with his single backing, and I found that Eglinton and Hardwicke were quite of my opinion. We have, therefore, made him ask Walpole, Pakington, and Lytton, to meet us at Eglinton's house on Thursday morning to go over the Speech. . . .

I found Dizzy last night at the Carlton sitting at table with the Duke of Buckingham, and in a very amusing mood. It seems he had come up on business for an hour, and went in to speak to Taylor, who he was told was dining there. To give his own description: 'You find me poisoned and robbed. God has made me blind. I came in here expecting to find Taylor. I see a large man at dinner, and fall into the arms of "Robert Macaire." He forces me to drink a bottle of champagne with him, which always makes me ill, and then borrowed £50 of me.' It was worth £50 to see Dizzy's face. . . .

CHAPTER IV.

DISRAELI AND INDIA.

1857–1858.

In the opening weeks of the new Parliament in May, 1857, politics appeared to be quite dead. The electorate had given Palmerston a free hand, and Derby had muzzled Disraeli by insisting that the Opposition should play a waiting game. Court and society displaced politics in the public mind. The announcement was made of the engagement of the Princess Royal to Prince Frederick William of Prussia; and, with the prospect of the Prince's visit, London gave itself up to the festivities of the Season. There was, however, for the credulous a portent of evil.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *June* 7, 1857.—. . . The world is very much frightened about the comet, Dr. Cumming having declared the last day is certainly at hand, Sebastopol meaning Armageddon; but it seems that Sebastopol literally means 'blessed city,' and the received version of Armageddon is 'accursed plain'—so they don't exactly agree. A philosopher who laughs at the theological view of the question, and therefore shocks the ladies, has, however, frightened them equally by his scientific announcement that the world has already been destroyed 27 times; that, reasoning by analogy, it must be destroyed again, and probably often; that he rather imagines it will not be destroyed on the 13th inst.; but there is no reason why it should not be destroyed before that, as the destructive agencies are all rife—in the centre of the earth a raging fire, while the misty tail of the comet would, if it touched us, pour forth an overwhelming deluge—so in 4 and 20 hours we may be shrivelled or drowned. In the meantime, if the catastrophe do not occur, we hope to be at Torquay by the end of next month.

Exactly four weeks before this letter was written, though the news had not reached England yet, a catastrophe had occurred, of quite another character than those which Disraeli so lightly discussed: the Indian Mutiny had broken out. From Meerut, where it began,[1] the mutineers had marched to Delhi, and proclaimed the old and feeble king as Emperor of India. The rebellion, facilitated as it was by the insufficient proportion of English officers in native regiments, spread rapidly, other important military stations affected being Ferozepore, Allyghur, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Bareilly, and Allahabad; while in many cases the mutinous sepoys, besides massacring men, committed terrible atrocities on helpless women and children. Symptoms of uneasiness and disaffection among the native troops and in other quarters had been observed in India since the beginning of the year. A new rifle had been issued to the troops, and a rumour ran through them, which, though strongly denied by the authorities, proved afterwards to have some truth in it, that the new cartridges had been greased with cows' fat and pigs' fat, thus offending the religious principles both of Hindus and of Mohammedans. But the Government at home paid no attention to the signs of unrest, and were accordingly taken entirely by surprise when the outbreak came; nor could they for weeks, or indeed months, be convinced of the seriousness of the situation.

It was very different with Disraeli. The general interest which, ever since his tour in the Levant in 1830-31, he had felt in India as part of the gorgeous East had given place of late years to a more particular study of her characteristics and problems. To one persuaded of the vital importance of race, this land of ancient races made a special appeal. During his term of office his attention had been necessarily directed to the forceful proceedings by which the then Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, was rapidly extending the area of British rule; and his solicitude for the revenue of India had made

[1] May 10.

him protest against the indefinite expansion of our commitments in Burma.[1] He had served on the Committee of the House appointed to consider the system of Indian Government, and had, in consequence of the knowledge thus acquired, dissociated himself from what was the official policy of both front benches, to uphold the East India Company, and to continue to govern India largely through its agency. He was convinced, as he showed both in the *Press* and in his speech on Wood's India Bill in 1853,[2] that the Indian population suffered under serious grievances, which could not be properly remedied unless India were brought more directly under the Crown and Parliament. His attention having once been called to Dalhousie's policy, he followed with misgiving that ruler's energetic interferences, actuated by the highest motives, both with native States and with Hindu customs. His imagination showed him the unwisdom of applying, without the most careful discrimination, Liberal principles and Western morals in traditionary Hindustan. The annexation of Oude, however justifiable on the score of the misgovernment of the native king, seemed to him deplorable in policy, as a breach of faith tending gravely to alarm native opinion; and, under his direction, this final stroke of Dalhousie's policy was vigorously criticised in the *Press*, though he allowed himself to be dissuaded by colleagues from challenging it in Parliament.

Disraeli, therefore, grasped at once the significance of the news from India, and endeavoured to stir into action the supine Ministry. On June 29, when reports of only the earlier incidents had been received, he addressed a series of questions to Vernon Smith, the President of the Board of Control. What was the cause of these calamitous events? Was it political or religious? Did they arise from maladministration, or from some outburst of fanaticism, which ought perhaps to have been foreseen, even if it could not have been prevented? Had the Government been forewarned? Were the civil and

[1] See pp. 1213, 1214.

[2] See pp. 1326-1330.

military authorities in India in accord? Was it true that Lord Canning, Dalhousie's successor as Governor-General, had resigned? It was a moment, he said, of extreme peril to our authority in India; but, little confidence as he had in the Indian Government, he did not take despairing or desperate views. The tenure by which we held India was not a frail tenure; considering that that great country was inhabited by twenty-five nations, differing in race, religion, and language, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to fuse them into combination against us. Vernon Smith replied that additional reinforcements would be sent to India, but merely as a matter of precaution; that the Indian Empire was not imperilled; that he had no doubt the Mutiny would be shortly suppressed; that the military grievances which caused the disaffection would be anxiously inquired into; and that it was monstrous to suggest that Canning would resign in such a crisis. The troops in India were equal to any emergency, and he anticipated no danger.

This fatuous optimism was soon rudely shaken by the increasing gravity of the news, but it needed all the Queen's authority and insistence to induce Palmerston, who was intoxicated with his political success, to send out an adequate number of troops. Valuable time was also lost through a refusal to make use, for purposes of transport, save to a very limited extent, of the new screw-steamers instead of sailing vessels.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

Grosvenor Gate, *July* 13, 1857.—The Indian news is really alarming. Besides the telegraphs in the newspapers, there are said, undoubtedly, to be several others last night, and I am now going down to the House to inquire of the Government the real state of affairs. It is the most serious thing of the kind that has yet happened, and if it had occurred, as was perhaps intended, during the Russian war, the consequences might have been fatal. As it is, it is combined with a Chinese war, and perhaps still a Persian; for Orientals will care little for treaties, of which the ink is not dry, if they think we are in danger.

We were at the Duchess of Manchester's[1] on Friday night; a ball of very *haut ton*, and Mrs. Anson was there, very gay. I talked to her a good deal, and of the opportunity which was now offered to her husband, General Anson,[2] for showing those abilities which his friends always knew he possessed—a man of singular firmness and intrepidity. She was of the same opinion, and evidently saw, in the future, victories and a coronet. Alas! at that moment her husband had been six weeks dead. Hastening from the Hills to take command of the forces before Delhi, he was struck by cholera and carried off.[3]

Anson had been a *roué* in his youth, and of singular success. Then he took much to play, and, when he left England, had been long considered the finest whist-player in Europe. When the news first arrived, about ten days ago, and some were doubting whether Anson had sufficient experience for the occasion; the native army in revolt, the ancient capital of Hindostan in possession of the rebels, and the Great Mogul declared Sovereign; I said that for my part I had confidence in George Anson, because he had seen the Great Mogul so often on the ace of spades that he would know how to deal with him. All the world laughed very much, and Mrs. Anson sent off the joke to the General. Alas! alas! . . .

London is very gay: fêtes every night, and the Court itself at many, for the Prince of Prussia is here visiting his *fiancée*, the Princess Royal, and young Princes and Princesses require balls. There are also the Duke and Duchess of Montpensier, the King of the Belgians, his pretty daughter, the Princess Charlotte, and his son, the Comte of Flanders; also Princes of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen and Schleswig-Holstein, etc., etc., so the Court is very brilliant. There is also a famous beauty here, the Comtesse Castiglione, who, having charmed the Emperor of the French, is now on a tour of conquest in foreign parts, and, as she is universally decried by all the grand ladies, I take it is of ravishing excellence.

The most remarkable fête of the season, and indeed of many seasons, was given by the Prussian Minister at Prussia House to the Queen and Court last Monday. We had the honor to be invited. It recalled old days of Carlton House splendor, fanciful illuminations, and golden fish in endless fountains. There was a pavilion two hundred feet long, lined with the most splendid trees and shrubs I ever saw—araucarias and Norfolk Island pines . . . .

[1] Wife of Disraeli's friend Lord Mandeville, who had succeeded to the dukedom in 1855. See p. 933.
[2] Commander-in-Chief in India.
[3] On May 27.

The Opposition, as a whole, were content to throw the responsibility of dealing with the Mutiny on Ministers, though Ellenborough, as an old Governor-General, pressed in the Lords for more vigorous measures. But Disraeli, convinced that the troubles in India were deep-seated, and that, unless Parliament and the country came to realise them and insist on a change of policy, still more grave disasters might be apprehended, resolved to brave the reproach of faction, certain to be raised at this critical moment, and to expose the whole Indian situation, as he saw it, for the serious consideration of the House of Commons. Few speeches have ever been contributed to Indian debates in Parliament more worth study than that, three hours long, which he delivered on July 27.

It was essential, he said at the outset, to settle one point. Was this a mere military mutiny, or was it a national revolt? Did it spring from sudden impulse, or was it the result of organised conspiracy? Till these questions were answered, it was impossible to decide what measures the situation demanded. He was persuaded that the mutineers of the Bengal army were not so much the avengers of professional grievances as the exponents of general discontent. The old principle of our rule had been to respect nationality; but the Government of India of late years had alienated or alarmed almost every influential class. He deprecated talk of reconquering India. Glorious as the annals of our warfare in that country had been, what had been the nature of our conquest?

> I deny that, in a vulgar sense of the words, we have ever conquered India. . . . . Our conquest of India in the main has been a conquest of India only in the same sense in which William of Orange conquered England. We have been called in—this happened very frequently in the earlier periods of our Indian history—by populations suffering under tyranny, and we have entered those kingdoms and principalities to protect their religion and their property. It will be found, in that wonderful progress of human events which the formation of our Indian Empire presents, that our occupation of

any country has been preceded by a solemn proclamation, and concluded by a sacred treaty, in which we undertook to respect and maintain inviolate the rights and privileges, the laws and customs, the property and religion, of the people whose affairs we were about to administer. Such was the principle upon which our Indian Empire was founded; and it is a proud as well as a politic passage in the history of Englishmen, that that principle has been until of late years religiously observed.

Our empire in India was, indeed, founded on the principle of *divide et impera*, in no Machiavellian spirit, but because of the number of independent states, of religions, and of languages, in the country. The Mohammedans and Mahrattas had failed in India because they had persecuted religion and confiscated land. England came in with a guarantee of the land and a pledge not to tamper with religion. But now everything in India had been changed, or attempted to be changed—law and manners, customs and usages, political organisations, tenure of property, and religion.

The causes which had produced discontent among all classes might be ranged under three heads: first, our forcible destruction of native princes; next, our disturbance of the settlement of property; third, our tampering with the religion of the people. These changes began about 1848, when it was necessary that the revenue of the Government should be increased. The doctrine of 'lapse' of the States of native rulers who died without natural heirs was invented, and the Hindu law of adoption set aside, first in the case of the Rajah of Sattara, and afterwards in some ten other cases, including the important state of Berar. The States were annexed and the riches of the rulers appropriated. This was done in the teeth of the remonstrances of some of the most experienced Anglo-Indians. Then, in regard to property, commissions had been issued to inquire into the titles of landed estates, and a great quantity of freehold land had been resumed by the Government. Here, too, the law of adoption had been abolished. Moreover, the hereditary

pensions of descendants of royal houses which we had dispossessed had been turned into annuities for life. As to tampering with religion, there was no objection among the Hindus to missionary enterprise, but to the union of missionary enterprise with the power of the Government. 'No taxation, however grievous, no injustice however glaring, acts so dangerously upon the Hindu character as the persuasion that the authority of the Crown is exercised to induce him to abandon the religion he professes.' Now, the legislative Council of India, under the new system, had been constantly meddling with the Hindu religion. Under the national system of education recently established, the Scriptures had appeared in the schools, 'and you cannot persuade the Hindus that they have appeared there without the concurrence or the secret sanction of the Government.' Female education in India was also a dangerous measure to take in hand. There were two much more reprehensible acts: the first, the law that no man should lose his property on account of a change of religion; the second, the law permitting a Hindu widow to marry a second husband. These two laws, more than anything else, had disquieted the religious feelings of the Hindus, and a powerful society had been started to defend the religion of the country.

Then came the annexation of Oude. Whatever might be thought of the king's conduct, no right could be founded on that for dethroning him; for, by the treaty we had with him, the very matter of misconduct had been anticipated and provided for. Owing to that annexation the Mohammedan princes felt that they had an identity of interest with the Hindu Mahrattas. So the whole of the native princes, and also the proprietors, had a common interest against the English Government, and the peasant was alarmed about his religion. 'Never mind what were *your* intentions; the question is, what were *their* thoughts, what were *their* inferences?' The Bengal army was mainly recruited from Oude, and by the annexation

the sepoy lost a privileged position. The sending of mysterious symbols from village to village, and from regiment to regiment, showed there was a wide-spread combination. 'The people of India were only waiting for an occasion and a pretext. That occasion was furnished, and that pretext was soon devised.' The Russian war had disquieted the Indian mind. The English Government chose that time, not to tranquillise India, but to go to war with a great Mohammedan State, Persia, and to send troops to China and Pegu. Here was the occasion, and a pretext was found in the greased cartridges. 'The rise and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes and by an accumulation of adequate causes.'

As to the means to be adopted to meet the present emergency, in one sense there was no controversy, because all were agreed on the employment of force. But what amount of force? 'A merely military mutiny may be met by a merely military effort.' But this was a national revolt, and even for a military mutiny what Government proposed was hardly adequate. He recommended that there should not only be an advance from Calcutta through Bengal, but also an expedition advancing up the Indus, and that the militia should be called out and embodied. But force was not all that we should look to.

> We may pour our legions and our fleets up the rivers and through the provinces of India; we may be successful; but to my mind we should add to that success and doubly strengthen our force—and I am prepared, for one, to give any support to Her Majesty's Government which they may require for that purpose—if at the same time we should say to India that supposes she is aggrieved and outraged, to India perhaps despairing of pardon: 'Although we will assert with the highest hand our authority, although we will not rest until our unquestioned supremacy and predominance are acknowledged from the Punjab to Cape Comorin, it is not merely as avengers that we appear.' I think that the great body of the population of that country ought to know that there is for them a future of hope. I think we ought to temper justice with mercy—justice the most severe with mercy the most indulgent.

India could not be governed by English regiments and European agency alone. The difficulty should be met boldly and completely.

> The course which I recommend is this: You ought at once, whether you receive news of success or defeat, to tell the people of India that the relation between them and their real Ruler and Sovereign, Queen Victoria, shall be drawn nearer. You must act upon the opinion of India on that subject immediately; and you can only act upon the opinion of Eastern nations through their imagination. You ought to have a Royal Commission sent by the Queen from this country to India immediately to inquire into the grievances of the various classes of that population. You ought to issue a royal proclamation to the people of India declaring that the Queen of England is not a Sovereign who will countenance the violation of treaties; that the Queen of England is not a Sovereign who will disturb the settlement of property; that the Queen of England is a Sovereign who will respect their laws, their usages, their customs, and, above all, their religion. Do this, and do it not in a corner, but in a mode and manner which will attract universal attention and excite the general hope of Hindostan, and you will do as much as all your fleets and armies can achieve.

Only a man of high imagination could, without ever visiting India, have grasped, so completely as Disraeli in this speech showed himself to have done, the native point of view; could have understood so clearly how Dalhousie's repeated annexations and well-intentioned reforms must have appeared to Hindus and Mohammedans, and by what means native opinion could best be conciliated and impressed. Subsequent Indian policy has largely followed the lines which Disraeli suggested. Dalhousie's policy of 'lapse,' then so much in vogue, was reversed when the Crown took over the Indian Government, with the result that there are no more loyal denizens of the Empire than the ruling princes of India. Moreover, that neglect of native feelings, customs, and religion, which Disraeli discerned and reprobated, has entirely disappeared. Careful attention to Indian susceptibilities is a special mark of the Supreme Government. In both these respects Disraeli has been vindicated, but in nothing

has he been more vindicated than in his recommendations affecting the Crown.

No more pregnant suggestion has ever been made about Indian government than his admonition to draw closer the relation between India and the person of the Sovereign. He knew that persons, not constitutional abstractions, Emperors, not Parliaments, impress the Oriental mind. To the following out of this policy, more, perhaps, even than to the increasing association of native Indians in the responsibilities of government, is to be ascribed the admirable harmony between Great Britain and India which we witness to-day[1]; and during his life all the principal steps were taken under Disraeli's auspices. The transference of the government from the Company to the Crown, and the issue of just such a royal proclamation as he recommended in his speech, were effected by the second Derby-Disraeli Ministry. When Disraeli became Prime Minister for the second time, he persuaded a reluctant Queen not to withhold or withdraw her sanction from the visit of the Prince of Wales to India —a visit which established a personal relation between the Indian princes and peoples and the heir to the throne; and in 1876 he carried through Parliament, in the teeth of much ill-informed scoffing, a Bill which added to the other glorious titles of an English King the dignity of Emperor of India. The great Durbar of 1911, in which the Emperor and his Consort appeared at Delhi in person to claim the fealty of the people, was the logical conclusion of Disraeli's policy. He knew that 'you can only act upon the opinion of Eastern nations through their imagination.'

Imagination was the last thing that the Whigs and Liberals of 1857 brought to bear on the crisis. Vernon Smith assured Disraeli that no native princes were engaged in the conspiracy, that the annexation of Oude had nothing to do with what had happened, that there was no national revolt, but a mere military mutiny. He ridiculed the idea of a Royal Commission, which would

[1] 1915. Unfortunately the harmony did not prove lasting.

necessarily supersede the Governor-General—and perhaps this was not Disraeli's happiest suggestion; but of the vital hint about the person of the Sovereign neither the Minister nor any subsequent speaker took any notice. Disraeli's motion was only for papers, and was in no sense a motion of censure; but Russell, interpreting the general feeling of a patriotic but unimaginative House, proposed as an amendment, and carried unanimously, an address to the Crown of support and confidence in the Government—'one of those dry constitutional platitudes,' said Disraeli, 'which, in a moment of difficulty, the noble lord the member for the City of London mechanically pulls out of the dusty pigeonholes of his mind, and shakes in the perplexed face of a baffled House of Commons.' The reproach of faction, which Disraeli had anticipated, came not only from the Whigs, but from his own friend and supporter, Thomas Baring, who had been chairman of the Indian Committee, and had then and subsequently, as was natural to a City magnate, upheld the cause of the Company.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

CARLTON CLUB, *July* 31, 1857.—. . . I have many things I could say, if we were in your boudoir, but India is a whirlpool in which all merges—great or small.

The season is over, but the Parliament will last a long time. Everybody is alarmed and shocked at the private tone of the Government, which is flippant. Her Majesty sorely oppressed, and believes, like her grandfather, she is destined to lose provinces.

The Queen of Holland has been the heroine of the last fortnight—indefatigably intelligent, and the *fête-champêtre* at Orleans House the most considerable social incident since your departure. So much Royalty, that our friend, Lady Jersey, seemed to me rushing about the gardens in perplexed ecstasy.

The Princesses, in fantastic hats, sat under the trees to receive their guests; and never was a prettier Court circle. The tables for the banquet—a variety of round tables—were laid in a *bosquet*, surrounded with tall green trees; and, as the day was burning, the site was delicious. Everything was well done, and the whole thing successful.

The Comte de Paris and the Duc d'Aumale came to me

after my Indian speech, which they heard on Monday, and dined at Bellamy's! What do you think of that? Do you know the young Ascanius? He is at present too slender, being much above six feet; but his countenance is intelligent and his manner simple but refined.

This is sad scribblement; but I must go down to the House to fight about Sir Chas. Napier's despatches and Hindu protests against Supreme Legislation about widows and converts.

The session was prolonged till August 28, but only a small portion of the time was given to the question of India. There was not, as Disraeli said, 'in the House or in the country a due sense of the gravity of the emergency.' The prolongation was mainly due to the passionate opposition, led by Gladstone, to the Divorce Bill; which, though of course it raised nice ecclesiastical questions, was in its essence a Bill, not to legalise divorce in England for the first time—that would have been a matter of real principle—but to make it possible for the ordinary man or woman to obtain a relief which was at that time obtainable only by the rich. Disraeli's mind was full of India, and he took no part in the discussion of a Bill which he doubtless regarded as of comparatively small moment, and in regard to which his own friends were divided. Gladstone's mind was so full of the question of divorce that, to judge by the absolute silence of Lord Morley's exhaustive *Life*, the thought of our Indian Empire and its perilous situation hardly found any lodgment there. Could there be a more illuminating commentary on the differing genius of these eminent rivals than their simultaneous absorption in subjects so widely apart and of such different political consequence?

As the autumn advanced, the news from India grew worse. It became evident that, in spite of Vernon Smith's assurances, many dethroned princes, their heirs and widows, had become tainted with the spirit of disaffection. The sinister figure of Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the ex-Peishwa of Poona, appeared, massacred the garrison of Cawnpore, and issued the most blood-

thirsty proclamations. Sarah Disraeli wrote on September 2: 'This sanguinary "Fakredeen"[1] who has issued out of his castle at Bithoor to regain "his rights," and this proclamation, begin to look something like a national revolt to the meanest capacity.' Happily the bulk of the civil population, whatever their grievances, remained quiet.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 16, 1857.—. . . I wish, like you, I could console myself with reading novels, or even writing them; but I have lost all zest for fiction, and have for many years. I have never read anything of Dickens except an extract in a newspaper, and therefore I cannot help to decide on the merits of *Little Dorrit*. . . .

One ought not to prophesy about India, when probably the new mail has by this time arrived, tho' it has not reached me; for altho' little more than 30 miles from town, I live in a forest, or what once was one—but I take a gloomy view of affairs. The Ministers underrated the business from the first. They are in a scrape, and trying to get out of it by the bullying of *The Times*.

I cannot altogether repress a suspicion, tho' it is only for your own ear, that many of the details of horrors, which have so outraged the sensibility of the country, are manufactured.

The striking story of Skene at Jhansi, his deeds of heroic romance, worthy of a Paladin, then kissing his wife and shooting her, etc., etc.—all appear now, to be complete invention. This story has produced a great effect in this neighborhood, and, I doubt not, in all others, and I dare say stimulated subscriptions, as it certainly has the warlike passions of the people. We must remember Captain Jenkins's ears. He appeared without them before the House of Commons, and the House declared war against Spain in consequence. It afterwards turned out that he had lost them in the pillory, and deserved to do so.

The detail of all these stories is suspicious. Details are a feature of the Myth. The accounts are too graphic—I hate the word. Who can have seen these things? Who heard them? The rows of ladies standing with their babies in their arms to be massacred, with the elder children clutching to their robes—who that would tell these things could have escaped? One lady says to a miscreant: 'I do not ask you to spare my life, but give some water to my child.' The child is instantly tossed in the air and caught on a bayonet! Those

[1] See pp. 858-863.

who invented the Skene story might invent others. It was no rude hand that forged that tale of plaintive horror. What can there be, even in your *Copperfield*, like that? . . .

Disraeli's tendency to believe that there was great exaggeration in the accounts of the Mutiny massacres finds a parallel in his subsequent hesitation to accept the stories of Bulgarian atrocities in the seventies. The habit of his mind was sceptical in regard to such tales of horror, and this habit no doubt counted for something in his creditable refusal to join in the cries for vengeance on the mutineers, or to stimulate the passions of the English people. With much of Lord Canning's conduct during this anxious time Disraeli was dissatisfied, and he questioned the propriety of including his name in the list of those whom Parliament formally thanked for their services in suppressing the Mutiny. But he was, at any rate, one with him in the disposition which earned for him the honourable nickname of 'Clemency Canning.'

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Sept.* 23, 1857.—. . . The Indian news is most grave. The world has now found out it is a rebellion, not a mutiny. But of all the awful circumstances of this terrible affair, is the spirit of vengeance which is preached—as if we were to take our enemies for our model. In a political, a military, a religious point of view, nothing can be more unwise or more heinous. But the passions of the people are diverted thus from the misconduct of their governors. . . .

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Oct.* 8, 1857.—. . . We have been here since the middle of August, enjoying the charming scene and season, with the exception of a visit to Ashridge, who counts as a neighbor, and is a constituent. . . .

We met there a lively party: the Ebringtons, Lady Brownlow, F. and Lady Margaret Leveson, the female Lyndhursts, Stafford, Powis family, and a troop of cavaliers. In the evening they performed charades, with all the neighbors and servants assembled and admitted. Nothing could be worse; except Stafford, who is capital, not a performer had the slightest dramatic talent. They all seemed to cluster round

Stafford like bees, with their backs to the audience, and mumbling in a nervous whisper; occasionally a giggle, the last despair of *mauvaise honte*. Our hostess,[1] who is as kind as she is agreeable, thought they were not applauded enough, and we organised some *claqueurs*; but this finished the business. The rehearsal in the morning of a charade took three hours, and the performance could never be spun out to ten minutes! At last Mr. Stafford went away in despair, and the company took refuge in a more congenial round game. . . .

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Oct.* 15, 1857.—. . . Ashridge is a wonderful place—a castle in a forest, and not thirty miles from town! The present building was raised by the late Lord Bridgewater, at the commencement of this century, in the vicious Gothic of the time, but regardless of expense—and, tho' all its details are wrong, the aggregate, from its extent, is very imposing. It is a sort of Windsor, which was restored to its present style by the same architect, Wyatt, who happened to know a little of Gothic architecture, when the world knew nothing, and wanted to know a great deal. Fortunate man, he has built a good percentage of all the great houses in England! Unhappy country, that such an opportunity should have fallen to such hands! At Ashridge, the great hall, the great tower, the chapel, etc., etc., are all Gothic, but all of different ages and incongruous ornament. But Nature is independent, not only of architects, but of Art itself, and no words can describe the variety and beauty and size and age of the trees at Ashridge—with every succession of woodland bush; fern taller than the Life Guards; and herds both of red and fallow deer. . . .

Disraeli took the opportunity of a farmers' dinner at Newport Pagnell, on September 30, to deprecate in public that rising spirit of vengeance which he had deplored in private. It was a noble and courageous protest, as applicable to subsequent wars in which the enemy has outraged humanity as to the experiences of the Mutiny:

The horrors of war need no stimulant. The horrors of a war carried on as the war in India is at present especially need no stimulant. I am persuaded that our soldiers and our sailors will exact a retribution which it may perhaps be too terrible to pause upon. But I do without the slightest

[1] Lady Marian Alford.

hesitation declare my humble disapprobation of persons in high authority announcing that upon the standard of England 'vengeance' and not 'justice,' should be inscribed. . . . I for one protest against taking Nana Sahib as a model for the conduct of the British soldier. I protest against meeting atrocities by atrocities. I have heard things said and seen things written of late which would make me almost suppose that the religious opinions of the people of England had undergone some sudden change, and that, instead of bowing before the name of Jesus, we were preparing to revive the worship of Moloch. I cannot believe that it is our duty to indulge in such a spirit.

In other respects the line of the speech was that all the subsequent news from India had justified his original appreciation of the gravity of the crisis; but, though he foresaw evil, he did not counsel despondency or despair. He believed that the country was now roused to the real nature of the rebellion, and would therefore take steps to vindicate our imperial power. Palmerston apparently, however, according to Greville's gossip, reported to Disraeli by Lennox on September 27, still laughed at there being any real danger. Lennox continued: 'Pam seems low in C. G.'s estimation, but he says nothing else will or can go down. That everyone says he is the only man possible; there is no one could take his place. Derby he considers quite an impossibility. Were it not for the general feeling that no one could follow him, he thinks more disasters in India would rub Pam's prestige off.'

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 2, 1857.—. . . C[harles] G[reville]'s facts are always more valuable than his opinions, or rather what he chooses to circulate as his opinions, for he does not always pronounce what he believes. I am not, however, surprised that he should say what he does about Derby; nevertheless, I recollect that in January, 1855, he used to several persons, and among them, I think, to yourself, exactly the same phrase. Nevertheless, we know what occurred in a couple of months.

Returning from Ashridge, I contrived to pass a day at Chicheley and dine with the farmers at Newport Pagnell, and,

tho' the assemblage was intensely bucolic, managed to say a few words in the right direction, tho' with great difficulty and caution.

Mills's opinion, or that of any E.I. Director, goes for nothing, and no £ s. d. view can now affect this question. What the fate of the Government may be I do not foresee: what it ought to be is not very difficult to pronounce. The act which brought about the rebellion is entirely attributable to them, and they ought to be held responsible for it. V[ernon] S[mith]'s words, in answer to me, remain: 'There is not the slightest reason to suppose that the annexation of Oude has anything to do with this outbreak.' Every paper now says that Oude is the centre of the rebellion. . . .

To Sir John Pakington.

HUGHENDEN, *Oct.* 6, 1857.—I read your speech to-day with great satisfaction. I am glad we are agreed. I am confident that, if the party will only act like sensible men, they may attain a far higher position than any that, for years past, they have held. What could be a more sure basis for public confidence, and a more glorious claim for a nation's gratitude, than to restore that Empire in India which the Whigs have all but lost?

I see old Henley is at his tricks again. It is really intolerable that, because his father was an E. Ind. shipbuilder, the party is to be broken up at such a crisis. He it was who mainly threw us in 1853 into that painful minority on Stanley's motion for the postponement of legislation until the inquiry was concluded—a motion which, if largely supported, would have been now a stepping-stone to power, and the defeat of which, I really believe, was the true cause that Stanley refused my proposal in 1856 to bring forward the Oude case. However, I am resolved that Henley shall not again play this game. The Government of India must be one of the mainsprings on which any Ministry can now be formed, and I have myself not a doubt that, if the Tories go straight on this, and hold together, the defection from the commercial ranks of the Government will be large. . . .

It was with the utmost difficulty, and only by the forbearance and aid of Mr. Rose, that I prevented, before I left town, the *Press* being sold to that lot of mysterious capitalists who are buying up all the Tory papers, or in all probability by this time it would be writing up the E.I. Company and Lord P. As it is, I do not know whether this may not yet happen before Parliament meets. It will be a great blow to us.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

TORQUAY, *Nov.* 7, 1857.—. . . The Government, of course, wish o make the Company a scapegoat, and are feeling their way to that end. This must not be allowed. At the same time, it is not for us to vindicate the Company. If the motion of Lord Stanley, brought forward, at my request, in 1853, had been carried, the double Government would not have been in existence. This is a strong point in our position.

There are two questions as regards the government of India: one of administration, the other of policy. We have always opposed the administration of the Company, and what has occurred renders it still more expedient to reconstruct that administration; but the primary cause of the present disasters is policy, not administration, and Downing St. is responsible for policy. The question of administration will arise when that of policy is settled. The policy should be first censured, and, if Parliament sanctions such a course, the censurers will be responsible for the construction of a new administrative system. . . .

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HATFIELD HOUSE, *Nov.* 23, 1857.—We came down here in the same carriage as Lady Stuart de Rothesay, the mother of Lady Canning. She was, as usual, very agreeable and chatty, and told us endless tales of Calcutta, and all the adventures of this perilous crisis.

One thing she said particularly amused me. She was very indignant at a statement made in Exeter Hall by Lord Shaftesbury, that mutilated Englishwomen were constantly arriving at Calcutta, and that he had read in a letter of Lady Canning that there were more than thirteen English ladies with their noses cut off at that moment at the Presidency. Lady Stuart said that there was not the slightest authority for this statement of Lord Shaftesbury, and that Lady Canning had never alluded to the subject in any letter.

In consequence of this statement of Lord Shaftesbury, a surgeon wrote to the Ladies' Committee for the Relief of the Indian Sufferers, of which Lady Stuart de Rothesay is a member, stating that he had great experience in the formation of artificial noses, that he was ready to give all his skill, time, and devotion, to the cause, but as the machinery was rather expensive, he hoped, in accepting his services, the Committee would defray the prime cost of the springs! He then gave a tariff of prices, and offered to supply noses for English ladies by the dozen, and, I believe, even by the gross. . . .

Parliament was unexpectedly called together in the beginning of December, not in order to deal with the Mutiny in India, but because, as in the autumn of 1847, ten years before, the Government had found it necessary, in order to cope with a commercial crisis, originating in the present case with failures of banks in the United States, to authorise an issue of notes by the Bank of England in excess of the £14,000,000 prescribed by the Bank Charter Act. Derby wrote on November 15 to ask for Disraeli's opinion on the course which the party ought to pursue in Parliament. Attention could not be confined to the currency question. 'I own,' he continued, 'I think myself that we have arrived at a stage in Indian affairs in which we have a full right to inquiry both as to the past and the future, and when, without laying ourselves open to any imputation of faction, we may fairly challenge the Government to vindicate the measures they have adopted in the East, including the forgotten China!'

To Lord Derby.

TORQUAY, *Nov.* 18, 1857.—Our party is pledged against the Bank Charter Act by the course pursued by them in 1847, and also by the standing policy of the country gentlemen, which is adverse to a restricted currency. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the present Act has nothing to do with the existing state of affairs, and had it not been in force, a crisis equally disastrous would probably have occurred, and we should have been driven to £1 notes, as in 1825.

I doubt the expediency of fixing upon any particular rate of interest as the period of interposition, and, indeed, I question the propriety of the power of suspension in anybody being recognised. We should, I venture to think, support the policy advocated in 1847—*i.e.*, a recurrence to the state of things existing before the Act of 1844, which we then held as aggravating evils at periods inevitable in a country of great commercial transactions.

The suspension of the Act by the present Government I look upon as rather pitiful, and I think, with their opinions, they ought to have been firm. The suspension by our friends, if they had been in office, would have been a consistent and, in their views, a beneficial course. The present state of

affairs is a triumph for the opinions advocated by Ld. G. Bentinck and Mr. Thomas Baring in 1848.

If by any chance you have a copy of G. B.'s biography at hand, you will find some curious details, which may be of use at this moment, regarding that similar period.[1]

I believe, if the Government had been firm, and that all the joint stock banks and the re-discounters of Lombard Street had suspended payment, which they would infallibly have done, that with the present produce of the mines you would have had money at 2 per ct. this time next year, and for an enduring period. This would have been much better for the country gentlemen than an inflated currency, but, without knowing it, they always play the game of the commercial gamblers.

I think the position taken up generally by our friends, that the currency of the country ought to expand with the commerce of the country, and that what might have been expedient in 1844 is not suited to 1857, is a fallacy. Currency always does expand with the commerce of the country. Bank notes are a very small portion of the currency of the country. That is represented mainly by bills of exchange, which always necessarily bear a due relation to the commercial transactions.

Peel's limit of 14 mill. was fixed, if I am not mistaken, upon returns, which proved that under no circumstances of pressure had the bank circulation been reduced to that amount, which described also the amount of the Government debt to the Bank.

After all, what is wanted now is not currency, but capital.

There is, however, one subject of speculation the interest of which, at this moment, cannot be too highly imagined. What light does the present monetary condition of the country throw upon those vast returns of exports and imports which have been so ostentatiously paraded before us during the last seven years, accompanied by simultaneous assurances that trade was never in so healthy a state ?

I agree with you entirely that we must not permit the impending session to be a merely monetary campaign. The whole policy of the Government must be opened—but tho' there are for the Cabinet, at the present moment, many points of difficulty, in Parliament all will be merged in that of India. . . .

I ventured in the H. of C. in the month of July to lay

[1] Derby, in his reply from Knowsley, Nov. 24, wrote: 'We have not here your biography of G. Bentinck, but it is in St. James's Square, and I have asked Stanley, who goes up to town to-morrow, to send it me down here; and before we meet I will refer to the passages to which you allude.'

down that no measure would be efficacious unless we first ascertained the cause of the outbreak, and I staked my opinion that the paramount and proximate cause was to be found in the annexation of Oude. The Government expressed their astonishment at the bare suspicion of such a cause, and distinctly gave it as their opinion that Oude had nothing to do with the affair. As present it is generally held that my statement was justified.

But what has been the consequence of the Government attempting to quell a rebellion, of the cause of which they were not cognisant ?

The insurrection in Oude cut off all their communications with the Upper Provinces. They have never been able to send a man to Delhi from the Metropolis. Had they recognised the annexation as the prime cause, acting, of course, on discontented materials long brooding, they might have sent troops early in the year overland, perhaps, to Bombay, forwarded them up the Indus, and through countries where camels abound; descended on Delhi, then on Oude, and prevented all the disasters that have occurred and the still existing dangers. At present, having assumed an erroneous basis for their operations, there seems a chance of the blunders of the Crimea being repeated on a larger scale—for the means of transport from Calcutta are very deficient, and we may find that we have a large army at the capital and none in the provinces.

I think on the first night the Indian case ought to be opened in both Houses.

You told me to write fully, and I have endeavored to do so without reserve, though very roughly. After all, a good talk together is better than all the letters in the world, but these are suggestions which you can, if you think them worthy of it, turn in your mind, and may lead, when we meet, to perhaps less crude conclusions. . . .

CARLTON CLUB, *Friday, Nov.* 27, 1857.—. . . I apprehend any unnecessary declaration against the Company, at this moment, would be extremely impolitic. Whatever the faults of the 'double government,' the causes of the present calamities in India are attributable to the policy of the Cabinet. Who annexed Oude ? Who sent the soldiers in sailing vessels ? Who scornfully neglected the overland passage ? . . .

When Parliament met on December 3, Disraeli criticised the Government both about the suspension of the Bank Charter Act and about their Indian policy on the

lines of his letter to Derby. He was especially severe on the feebleness of the course proposed with regard to the Bank Charter Act.

> We shall be doing exactly what we did in 1847.[1] In 1847 the country was panic-struck and half ruined. Parliament was called together, and the country looked to it for the expression of some distinct opinion. A Committee was appointed. Ten years have elapsed. The same occurrence takes place. Parliament is again called together; and what is Parliament, and what are Ministers—the most influential members of Parliament—about to do in the difficulty? Again they are going to evade doing that which is the duty of every statesman in this country: to lay down in this House the opinion which they have formed on the subject, and to call on the House to maintain that opinion. Instead of that—and I deeply regret it—we are to have another Committee on the Bank Charter Act of 1844; and I suppose that in 1867, after a repetition of the same mischance and the same miseries, the same fruitless and bootless process will be adopted of appointing a Committee on that subject in this House.

There is much good sense in this criticism, and Disraeli followed it up by a motion that it was desirable to legislate at once without further inquiry. The motion was lost by a large majority, in spite of the exhaustive and ingenious manner in which he developed his abstruse subject. The course which the debate took made failure inevitable. The legislation which Disraeli desired was the repeal of the Act; but Gladstone rose and called for legislation to uphold it and increase its stringency; and between these two extreme views the Government had little difficulty in persuading the House that the safest course was to appoint a Committee. The apparently illogical plan of enforcing the Act in quiet times and issuing a licence, subject to a subsequent indemnity, to break it when matters are critical, has justified itself by its persistence; and after this unsuccessful protest in 1857 Disraeli ceased to tilt at it. He had been hampered throughout the discussions by an attack of his old enemy, influenza.

[1] See III., Ch. 1.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Dec.* 28, 1857.—A merrie Xmas, and many very happy new years!

Last Monday we went to Middleton Park, and stayed until Thursday, on a visit to Lord and Lady Jersey, but we could not eat our Xmas dinner there, for we were obliged to go home for a county election! . . .

The Government are going to take the rule of India from the E.I. Company. Instead of the Directors, there is to be a Council in London of 18, with large salaries, and to be appointed by the Ministry. Thus the Whigs will probably succeed in accomplishing in 1857 what destroyed their party more than seventy years ago; which shows one should always persevere.

To Lord Henry Lennox.

HUGHENDEN, *Dec.* 28, 1857.—. . . Here, the Whigs, frightened out of their wits, with unceasing efforts and reckless expenditure, have succeeded in only polling 1,600 men out of 6,000. The county of Bucks won by such a number was never known! But no one would stir for Hamilton except the farmers, and two or three squires about me, who had local jealousies of the Cavendishes.[1]

I came here, and did what I could, and sent him up 40 votes. However, the Tory party is not like the E.I. Company: it is immortal, and, tho' it was never more forlorn than at present, will some day hold up its head.

Disraeli had expressed the opinion, in a letter to Lennox in the autumn, that the Government would make the Company the scapegoat for their own Indian miscalculations and blunders, and the expectation was realised. Palmerston gave notice to the Company before Christmas that it was intended to transfer their dominion over India to a President and Council, the President always to be a Cabinet Minister. To propose a change of this kind, however right and necessary in itself, while the disturbance was still raging in India, was to suggest that the Company was responsible rather than the Cabinet—so responsible that there must be no delay whatever in terminating its existence; whereas, in fact, there was

[1] This was a by-election in which one Whig Cavendish stood in succession to another Whig Cavendish who retired. The numbers were—Cavendish (L.), 1,617; Hamilton (C.), 1,454.

evidence to show that the Company realised the serious nature of the crisis better, and earlier, than the Government. Disraeli, though in principle favourable to the transfer of authority, thought the action of Ministers very unfair; nor did he see any special hope for India in handing over its Government, and all its valuable patronage, to an inefficient Whig placeman—a 'mere machine'—like Vernon Smith. He told Vitzthum in January that all his gloomy predictions had not only been verified, but surpassed by facts. Delhi had indeed been taken, but the victory had not been followed up; Lucknow was relieved, but not held. Sir Colin Campbell was a competent General, but what could he do without troops? 'Dismal forebodings' of this kind, it may be added, were shared also by Greville this January. Vitzthum's account of Disraeli's conversation proceeds:

> Such is the moment which the Premier chooses to carry out the Whigs' favourite scheme, hatched eighty years ago, of transferring the rule of the East India Company to the Crown —in other words, to the Ministry of the day. It is true, we have not much to praise the Company for, and have often intimated that we should not be sorry to see it done away with. Palmerston, careless as usual, thinks he will be able to accomplish the *coup* without encountering any opposition in the House of Commons. . . . After a victorious suppression of the revolt, he could have done anything. In the present state of things he could hardly choose a more inauspicious moment for officially informing the Company of their dissolution. . . . One thing seems certain, that a transformation so materially affecting our home affairs cannot be entrusted to men who, by their senseless policy of annexation, have caused the mischief, and are responsible for the present crisis.[1]

Accordingly, Disraeli was ready to assist Thomas Baring, and other friends of the Company, in endeavouring to defeat the Bill as at any rate inopportune. But to interpose, as Baring did, a hostile amendment on the introduction of a Government measure was felt to be rather outrageous; and Palmerston was easily able to

[1] Vitzthum, Vol. I., pp. 265-268.

show, as indeed Disraeli had already recognised, the enormous practical inconvenience of the existing system of double government, the Board of Control on the part of the Cabinet, and the Court of Directors on that of the Company. The great majority of 318 to 173 by which Baring's amendment was defeated[1] sounded the Company's knell, even though the Bill itself, and the Premier who introduced it, disappeared almost immediately in an entirely unlooked-for Ministerial convulsion.

Before this happened, Prince Frederick William of Prussia and the Princess Royal, whose engagement had been announced just before the outbreak of the Mutiny, were duly married. It was a fateful alliance, charged, in spite of the admirable qualities of bride and bridegroom, with the seeds of evil for the countries of both; but there was no presentiment then of anything but good, and the Disraelis entered with zest into the accompanying festivities.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

Saturday, Jan. 23, 1858.—On Wednesday we were at the Bridal Ball at Court. It was more brilliant than numerous, being, as I thought, unbecomingly limited; for the new ball room was only half full, and all the other rooms were open and empty. However, I liked it, for I got a seat. There were as many Princes as at the Congress of Vienna. The royal party did nothing but dance with each other, and I thought, perhaps in consequence, looked bored. I saw the Princess of Prussia cram her pocket-handkerchief into her mouth to stifle a yawn. The Princess Royal, however, looked bright and gay, tho' I understand she is continually crying about leaving home; but then, they say, she is very childish and always cries.

The Queen rather expands too much in form, but she danced with the Prince of Prussia[2] and some others.

One of the Princes, the Duke of Brabant, a tall and otherwise good-looking young man, has so long a nose that it startles everyone who meets him, and makes the women almost scream. It is such a nose as a young Prince has in a fairy-tale, who has been banned by a malignant fairy, or as you see in the first scenes of a pantomime, or in the initial letter of a column of *Punch*.

[1] Feb. 18, 1858. [2] Afterwards William I., German Emperor.

Lord Stratford de Redcliffe was there, and made a sensation. He came up to me and revived an old acquaintance. Still a very comely man, and had on the finest coat that was ever seen since Joseph's jacket.

A few days before we assisted at another royal party, tho' of a different character—a dinner at which we met all the illustrious exiles of France: the Duchess of Orleans, the Count of Paris, his brother the D. of Chartres, and the D. and Duchess of Aumale, and full suites. The circle was, however, very agreeable, the guests to meet them choice, among them, by-the-by, Cardinal Wiseman, and the banquet not to be surpassed in splendour or *recherche* even at Windsor or B. Palace. It was rather curious to dine with a Cardinal at Gunnersbury.[1]

Kielmansegge gave me, in confidence, a most interesting description of the audience at which, after so many years, the jewels were restored to Hanover. The Queen herself was present, and the Prince; V[ice] Chancellor Page Wood,[2] and Garrard, the jeweller. The jewels were all valued, and the aggregate £160,000; they were those which the Queen constantly wore in state, and of which she was most proud. When it was impossible longer to retain them, she behaved very well; thanked K. for the tact and regard for her feelings and convenience he had shown throughout, and said that from the first she had always been of opinion that she was not entitled to them. I believe it was Melbourne who, in his off-hand way, advised her to keep them. K. has got them all sealed up at Grosvenor Place, and is so nervous that he can't sleep o' nights.

Persigny[3] seized upon me at the Palace, and took me to a corner, where for half an hour he dilated on the theme that, if we would not introduce an Alien Bill, we must prepare for the worst, so far as France is concerned.

Heaven knows what will happen! We have enough on our hands.

What was about to happen was in some respects a repetition of what happened in the winter of 1851-52. Palmerston's excessive complaisance to the Emperor Napoleon III. was once more to result in placing Disraeli in office.

[1] Baron Lionel de Rothschild's house.
[2] Afterwards Lord Chancellor Hatherley.
[3] French Ambassador.

CHAPTER V.

Chancellor a Second Time.

1858.

Few things appeared more improbable, to judge by the events of 1857, than the return of the Conservatives to office early in 1858. Palmerston's personality and policy had received an emphatic endorsement from the electorate in the spring; and the stirring events of the subsequent months—the Indian Mutiny and the Chinese War—were apparently calculated to confirm the rally of people and Parliament to a patriotic Premier. But, to use one of Disraeli's favourite phrases, 'there is no gambling like politics.' On the night of February 18, 1858, the Government India Bill was read a first time, in spite of the strong protest of the Opposition, by the handsome majority of 145. As Palmerston walked home after the division, he was told by Bethell, his Attorney-General, that, like a Roman Consul at a triumph, he ought to be accompanied by a slave to remind him of his mortality. The reminder came the very next night, when, on the second reading of the Conspiracy Bill, he was defeated by a majority of 19, and driven to resignation.

Palmerston's position had not been really so strong as it seemed. His great personal success at the elections had made him careless and arrogant. A swaggering speech which he delivered at Guildhall on Lord Mayor's Day had offended the judicious; and judicious and injudicious alike were scandalised by his appointing to a seat in the Cabinet a man who, in the Prince Consort's words, was 'looked upon as a reprobate.'

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Jan.* 7, 1858.—. . . The succession of Lord Harrowby is, at present, the crisis of the Cabinet difficulties, but it is certain that a week ago Lord Lansdowne was on the point of retiring. The appointment of Lord Clanricarde has greatly injured the Government, but I hear that everything was tried, and everybody sounded, before it was decided on. Among others, the post was offered to Lord Overstone: when all failed, Lady Palmerston rallied, and made a successful charge, and carried her *protégé*. There is nothing like female friendship — the only thing worth having. . . .

Though the Clanricarde appointment and his own arbitrary behaviour had diminished Palmerston's popularity, these things would hardly by themselves have effected his overthrow. That was the result of a crime in France, for which the blame was largely thrown on England. On January 14 an unsuccessful attempt, resulting, however, in the death of several onlookers, was made in Paris to assassinate with bombs the Emperor and Empress of the French. The conspirators were Italians, members of the secret society of the Carbonari, to which Louis Napoleon had once himself belonged; but Orsini's plot had been concocted, and his bombs had been manufactured, in England. Very naturally, there was an outburst of anger in France against *perfide Albion*, who sheltered regicides. Colonels of the French army uttered violent threats, and their addresses were printed in the official *Moniteur*. Public feeling in England turned from sympathy with the Emperor to indignation against the French. Earle, from the embassy in Paris, kept Disraeli informed of what was going on; that the British Ministry had promised the Emperor a measure directed against the refugees in England; that public opinion in France was strongly anti-English; that the Emperor's dread of assassination had redoubled.

When the session was resumed on February 4, Palmerston, mistaking, for once, the temper of the British

people, gave notice of his intention to bring in a Bill to amend the law of conspiracy. As the law then stood, conspiracy to murder was only a misdemeanour, and the Bill proposed to make it a felony, punishable by penal servitude for life. This was in itself a reasonable proposal; but John Bull never relishes making even reasonable concessions in response to menace, and on the introduction of the Bill, not merely free-lances like Roebuck and Kinglake, but even the old Whig leader, Russell, strongly opposed it. The threats of the French Colonels had been followed up by a despatch from Walewski, the Emperor's Foreign Minister, in which he pointedly asked whether the right of asylum ought to protect 'assassination reduced to a doctrine, preached openly, practised in repeated attempts, the most recent of which has struck Europe with stupefaction?' Was hospitality due to assassins? Should English law favour their designs? The Government had neglected to reply to this intemperate outburst, and the omission was strongly resented in England. Disraeli said in the debate that it should have been answered 'in some immortal State paper, breathing the fire and logical eloquence of a Canning.' He would vote for the first reading because he wished to maintain the Anglo-French Alliance, the key and corner-stone of modern civilisation. But the Government had, in his opinion, acted in a clumsy and feeble manner; they had alarmed England without pleasing France; and he reserved his liberty of action on the subsequent stages of the Bill. The first reading was carried by a majority of 200,[1] as the bulk of the Conservatives voted with Ministers. The ten days that elapsed between the first and second reading produced a great hardening of public opinion against the Government. Palmerston, arrogantly relying on his majority and on his personal popularity, paid no heed; and his foes, of different parties, saw their opportunity. Milner Gibson, a Radical who had lost his seat in the previous year because of his opposition to the man of

[1] Feb. 9.

the hour, gave notice of an amendment which expressed no opinion on the Bill, but censured Ministers for not answering Walewski's despatch before bringing their Bill in. Derby realised at once what might happen, and was perturbed. Gibson's motion, he wrote to Disraeli, was of the utmost importance, and demanded the most wary walking on the part of the Conservatives. He was urgent that the debate should be postponed, to give time for consideration before the leaders or the party should be committed. 'C'est le commencement de la fin,' he added.

Disraeli overbore Derby's hesitations. The issue was now changed. Whether the Conspiracy Bill was reasonable or not was no longer in question. Walewski's despatch was still unanswered; the Government had failed to interpret the feeling of the country. It was a matter of confidence. If not on the India Bill, on which debate was proceeding, then on Gibson's amendment Palmerston's power must be broken. 'There must now be no shilly-shallying, but heaven and earth, and all below, moved for the issue,' Disraeli wrote to Lennox, adding: 'There are great defalcations in the Ministerial camp.' He found no difficulty in reconciling his vote for the first reading with his support of Gibson's amendment. Ten days before, he said, it had been a question between the Parliament of England and the Government and people of France; and the way in which the House of Commons agreed to the introduction of the Bill proved their sincere sympathy for the people and their decorous respect for the Emperor. Now they were free to offer, without the possibility of misinterpretation, their opinions on the conduct of the British Minister. There was no valid excuse for the persistent omission to answer a despatch which had been published to our detriment everywhere in Europe. It was now a question between the House and the servants of the Crown. Had they, or had they not, done their duty?

By 234 votes to 215 the House decided[1] that they had

[1] Feb. 19.

not done their duty; not only Graham and Gladstone, but as many as 84 Liberals, including Russell, voting against Ministers. Once again Palmerston had been defeated by a combination of all the most eminent men in the House of Commons. This time no dissolution was possible, and the Government resigned immediately.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

Grosvenor Gate, *Feb.* 20, 1858.—Ever since the meeting of Parliament, the 4th of this month, there has been an unceasing battle, and the struggle concluded last night in the signal defeat of the Ministers.

What will happen I know not, but it is a curious circumstance, and I hope it may be a coincidence, that on Sunday, the 21st Feb., 1852, Lord Derby was sent for by the Queen to form a Ministry, and on Saturday, the 20th Feb., 1852, I dined with the Speaker, a state banquet to the leaders of the Opposition; and, strange to say, I am going thro' the same ceremony to-day—that is to say, if I can keep awake. I am very tired, not having got to bed till nearly four o'clock, and having had to rise from a troubled slumber very early. For the last fortnight there has been little opportunity for sleep or food—and I almost fear you will scarcely make out this scrawl—but I am very well, and hope you are.

On this occasion Disraeli was free from one anxiety. With or without extraneous help, with or without a majority in Parliament, Derby felt himself bound to accept office, if the Queen, after deliberation, thought fit to impose the task upon him. He was summoned to the Palace at once.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. Saturday, 8 *p.m.* [*Feb.* 20].—Matters are going on more rapidly than I expected. I am just come back from the Palace, where I was sent for at ½ past 6, to *consult.* I have laid fully before the Queen the existing situation, and have begged Her Majesty to take some time to consider her course; adding that, if on full reflection she made up her mind to command my services, I should feel it my imperative duty to obey. I shall probably hear to-morrow. The Government were unanimous in resigning, but whether she will ultimately accept their resignation I cannot say. If she does, we accept

with some advantage in our favour. If not, we have not declined office.

Derby told the Queen that 'nobody was more surprised in his life than he had been at the result of the debate.' But Milner Gibson's amendment was 'so skilfully worded' that it was difficult for the Conservatives not to vote for it. 'He had to admit this, when they came to him to ask what they should do, merely warning them to save the measure itself, which the amendment did.' He explained his own position and that of his party thus:

After what had happened in 1851 and 1855, if the Queen made the offer, he *must* accept it, for if he refused the Conservative party would be broken up for ever. Yet he would find a majority of two to one against him in the House of Commons, would have difficulty in well filling the important offices, found the external and internal relations of the country in a most delicate and complicated position, war in India and in China, difficulties with France, the Indian Bill introduced, and a Reform Bill promised; nothing but the forbearance and support of some of his opponents would make it possible for him to carry on any Government. The person who was asked first by the Sovereign had always a great disadvantage; perhaps other combinations were possible, which, if found not to answer, would make him more readily accepted by the country.[1]

From Lord Derby.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Feb.* 21, 1858.—The Queen writes that further reflection has only confirmed her in her resolution to offer me the task of forming a Government, as being 'at the head of the only party which can secure a certain support, and which the country would accept as a substitute for that hitherto in power.' I have, of course, accepted the task; and I think you will agree that I do so, *as regards the Court*, to more advantage than if I had at once, and without giving her time to weigh the difficulties, undertaken the responsibility. I shall be glad to see you as soon as you can come down.

Derby, after consulting Disraeli, went through the form of seeking outside assistance—an indispensable preliminary which he never omitted on these occasions; but he

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters*, memorandum by Prince Albert, Feb. 21, 1858.

did it this time without any illusions as to the probability of success. 'He fears that he can hardly hope,' he wrote to the Queen, 'in the formation of a Government, for much extrinsic aid; as almost all the men of eminence in either House of Parliament are more or less associated with other parties, whose co-operation it would be impossible to obtain. Lord Derby will not, however, hesitate to make the attempt in any quarters in which he may think he has any chance of success.'[1] According to Prince Albert's information, the move which upset Palmerston's Government had been dexterously planned by Graham. But Derby did not think it worth while to appeal to him, or to Russell, who also had taken a prominent part against Ministers. The statesmen he approached were two, Lord Grey and Gladstone, who, in their respective Houses, had acted pretty steadily with the Conservatives for the last three years. Both refused: Grey because all the political friends with whom he had been connected would be opposed to the new Government, Gladstone for a variety of reasons. 'Alone, as I must be, I could not,' he wrote, 'render you service worth your having.' Further,

> Those who lament the rupture of old traditions may well desire the reconstitution of a party; but the reconstitution of a party can only be effected, if at all, by the return of the old influences to their places, and not by the junction of an isolated person. The difficulty is even enhanced in my case by the fact that in your party, reduced as it is at the present moment in numbers, there is a small but active and not unimportant section who avowedly regard me as the representative of the most dangerous ideas. I should thus, unfortunately, be to you a source of weakness in the heart of your own adherents, while I should bring you no party or group of friends to make up for their defection or discontent.[2]

This last was surely a point for Derby and Disraeli, and not for Gladstone, to consider. If they were prepared to disregard the prejudices of their party, it did not become him to allege them as an excuse for refusal.

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.* [2] Morley's *Gladstone*, Bk. IV., ch. 9.

Moreover, it is clear that, if Gladstone had cordially accepted the rôle of a Conservative statesman, his power and eloquence would have compelled the admiration and respect of the most reluctant partisans. Was the real reason of Gladstone's refusal, as Lord Grey believed, that he was not offered the leadership of the House of Commons ?[1]

These were not the only refusals of importance which Derby experienced in his Cabinet-making, and his sanguine lieutenant thought it advisable at intervals to hearten him to continue his task.

From Lord Derby.

Private. Sunday night, Feb. 21, 1858.—Come and see me at 11 to-morrow. Things look bad. Grey and Gladstone decline[2]—with friendly letters, but you know what that is worth. *The* objection is to Ellenborough at the War Office. There is no difficulty as to Malmesbury. *Stanley* hesitates, and I think will refuse office. He 'had hoped we should not have accepted without a combination.' By the Queen's express command I have written to the Duke of Richmond to ask if he would take the War Office. I do not think he will, but if he does he saves us. St. Leonards thinks he is too old, and declines the Great Seal! If he persists, I have asked the Queen if I may *try* Pemberton Leigh. He would be an immense card, but he has refused it before. He is, however, a true friend, and may accept—the more so, if he thinks we are not likely to be long-lived, when he will have his peerage for nothing.[3]

I am to be with the Queen again at 3 to-morrow, to report progress, no progress, or retrograde. I dine at Bernstorff's to-morrow to meet the Duke of Cambridge—and the Aumales! How the unconscious foreigners will kotoo!

To Lord Derby.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Feb.* 22, 1858.—I have just heard that *The Times* has decided to support you. So much for public opinion.[4]

[1] See *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, under date March 2, 1858.

[2] Derby made an unsuccessful offer also to Newcastle.

[3] Pemberton Leigh accepted a peerage (Kingsdown) but declined the Chancellorship, and Thesiger (Lord Chelmsford) was appointed.

[4] Greville noted on March 3: 'There are symptoms of a disposition on the part of *The Times* to support the new Government.'

Delane says we 'shall do much better without Gladstone.'

Assuming that General Peel does not join, I have drawn up a complete scheme with the resources at our command. It will obtain public respect.

There is really only one sorrow in all this: it draws tears from my eyes, and from your heart, I am sure, drops of blood. What mortifies me most is that I feel he [Stanley] is making a great mistake.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Feb.* 25, 1858.—Another hitch! Lytton informed Jolliffe, at 11 o'clock last night, that he could not face his county election! The fact is, he wants to be made a peer, which I will not do for him. *If* he is to be of *any* use, it must be in the H. of Commons. They parted on angry terms. I wish you would come down here as soon as you conveniently can; unless you can, *en route*, call on our refractory friend, and get him straight again. I must have his answer *at once*, Aye or No; and I think it would not be amiss to hint to him that we are not without resources. I believe Sir J. Buller would accept, and would fill the office better than Lytton. . .

To Lord Derby.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Thursday* [*Feb.* 25].—Never mind—John Manners must have the Colonies: he will do *very well*, better than Labouchere. I wished him to have it, and, indeed, never contemplated that Lytton should even have been in the Cabinet had it not been for our Chief's too gracious notice of him in 1855.[1] Sir John Y. Buller should have J. M.'s place.

All this, of course, humbly suggested to the Chief.

I shall be in St. James's Square in an hour. I think Lytton too impudent.

At the last moment Stanley, 'on the urgent representation of his colleagues,' of whom Disraeli was certainly not the least pressing, though Malmesbury, in his *Memoirs*, claims for himself the credit, consented to join the Government and take the Colonial Office; and Manners, much to his own satisfaction, resumed his seat at the Board of Works, instead of attaining an undesired promotion to a Secretaryship of State.

[1] In Derby's speech in the Lords, explaining his failure to form a Government in 1855.

The Cabinet, as originally formed, was as follows:

First Lord of the Treasury ..	EARL OF DERBY.
Lord Chancellor	LORD CHELMSFORD.
Lord President	MARQUIS OF SALISBURY.
Lord Privy Seal	EARL OF HARDWICKE.
Home Secretary	S. H. WALPOLE.
Foreign Secretary	EARL OF MALMESBURY.
Colonial Secretary	LORD STANLEY.
War Secretary	GENERAL PEEL.
Chancellor of the Exchequer ..	B. DISRAELI.
First Lord of the Admiralty ..	SIR JOHN PAKINGTON.
President of the Board of Control ..	EARL OF ELLENBOROUGH.
President of the Board of Trade ..	J. W. HENLEY.
First Commissioner of Works ..	LORD JOHN MANNERS.

The Irish government was entrusted to Lord Eglinton and Lord Naas, as in 1852; Fitzroy Kelly was Attorney-General, and Cairns Solicitor-General. Adderley, Sotheron Estcourt, and J. R. Mowbray, filled important offices outside the Cabinet; Gathorne Hardy and Lord Carnarvon became Under-Secretaries. 'I do not think at any time the secondary appointments were so strong,' Disraeli wrote to Delane.

'Lord Eglinton, who dined here,' wrote Disraeli to Lennox on February 28, 'said that the Court had expressed itself to a high personage (who told him) that it was very pleased with the new Cabinet.' 'Somewhat better' than the last Derby Cabinet was the unenthusiastic phrase used by the Prince Consort to Stockmar; and public opinion was in agreement with the Prince in a temperate satisfaction. Greville wrote[1] that the Government 'presents a more decent-looking affair than anybody expected'; and, after further consideration,[2] that Derby 'has brought forward some new men who have a good reputation, and may distinguish themselves in Parliament, and show us that we have something to look to beyond the old worn-out materials of which everybody is tired. The first class of this Government is not worse than that of the last, and the second class is a great deal better.' In *personnel*, except in one instance, the

[1] Feb. 27. [2] March 2.

Cabinet of 1858 was decidedly stronger than that of 1852. If Chelmsford was a poor exchange for that eminent lawyer St. Leonards, Stanley, Ellenborough, and Jonathan Peel brought much more weight and capacity than Herries, Lonsdale, and Northumberland. Stanley, who was in his thirty-second year, was the most promising of the younger men in Parliament, and Palmerston had tried in vain to capture him, before he was thirty, for his own Cabinet. Ellenborough had been Governor-General of India, and there, and in the House of Lords, had displayed many brilliant gifts, but not discretion. Jonathan Peel, though not brilliant, had the family competence and integrity; and it was felt to be a proof of Conservative reunion that Peel's younger brother, who had once challenged Disraeli to a duel in Sir Robert's interest,[1] should sit in Cabinet with the 'Peel-smasher.'[2]

It was well that the Ministry was stronger in *personnel* than that of 1852, for in Parliament it held a weaker position. Derby had indeed exaggerated when he told the Queen that the House of Commons was by two to one against the Conservatives; the proportion was three to two—a proportion sufficiently unsatisfactory without exaggeration. Fortunately for them, the large majority of the House, though of a generally progressive tendency, had been held together only by the personal tie of allegiance to Palmerston. That allegiance it had repudiated by the recent vote, and it must be a matter of time to restore harmonious working between the fallen Minister on the one hand, and his jealous rival and recalcitrant followers on the other. The divisions among their opponents justified the Conservatives in taking office; but it was clear that they could not retain it unless they were prepared to govern in accordance with the dominant progressive sentiment of the House of Commons. With that sentiment Disraeli, and that section of the party which was represented by the *Press*, agreed; and Derby himself, no reactionary, but a Reformer and a converted

[1] See p. 777.

[2] See p. 1379.

Whig, recognised and accepted the necessity of acting in harmony with it. The adhesion, at the last moment, of Stanley, a Conservative who was so nearly a Liberal as to have been asked to sit in a Liberal Cabinet, must have been obtained by assurances of the progressive basis on which the new Administration was formed. He would certainly have persisted in his refusal if Reform, for instance, was to be shelved.

In truth, there was probably in these years less divergence in political opinion between the leading men of all parties, except on the extreme wings of Radicals and Reactionaries, than at any period of recent history. A good reception was therefore accorded to Derby's statement in the Lords, which, while announcing that Walewski's despatch would be answered and the Conspiracy Bill dropped, promised an India Bill for the present session, and a Reform Bill for the next. These two Bills, in a racing simile subsequently employed by Palmerston, were 'engagements' with which the Conservatives took the Government, and which 'they were bound to fulfil or else pay forfeit.' Apart from deficiency in Parliamentary support, the difficulties immediately facing the Ministry were serious. Clarendon wrote to Derby: 'We must not disguise from ourselves that the spirit in France is very bad against us, and that the Emperor may soon think it for his personal and dynastic interest to encourage that feeling'; and Earle reported to Disraeli from Paris: 'The Emperor thinks it so necessary to keep up the idea that all foreign Governments bow to his will that he is much annoyed at this check.' It would require no little skill to restore satisfactory relations with France while denying her request for penal legislation. Then the Indian Mutiny was still unsubdued, the Chinese War unfinished. The details of the India Bill in the present, and of the Reform Bill in the future, must be full of pitfalls. Finally there was the prospect of a large deficiency in the revenue, owing to the expense in India and China on the one hand, and to the

severe monetary crisis of the autumn on the other. In the actual situation in the House of Commons, the burden of almost all these difficulties must fall mainly on its Leader. Disraeli, however, was undaunted, and with the assistance of his clever young friend, Earle, who left the Paris Embassy to be his private secretary, got speedily into harness at the Treasury.

In his address to his constituents Disraeli had expressed a hope that 'by measures at once firm and conciliatory' the causes of misunderstanding with France might be speedily and entirely removed. In his speech on the hustings he emphasised once more his adhesion to the Anglo-French Alliance. Such an alliance was the essence, he maintained, not only of English, but of French policy. It was totally independent of forms of government, of dynasties, and even of the character of the rulers of France. It did, indeed, happen that the present ruler of France was a man eminently gifted, who exercised a great influence over events; who was not only a prince, but a statesman; who had not only a great knowledge of human nature generally, but of English human nature. It was to the 'sagacious and unimpassioned intelligence of the Emperor' that Disraeli mainly looked to settle the difference between the two countries. The Emperor would not send insulting messages—'he would leave them to Counts and Colonels'—but he would appeal to the justice of the English people. The other main topic of Disraeli's speech was Reform. Was it decent, honest, politic, or honourable, that Reform should be made 'the stalking-horse of faction; that it should be hung up and taken down according to the exigencies of a distressed Minister; and that the highest principles of policy should be made part of the stock-in-trade by which a Government are to shuffle through a disgraceful and discreditable existence?' The question should no longer be trifled with.

Malmesbury's despatch to Walewski, though hardly breathing the fire and eloquence of Canning, achieved its

purpose; Walewski replied that the Emperor's intentions had been misunderstood, and that the French Government would 'place its reliance purely and simply on the loyalty of the English people.' Disraeli was naturally anxious to have this good news to tell the House of Commons on its reassembling on March 12 after adjournment. 'The Ides of March are approaching,' he had written to Rose, 'and I am getting rather nervous.' The despatch did not arrive till the very day, and, on receipt of a message from Derby, Disraeli, records Malmesbury, 'rushed up in such a desperate hurry that he nearly knocked over the messenger, and entered the room in a great state of excitement. When the despatch was produced, his delight was indescribable and amazingly demonstrative, considering the usually phlegmatic manner in which he receives news of all kinds.' He went straight to the House, and announced in his most impressive fashion that the 'painful misconceptions' between the Governments of France and England had 'entirely terminated in a spirit friendly and honourable, and in a manner which will be as satisfactory to the feelings as it will be conducive to the interests and the happiness of both nations.' The Opposition, however, had come back in a very hostile frame of mind, and, instead of showing gratification at this happy ending of a critical situation, at once proceeded to attack Ministers for not having, immediately on entering office, procured the release of two English engineers who, eight months before, had been captured on the Sardinian steamer *Cagliari* and imprisoned by the Neapolitan Government. As it happened, the Derby-Disraeli Government did manage to obtain, in the course of this spring, ample satisfaction in a matter which Palmerston's Government had dallied with and neglected for more than half a year. Within a short time, too, the French Emperor showed his friendly disposition by sending Marshal Pélissier, the first soldier of France, to replace, as Ambassador in England, Count Persigny, who, though a friend to this country, had

inflamed the Anglo-French misunderstanding. Even the acquittal by a London jury, amid popular applause, but in the teeth of the clearest evidence, of one Simon Bernard, who was tried for murder as an accomplice in Orsini's plot, did not disturb the better relations that had been established with France; and the Emperor showed no umbrage at the withdrawal of the indictment against Bernard for conspiracy when the indictment for murder had failed.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April* 21, 1858.—. . . If there were the slightest chance of success for the 2nd indictment, or it could please or benefit in any degree our ally, I should be prepared to make any sacrifice or forgo any advantage. But, on the contrary, persistence will aggravate the anti-Gallic feeling and injure our ally; while it would damage us.

Lord Cowley is very strong on this head, too, and mentioned this morning to me that his conviction of the impossibility of proceeding was so decided, that he would willingly take upon himself the responsibility to the Emperor of having himself personally urged on us the withdrawal. . . .

The country does not connect our Government with the late trial: it will with the impending one.

The foreign policy of the new Government had got successfully under way; and Disraeli's adroitness turned the balance in the House of Commons, after an unpropitious opening, in favour of Ministers.

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *March* 12, 1858 (*Friday*).—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his humble duty to your Majesty.

The Opposition benches very full; the temper not kind.

The French announcement, which was quite unexpected, elicited cheers, but only from the Ministerial side, which, he confesses, for a moment almost daunted him.

Then came a question about the *Cagliari* affair, on which the Government had agreed to take a temperate course, in deference to their predecessors—but it was not successful. The ill-humour of the House, diverted for a moment by the French news, vented itself on this head.

What struck the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the course

of the evening most was the absence of all those symptoms of 'fair trial,' etc., which have abounded of late in journals and in society.

Lord John said something; Mr. Gladstone said something; but it was not encouraging.

Nevertheless, in 1852 'fair trial' observations abounded, and the result was not satisfactory; now it may be the reverse.

The House is wild and capricious at this moment.

Your Majesty once deigned to say that your Majesty wished in these remarks to have the temper of the House placed before your Majesty, and to find what your Majesty could not meet in newspapers. This is the Chancellor of the Exchequer's excuse for these rough notes, written on the field of battle, which he humbly offers to your Majesty.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *March* 15,[1] 1852 (*Monday, half-past eight o'clock*).—. . . This evening was a great contrast to Friday. House very full on both sides. . . .

Mr. B. Osborne commenced the general attack, of which he had given notice; but, after five years' silence, his weapons were not as bright as of yore. He was answered by the Government, and the House, which was very full, became much excited. The Ministerial benches were in high spirit.

The debate that ensued most interesting and sustained.

Mr. Horsman, with considerable effect, expressed the opinions of that portion of the Liberal party which does not wish to disturb the Government.

Lord John Russell vindicated the Reform Bill of 1832 from the attacks of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and with great dignity and earnestness.

He was followed by Mr. Drummond on the same subject in a telling epigram. Then Lord Palmerston, in reply to the charges of Mr. Horsman, mild and graceful, with a sarcastic touch. The general impression of the House was very favorable to the Ministry; all seemed changed; the debate had cleared the political atmosphere, and, compared with our previous state, we felt as if the eclipse[2] was over.[3]

Disraeli's speech in this debate, modestly disguised in his letter to the Queen as an anonymous 'answer' by the Government, was a brilliant debating effort, which began by chaffing Bernal Osborne on his 'wild shriek of liberty' after five years of subordinate office.

[1] The date is wrongly given in *Queen Victoria's Letters* as March 22.

[2] Writing to Mrs. Willyams on the following day, Disraeli says: 'Nature seems to have been relieved by the eclipse, and to-day is quite spring.'

[3] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

Disraeli stated the position of the Government in a few general words:

> We represent the Conservative party. We wish to support and maintain the institutions of the country, but we also wish to improve them. We believe that the best way to maintain the institutions of the country is to improve them when improvement is necessary, and therefore we cannot permit the hon. gentleman to be such a monopolist of all plans for the amelioration of society as he and his friends, on all occasions, in a manner so greedy and covetous, aspire to be considered.

In the special instance of Reform, which occupied the final portion of the speech, 'nobody, it appears,' Disraeli said, 'may poach upon that manor except the Liberal party.' The Tory party had accepted the great Reform Act when it was the law of the land, and had supported Whig Ministers in resisting attempts to enlarge it. But when 'finality' was given up by the Whigs, the Conservatives considered themselves free in the matter. Russell's, Aberdeen's, and Palmerston's Governments had been nibbling in a half-hearted fashion at Parliamentary Reform for seven years, and had promised it in Queen's Speeches; a question of this vast importance could no longer remain unsettled.

> If there is anything more likely than another to poison the feelings of the people and to alienate their best sentiments from the institutions of the country, it is the suspicion permitted to be engendered in the public mind that schemes for reconstructing those institutions are used by public men for party purposes. It is impossible that a question like that of Parliamentary Reform can be hung up and taken down at the convenience of any statesman, so that when in Opposition he is to brandish it in the face of those in office, and when a Minister to place it in a rusty scabbard. Under these circumstances we feel it our duty to consider that question, and we shall consider it with earnest determination of endeavouring to make a settlement of it that will be satisfactory to the sober-minded people of this country.

Bernal Osborne had made use of the standing complaint of the Liberals, however split up they might be

among themselves, that the Conservatives had no business to be in office, because they had not got a majority. Disraeli entirely repudiated the assertion. Where was the majority, he asked, and who had it ? Had Palmerston got it ? If so, why was he sitting on the Opposition bench ? Had Russell got it ? Why, it was only a fortnight ago that Palmerston beat him by a majority of 200. In the absence of proof to the contrary, Disraeli was prepared to maintain that the Government possessed the 'constitutional confidence' of the House of Commons.

It was natural that those members of the Cabinet who specially represented the interests of Churchmen should be anxious to take advantage of the existence of a Conservative Government to settle by some compromise the vexed question of Church rates.[1] Both Walpole and Pakington had plans; but Stanley, who was very unsympathetic, implored Disraeli to put a veto on the introduction of any Bill of the kind. Disraeli agreed, at least so far as regarded the present session.

To Sir John Pakington.

C. OF E., *April* 3, 1858.—There are plenty of rocks ahead, but I don't think we ought ourselves to sink ships to increase the difficulties of our navigation. Depend upon it, if the Angel Gabriel himself were to draw a Church Rate Bill for us, it would never be accepted in this Parliament. The more Liberal our measures, the less inclined they will be to accept them. They will never permit us to poach on their manor, and we must postpone our Liberal battue until we have a Conservative majority.

India we could not avoid, and whatever form our legislation had taken, the opposition would have been exactly the same. If we pull through that we shall do wonders, but I am convinced our lawmaking this year should be confined as much as possible to the Appropriation Act. . . .

'India we could not avoid.' By the welcome which Parliament had accorded to the first India Bill in February, the authority of the East India Company had been fatally undermined; and any Government which succeeded

[1] See Vol. III., IV., Ch. 10.

Palmerston's must have given effect to the policy thus generally accepted. To Disraeli it was a matter of solid satisfaction to take a leading part in carrying out that transfer of authority from the Company to the Crown which, in advance both of his own party and of his Whig opponents, he had seen some years before to be necessary and desirable. But his first attempt at legislation in this direction, owing largely to the shortness of time available for preparation and to the over-cleverness of Ellenborough, the Minister in charge of the department, was unhappy and unsuccessful. It was on Friday, March 26, just a month after the completion of the Ministry, that Disraeli rose to introduce the Government Bill. Before explaining its terms, he paid an eloquent tribute of respect to the Company for the historic services which it had rendered to Great Britain and to India. It resembled Venice both in its greatness and in its fall, and like Venice had left 'a legacy of glory to mankind.'

That a Cabinet Minister of the rank, if not of the name, of Secretary of State, should be responsible to Parliament and the Crown for the government of India was inevitable, if the Company was to be superseded. That the Minister should be assisted by some form of Council, to take the place of the old Court of Directors, was also generally regarded as essential. Palmerston in his Bill had proposed a Council of eight, nominated by the Crown. That plan had been denounced as lending itself to party jobs. Ellenborough's Bill, which Disraeli introduced, provided for a Council of eighteen, half to be nominated by the Crown from among men holding special Indian qualifications. The other nine were to be chosen by popular election at home: four by a constituency of persons who had either seen service in India or possessed financial interests there; and the remaining five by the Parliamentary electors of the cities of London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast. It was claimed that this fantastic arrangement would give a democratic flavour to the Council, and secure its

independence of Ministers; but the Bill had a very unfavourable reception in Parliament. The democratic provisions were repudiated by the representatives of democracy: Bright denounced them as claptrap, and earnestly advised Ministers to reconsider them. Ellenborough was, no doubt, the author of these strange proposals; but to Disraeli, who always himself displayed a weakness for fancy franchises, their absurdity would not be so patent as to the ordinary member of Parliament.

The courtesy of a first reading was accorded to the Bill; but so general was the condemnation of its provisions, even among those independent members of the Liberal party who were friendly to Ministers, that Palmerston had great hopes of defeating it on second reading, and, if not of ejecting the Government from office, at least of restoring his own Bill, which had been laid aside. When Parliament separated for the Easter recess, Ministerial prospects were very gloomy. But the rivalry between the two Whig leaders, which had helped to place Derby and Disraeli in office, was still sufficiently active to keep them there. Russell was not disposed to aid Palmerston to return to power; and his patriotism was revolted by the idea of making a party matter of the exact form in which the government of India should be taken over and administered by the Crown. A hint of what was coming was conveyed, probably through Horsman, to Disraeli, who was spending a strenuous Easter in town preparing for his Budget, and superintending generally the tangled affairs of the Administration.

To Lord Derby.

Most confidential. GROSVENOR GATE, *Good Friday*, 1858 [*April* 2].—Affairs are most critical, and everybody is out of town except myself; tho' I don't know that I should venture to speak to anyone except yourself, save Malmesbury and Jolliffe.

Ld. Palmerston is making every effort to defeat us on the 19th April. A condemnatory amendment, on the 2nd reading of the Indian Bill, is to be moved by Sir Erskine Perry.

The Independent Liberal Party, about ninety to a hundred,

are most anxious to prevent the triumph of P., but they will not vote for the second reading of our Bill: and say that, so great and various are the objections to it, that there are certainly no modifications of it which would influence any portion of them to that course.

It has been suggested that, to prevent the defeat of the Government, someone on their side should move that both Bills be referred to a Select Committee, but then it is urged that the theme is too vast for such a tribunal: then a Committee of the whole House has been discussed, but it is thought that a very inefficient and unsatisfactory measure must be the result of such a process: finally, it has been suggested that some person of commanding position (I make no doubt that Lord John Russell is meant, and is probably the author of the suggestion) should move a series of resolutions as to the opinion of the House of the principles on which a Bill for the government of India should be framed. This was done, they say, by Lord Grenville.

It may be objected that, in the present instance, the Bills are already introduced: but it is replied that in our case we have acted in deference to the wish of the House of Commons, and therefore the House of Commons can, without any slight to us, counsel the Government in the course they should pursue.

All this has reached me from the most authentic quarter. You may rely upon its accuracy, as if we had been present, invisible, at the council.

I thought no time should be lost in your deeply meditating over it. There is a sincere and hearty desire, on the part of the Independent Liberals, to hinder the restoration of P.; but he is very strong, and his opportunity, it is vain to conceal it from ourselves, is a good one. . . .

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

DOWNING STREET, *April* 3, 1858.—These are Easter holidays, but not to me, as the campaign is to be very brisk when the House of Commons reassembles on the 12th. I think, however, we shall baffle the enemy.

I have got to dine with the Lord Mayor on Easter Monday—a great effort. It frightens me more than the Budget, which comes on the 16th, or the Indian Bill, which is fixed for execution on the Monday following.

We have got the two poor English engineers out of the jaws and cells of the King of Naples: but I fear that will not satisfy John Bull. He wants King Bomba to be bombarded. How terrible to shell Parthenope! One might as well think of bombarding Torquay!

At the Easter Monday banquet at the Mansion House Derby spoke in such a way as to facilitate any friendly action which Russell might be disposed to take. He said that the Government courted the co-operation and advice of Parliament and the country; the one thing they deprecated was that a question of such overwhelming importance for both Great Britain and India 'should be made the sport of political parties or the battlefield of rival disputants.' With Disraeli's concurrence, but in his absence owing to some temporary indisposition, the Cabinet determined themselves to hang up the India Bill and proceed by resolution, on the ground that the objections which had been made were so various and conflicting that it was the better course to submit the principles separately and in detail to Parliament, rather than to take a vote on the whole. This decision was to be announced on the following Monday to the House at its reassembling; and Disraeli, who was convalescent, spent the intervening week-end as Her Majesty's guest at Windsor.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

WINDSOR CASTLE, *April* 11, 1858.—A pretty good night, and, generally speaking, rather better.

I sat between Lady Hardwicke and Lady Elizabeth at dinner, taking in Lady Hardwicke. The D'Aumales also here, and Lord Sandwich; I think that is all staying. The neighbours, however, dined, in the shape of the Duchess of Kent, the Van de Weyers, Sir W. Codrington.

The Queen very gracious, and seemed very much pleased that I had brought the Budget down for the Prince. H.R.H. himself talked to me a great deal, and said he was sorry to hear that I had been unwell, and had not been able to attend the Cabinet. Lady Churchill in waiting. The Duc d'Aumale asked very much after you.[1]

I am now going to Chapel.

Disraeli described with great humour, in his report to the Queen, the scene in the House on the following

[1] Writing next day to Mrs. Willyams, Disraeli said: 'Perhaps better conversation cannot be had than that afforded by the two Princes, the Prince Consort and the Duc d'Aumale—the two most richly cultivated minds I ever met, and men, too, of great abilities.'

day, when Russell's intervention enabled the Government to pose as following, in deference to the advice of so respected a statesman and to the general opinion of Parliament, a course which they had already resolved to take, on their own motion, to avoid certain defeat.

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April* 12, 1858 (*Monday night*).—The Chancellor of the Exchequer with his humble duty to your Majesty.

House reassembled—full. Chancellor of Exchequer much embarrassed with impending statement, on the part of your Majesty's servants, that they intended to propose Resolutions on the Government of India, instead of at once proceeding with their Bill.

Received, five minutes before he took his seat, confidential *information that Lord John Russell, wishing to defeat the* prospects of Lord Palmerston, and himself to occupy a great mediatory position, intended himself to propose the *mezzo-termine* of Resolutions!

Chancellor of Exchequer felt it was impossible, after having himself introduced a Bill, to interfere with the Resolutions of an independent member, and one so weighty and distinguished: therefore confined his announcements to the Budget on Monday week, and consequent postponement of India Bill.

Soon after Lord John rose and opened the case, in a spirit most calm and conciliatory to the House and to your Majesty's Government.

The Chancellor of Exchequer responded, but with delicacy, not wishing rudely to deprive Lord John of his position in the matter, deeming it arrogant; but the real Opposition, extremely annoyed at all that was occurring, wishing, at the same time, to deprive Lord John of the mediatory position, and to embarrass your Majesty's Government with the task and responsibility of preparing and introducing the resolutions, *insisted* upon Government undertaking the task. As the Chancellor of Exchequer had the sketch of the Resolutions in his box, this was amusing; he undertook the responsibility, thus urged, and almost menaced; Lord John, though greatly mortified at not bringing in the Resolutions himself, for it is since known they were prepared, entirely and justly acquits Chancellor of Exchequer of any arrogance and intrusion, and the affair concludes in a manner dignified and more than promising. It is now generally supposed that, after the

various Resolutions have been discussed and passed, the Bill of your Majesty's servants, modified and reconstructed, will pass into a law.

The Chancellor of Exchequer will have a copy of the Resolutions, though at present in a crude form, made and forwarded to your Majesty, that they may be considered by your Majesty and His Royal Highness. Chancellor of Exchequer will mention this to Lord Derby, through whom they ought to reach your Majesty.

After this unexpected and interesting scene, because it showed, in its progress, a marked discordance between Lord John and Lord Palmerston, not concealed by the latter chief, and strongly evinced by some of his principal followers—for example, Sir C. Wood, Mr. Hall, Mr. Bouverie—the House went into Committee on the Navy Estimates, which Sir J. Pakington introduced in a speech, lucid, spirited, and comprehensive. The feeling of the House as to the maintenance of the navy was good.[1]

If Disraeli was indebted to Russell for extricating him without serious damage from his troubles over Ellenborough's Bill, he surmounted his financial difficulties by his native genius. He was faced, as the figures of his Budget, opened on April 19, showed, by a deficit of four millions, due partly to additional naval and military expenditure, and partly to the obligation to pay off during the year three and a half millions of war debt. The deficit was calculated on the assumption that the rate of income tax was to fall, as arranged in 1853, to 5d. Disraeli had adopted in the previous year, as the basis of his financial policy, the carrying into effect of Gladstone's original proposals, which involved the extinction of the income tax in 1860. From that standpoint he had criticised, side by side with Gladstone, Cornewall Lewis's Budget of 1857. That standpoint he maintained now, and thereby secured Gladstone's powerful support. He would not say that 'a solemn compact,' independent of all circumstances and events, was concluded with Parliament in 1853. But there were 'arrangements cordially entered into, and in the same spirit understood, and which the country

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

expected would be religiously fulfilled if the interposition of extraordinary circumstances did not render their fulfilment impossible.' The Crimean War had suspended the arrangements, but they ought to be resumed now. In Northcote's words, 'it was not merely a question whether a certain amount of taxation should be levied, but whether a certain tax, which the public wished to put an end to, should be continued or not. It was the critical moment for deciding whether the scheme of 1853 should or should not be carried into effect.'[1] Disraeli maintained that the income tax should not form a permanent feature of our finance.

> The feeling of the community generally of the inequality, of the injustice, and of the odious nature of this tax, has unfortunately been sanctioned and concurred in by all those statesmen who have felt the necessity of levying it; and it has been possible to maintain it for any considerable time, or to adopt it as a permanent feature of our financial system, without great acerbity of feeling and much violent controversy being excited as to its character and its incidence.

But, if the arrangement providing for the eventual abolition of the income tax was to be carried into effect, there was no way of meeting the deficit save by postponing the redemption of debt. 'The choice lay between the extinction of the debt,' as Northcote says, 'and the extinction of the income tax.' Disraeli accordingly, on the plea that the expensive warlike operations in progress in China precluded the year from being treated as one of peace, postponed the obligation to pay off £3,500,000 of debt, and thus reduced his deficit to half a million. For this he provided by raising the duty on Irish spirits to the English and Scottish level. He playfully deprecated Irish opposition to this increase of taxation.

> At this moment, the only differential duty that remains between Ireland and Great Britain is the differential duty on spirits. I am sure that my Irish friends, who are always demanding justice for Ireland, and who define that justice to consist in an identity of institutions, of rights and of duties,

[1] *Twenty Years of Financial Policy*, p. 339.

cannot on reflection consider the position in which they are placed by this differential duty on spirits with any other but feelings of indignant humiliation. I remember once, when I was at Bristol, a ship came in from Ireland, and, to my great surprise, I saw it boarded instantly by Custom-house officers, and the crew treated just the same as a parcel of foreigners. All this was to see if there were any Irish spirits in the hold, which, if they had come in undetected, would have paid a duty of 6s. 2d. instead of 8s. Was that a position for high-spirited Irishmen to be placed in? How much better will it be for the Irish to have the command of the English market, and not only of the English, but of the British market; how much better for them to enter into active competition with English and with Scotch spirits, and, instead of confining themselves to the supply of a mere provincial demand, to be entitled to pour in their admirable products, which I am told the French now prefer even to their own brandy; how much better for them to pour their spirits into this country, and through this country into the Continent, and thus give a great stimulus to trade!

Finally, to obtain a small surplus, Disraeli imposed a penny stamp on bankers' cheques, and thereby secured for the public purse a steadily expanding revenue, which, however, for the coming year he only estimated at £300,000.

'The Budget has had a complete success,' Disraeli wrote that evening to the Queen; 'indeed, he may say it has met with universal approbation.' The verdict of the first night was confirmed on reflection; it was felt that Ministers were keeping faith with the nation about the income tax; and Cornewall Lewis's criticisms in a subsequent debate were answered by Gladstone, who protested strongly against the idea of treating the income tax as part of the permanent revenue of the country. It did 'more than any other tax to demoralise and corrupt the people,' and it hindered 'effective and extensive economy.' But though this Budget was successful, while the December Budget of 1852 failed, Disraeli was better advised when accepting in 1852 the income tax as a necessary part of a Free Trade Budget and endeavouring to mitigate its anomalies and injustices, than when vainly striving in

1858 to secure its ultimate extinction at a time of rising public expenditure,[1] and while the nations of Europe were steadily arming. Bright said truly in one of the debates that, with Parliamentary Reform imminent, 'your property tax, which you are assisting the Chancellor of the Exchequer to throw over, will come back to you, and come back in increased proportion.' Disraeli secured the support of Gladstone for the moment; but Gladstone nevertheless joined the Liberal Government formed on Disraeli's fall, and as Chancellor of the Exchequer disregarded altogether in 1860 his own arrangement by which the income tax was to come that year to an end. Disraeli had shrewdly prophesied in 1853 that the income tax would never be abolished;[2] all his strenuous efforts in 1857 and 1858 were of no avail to avert the fulfilment of his prophecy. The Budget of 1858 was adroitly composed to pass a House of Commons resting on the middle class, and containing a large majority against Ministers, but it has little claim to remembrance save for the admirably devised plan of taxing cheques. The Budget of December, 1852, had the higher merit of laying down principles which subsequent Chancellors have been compelled to follow.[3]

Disraeli was apparently contented. He wrote to Mrs. Willyams on April 24: 'The Budget is said to be the most successful for a quarter of a century. There is to be some warm fighting about India, but no one thinks now there is any chance of disturbing the Government. I never went through two such months.' But neither his friends nor his foes were content. The accommodations inevitable for a Government in a minority irritated both sides. Malmesbury noted in his diary on April 28: 'Our party, I am sorry to say, are, or pretend to be, offended with Disraeli. They, of course, ought to know that we are in a minority, and can neither help it nor disguise the fact.' Greville gives us the Opposition view.

[1] Over £10,000,000 more than in 1852.

[2] See p. 1323.

[3] See III., Ch. 12.

On April 24 he wrote: 'There is no example of any Government consenting to hold office on terms so humiliating, and to such a powerless existence. They dare not originate anything, and they submit to everything that anybody proposes or suggests, having seemingly no object but that of currying favour and avoiding to give offence.'

The Indian Resolutions drafted by the Government were general in terms, but so far agreed with the principles of Ellenborough's Bill that they provided that the Council should be partly nominated and partly elected; and Disraeli, in debate, dwelt on the importance, if this was to be a real Council with real power, of introducing the elective principle. On going into Committee an obstructive motion was made from the Liberal benches to postpone legislation till the next year; but it was ill received, Palmerston hastened to disclaim it, and it was negatived by an enormous majority. The principal speaker for the Government in the debate was Stanley, and his success was a source of special gratification to his political tutor.

To Lord Derby.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April* 30, 1858.—It will make you happy to hear that Stanley has *greatly* distinguished himself: indeed, I hardly know a Parliamentary effort that, both on the House and his own party, ever produced a better effect. And quite unstudied; it occurred to me that it would be wise that he should rise after Palmn. instead of myself. I thought it was a great occasion, and that he *might* be equal to it. He WAS.

I never was so nervous in my life, and I never was so pleased. Except yourself, I don't know anyone who is so content.

It is difficult to convey to you the feeling of the party; it is really enthusiastic.

From Lord Derby.

Secret. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Friday night* [*April* 30].—You cannot doubt but that the report which you were kind enough to send me to-night of Stanley's success was in every sense, private and political, most gratifying to my feelings; and if the fact itself, which it announces, created such feelings,

they were not diminished by the very kind and sympathising feeling with which you conveyed to me your impression of the effect which he had produced.

But as it occurs everywhere, and has done in all times, that one agreeable intimation is generally balanced by something quite the reverse—'medioque in fonte leporum Surgit amari aliquid'—I am compelled, at a moment when I should least wish to say anything unpleasant to you, to call your attention to a notice which I see to-day in the Votes of the House of Commons. Lord Ellenborough, in the House of Lords, first pointed out to me, *from a newspaper*, a very material alteration, of which public notice had been given by yourself as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the Resolutions intended to be proposed by the Government on the India question. I doubted at first the accuracy of Lord Ellenborough's information; and even when I returned home, and saw in the evening papers the proposed amendments, I concluded that they proceeded from Ld. J. Russell or an opponent, or an independent member of the House. But, on looking to the Votes, I am compelled to come to the conclusion that the amendments are your own, and, being your own, are presented to the House as the more mature result of the reflections of the Cabinet of which you are a (and in the House of Commons *the*) leading member. In that position you have a great latitude allowed to you, in which all your colleagues would acquiesce, and which no one would be more decided than myself in supporting.

But the Indian Resolutions, as you must be aware, are no ordinary question. Their substance, and their very phraseology, were carefully considered, and decided on, by the Cabinet. This being the case, I cannot but think that not the slightest deviation from those Resolutions ought to have been adopted, even verbally, without the consent of the Cabinet. That which I laboured to-day to impress upon the minds of the party, and that without which we cannot go on, is perseverance in our intentions once announced; and though, on matters immediately in discussion, it may be justifiable in the Leader of the House of Commons to act upon his own discretion, and recede from a position intended to have been maintained, in face of a formidable opposition, these considerations do not apply to an alteration, made without any external pressure, of a measure which had previously received the fullest consideration of the Cabinet.

Such, I deeply regret to say, appears to me to have been the effect of the amendments placed by you on the papers of the House of Commons, on the Cabinet Resolutions previously announced. The amendments are not verbal, nor technical.

They affect vitally the constitution of the Council, and the position of the Minister of the Crown—so vitally that Lord Ellenborough declares, and in my opinion justly, that no man who had ever had experience of the working of the India Board would consent to serve under such restrictions. The question whether the Minister should or should not be Secretary of State was discussed in Cabinet, submitted to, and approved by, the Queen. The Amendment, by being an amendment brought forward by the Government, virtually abandons this position; but it does more. Whereas our main principle was that the Secretary of State (whether so called or not) should exercise an absolute authority, his Council being only advisers, your amendment alters the whole form of the arrangement, and subjects him to the acquiescence, certified by signature, of three members of the Council. Lord Ellenborough plainly declares that, under such conditions, neither he, nor any man who knows anything of the affairs of India, would hold office for a moment. I name this, to show the *practical* effect of such a notice of amendment as you have apparently given. That I should have to say only *apparently* is the strongest opinion I could pass upon it. We have a Cabinet at 2 to-morrow, at which this question must be raised. Will you call on me in Downing Street at 1.30 ? This subject cannot be avoided; and I should be glad, by previous communication with you, to make as easy as possible the explanations which must follow, and the determination which must be taken as to ulterior proceedings in Parliament. I own I do not see how your proposed amendments can be justified to Parliament, and still less how their announcement to Parliament can be justified to your colleagues.

I need hardly say how sincerely I regret the first important difference between us as to the conduct of public business; and more especially on an occasion when every feeling on my part would have led me to wish that nothing should interfere with an entire and perfect sympathy between us, personally and politically, in reference to public affairs.

This letter illustrates the difficulties under which business is carried on in the House of Commons when its leader has not the authority of Prime Minister, and it says much for the good feeling of both Derby and Disraeli that this is the only serious remonstrance of the kind in their whole correspondence. No judgment can fairly be passed on the actual points in dispute without knowing Disraeli's explanation, which was no doubt

given verbally; but it may be said that Derby perhaps hardly makes sufficient allowance for a leader of the House of Commons in a permanent minority, with a constant necessity of humouring the majority on the details of legislation.

The Whigs by the end of April had become, as Greville has told us, very impatient of the existence of a Tory Government; and what they thought a favourable occasion for a combined onslaught was afforded by a glaring indiscretion committed by Ellenborough. Early in May there was published in England a draft proclamation issued by Canning, the Governor-General, after the fall of Lucknow, to the chiefs and inhabitants of Oude. It stated that those of the inhabitants who remained stedfast during the Mutiny would be rewarded, and accordingly that six landowners of Oude, who were named, would be regarded henceforward as the sole hereditary proprietors of the lands which they held when the province became British; but that, with these exceptions, the proprietary right in the soil was confiscated to the British Government, which would dispose of that right as might seem fitting. To those who immediately surrendered, their lives and houses were guaranteed, provided their hands were unstained by British blood; but as to any further indulgence, they must throw themselves upon the justice and mercy of the British Government. This read like a harsh policy of general confiscation, though Canning's intention, it afterwards appeared, was to strike only at the chiefs and secure the farmers in the permanent tenure of the land. Ellenborough and the Government, taking the words in their natural meaning, thought that Canning had been won over to the vindictive policy which was widely advocated both in India and in England, and which had been expressly disavowed and disapproved by Disraeli in the previous autumn. Ellenborough at once forwarded a despatch to the Governor-General, condemning in strong terms the Oude proclamation. This was the most important passage.

Other conquerors, when they have succeeded in overcoming resistance, have excepted a few persons as still deserving of punishment, but have, with a generous policy, extended their clemency to the great body of the people. You have acted upon a different principle: you have reserved a few as deserving of special favour, and you have struck, with what they feel as the severest of punishments, the mass of the inhabitants of the country. We cannot but think that the precedents from which you have departed will appear to have been conceived in a spirit of wisdom superior to that which appears in the precedent you have made. We desire that you will mitigate, in practice, the stringent severity of the decree of confiscation you have issued against the landowners of Oude. We desire to see British authority in India rest upon the willing obedience of a contented people. There cannot be contentment where there is general confiscation.

The despatch was never submitted for approval either to the Queen or to the Cabinet, though it was read and approved informally by leading Ministers—among them by Disraeli.

Lord Ellenborough to Lord Derby.

EATON SQUARE, *May* 13, 1858.—. . . I took to the Cabinet on the 17th [April] the abstract of secret letters containing the proclamation and the letter which accompanied it. I showed the passage containing the confiscation to you, Disraeli, and others, by the fire. I wrote the letter early on the 18th, and you saw it and approved of it, saying 'it was very proper, and not too strong for the occasion.' Either on that evening or on the following morning Disraeli read it, Sir John Pakington, and Lord John Manners—no others.

I took it to the Cabinet on the 24th, but other business occupied all the time, and prevented my having the opinion of the Cabinet about it. . . .

The sentiments of Ellenborough's despatch were admirable, but the tone in which it was written was hardly one in which it became the responsible Minister at home to address a great Imperial officer upholding the honour of his country in circumstances of the utmost difficulty and danger. So long, however, as the terms were not published, the rebuke would not be known, either in England or—what was of more importance—in India. But Ellenborough's vanity would not be satisfied

without publication; he sent copies immediately, on his own account, to Granville, the leader of the Opposition in the Lords, and to Bright, the principal Radical critic of Indian Government. Publication was now inevitable, and, when the papers were presented, Disraeli, acting with loyalty to a colleague and in harmony with his autumn deprecations of vindictiveness, declared that the Government condemned the Oude proclamation 'in every sense.'

Ellenborough's inconsiderate treatment of Canning was deeply resented by public opinion. Notices of censure were given in both Houses, and the fall of the Government appeared to be imminent. Ellenborough, however, who was solely responsible for the publication, sacrificed himself, as Russell had in the summer of 1855,[1] to save his colleagues. But the Liberal Opposition in 1858 did not imitate the prudence and magnanimity of the Conservative Opposition in 1855, and abandon their attack when the offending Minister had resigned. The opportunity appeared to be too good; Palmerston and Russell were temporarily agreed; many, if not all, of Canning's fellow-Peelites were expected to vote for a resolution of censure to be proposed by one of themselves, Cardwell. 'The line of attack,' wrote Lennox to Disraeli, 'is . . . to give no opinion upon proclamation, but to assert that, be that ever so bad, the despatch should not have been written.' On this line Lord Shaftesbury moved a vote of censure in the Lords on May 14. The eminent philanthropist disclaimed party feeling, from which indeed he was conspicuously free. But he was intimately associated with Palmerston, who was the moving spirit of this attack, a fact of which Derby reminded him. The Government were saved in the Lords by a majority of nine; but, of course, the critical debate was that in the Commons, begun on the same night, and continued, with intervals, for a week.[2] Cardwell, the mover, was answered

[1] See above, p. 1412.

[2] May 14, 17, 20, and 21.

by Cairns, the Solicitor-General, who laid that night the foundation of his great Parliamentary reputation. Russell severely censured Ministers for having written to Canning in a manner totally unbecoming the Government of a great Empire. But that, after all, was only one of the questions at issue, and was largely disposed of by Ellenborough's resignation. The Opposition were naturally shy of identifying themselves with a policy of confiscation as opposed to clemency, and it became more and more evident, as the debate proceeded, that the real issue was whether the House of Commons was disposed to eject the Conservatives and restore Palmerston to office.

The peril of the occasion stimulated all Disraeli's remarkable powers of political and Parliamentary management.

To Lord Derby.

[*May* 14, 1858]. Cairns has made one of the greatest speeches since I have been in Parliament: perhaps, all things considered, the occasion, character of the man, etc., the greatest. He has completely destroyed the whole case. Cardwell a failure.

No news as to numbers.

GROSVENOR GATE, *May* 16, 1858.—I have quite made up my mind to continue the debate till Friday, and have ample resources for that end. I do not see how the Opposition can press for the close of the debate, or shrink from maintaining the indictment which they have preferred against us. When the fate of a Government, or perhaps a Parliament, is in the balance, a week's debate is not unreasonable—especially as we shall not be under the necessity of spinning out, having sufficient of first-rate men on the subject from the Government, Gladstonians, and Gibsonites.

Hamilton has ascertained about the financial portion of the dissolution question. One vote in supply is necessary. I regret this, but it could not be refused. On Friday next, I would at the commencement adjourn the House until Friday, the 28th, as a matter of course,[1] so that if we be in a minority the necessary time for deliberation will have been already prepared. But I am assured that we ought not to lose, and the only thing that makes the result doubtful is the general

[1] Sunday, May 23, was Whitsunday.

incredulity as to dissolution. Palmerston, I am informed, did all but pledge himself at his meeting that he knew from high authority that dissolution would not be permitted. This has worked greatly.

I hear the Peelites, with the exception of Gladstone, are all wrong. Sir J. Johnstone consulted Graham yesterday as to his course, and G. said, for his part, he thought he should not vote; Sidney Herbert, it is now credibly said, against us, after much doubt. Robert Clinton, on whom we counted, to-day against us—and so on. Elcho against, etc.

Depend upon it, if you open the *pourparlers* with Aberdeen, as we arranged yesterday, all these materials now hesitating and hostile might be fused and appropriated. They want the word of command from their Director-General. Pray think of this: I even hope you have already done something in this respect.

Nothing must be spared. Active as are the exertions of the enemy, I hope our efforts are not less energetic. But 'tis a great stake; for if they are beaten, it will really be the greatest Parliamentary discomfiture since the rout of Lord North and Fox, and perhaps in the present temper of the country might lay the foundation of as permanent results.

The prospect of dissolution was likely to have a very potent effect on the division. Palmerston was well informed. On May 11 the Queen had refused to allow Derby to make use of any threat of that kind. But Her Majesty, in view of the certainty that Derby would broach the question again, took the opinion of an elder statesman, Aberdeen, who, while approving her refusal to allow dissolution to be threatened, at the same time counselled her that it would be constitutional, if her Minister advised her to dissolve, to accept his advice. Accordingly, on Sunday, May 16, the day of Disraeli's letter quoted above, the Queen, in the Prince Consort's words, 'allowed him [Lord Derby] to know that a dissolution would not be refused to him, and trusted that her honour would be safe in his hands as to the use he made of that knowledge.'[1] The use made of the knowledge is shown in two notes which Disraeli sent in the next couple of days to Graham, who, influenced perhaps

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters*, under dates May 11, 15, and 16.

by Aberdeen, had now definitely made up his mind to support Ministers, and a speech by whom in that sense would determine many votes.

To Sir James Graham.

Confidential. May 17, 1858.—What might be said is that Lord Derby has not the slightest doubt of his power of dissolving.

May 18.—The division, I apprehend, will be close, and I am assured is still doubtful. The question of dissolution would decide the result. It is impossible for any of us to intimate it, but—if indeed I might presume to make such a suggestion—were a personage of your great authority, in the course of the debate, to announce that it would be scarcely possible, if the Government were defeated, not to appeal to the country, the effect might be conclusive.[1]

It was a memorable debate, and Sir Willian Fraser has given a spirited account of it, and of the passions generated both in society and in the House.

Ross, who for fifty years was the sagacious and excellent head-reporter of *The Times,* told me that, from beginning to end, there was not, in his judgment, one bad speech delivered. I was astonished to find what brilliant powers of argument and of elocution the House then held. The brain of every man of capacity was, of course, stimulated to the highest degree: and the result was a series of scenes that no one who took part in them, or witnessed them, will ever forget. . . .

I have never seen anything approaching the personal feeling and resentment which was shown during this debate, not only in the House, but in society. Wherever you went, nothing else was spoken of. Language almost transgressing the borders of decency was used, and it seemed at one time as if men would have come to blows. The Derby[2] intervened: this breathing-space gave a little time to cool: but the fury was renewed afterwards: nothing like it has occurred since.[3] . . . No one can form the least idea, from looking at Hansard, of what took place. The cheering, groaning, laughing, were beyond belief. We considered ourselves justified in

[1] Parker's *Graham,* Vol. II., p. 343.

[2] Wednesday, May 19. Lord Derby's Toxophilite was first favourite, but was beaten by Beadsman. Derby therefore missed the good fortune, which attended Lord Rosebery in 1894 and 1895, of winning the great race when Prime Minister.

[3] Published in 1891.

using inarticulate means of rendering the eloquence of the other side nugatory. . . . When I say that we absolutely demolished a man of such consummate effrontery as Bethell, ex-Attorney-General, and later Lord Chancellor, any reader who remembers him will wonder at our prowess.[1]

We can picture the sphinx-like figure of the leader of the House, watching with impassive face the battle surging round him day by day, never missing any indication of the movement of opinion and the disposition of parties, and waiting for the exact moment to intervene with effect in person. In the early part of the week, in spite of a speech by Roebuck in their favour, the tide was still running strongly against Ministers; and Disraeli thought it wise to intimate his readiness to accept an amendment suggested by the Radical, Dillwyn, expressing approbation of Canning's conduct down to the proclamation, and declining to express any opinion on the proclamation itself without further information. 'It seems to me,' wrote his colleague Pakington to the Prime Minister, 'to be a descent, *per saltum*, from the highest ground on which a Government could stand to the lowest that a Government could condescend to occupy.' On the Thursday the tide began to turn in favour of Ministers. Palmerston was driven to read out in the House of Commons letters on Indian business sent by Canning to Vernon Smith, Ellenborough's predecessor at the Board of Control, and received after the change of Government; letters which, by all the rules of courtesy and frankness governing the relation of outgoing and incoming Ministers, should have been, but were not, passed on to Ellenborough, and which would have put a rather different complexion on Canning's policy and would probably have prevented the Minister from expressing a hasty opinion. Then the news came by mail that Sir James Outram, the distinguished Commissioner of Oude, had protested against the draft proclamation as too severe, and had prevailed on Canning to modify it.

[1] Sir W. Fraser's *Disraeli and his Day*, pp. 252-254.

It began, moreover, to be generally understood that, if Ministers were defeated, the Queen would allow Derby to dissolve—a prospect very displeasing, as Parliament had been elected only twelve months before. The effect of all these considerations was heightened by two speeches in that night's debate. Bright treated the motion as a desperate party effort, and said that, if the question was between hurting Canning's feelings and sanctioning this proclamation, he could not hesitate. Graham announced the refusal of Aberdeen, now that the honour of his friend Canning was vindicated by Ellenborough's withdrawal, to take part in a faction fight. Graham's own conclusion was that the proclamation was wrong, and Ellenborough's despatch substantially right; that the error of the proclamation was in its essence, the error of the despatch in its form. A vehement party attack on Ministers by Bethell did not rehabilitate the case of the Opposition.

Fraser gives us a pleasant anecdote about Disraeli after this night's debate.

> I was returning at a little past midnight from a party at the west end of Piccadilly. By the dead wall[1] between the gates of Devonshire House I met Disraeli, arm-in-arm with Sir William Jolliffe, then Secretary of the Treasury, and manager for the party. Disraeli said: 'Where have you been?' I replied: 'To Baron Rothschild's.' The street was empty, and a bright moon was shining. Disraeli said: 'What does the Baron say about it? He knows most things!' I replied: 'There was a great crowd, and I did not see him. You need have no anxiety; the motion will not be put from the Chair.' I shall never forget Disraeli's look of blank astonishment: his face was quite clear in the moonlight. He was silent; after half a minute had passed, he said: 'Good-night!' I answered: 'Good-night; *dormez bien!*'

'I shall never forget that night,' said Disraeli many years afterwards to Fraser. 'I believed that we were smashed. At the moment you met us I was arranging with Jolliffe the details of our going out. I had no more doubt that the Government would be defeated the next

[1] The demolition of Devonshire House, with its high wall and forecourt, and the substitution of shops and flats, have entirely altered this part of Piccadilly.

day than I had of my own existence.'[1] Fraser's prediction was correct; but, in spite of the circumstantial character of his story, it is difficult to believe that Disraeli, after the cheering symptoms of Thursday's debate, was so convinced of defeat as his reported attitude and words suggested. The collapse of the Opposition was admitted the next morning, when, according to Henry Lennox's statement to Greville, Disraeli received a letter from Cardwell asking if he might be allowed to withdraw his motion, and subsequently a similar request from Palmerston himself. Disraeli, Lennox said, 'replied, in a very lofty tone, that he would hear of nothing which could possibly be construed into any admission, on their part, of their meriting any part of the censure which the Opposition had been labouring to cast upon them.'

The scene which followed in the House of Commons, so mortifying for Palmerston and the Opposition, so signally triumphant for Disraeli and the Government, was described by Disraeli with great gusto, both in letters to the Queen and to Mrs. Willyams, and within a week in a public speech in his constituency.

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *May* 21, 1858.—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his humble duty to your Majesty.

The fullest House; it is said 620 members present; it was supposed we should have divided at three o'clock in the morning; Mr. Gladstone was to have spoken for the Government at half-past ten—very great excitement—when there occurred a scene perhaps unprecedented in Parliament.

One after another, perhaps twenty members, on the Opposition benches, rising and entreating Mr. Cardwell to withdraw his resolution. After some time, silence on the Government benches, Mr. Cardwell went to Lord John Russell, then to Lord Palmerston, then to Lord John Russell again, then returned to Lord Palmerston, and retired with him.

What are called the interpellations continued, when suddenly Lord Palmerston reappeared; embarrassed, with a faint smile; addressed the House; and, after various preluding, announced the withdrawal of the motion of censure.

A various debate followed; the Chancellor of the Exchequer

[1] Fraser, pp. 255, 256, 260.

endeavouring, as far as regards Lord Canning, to fulfil your Majesty's wishes. It is impossible to estimate the importance of this unforeseen event to your Majesty's servants. It has strengthened them more than the most decided division in their favour, for it has revealed complete anarchy in the ranks of their opponents. With prudence and vigilance all must now go right.

The speech of Sir James Graham last night produced a very great effect. No report gives a fair idea of it. The great country gentleman, the broad views, the fine classical allusions, the happiest all omitted, the massy style, contrasted remarkably with Sir Richard Bethell.[1]

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

DOWNING STREET, *May* 22, 1858.—. . . The great struggle, which has agitated the country the last fortnight, came to a sudden and untimely end last night; when it was thought that the very heat of the fight was to rage, the enemy suddenly fled in a manner the most ignominious! Never was such a rout! And never was a party in such a humiliating plight as was the great Whig Coalition that was to have devoured Her Majesty's Government, as an ogre does a child. I don't know I ever passed thro' a period of so much excitement, labor, and anxiety, encouraging the desponding and animating the timid. On the whole, however, our friends mustered gallantly, and the result of the attack has been greatly to strengthen our position. The country is with us, and had we dissolved Parliament, which we were prepared to do if the cabal had succeeded, I am convinced we should have crushed them. . . .

Montalembert, the eloquent Liberal Catholic, was present at this famous debate, and concludes his description thus: 'Ministers were victorious without one of them having risen to speak. Nothing remained for the Cabinet save to register its victory and determine its moral effect. This was done by Mr. Disraeli with infinite address and a triumphant modesty.' The motion, Disraeli said, was a vote of censure; but the Government had looked without apprehension to the result, and were ready to encounter the consequences of a division. Still, it was in the public interest that the debate should be terminated by a withdrawal of the

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

motion. With the exception of Ellenborough's despatch, intended only for Canning's eye, the Government had given and would give the Governor-general their cordial support, and they had telegraphed to him to that effect.

> But permit me to say that if the relations between Her Majesty's Government and the Governor-General of India should be cordial, they should also be sincere; and if it is supposed that I or those with whom I act are prepared in any way to retract the opinions which we have expressed with regard to the policy of confiscation which Lord Canning, under evil influence, unhappily adopted, but which I hope, and have some reason to believe, he has by this time relinquished, the House will indeed have misinterpreted what I have said, and the country will indeed be deceived as to the policy which we intend to pursue. I trust that Lord Canning will be influenced by those sentiments and that policy which distinguished his career at the commencement of these sad disturbances and disasters.

Disraeli's gallant fight and surprising victory brought him one of his first tastes of popular applause. Mrs. Disraeli wrote to Mrs. Willyams of the 'glorious news.' Dizzy was cheered again and again by the multitude to and from Downing Street to the House of Commons.' The Whitsuntide recess immediately followed, and Disraeli went down into Bucks on the next Wednesday, and obtained from his constituents the same cordial greeting that the House of Commons and the people of London had already given him. The occasion was a public dinner at Slough to the members for the county. Disraeli claimed that Ministers had successfully surmounted three great sets of difficulties in their three months of office. In foreign affairs, where 'the question of peace or war when we acceded to office was not a question of weeks or days, but of hours,' they had preserved peace, vindicated the honour of England, and freed their imprisoned countrymen at Naples. In finance they had met an immense deficiency and reduced taxation. At the turning-point of our Indian Empire they had successfully laid down the principles on which it should be reconstructed.

Was it always to be massacre and confiscation ? Or was it, on the other hand, to be a discriminating amnesty ? Was it to be respect for private property, toleration for religious convictions, a due and decent regard for the manners and customs of the people ? Were we, or were we not, to distinguish the great body of the inhabitants of India, who, after all, are Her Majesty's subjects, from those military and treacherous rebels who have received, or will receive, their merited punishment ?

Though the House of Commons, as a body, had treated Ministers with a 'generous courtesy,' there existed a 'cabal,' consisting of some scheming English politicians and some foreign intriguers, working in a most reckless and unprincipled but determined manner to upset the Government. The cabal had corrupted the Press. 'Leading organs now are place-hunters of the cabal, and the once stern guardians of popular rights simper in the enervating atmosphere of gilded saloons'—a not very worthy sneer at Delane, who was a frequent guest at Palmerston's house, and who, in spite of his initial friendliness to the new Government, had encouraged in *The Times* the recent attack upon them.[1] To that attack Disraeli now turned. The cabal thought the occasion was favourable. 'Among all the shortsighted hangers-on of politics, our doom was supposed as certain as that of a man convicted and sentenced, who awaits only the arrival of Mr. Calcraft.' The cabal were resolved to 'loot' the Treasury, but they employed 'solemn and pious tools.'

The motion was brought forward in the House of Commons by a gentleman of unimpeachable reputation. The cabal, which has rather a tainted character, chose its instrument with pharisaical accuracy; and I assure you that, when Mr. Cardwell rose to impeach me, I was terrified at my own short-

[1] The quarrel with Delane was made up in the autumn. Samuel Lucas, the first editor of the *Press*, wrote to Disraeli on Oct. 11: 'I have just established regular communication between Earle and Printing House Square. . . . I had a long chat with Dasent to-day, and he assures me that in his opinion Delane bears no malice, but, on the contrary, like himself, he prefers you personally to most of the Whigs. As regards himself he says unquestionably, and as regards Delane he believes, that the effect of the Slough speech has entirely passed away.'

comings, as I listened to a *nisi prius* narrative ending with a resolution which I think must have been drawn up by a conveyancer. In the other House of Parliament a still greater reputation condescended to appear upon the human stage. Gamaliel himself [Shaftesbury], with the broad phylacteries of faction on his forehead, called God to witness that he was 'not like other men,' and was never influenced by party motives.

But independent members of Parliament, unconnected with the Ministry, 'saw through the flimsy web, and despised the authors of the perfidious and pernicious manœuvre.' The 'enlightened and indignant mind of England' declared itself in an unmistakable manner against the cabal, with the result which Disraeli once more described in an inimitable passage:

> There is nothing like that last Friday evening in the history of the House of Commons. We came down expecting to divide at 4 o'clock in the morning, and I myself, with my armour buckled on, prepared to address them, perhaps, for two hours after midnight; and believe me, gentlemen, even with the consciousness of a good cause, that is no vain effort. We were all assembled. Our benches, with their serried ranks, seemed to rival those of our proud opponents, when there arose a wail of distress, but not from us. What ensued I can only liken to that mutiny of the Bengal army with which we are all so familiar. Regiment after regiment, corps after corps, general after general, all acknowledged that they could not 'march through Coventry' with Her Majesty's Opposition. Gentlemen, it was, I may say, rather like a convulsion of nature than one of the ordinary transactions of human life. I can liken it only to one of those earthquakes in Calabria or Peru, of which we sometimes read. There was a rumbling murmur, a groan, a shriek, distant thunder; and nobody knew whether it came from the top or the bottom of the House. There was a rent, a fissure in the ground. Then a village disappeared. Then a tall tower toppled down. And then the whole of the Opposition benches became one great dissolving view of anarchy!

Derby, who was present in the House of Commons on that Friday, testified a few days later to the perfect truth of this 'humorous and graphic description.' 'There was no exaggeration in the colouring, for no exaggeration could be applied to that extraordinary scene.' The

country in general joined in the laugh at the discomfiture of the cabal; and the leaders of the Opposition were unwise enough to show their soreness, and to give Disraeli a further opportunity of rubbing his criticism in. Russell,[1] supported by Cornewall Lewis, rose to reply to the Slough speech directly the House reassembled on Friday, May 28; he was followed on the Monday by Palmerston, with Sir George Grey for his supporter; and on the Tuesday Clarendon, with Granville at his back, took up the tale in the Lords, and gave Derby an opportunity to defend his lieutenant. But Disraeli required no champion but his own wit. No serious point was made against him, except that he had exaggerated the danger of war at the time of the change of Government. When, after Russell's repulse, Palmerston advanced to the attack, Disraeli said he was reminded of 'a very unfortunate circumstance' of recent occurrence.

> A gentleman of letters, having done, or said, or written something that offended a very powerful army, was called to account by a member of it. He met his opponent without any hesitation, and in the first instance conducted himself with fair repute and success. But no sooner was this first affair over than another gentleman was sent for, one whose fierce mien and formidable reputation were such that his friends thought he would put the matter right. He, too, demands satisfaction, and he is accompanied by a considerable body of other gentlemen who seem by their appearance to signify that, if the second assailant is not more successful than the first, then they will find others to succeed him. In short, having somehow or other got into a scrape, they mean to bully him by numbers.

Disraeli reproached the Opposition leaders with wasting precious time, when public business was backward, by these unavailing expressions of discontent with the position they now occupied. As to the cabal,

> What I call a cabal is a body of men, whether it be in this House or in another house—either a private house or a house

[1] Russell told Motley at the time that Disraeli's Slough speech was 'one of the cleverest, wittiest, most mendacious, audacious, and besotted speeches that were ever made' (Motley's *Letters*, Vol. I., p. 249).

devoted to affairs of State—banded together, not to carry out a policy, not to recommend by their wisdom and their eloquence great measures to the approving sympathy of the community, but uniting all their resources, their abilities, and their varied influence, for what ?—to upset the Queen's Government, without even in so doing declaring any policy of their own, or giving any further clue to their opinions than this—that the first article of their creed is place.

Neither Liberals nor Conservatives, added Disraeli, whatever their differences, would any longer allow themselves to be made 'the tools or the victims of an obsolete oligarchy.' The Whigs had indeed exposed themselves to derision and contempt. Bright's organ, the *Morning Star*,[1] gave a description, at once truthful and humorous, of the situation. It likened the consternation which the Slough speech had produced in the ranks of Whiggery to the clamour set up by the discharge of a fowling-piece among a flock of wild-geese. Their fury was ludicrous and uncontrollable. They could not conceal the intense bitterness of their chagrin; their daily and weekly organs harped upon it with 'damnable iteration'; their leaders in Parliament 'nightly to the moon complained' of their wrongs.

> And the worst of it is that they come off second-best each time they renew the assault. Beyond all question, their adversary, whatever may be thought of his prudence as a statesman, is perfect master of the sort of fence to which they are constantly challenging him. He evidently revels and luxuriates in the sport, and no impartial observer, we believe, will deny that his opponents have been obliged to retire from the lists worsted in the encounter.

The principles underlying Ellenborough's despatch had been vindicated; it remained to fill the place which his resignation had left vacant. Disraeli, no less than Derby, was anxious to utilise the vacancy to promote an object which they had pursued at intervals for some years, and which they kept constantly before them throughout the course of the 1858-59 Ministry—namely, the recapture of Gladstone for his old party connection, with or without

[1] June 2.

the other *disjecta membra* of the Peelite party, Aberdeen, Graham, and Sidney Herbert. Aberdeen and Graham were now veterans, no longer desiring office—the one seventy-four, the other, though not more than sixty-six, yet in failing health; Sidney Herbert was attractive and accomplished rather than powerful. But Gladstone was in his prime, still under fifty; and, though it was not yet realised how volcanic was his pent-up energy, he was already a political force of the first magnitude, condemned, however, to temporary ineffectiveness through isolation. Moreover, to a greater degree than his Peelite colleagues, he had been for three years steadily associated in political action, though not allied, with his old party; and to the world in general, though some, like Bright, saw more clearly the drift of his mind, he appeared to have taken up a definitely Conservative position. That was certainly the opinion of his own Conservative University, which at the General Elections of 1857 and 1859—and at them alone of seven occasions on which he was a candidate—returned him unopposed. Now there was to be a test whether the recent political course of this 'half-regained Eurydice,' as Derby called him, had any serious intention behind it. In 1855, according to his own account, he was prepared to join Derby if Palmerston would join also, in spite of having just resigned as a member of that Coalition which Disraeli had done so much to destroy.[1] Since then he had, like Disraeli, supported a reasonable peace with Russia, and had, in common with him, advocated a policy of retrenchment and economy after the war, and vehemently opposed Palmerston's aggressive adventures. He shared with the Conservatives the responsibility for defeating Palmerston both over the China War and over the Conspiracy Bill. He told both Derby and his Peelite friends that his principal object during this period was to overthrow Palmerston's supremacy, in which he saw nothing but evil. If he perceived no fatal objection to a junction

[1] See p. 1379.

with Derby in 1855, surely *a fortiori* he must gladly come in now, when he had proved the possibility of common action, and when the consolidation in office of a strong Conservative Government was the only possible means of preventing Palmerston's return to power.

Derby, with Disraeli's complete approval, had applied to Gladstone, without success, immediately he received the Queen's commission to form a Government. Gladstone's reasons for refusal did not seem of a final or conclusive character; and his relations to the Government had been drawn closer by a Budget based on his own proposals of 1853, and defended by him against Liberal criticism. It was to Gladstone, therefore, that the thoughts of the Government chiefs mainly turned when Ellenborough's resignation placed a high office at their disposal. Rose, as the party agent, pressed on Disraeli the necessity of not being content with 'a mere patch-up' among the members of their own party, but of making every effort to strengthen the Cabinet from outside; Earle reminded him that what the Cabinet wanted was 'strength in the House of Commons.' Accordingly, after some preliminary soundings—in the course of which Disraeli vainly offered, in order to facilitate Gladstone's adhesion, to resign the lead to Graham—Walpole, on May 22, the morrow of the collapse of Cardwell's motion, formally on Derby's behalf asked for Gladstone's co-operation, placing either the Board of Control or the Colonial Office at his disposal, and saying that the spirit in which the offer was made was 'a desire that it should be taken to signify the wish of the Government progressively to extend its basis.' Gladstone still demurred, stating his objections in much the same terms as in the previous February, but consented to consult Graham and Aberdeen before finally refusing. Disraeli, however airily he might talk of Gladstone as a 'deserter' whose submission must be unconditional,[1] was determined to do

[1] Vitzthum, Vol. I., p. 269.

everything in his power to make the negotiation a success. Accordingly he seconded Derby's offer by a personal appeal, as magnanimous as it was impressive.

To William Ewart Gladstone.

Confidential. GROSVENOR GATE, *May* 25, 1858.—I think it of such paramount importance to the public interests that you should assume at this time a commanding position in the administration of affairs that I feel it a solemn duty to lay before you some facts, that you may not decide under a misapprehension.

Our mutual relations have formed the great difficulty in accomplishing a result which I have always anxiously desired.

Listen, without prejudice, to this brief narrative.

In 1850, when the balanced state of parties in the House of Commons indicated the future, I endeavored, through the medium of the late Lord Londonderry, and for some time not without hope, to induce Sir James Graham to accept the post of leader of the Conservative party, which I thought would remove all difficulties.

When he finally declined this office, I endeavored to throw the game into your hands, and your conduct then, however unintentional, assisted me in my views.

The precipitate Ministry of 1852 baffled all this. Could we have postponed it another year, all might have been right.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding my having been forced publicly into the chief place in the Commons, and all that occurred in consequence, I was still constant to my purpose, and in 1855 suggested that the leadership of the House should be offered to Lord Palmerston, entirely with the view of consulting your feelings and facilitating your position.

Some short time back, when the power of dissolution was certain, and the consequences of it such as, in my opinion, would be highly favorable to the Conservative party, I again confidentially sought Sir James Graham, and implored him to avail himself of the favorable conjuncture, accept the post of leader in the H. of C., and allow both of us to serve under him.

He was more than kind to me, and fully entered into the state of affairs, but he told me his course was run, and that he had not strength or spirit for such an enterprise.

Thus you see, for more than eight years, instead of thrusting myself into the foremost place, I have been, at all times, actively prepared to make every sacrifice of self for the public good, which I have ever thought identical with your accepting office in a Conservative Government.

Don't you think the time has come when you might deign to be magnanimous?

Mr. Canning was superior to Lord Castlereagh in capacity, in acquirements, in eloquence, but he joined Lord C. when Lord C. was Lord Liverpool's lieutenant, when the state of the Tory party rendered it necessary. That was an enduring and, on the whole, not an unsatisfactory connection, and it certainly terminated very gloriously for Mr. Canning.

I may be removed from the scene, or I may wish to be removed from the scene.

Every man performs his office, and there is a Power, greater than ourselves, that disposes of all this.

The conjuncture is very critical, and, if prudently yet boldly managed, may rally this country. To be inactive now is, on your part, a great responsibility. If you join Lord Derby's Cabinet, you will meet there some warm personal friends; all its members are your admirers. You may place me in neither category, but in that, I assure you, you have ever been sadly mistaken. The vacant post is, at this season, the most commanding in the Commonwealth; if it were not, whatever office you filled, your shining qualities would always render you supreme; and if party necessities retain me formally in the chief post, the sincere and delicate respect which I should always offer you, and the unbounded confidence which on my part, if you choose, you could command, would prevent your feeling my position as anything but a form.

Think of all this in a kindly spirit. These are hurried lines, but they are heartfelt. I was in the country yesterday, and must return there to-day for a county dinner. My direction is Langley Park, Slough. But on Wednesday evening I shall be in town.—B. DISRAELI.

It was a generous and manly letter,[1] and deserved a worthier response than the stiff and frigid reply in which even Gladstone's biographer seems to hear the 'accents of guarded reprobation.'

From William Ewart Gladstone.

11, CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE, *May* 25, 1858.

MY DEAR SIR,—The letter you have been so kind as to address to me will enable me, I trust, to remove from your mind some impressions with which you will not be sorry to part.

[1] That Gladstone did not join, Disraeli told Bishop Wilberforce in 1862, 'was not my fault . . . I almost went on my knees to him.'

You have given me a narrative of your conduct since 1850 with reference to your position as leader of your party. But I have never thought your retention of that office matter of reproach to you, and on Saturday last I acknowledged to Mr. Walpole the handsomeness of your conduct in offering to resign it to Sir James Graham.

You consider that the relations between yourself and me have proved the main difficulty in the way of certain political arrangements. Will you allow me to assure you that I have never in my life taken a decision which turned upon them?

You assure me that I have ever been mistaken in failing to place you among my friends or admirers. Again I pray you to let me say that I have never known you penurious in admiration towards anyone who had the slightest claim to it, and that at no period of my life, not even during the limited one when we were in sharp political conflict, have I either felt any enmity towards you, or believed that you felt any towards me.

At the present moment I am awaiting counsel which at Lord Derby's wish I have sought. But the difficulties which he wishes me to find means of overcoming are broader than you may have supposed. Were I at this time to join any Government, I could not do it in virtue of party connection. I must consider, then, what are the conditions which make harmonious and effective co-operation in Cabinet possible; how largely old habits enter into them; what connections can be formed with public approval; and what change would be requisite in the constitution of the present Government in order to make any change worth a trial.

I state these points fearlessly and without reserve, for you have yourself well reminded me that there is a Power beyond us that disposes of what we are and do, and I find the limits of choice in public life to be very narrow.—I remain, my dear sir, very faithfully yours, W. E. GLADSTONE.[1]

Aberdeen, on the whole, advised Gladstone to decline; Graham, on the whole, to accept. Graham no longer thought it would be humiliation for Gladstone to sit on the Treasury bench with Disraeli as his leader, and believed that, if he accepted, he would eventually supersede him. The historian may well regret that so intensely interesting an experiment was never made. It would

[1] Both of these letters are printed (Gladstone's from a draft, which explains some slight inaccuracies) in Lord Morley's *Gladstone*, Bk. IV., ch. 9; but it seems material to the proper understanding of Disraeli's character and conduct to reprint them here.

have reproduced on the Conservative front bench the spectacle presented for some twenty years by Russell and Palmerston on the Liberal front bench. Disraeli, with a fine confidence in himself and with the spirit of adventure still strong within him, openly invited this friendly rivalry, and was prepared to carry it on in a chivalrous manner. Not every student of politics will agree with Graham that Gladstone would have superseded Disraeli, as Palmerston superseded Russell, as leader. It is at least possible that, subjected to the same intimate influence, Gladstone would eventually have yielded to the fascination which in the long run brought people so diverse as Queen Victoria, Derby, Salisbury, Metternich, Lyndhurst, Northcote, Gathorne Hardy, and many more, to repose their confidence in one whom most of them were originally disposed to dislike and contemn.

Gladstone was not willing to make the trial. 'If he supports him [Disraeli],' wrote, with robust common-sense, Gladstone's friend the Duke of Argyll, 'I cannot see why he should not serve with him.'[1] The Duke forgot that to Gladstone a fine distinction of this kind would make a special appeal. Gladstone wrote next day to Derby that he must adhere to his reply to Walpole, as he did not see 'a prospect of public advantage or of material accession to your strength, from my entering your Government single-handed.' He added that to a scheme which would embrace the Peelite leaders as a body he should be individually favourable; but even of such a scheme he should not be sanguine. 'Lord Aberdeen is the person who could best give a dispassionate and weighty opinion on this subject.' The Conservative leaders differed as to what this oracular letter meant.

From Lord Derby.

Private. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *May* 27, 1858.—I could not get away from Osborne. . . . We have much and important

[1] Letter to Lord Aberdeen, May 25, 1858. See the Duke's *Autobiography*, Vol. II., p. 120.

matters to talk on, in reference to personal arrangements. Stanley seems to think, and he says that you agree with him, that Gladstone's letter, like that of the K. of Naples, is not a 'refus catégorique,' but a 'réponse argumentative.' I am rather of the Queen's opinion, who wished to know whom he expected to take the responsibility of his accepting office. . . . I really hardly see how we can approach Aberdeen (which is Stanley's notion, and he thinks is Gladstone's) with any proposition which should not be either an insult to him or a degradation to us; but I will talk this over with you to-morrow. . . .

To Lord Stanley.

May 28, 1858] *Friday,* 11 *o'clock.*—Your father has just left me. He wishes that you should see Ld. A[berdeen] immediately, and sound him on the situation. What we want is that G[ladstone] should take India under the shield and cover of Lord Ab. joining the Cabinet, like Lord Lansdowne, without office—in short, as we settled together yesterday. . . . Time is very precious, which I need not press upon you. I give you no precise instructions, for all must depend upon the occasion, the humor of Ab., and your own tact.

The mission to Aberdeen was unsuccessful, and Derby and Disraeli had once more to fall back on the resources of their own party. It was decided to transfer Stanley, the man of the future in the Cabinet, to the India Board—an arrangement equally agreeable to his father and to his political mentor. For the Colonial Office Disraeli suggested his friend Chandos, who 'is a little Lord Grenville'; but eventually it was offered to, and accepted by, Bulwer Lytton, who had made difficulties in February, but was now ready to face his re-election. As Earle wrote, it was 'something to have a name of European celebrity added to the Cabinet.' The new Minister assured Disraeli that 'on accepting office I have no sensation so pleasurable as that of sharing in any difficulties that may beset you; and in the easier opportunities, so afforded, of removing any misconceptions which may yet leave a shadow on that affectionate friendship which I trust to carry with me to my grave.'

Lytton's tenure of the Colonial Office was shortly to

subserve Disraeli's determination, still persistent in spite of repeated rebuffs, to secure, if possible, Gladstone's co-operation in Government. The Ionian Islands, which had been a British protectorate since 1815, had been for years in a disturbed state, with a strong party agitating for union with Greece. Lytton considered it advisable to send a special mission, and fixed on Gladstone as an ideal High Commissioner. Gladstone's disposition was supposed, in spite of his refusal to take office, to be still friendly to Ministers. Rose wrote to Disraeli in August that a friend of his who had been visiting Gladstone reported: 'G. expressed himself warmly in favour of the Government, and in very friendly terms towards you, describing your conduct of the business in Parliament in most complimentary terms.'

From Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

COLONIAL OFFICE, *Sept.* 23, 1858.—. . . I have received some information privately which makes me believe that he [Gladstone] would listen more favourably to such a proposal than you might imagine at the first blush. The peculiar position of the man at present, his scholarly tastes and associations, the prospective fame of saving the freedom and reforming the constitution of a Greek people, might be so placed before him as to influence his choice; and at all events I think I could so put the proposal as to please and propitiate him.

As a party move for the Government, I think success here would be a masterstroke in negotiation; and, besides, if he would consent to be less crotchety, I believe he would suit the occasion better than any other man we could send. . . .

Disraeli cordially approved the suggestion. 'I was privy to the plot,' he wrote to Stanley on October 24, 'but never supposed it would result in anything but endless correspondence.' The idea, however, fired Gladstone's imagination, and on October 30 Lytton was able to tell Disraeli: 'All is settled, and Gladstone is to have a war steamer to meet him at Trieste.' Gladstone, undeterred by several untoward incidents, went to work with a will, drew up a series of constitutional reforms, and

offered, on December 27, to remain for a time in the islands himself, as Lord High Commissioner, to introduce them. Lytton advised acceptance of the offer. 'His proposed constitution,' he wrote to Disraeli, 'is in reality a responsible Government approaching to that of a colony; and though it may need alterations to which he would agree, it is our safest choice to take it and leave it under his care.' Derby hesitated, foreseeing, it may be, the difficulty of maintaining the protectorate if a free constitution were granted; but Disraeli took prompt command of the situation.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. DOWNING STREET, *Jan.* 6, 1859.—Lytton sent me last midnight the Ionian box from Knowsley. It is impossible to impugn the sound sense of your observations. Pardon me, therefore, if an overwhelming conviction of the inexpediency of exactly following the course which you recommend emboldens me to trouble you with one remark.

I view the strange circumstances solely with reference to the assembly for the management of which I am, through your confidence, mainly responsible.

If we decline Gladstone's proposal, it is clear to me that he will lose no time in bringing it forward in the House of Commons. There I am persuaded it will be carried, and Gladstone will be master of the situation.

If we accept his present offer, and he fails, the failure will be his: if he succeed, the credit will redound to the Government which selected him. When once he has embarked in the undertaking he must see it to its end. Every thought and feeling that govern man will bring this about.

I will not dwell on the question who, but he, in the present state of affairs, can be L. H. C. . . . Young[1] must be recalled instanter.

I confine myself solely, in these rapid but deeply considered lines, to the expression of one of the strongest and clearest opinions that I ever entertained, that the general refusal of Gladstone's proposal would be to extricate him from a most difficult position, and to place him in a commanding one. . . .

Disraeli prevailed, and Gladstone's offer was accepted. Unfortunately, the islanders could not be persuaded to

[1] Sir J. Young, the Lord High Commissioner.

take constitutional reform as a substitute for union with Greece. They rejected Gladstone's proposals; and the union with Greece, of which he would not hear at the time, was ultimately, in 1863, acquiesced in by a Government of which he was a leading member. Disraeli does not appear, on the present occasion, to have regarded the Ionian question, which was outside his departmental purview, in any other aspect than as a means of either attaching Gladstone more closely to the Government, or, in the alternative, discrediting him. The value of the islands from a naval and military point of view to a Mediterranean Power is not discussed in his correspondence of 1858-59.

Gladstone returned to England in March, 1859. He refused to join in the Liberal attack on the Government Reform Bill, and he supported Ministers on the vote of confidence.[1] But he declined renewed overtures from Derby in May, and in June unhesitatingly accepted an offer to be Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Liberal Government, under a Prime Minister of whose policy, save in his support of Italian unity, he had totally disapproved, and whom he distrusted, his friends thought, even more than he distrusted Disraeli. He thereby secured for himself a fairly certain succession to the veterans Palmerston and Russell, in preference to a dubious rivalry with Disraeli, who was almost his contemporary.

The appointment of Stanley to the Board of Control took the burden of conducting through the House of Commons the India Resolutions, and the subsequent India Bill, off Disraeli's shoulders; but his constant attention to the subject was insured both by his deep interest in the country and by his solicitude for the success of his political pupil. The collapse of the Opposition over the Cardwell motion had left them with little heart for further fighting; and the Government repelled, by considerable majorities, amendments to the Resolutions calculated to

[1] See below, Chs. 6 and 7.

substitute Palmerston's original provisions for their own. Such being the temper of the House, Ministers introduced their Bill without taking the trouble to carry all their Resolutions, Stanley drily remarking, to the general amusement, that those already passed had answered their purpose.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

DOWNING STREET, *June* 16, 1858.—It is a long time since I said to you, 'How d'ye do?'

My life has been passed in constant combat, but I am glad to add, with respect to all important matters, constant victory. The enemy, however, like the Sepoys, still keep the field, and, like Sir Colin, I really have to carry on the campaign under a scorching sky. Morning sittings and evening sittings, with the duties of my department, Cabinet Councils, and the general conduct of affairs, engross and absorb my life from the moment I wake until the hour of rest, which is generally three hours after midnight.

But I never was better. I am sorry to say I cannot aver as much of my chief and colleague. Lord Derby has a raging fit of the gout, which terribly disconcerts me. Fortunately, we are now, generally speaking, on velvet; but, unhappily, all the measures which I have carried thro' the House of Commons will soon be going to the Upper House, and he will be required to advocate and conduct them.

Our settlement of the Neapolitan difficulties has gained us great credit, and I hear from all parts of the country that the Government is not only popular, but daily increasing in public favor. Lord Stanley is of great use to me, and much distinguishes himself. . . .

I have never been in the country for five months, except a little visit to Windsor. Even when I went to Slough—the famous Slough—it was with a return ticket. But with success one can bear anything.

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *June* 24, 1858.—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his humble duty to your Majesty.

The India Bill was read a second time without a division. Lord Stanley made a clear and vigorous exposition of its spirit and provisions; Mr. Bright delivered a powerful oration on the condition of India—its past government and future prospects; the rest of the discussion weak and desultory.

No serious opposition apprehended in Committee, which

the Chancellor of the Exchequer has fixed for this day (Friday), and almost hopes that he may conclude the Committee on Monday. He proposes to proceed with no other business until it is concluded.

When the Bill has passed, the temper of the House, and its sanitary state, will assist him in passing the remaining estimates with rapidity; and he contemplates an early conclusion of the Session.

It will be a great thing to have carried the India Bill, which Mr. Thomas Baring to-night spoke of in terms of eulogy, and as a great improvement on the project of the late Government. It is, the Chancellor of the Exchequer really thinks, a wise and well-digested measure, ripe with the experience of the last five months of discussion; but it is only the antechamber of an imperial palace, and your Majesty would do well to deign to consider the steps which are now necessary to influence the opinions and affect the imagination of the Indian populations. The name of your Majesty ought to be impressed upon their native life. Royal proclamations, Courts of Appeal, in their own land, and other institutions, forms, and ceremonies, will tend to this great result.[1]

The constitution provided by this Bill is that under which, with slight modifications, the Government of India has ever since been carried on. The authority of the East India Company and of the Board of Control was transferred to the Secretary of State for India in Council. In regard to the Council, in deference to the general opinion of the House of Commons, the Government abandoned the elective principle, which had been a pet device of Ellenborough's and was favoured by Disraeli, but which was abhorrent to Stanley's plain common-sense. The number of the Council was fixed at fifteen, seven to be chosen by the Directors of the Company, and eight to be nominated by the Secretary of State, the majority of the Councillors to have the qualification of ten years' residence in India. As the result of later legislation, the Council is now twelve instead of fifteen, and they are all nominated by the Secretary of State. They were to be paid, might not sit in Parliament, and had a tenure of office as secure as that of the Judges. The decision of

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

the Secretary of State was to be final, save in financial questions, and he had authority to decide, without consulting the Council, all matters which came within the purview of the old Secret Committee. Comparatively slight changes were made in the Bill during its Parliamentary course, save that Gladstone procured by general consent the insertion of a clause which, as modified in the Lords, provided that, except for repelling actual invasion or under other sudden or urgent necessity, the Indian revenues should not be applied, without the consent of Parliament, to defray the expense of military operations beyond the Indian frontiers.

It is a constitution which has upon the whole worked well; but it required for its cordial acceptance in India, as Disraeli wrote to the Queen, personal association with the Sovereign in such a way as 'to influence the opinions and affect the imagination of the Indian populations. The name of your Majesty ought to be impressed upon their native life.' In after-years Disraeli was to effect this in several striking ways.[1] For the moment he was anxious that the royal proclamation, announcing to the people of India the assumption of direct authority by the Crown, should be a document worthy of the Sovereign and of the occasion. Stanley, with great business merits, was lacking in imagination,[2] and his draft satisfied neither the Queen nor Disraeli. He was laudably anxious that the religious neutrality of the Indian Government should be emphasised, but did not seem to realise the importance, both in England and in India, of emphasising also the religious character of the Sovereign.

To Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Aug.* 13, 1858.—I fear a storm is brewing respecting the religious portion of the Ind. question.

[1] See above, p. 1493.

[2] In a note, dated 1863, Disraeli writes that when he and Stanley 'were discussing any grave point, and Stanley saw nothing but difficulties, and I evinced my impatience, he used to say, "I know what you are going to say." He meant, that he had no imagination.'

You appear at Lynn, and also to the deputation the other day, to have spoken of Christianity as 'the religion of Europe.' The dissatisfaction is not confined to the ultra-religious circles merely. No Government can stand that is supposed to slight the religious feelings of the country. It is as important to touch the feelings and sympathy of the religious classes in England as to conciliate the natives of India; and I think both objects may be accomplished if the neutrality, on which all agree, is laid down in the right way and on the right basis. . . .

To Derby Disraeli had written to the same effect, adding: 'I shall write to [Stanley] by this post; he will not like it, but it must be done.' Stanley did not like it, and forwarded the letter to his father with a caustic comment. The Queen interposed, and asked the Prime Minister to draft the proclamation himself 'in his excellent language,' 'bearing in mind that it is a female Sovereign who speaks to more than 100,000,000 of Eastern people on assuming the direct government of them after a bloody civil war, giving them pledges which her future reign is to redeem, and explaining the principles of her government.' Derby justified Her Majesty's confidence. 'Firmly relying on the truth of Christianity,' ran the proclamation, 'and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. It is our royal will and pleasure that no one shall in any wise suffer for his opinions, or be disquieted by reason of his religious faith or observance. We will show to all alike the equal and impartial protection of the law.' The policy of clemency which Disraeli had throughout advocated was carried out in the proclamation by the promise of a general amnesty to all not guilty of murder.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

Downing Street, *July* 26, 1858.—It is a long time since I wrote to you, but the last month has been one of almost supernatural labor. It has, however, been successful. Notwithstanding all the disturbance and hostility of the early

part of the session, there has seldom been one in which a greater number of excellent measures have been passed than the present.

The day before yesterday, altho' Saturday, the House sate in the morning and worked well; then at three o'clock we had a Cabinet, and at 6 o'clock we went to Greenwich for the Fish Dinner. We ate it with a good relish. It is the carnival of politics, and a great deal of nonsense is talked, which is not difficult when you have won the day. Our chairman was the Attorney-General for Ireland, Whiteside, who is witty and eloquent and full of resource.

Lord Derby gave his health with a sentiment: 'Whiteside and whitebait!'

On Saturday we go to Osborne to hold a Council and settle the Queen's Speech. It will be a flourishing one, and on Monday we shall prorogue Parliament and give it a holiday—I hope of at least six months.

We shall try to get to Hughenden immediately, that we may see our trees with something of the bowery refulgence of summer; and as the summer wanes, I shall not be surprised if we find ourselves for a day or two at Torquay.

I don't count on much holiday for the rest of the year, as public affairs are very urgent, and my labors of preparation for the next campaign will not be light. I have declined to go to Ireland [1] and to Scotland, and shall content myself with the sylvan beauties of Bucks and the soft breezes of delicious Devon. I hope to see you quite flourishing.

Disraeli was justified in his boast of the fruitfulness of the session. The passing of the India Act alone would have given it distinction; but several other beneficial laws were enacted and thorny questions settled. Local government in towns was improved; Scottish Universities were regulated; an Encumbered Estates Act was passed for Ireland. These were useful but not showy measures. More interest attached to the passage, after a more than ten years' wrangle, of an Act admitting Jews to Parliament. This measure of liberality and justice, for which Disraeli had so long pleaded in vain,[2] was at last granted under his official auspices, and a

[1] Lady Londonderry had pressed the Disraelis to come and stay with her in the North of Ireland, and had promised him an enthusiastic reception at Belfast.

[2] See III., ch. 3.

constant source of dissension between leader and party done away with. Then Bulwer Lytton carried a Bill establishing the colony of British Columbia; and, in the Queen's Speech, Her Majesty was happily advised to express a hope 'that this new colony on the Pacific may be but one step in the career of steady progress by which Her Majesty's dominions in North America may ultimately be peopled, in an unbroken chain, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, by a loyal and industrious population of subjects of the British Crown.' That hope has been abundantly fulfilled; but Disraeli, as the guardian of a not overfull Exchequer, did not feel justified in offering more than a sympathetic hearing to a deputation which came in the autumn from the Governments of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, with a scheme under which that 'unbroken chain' might be promoted by means of an intercolonial railway. Finally, Disraeli himself introduced and carried into law a Bill for the purification of the Thames by a great scheme of main drainage. The health of the people was always one of the preoccupations of his statesmanship; some years later he promulgated, as a Conservative watchword, *Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*. An unusually hot season had revealed the Thames in London for what it then was, a common sewer; and its offensiveness to members who met to legislate on its bank disposed them to facilitate the rapid passing of the Government Bill. The Metropolitan Board of Works was chosen as the authority, the expense was to be met by a sewage rate, and the Treasury started the scheme with a handsome guarantee. The success of the measure showed that practical efficiency could be happily combined with a statesmanship of ideas.

The India Act, both in its progress through Parliament and in its subsequent administration, raised a number of questions in which the prerogative was, or seemed to be, involved, and in which the Court was particularly interested. Stanley, the last President of the Board of

Control and first Secretary of State for India, was no courtier, and was somewhat impatient of the claims of prerogative; and not only Derby, but Disraeli, as Stanley's intimate friend and immediate leader, had to smooth away many difficulties. Stanley's prompt acceptance of Gladstone's amendment making the use of the Indian Army outside India dependent upon the consent of Parliament; his insistence on unrestricted competition and a Parliamentary title for Indian appointments; his delay in assimilating, to meet the Queen's wishes, the practice of the new India Office, in regard to submissions to Her Majesty, to that of the Foreign Office; his reluctance to allow the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge, to have any control over the Indian Army—were all causes of offence.

On the first two points Derby placated the Court by moving amendments in the Lords, which saved constitutional form without seriously modifying the meaning of the Act. In regard to the last two the Prince Consort sought Disraeli's aid; and an interesting letter to the Prince, dated November 18, printed in full in *Queen Victoria's Letters*, gives Disraeli's account of the tactful manner in which he carried out, in conversation with Stanley, the delicate mission. Stanley 'without reserve and cordially' accepted the position that he must act always as the Minister of the Queen, and not of the Council of India; and he agreed on all military matters, while reserving the authority of the Secretary of State, to communicate habitually with the Commander-in-Chief and take his advice. 'Throughout this interview,' Disraeli wrote, 'Lord Stanley's manner was candid, very conciliatory, and, for him, even soft. He was pleased to say that it was a source of great satisfaction to him that your Royal Highness had deigned to confer confidentially with me on the subject, and make me, as it were, a "mediator" on matters which, he assured me with great emphasis, had occasioned him an amount of anxiety almost intolerable. . . . He parted from me with an

earnest expression of his hope that the painful misconceptions which had prevailed might at once, or at least in due course, entirely disappear.' The Prince expressed in reply his satisfaction and gratitude.

As this correspondence shows, Disraeli's relations with the Court were decidedly better and closer during this Ministry than in 1852. Then he only received one invitation to Windsor in the whole ten months; in 1858-59 he was several times Her Majesty's guest. We may accept with confidence the first part of Mrs. Disraeli's statement to Mrs. Willyams after the fall of this Ministry: 'The Queen is all kindness to Dis, and would give him anything'—that is, of course, in the way of honour or decoration. The Prince Consort was obviously beginning to shake off the strong distrust which he had originally entertained of Disraeli, and had many friendly conversations and much friendly correspondence with him on public affairs, recommending, for instance, 'to your paternal care the infant establishment at South Kensington.' Disraeli gratified the Court by his refusal to act on a private member's motion, carried by a majority of two in a thin House, in favour of placing the War Office and the Horse Guards under a single Minister, and thus ousting the then quasi-independent authority of the Commander-in-Chief—a reform for which the time was perhaps not ripe. He recommended to the House of Commons[1] the Lords' amendment about open competition for Indian appointments, in language which showed a due regard both for the prerogative of the Crown and for the privilege of Parliament. He said that he was a firm, but not an extravagant or headstrong, supporter of the competitive principle in public appointments. In this great work of a new Indian Government they had added much to Her Majesty's regality, invested Her Majesty with new prerogatives, new privileges, and new powers. But in doing so they had felt it their duty to insert conditions and regulations which they would not have

[1] July 30.

thought of inserting had they been dealing with ancient prerogatives of a different character. India was gained by the energy of the middle classes, who had long possessed all the patronage of that great empire. It had always been considered that the transfer from the Company to a more direct and satisfactory polity could not take place without great injury to the middle classes and a dangerous increase of the power of the Crown. Disraeli claimed that the Government measure had avoided both these dangers, and that by the Lords' amendment the constitutional form and spirit were more completely observed.

During the whole of this Ministry the intimacy between Disraeli and Stanley was particularly close, and Disraeli watched over Stanley almost as a father over a son. The correspondence between 'Dear S.' and 'Dear D.' was constant, and Stanley repaired to Disraeli whenever he was in a difficulty. There was withal a frequent difference of opinion; Stanley by no means always accepted his mentor's view.

To Lord Stanley.

[*July,* 1858.]—Ross of *The Times* earnestly begged me to impress on you always to speak to the *clock*.[1] I always do myself, and call it Mr. Speaker.

If you address the gallery or the Opposition front bench, people below your own gangway and behind you hear so imperfectly that they begin to talk among themselves; and it looks as if you were losing the ear of the House, when, in fact, their inattention rises from their not hearing you.

By addressing the clock, your face is half turned to your own side, instead of your back.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Aug.* 9, 1858.—. . . Read the enclosed,[2] and help me in due season, I pray you! For the Tyrwhitt Drakes to ask a service from me is the Hapsburgs soliciting something from a parvenu Napoleon. After thirty

[1] Charles Ross, in his advice, seems to have ignored the interest of the Reporters' Gallery, of which he was the head. A speaker in the House of Commons who addresses the clock turns his back upon the reporters.

[2] Letter from Squire Drake, of Shardeloes, near Amersham, asking for a cadetship. Stanley gave the appointment.

years of scorn and sullenness they have melted before time and events. Their formal adhesion to me would add immensely to my power in this part of the world.

Aug. 10, 1858.—The more I think over your Indian Council, the more I feel convinced it will mortify your party and the House of Commons. No Ministry ever slighted either with impunity. The House of Commons is not in the least considered in the matter. . . .

When a great measure like the India Bill is carried, and a body like the Indian Council established, Parliament is entitled to some portion of the spoil. It is often the only means by which the labors and services of individuals who have been a quarter of a century in Parliament can be publicly recognised by a Minister.

If the first appointments in the Civil Service are to be regulated by statute, and the subsequent patronage is to be withheld from M.P.'s, the House of Commons will soon lose all authority, and be looked upon by the country as a mere debating club. Patronage is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, and that is Power. The feeling of the House of Commons was that the lay appointments should be reserved for public men in our political life. You have crammed the Council with Indians. Take a man like ——; he has been four and twenty years in Parliament; able, cultured, a man of business, as all who have seen him act as Chairman of a Committee well know; he would make a very good Indian Councillor. . . . There are several men of this class, who have given their lives to public affairs and their party, and who would be made perfectly happy in their lot by such a post, for which they are perfectly competent, bringing in the feelings of men of the world and Parliament, in a circle of somewhat restricted sentiments. . . .

I entreat you to think well of this matter. An overscrupulosity in public life often leads to arrangements which are less justifiable than a course of conduct which, at the first blush, might seem more coarse and obvious.

From Lord Stanley.

Confidential. INDIA BOARD, *Aug.* 12, 1858.—I am never insensible to arguments used by you, though in this case I must fairly own that my opinion is adverse. Remember that the interests to be consulted are various. Ellenborough is quite ripe for opposition already, and some of his men I must take, under penalty of offending him altogether: then each Presidency must be represented, for they differ as widely as

Spain from France: again, all the nominees of 1853 are excluded by the Directors, and some have an absolute claim, by virtue of service and recognised talent: lastly, bear in mind that the H. of C., great as its power may be, is not what it was before the Press reached its present influence, and a suspicion of jobbery, from which we at this moment stand clear, and the Whigs as a body do not, would hurt us far more than we should be helped by gratifying one or two individuals. I know you will weigh these reasons fairly, and that is all I ask you to do. . . .

On this question of the appointments to the India Council, there is force in the arguments on both sides. Stanley at any rate maintained his position, and none of the members of Parliament whom Disraeli recommended were appointed members of the first Council.

Disraeli's letters to Mrs. Willyams this autumn contain several allusions to his intimacy with Stanley and his high regard for him.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

HUGHENDEN, *Aug.* 28, 1858.—. . . Lord Stanley is coming down here to-day to stay with us until Monday. He is a source of great strength and popularity to the Ministry, and is a man of first-rate abilities and acquirements—a vast satisfaction to me to have such a colleague, and one with whom I have for many years, and ever since, indeed, that he entered public life, been on terms of intimacy and confidence. . . .

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Sept.* 19, 1858.—. . . I am more fortunate than Lord Stanley, who never leaves town, and is at the E. India House in Leadenhall Street every morning at 10 o'clock. He is of inestimable service to me in all things, and I think the country greatly admires and respects him. It is fortunate for England that, at such a crisis, so powerful and devoted an intellect is working the question of Indian government. . . .

This autumn there was a by-election for Manchester, and the suggestion was mooted that Stanley, strong in the influential Lancashire position of his family and in his own progressive opinions, might be able, now that Protection had been abandoned, to obtain a seat for Conservatism in the home of the Free Trade movement.

The idea immensely attracted Disraeli; but Derby protested, and Stanley was too prudent to make the experiment.

To Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Oct.* 24, 1858.—What do you think of Sir Chas. Trevelyan for Madras? It strikes me that it would be an efficient and popular appointment.

I hope you have deeply considered the Manchester proposition, and will accept it. It will be the inauguration of our new, and still infant, school; a public and national announcement that the *old* Whig monopoly of liberalism is *obsolete*. No doubt what you have to say will require equal tact and wisdom, if, indeed, there be any difference in those qualities. But our position is this: we represent progress, which is essentially practical, against mere Liberal opinions, which are fruitless. We are prepared to do all which the requirements of the State and the thought and feeling of the country will sanction: anything beyond that is mere doctrinaire gossip, which we should studiously avoid.

You will find some of the greatest persons at Manchester, for example, and—as I believe—the preponderant opinion there at present against the Ballot. It will not, therefore, be necessary to support, or, on the other hand, to repudiate it. And so on.

There is no doubt the country at this moment is eminently Conservative, but in the healthy sense of the word; and to a certain and even considerable degree because they have faith in our effecting prudently all changes which are necessary. We should carry into effect our policy by elevating and enlightening Conservative sentiment, not outraging it, or mimicking mere Liberalism.

I think you have hit this happy tone very successfully during the last year, and that it is one of the causes of your success and position.

There were times during the year when it was thought that not merely the Governorship of Madras, but the Governor-Generalship of India, would be at the disposal of the Derby Government; that Canning, disgusted with his treatment by Ellenborough and Ellenborough's colleagues, would resign. Rumour in that case suggested that the first ruler of India who was also Viceroy and direct representative of the Queen would be—Disraeli.

Delane, no *gobemouche*, mentioned the report in a letter in the autumn to W. H. Russell, the famous war correspondent, who was in India at the time. 'It would be a very bold step,' he wrote, 'but it is quite on the cards. He wants the money and the high station, and they want to get rid of him here. He has done so well during the last session as to have conciliated much opposition.'[1] The author of *Tancred* may perhaps have been attracted by the dazzling vision, and the discontented of the party may have hoped for his banishment and for the substitution of Gladstone as leader. But Canning very properly remained at his post; and Disraeli, instead of gratifying his tastes for splendour and the East by holding court in Asia, bent all his energies to grapple at home with the intractable question of Parliamentary Reform.

[1] Atkins's *Life of Sir W. H. Russell*, Vol. I., p. 342.

CHAPTER VI.

A Conservative Reform Bill.

1858–1859.

The adoption of a policy of Parliamentary Reform by the Conservative Government of 1858 was attacked at the time, but rather by opponents than by friends, and has frequently been condemned since, by Conservatives hardly less than by Liberals, as a betrayal of Conservative principles. If the duty of Conservatives is merely, in Disraeli's words when satirising the party as reconstructed by Peel, 'to keep things as they find them as long as they can,' the case must go by default. But if the preservation of the fundamental institutions of the country be held to include their gradual modification to suit the needs of the time, there is a good defence. At any rate, so far as leaders can bind a party, Derby and Disraeli, and particularly Disraeli, had proclaimed openly that they did not consider Reform a Whig monopoly, but at the proper time and in the fitting way would be prepared to deal with it themselves. They had realised, and Disraeli had expounded in his writings, the mistake which the Duke of Wellington had made in committing the party in 1830 to absolute opposition to a policy advocated by the younger Pitt, the founder of modern Conservatism, and only postponed by him owing to the protracted war with France. Peel had done his best to retrieve the mistake by a public acceptance in 1834 of the Reform settlement; and for some fifteen years after that date the maintenance inviolate of the Act of 1832 was the policy of both front benches, Whig as well as Tory. No one was more identified for many years with

this position than Russell, the statesman who carried the great Reform Bill through the House of Commons; he earned, in consequence, the nickname of 'Finality Jack.' But a small but increasing band of Radicals and independent Whigs, led by Hume and Locke King, and eventually by Bright, kept up an agitation, which was more successful in the House of Commons than in the country, for a reopening of the question and an enlargement of the Parliamentary constituency.

Disraeli was one of the first of the Parliamentary leaders of either Whigs or Tories to disclaim absolute finality, and to express a readiness in due course 'to reconstruct,' as he phrased it, 'the estate of the Commons,' by providing, among other things, for a larger representation of the industrial class. This was on Hume's motion for household suffrage in 1848.[1] Though Disraeli was not at that time the acknowledged leader of the party, yet, in consequence of Bentinck's withdrawal, he was leading it *de facto* from the front bench; and after his accession to the leadership, whether in or out of office, he on his party's behalf maintained the same attitude.[2] The *Press*, too, advocated Reform in 1853 as part of the Conservative programme, and pointed to Derby, an old Reformer, as the natural leader to carry it into effect.[3] The increasing Parliamentary support obtained for Locke King's annual motion for assimilating the county with the borough suffrage, culminating early in 1851 in the actual defeat of Russell's Government on this very question, drove Russell from his old position of finality. Henceforward the Whig leaders, however reluctantly, accepted the principle of further Reform, and Russell assumed the conduct of the campaign, introducing a Bill on behalf of his own Government in 1852, and on behalf of Aberdeen's Government in 1854. The Bill of 1852 was lost through the fall of the Government; that of 1854 was withdrawn owing to the Crimean War. Pal-

[1] See pp. 915-919.
[2] See pp. 1101, 1147, 1153, 1175, 1184, 1350.
[3] See p. 1316.

merston's indifference had kept Reform out of the programme of his Government till after the General Election of 1857; and Disraeli, as we have seen,[1] had then expressed his readiness for Reform on the hustings, and had only been prevented by Derby's reluctance from formulating practical proposals on behalf of the party in Parliament. Owing to the defeat of the Conspiracy Bill, Palmerston's Reform proposals had never seen the light; but that the question which had been talked about so long should be taken up in earnest and pushed to a conclusion was the general view in political circles, and the Conservative Government saw no reason why they should disappoint expectation. Disraeli and Stanley were no doubt the most decided Reformers among them, but the whole Cabinet accepted Reform as an essential element of their policy. Disraeli told Mr. Kebbel at the time that he and Derby thought it highly impolitic, if not impossible, for the Conservative party to take up a *non possumus* attitude on a great popular question. Had they done so, he said, they must have dwindled away in time like the Jacobites or the Non-jurors. Parliamentary Reform being a constitutional question, the Conservatives had as much right to deal with it as the Liberals. 'I was determined,' he added, 'to vindicate the right of the party to a free hand, and not to allow them to be shut up in a cage formed by the Whigs and Radicals, confined within a certain magic circle which they were not to step out of at the peril of their lives.'[2]

The Reform Act of 1832, by abolishing the majority of the pocket boroughs and transferring the seats thus gained to populous towns, and by establishing a £10 occupation franchise for boroughs, had transferred power in the main from the aristocracy to the middle classes; but the territorial interest retained a strong hold both on the counties, where the freeholders were the main voters and where the occupation franchise was fixed at £50, and

[1] See above, Ch. 3.
[2] *Lord Beaconsfield and Other Tory Memories*, pp. 16, 17.

on the remaining small boroughs, still considerable in number. Not only was the power of the aristocracy, but also that of the artisans, diminished by the Act. The establishment of a property qualification, and the extinction of ancient electoral rights enjoyed by the poor, resulted in the exclusion of the bulk of the working class; and it was recognised that to bring any considerable portion of them within the constituency the borough franchise must be lowered. A lowering of the county franchise, unless it was carried beneath the level of the existing borough franchise, would only increase the same kind of electors as then returned the borough members. Hume's proposal, which included the whole Radical programme of household suffrage, equal electoral districts, and ballot, meant a transfer of the power of the State to the working men. Locke King's Bill, which assimilated the county to the borough franchise, would establish the middle classes still more firmly in their seat. Disraeli's general view was that all national interests of importance should find adequate representation in the House, and that no one class should be placed in a predominant position. Not only, therefore, was he in favour of new franchises of a varied character, educational and other, but he had constantly shown himself ready to redress the shortcomings of the Act of 1832 by an extension of industrial franchise. His latest proposals, at the time of the 1857 election, had dealt rather with redistribution than with franchise, and were calculated to give a larger proportion of members to the underrepresented counties, which were mainly Conservative, and so diminish the political power of the Radical boroughs. He had shown throughout a strong aversion to equal electoral districts, as being bound up with what he considered the mistaken theory that the franchise is a right, instead of a privilege. But he was sensible of the scandal caused by the excessive inequalities still retained, and was prepared to deal summarily with all the more glaring instances.

No sooner was the distracting session of 1858 over than the minds of Ministers were turned towards the great task before them in the coming year. It was desirable that as mature a consideration as possible should be given to a measure presenting difficulties to any Government, but very special hazards for a Government calling itself Conservative. For, though the party recognised that their leaders, in consequence both of their professions and of the Parliamentary situation, were bound to produce a Reform Bill, most viewed the necessity with regret, and some with suspicion. The Prime Minister himself took charge of the early stages, and in the second week of August had a long conversation on the subject with Rose, the party agent. Rose wrote to Disraeli on August 12: 'I had my first Reform interview with Lord Derby yesterday. It lasted for nearly *three* hours, and I came away quite convinced that no one ought to venture to talk to Lord Derby who does not thoroughly understand his subject.'

The preliminary discussion of Reform between Derby and Disraeli was mixed up with a matter of patronage. A Commissionership of Excise was vacant. The position was one that Disraeli thought would be competently filled by his brother James, who had been an efficient County Court Treasurer since his appointment by Derby in 1852, and whose promotion would make it possible to recognise suitably Rose's great services to the Conservative party by giving him the vacated Treasurership. But Disraeli was laudably anxious not to put personal and family claims above the public service, and the correspondence on the point between Derby and himself is creditable to both men.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Aug.* 12, 1858.— . . . You are as much interested as I am in having a thoroughly competent man in a situation which, from the composition of the Board, must in all probability lead to the Chairmanship; and you are even more interested in not having

your name brought into question in connection with an unfit appointment. I therefore appeal to you confidently, but also most confidentially, for your candid opinion whether your brother is fully equal to the duties of such an office. Should you answer in the affirmative, I will with pleasure submit his name to the Queen, and his appointment will make an opening for Rose. Should you not be able conscientiously to recommend him, I am sure you will not do so; and in that case I must look elsewhere. . . .

To Lord Derby.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Aug.* 13, 1858.—I have no doubt that the individual in question is thoroughly competent, and that his appointment would ultimately reflect credit on your choice; but I nevertheless think at this moment the appointment would be injudicious.

We are now endeavoring to reconstruct the party on a wider basis, and trying to lay the foundation of a permanent system. In this transitionary state we depend entirely on opinion, and any appointment which has the appearance even of preferring private interests and feelings to the efficiency of the public service must be avoided.

I am sorry for the individual immediately concerned, still more for Rose; but if we succeed in our great enterprise you will, I doubt not, have opportunities of rewarding the services of the one, and perhaps of not altogether forgetting the sacrifice of the other. . . .

From Lord Derby.

Private. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Aug.* 15, 1858.—This Commissionership of Excise is really a considerable embarrassment. I enclose you the list of candidates, among whom there is hardly a good name. . . . Would Newdegate take it? and, if so, could we keep his seat? . . . You would, I suppose, prefer keeping Lord R. Cecil in the House;[1] besides which I do not think we should have a 'Lord,' and it would hardly be fair to make another vacancy for Stamford. . . . I shall be very glad if you can assist me in this matter, for I really know not where to turn. After your last note, I cannot think again of the arrangement I proposed to you. . . .

[1] This was not the only suggestion made during this Ministry for providing Lord R. Cecil with a permanent post which would have taken him out of politics. His father, then Lord President, contemplated at one time making him Clerk of the Council in succession to Greville, who resigned while the Derby Government was in office; and he was one of the Members of Parliament suggested by Disraeli to Stanley for original membership of the new Indian Council. See above, Ch. 5.

Derby's difficulties in filling up the post ultimately brought him back to the arrangement which Disraeli desired, but had refrained from pressing.

From Lord Derby.

Private. 10, DOWNING STREET, *Aug.* 25. 1858.—I have a letter from the Queen this morning, approving of your brother's appointment as Commissioner of Excise, and of Rose to succeed him in his Treasurership. . . .

I am to have another conversation with the latter on Friday on the subject of the Reform Bill, at which I have been working, and of which I have good hopes. Let me know your opinion as to the lowering of the franchise in the boroughs. Rose is in favour of a £6 rating. I confess I am afraid of going lower than the present rate, or its equivalent, an £8 rating. The houses between £6 and £10 will add 50 per cent. to the present constituencies. The keystone of the whole must be making freeholders in boroughs voters for the boroughs, and not for the counties, as at present. . . .

To Lord Derby.

HUGHENDEN, *Aug.* 26, 1858.—. . . The line we should take about the borough franchise, I think, must depend upon the general character of our measure. Is it to be moderate, or is it to be large ?

That again, I apprehend, depends upon the temper of the country. It may change by next year, but at present its inclinations in this matter appear temperate.

If you retain the £10 franchise in the boroughs, and extend the franchise in the counties, you will have a strong case in favor of the arrangement you mention of confining borough freeholders to borough voting. Indeed, this is the only mode by which even a colorable balance could be maintained between the county and borough constituencies.

I call a £6 rating a large measure, tho' it may be a safe one; but if you did not advance to that point, I think the wisest in every way would be to retain the £10, because in that case you would have the £10 interest on your side, while an £8 rating would not enlist many supporters, or any fervent support, while the 10 pounders would join the 5 and 6 pounders in opposition to your project.

But I make these remarks with great deference. I would like to have talked over the subject with you. It is hardly sufficiently cleared for correspondence. Indeed, if I had been aware you were so advanced in its consideration, and medi-

tated going to Knowsley before the Council on the 2nd, I should have proposed paying you a morning visit at Osterley, or even presumed so far as to intimate that it might be some distraction to you to discuss the matter in the woods of Hughenden.

I will apprise my brother of the great honor which you have conferred on him, and which I trust you may never regret. It is very satisfactory that you have rewarded Rose. . . .

The policy advocated in Disraeli's letter—the retention of the £10 franchise in the boroughs, the extension of the franchise in the counties, and the confinement of the borough freeholders to borough voting—was in large measure the policy of the Bill eventually produced to the House of Commons. But before that stage was reached Reform passed through many troubled moments in the Cabinet. In August and September, Stanley, who was detained in London or the immediate neighbourhood by the labour involved in bringing the India Act into effect, was frequently a guest at Hughenden; and he and Disraeli, as the representatives of the progressive party in the Government, worked out their own plan, which embraced (1) identity of franchise for counties as well as boroughs at £10; (2) new franchises, based on personal property, etc.; (3) optional ballot; and (4) disfranchisement ranging from sixty to ninety seats—the first and last points being those to which they attached most importance. They were led, no doubt, to put identity of franchise in the forefront by the fact that Parliament had accepted the principle of Locke King's Bill in the past session, as on several previous occasions, by a considerable majority, in spite of a deprecatory speech from Disraeli, who had objected to dealing piecemeal with a great question which the Government had determined to take in hand. If there were any principle of further Reform to which Parliament might be considered to be pledged, it was an identic suffrage for boroughs and counties. At the same time, for Disraeli to accept it, and make it, as he did, the outstanding

feature of the Government Bill, argues a great change of attitude towards the middle classes, whose power it was calculated so largely to increase, and may perhaps be attributed, at least in part, to Stanley's influence over him. For Stanley was pre-eminently a statesman who trusted, and was trusted by, the middle classes. His plain common-sense and love of peace appealed to them almost as much as did Palmerston's good-humour and bounce, and on Palmerston's death he largely succeeded to his place in their favour.

For a time, though Derby and Rose were also pursuing their labours, no further communications passed between Derby and Disraeli. 'I thought it better,' wrote Disraeli to Stanley on September 19, 'that an interval of silence should take place. He [Derby] must be sick of me after six months—and such months—of constant deliberation. Now he will be fresh again, and I shall be less stale.' Unfortunately, Derby was not fresh again at the end of September, but had a severe attack of the gout.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Monday, Oct.* 11, 1858.—Lord Derby's second attack of the gout, which came on the day after he left Balmoral, has deranged all my plans, and occasioned me a great deal of trouble and anxiety. It has been very severe, but we kept it secret for a long time, so that when it got known, and we were found out, he had recovered, which, considering the severity of the attack, was as satisfactory as unexpected. Nothing disheartens a party so much as an invalid chief, and they are always afraid he is going to die and break up the Ministry.

One, however, may be compensated for a little extra toil or care by the state of the country, which, I believe, is as generally prosperous as it ever was at any period of its history. Everything succeeds, foreign and domestic, and the Ex[cheque]r is overflowing.

These gold discoveries must exercise an immense influence on mankind; nuggets and the comet open everybody's mind.

We have had a great many visitors at Hughenden of late: Lord Stanley, Sir Edward Lytton, the Rothschilds,

Sir W. Jolliffe, Mr. Baring; the greater part of them combined business with pleasure, for they settled State affairs as well as occasionally killing a bird for you.

We have been here these six days or so, incog. except to my private secretary, and have done a deal of work. The paint is not very bad, and we have preferred its inconvenience to Downing Street and the Thames, so we did not send for your great analyser, Sir Brodie!

I hope to be able to get back to Hughenden on Friday, and appear at Aylesbury at Q. Sessions on the following Monday. . . .

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Oct.* 20, 1858.—Our visit to London incog. has come to an end, but to-morrow I must return, but not incog., to receive the Canadian Ministers, who have come over here, and who want, like all of us and all the world, some money. . . .

The Queen arrives on Wednesday (this very day), and a great deal is going on. Lord Derby's illness has very much put me out and deranged my plans.

The great thing now will be the new French Ambassadress[1] —a Spanish lady of high degree, and very haughty, they say, scornful, and all that. We have had nothing in that style for a great many years, and I think it will be amusing. The Emperor has given her a tiara of diamonds, and large pearls fit for the Empress: the Empress herself has given her a stomacher entirely of brilliants; the Queen of Spain a fan of diamonds and emeralds; the Duke of Malakhoff himself a corbeille, according to custom, full of all sorts of dainty devices—Cashmere shawls, brilliant trinkets, lace, pocket-handkerchiefs like the petticoats of the Madonna of Loretto, and no end of fancy splendor. But what we await with the greatest interest are—her favors.

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *Oct.* 30, 1858.—We have been here nearly a fortnight, enjoying the autumn, but business has been very active—couriers and despatch-boxes every day, and all the symptoms that graver days are at hand. The world gets serious in November.

To-day we go to Gunnersbury, Baron Rothschild's, to meet the French Ambassador and his bride, and stay there till Monday, on which morning I shall appear in Downing Street. All the Ministers will have arrived by that time—Lord Derby on Monday evening—and at 12 o'clock on Tuesday we two have our first confidential conference for three months. There will be no lack of matter to talk about.

The Cabinet will meet the next day, Wednesday. Their meetings will no doubt for some time be frequent. . . .

[1] Madame Pélissier, Duchess of Malakhoff.

One of the first acts of the November Cabinets was to appoint a Cabinet Committee to consider the details of the Reform Bill. Disraeli and Stanley, as the advocates of a comprehensive measure, resumed their special consultations, and determined, as far as possible, to mould in concert the decisions to be taken on the subject.

To Lord Stanley.

HUGHENDEN, *Nov.* 5, 1858.—You or I ought to be Chairman of the Reform Committee, in order to direct the course in a salutary stream.

I shall be at D. S. to-morrow at 12 o'clock, and propose you: but if, on the ground of E[ast] I[ndia] H[ouse], you demur, you can perform the office for yours ever, D.

The Committee reported on November 26, explaining that, though there had been individual differences of opinion, every proposition adopted had the sanction of a large majority. Their recommendations, with regard to franchise, were to retain the £10 franchise in the boroughs, to establish a £10 rating franchise in the counties, and a £20 lodger franchise for both town and country, while transferring the freehold franchise, where the property was situated within borough limits, from the county to the borough. With regard to redistribution, while repudiating any attempt at absolute equality, they recommended mitigating the more glaring anomalies. They would disfranchise totally boroughs with a population under 5,000, thus gaining sixteen seats, and partially disfranchise those between 5,000 and 15,000, gaining fifty-seven seats more. No new constituencies were to be created, except by the division of the West Riding and of South Lancashire; but every county constituency with a population above 100,000 was to have three members, and where it exceeded 50,000 two, thus giving fifty-two additional county seats. The same principle applied to towns disposed of eighteen seats. The small margin left might perhaps be used for the University of London or the Inns of Court. It was pro-

posed to disfranchise dockyard men, to allow polling papers, and to resist the ballot.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

WINDSOR CASTLE,[1] *Nov.* 15, 1858.—All well: *very* well. Coming up for a Cabinet, and just time to write this line. My visit has been an *endless conversation* with the Prince.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

DOWNING STREET, *Nov.* 27, 1858.—We have had as hard work this month as I ever recollect in public life, and a prospect of its continuance yet for some weeks. Cabinets, or Committees of Cabinets, every day—from 12 to 5 or 6 o'clock—and plenty of work afterwards. We are really working night and day.

On the whole, affairs are very satisfactory, and altho' I hear rumors of our career being cut short in February next, they don't give me sleepless nights. . . .

I sate next the Prince of Wales at dinner the other day, and was very much pleased with him—intelligent, informed, and with a singularly sweet manner. He was going off the next day to Berlin, on a visit to his sister, and seemed full of delight at the prospect. . . .

The last days of November and the early days of December were mainly occupied with Cabinet Councils on the details of the Reform Bill. The report of the Committee was by no means universally accepted. Malmesbury wrote on December 3: 'I have little expectation of the Government producing a measure that will satisfy either themselves or the public'; and he tells us of an important division in which Derby was only supported by Malmesbury himself and Manners. Disraeli, Stanley, Pakington, Salisbury, and Lytton, voted for a more liberal proposal; Chelmsford, Walpole, Henley, Hardwicke, and Peel, for a more conservative one. 'So nothing was done.' This division shows generally the parties into which the Cabinet was divided. The attitude of both Walpole and Henley was beginning to cause special uneasiness, when the leaders had an unexpected blow in letters from Lytton announcing his immediate resignation on grounds

[1] Disraeli was staying at the Castle from Monday to Wednesday.

of health. If the resignation took effect, Disraeli hoped to utilise the vacancy in such a way as to reconcile or neutralise Henley and Walpole.

To Lord Derby

Confidential. DOWNING STREET, *Dec.* 20, 1858.—Lytton sent me yesterday, *per* box from Knebworth, copy of his letter to you, and also the letter of his physician, evidently written to show. I am not clear that health is the cause of this unexpected movement, in which case we may have difficulty in inducing him to remain for the nonce, if, on reflection, it prove desirable.

Calculating from the dates that I might hear from you this morning, as turned out to be the case, I avoided replying to him, though I had framed in my mind an answer couched in the same spirit as your own, though not as good, as I think you touched every point, and with great felicity.

I have, of course, kept the affair quite close from our colleagues, but I thought it best yesterday to send a special messenger to Merstham, and secure Jolliffe with me this morning. I have shown him all the letters, and also told him that I would apprise you thereof.

I give you the result of a night's anxious meditation on this subject. The scheme which I recommend for your consideration is this:

Were I you, I would appoint Henley Secretary for the Colonies; Sotheron Estcourt, Board of Trade; Edward Egerton, Poor Board.

I fancy, often, that want of preferment is at the bottom of Henley's crotchety churlishness.[1] Secretary of State, you would find no difficulty with him in the Cabinet, I suspect, at this juncture. Were another promoted, he might probably take the occasion to resign on some 'principle.'

Sotheron Estcourt in the Cabinet would greatly control Walpole. Estcourt has a following in the House, and among those country gentlemen who, in default of one of their own set in the Cabinet, are constrained to look to Walpole, who, after all, with them is only a lawyer.

With Ed. Egerton joining, in addition to these arrangements, I really think the Government would be strengthened by the secession of Bulwer. Note this: the secession of Bulwer, if in any way connected with the Reform Question by the world, will rather be an indication that the project is

[1] Henley tendered his resignation no fewer than four times in twelve months—April 7, July 25, and Dec. 24, 1858; and finally Jan. 28, 1859.

not liberal enough. This will tend to keep our party together, otherwise pleased by seeing the administration much entrusted to men of their own class.

I showed your letter to Jolliffe, who was much gratified by your notice of him with respect to the Cabinet,[1] but we cannot spare him now, and no one feels this more than himself. When the great experiment is over, and the Conservative party is fairly settled on its broad basis of popular respect, then all and everything will be his due, and a pleasanter and more faithful colleague we shall never find. . . .

Before Derby had sounded Henley, he received from him what he considered an 'ominous communication, indicating rather a dogged feeling as to the details of the Reform Bill.'

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. TORQUAY, *Dec.* 27, 1858.—. . . Henley's mode of wishing you a merry Xmas is very characteristic. I see his grim smile.

It is strange that our people are so fidgety about a measure on which the fate of the Government does not, in fact, depend. If we carry a Reform Bill we shall become a powerful Ministry; if, on the other hand, we are unsuccessful, we shall merely continue in the position we now fill: a Government without an absolute majority, but one which, on all questions, including even Parliamentary Reform, is the most practicable under existing circumstances.

I enclose you a strange letter from Lytton in answer to my pathological remarks. It is a wonderful performance, and pray return it to me, for it is worth keeping in the family records. His symptoms are regularly divided under the head of—(1) consumption, (2) dropsy, (3) paralysis. I have had them all myself often, and five-and-twenty years ago in overwhelming degree, yet here I am writing to you on matters which certainly in their handling require tolerable nerves. A good rattling frost may, perhaps, set Bulwer right.

But the practical part of his letter seems to me to be this: that, if health be the real cause of his projected secession, on which head I am sceptical, then he would remain if we requested him—of course, as regards attendance and all that, studying him as much as possible. But if, instead of health, his wife is behind the curtain, then he will go, and the sooner the better for all concerned. . . .

[1] Derby had written: 'Jolliffe is equal to any position, but he is invaluable in his present position, and would be thrown away at the Colonies.'

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. KNOWSLEY, *Dec.* 30, 1858.—I return, according to your desire, Lytton's curious pathological epistle. I am inclined to think, however, that he is seriously alarmed about the state of his health; that such is the real motive for his resignation; and that he will persist in it. I have another letter from him in which he tells me that he is going to Malvern to try hydropathy, from which he has before derived benefit (he will probably kill himself), and that 'he hopes there to receive the result of the arrangements which I am considering.' He adds that every day convinces him more and more of the impossibility of his sustaining the labours of Parliamentary attendance during 'any part' of a session in winter, but that he shall remain in England to give a cordial support on any pressing occasions. I will not notice this till I hear again from you; but I think he has made up his mind, and that you will not be able to keep him. . . .

I had a most amiable note from Henley, sensible of the necessity of making every effort to smooth down differences, etc. He has had, however, a 'Memorandum on Reform as long as a Chancery brief,' which he has returned with a letter which he desired to be sent on to me. He omits (evidently by mistake) to say from whom it is; but I fear it may be from Walpole, and that we shall find him less easy to deal with than we have expected. If some of our colleagues overrate, I confess I think you somewhat underrate the effect which would be produced by our failing to carry a Reform Bill, more especially as ours is not likely to be of a character to excite any popular enthusiasm in its, or our, favour. 'The attempt, and not the deed, confounds us;' and though it might not cause the resignation of the Government, it would certainly weaken our prestige in the country. . . .

To Lord Derby.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER'S OFFICE, *New Year's Day,* 1859.—I have had a long interview with Lytton: he remains. His secession at this moment would embolden the clique, which is drawing up 'memoranda as long as Chancery briefs,' and would be most mischievous. He expects to die before Easter, but, if so, I have promised him a public funeral. . . .

We ought to have a brilliant Budget, which is scarcely second in importance to the Reform Bill, and the prestige of which will assist us in passing the latter.

The game of the Whigs, I understand, is this: to preach

very Conservative views in the Press, so that we may be deterred from bringing forward a bold measure, and they, consequently, be enabled to resume their old position of the reforming party, which we have turned. On the other hand, if we pursue the bold course, which they suspect we are following, then they count on defalcations from our own ranks, which will strengthen them in a Conservative opposition. However, I fear nothing but our colleagues. . . .

The great Minister who, under my influence, this morning has sacrificed his life to his party has a much grander idea for the solution of Ionian grievances and the strengthening of our ranks. I said I would not deprive him of the glory of communicating to you so vast an idea, but from the fear that he may have a fit before post-time I tell you, in confidence, that he is going to propose to send out to them—the Duke of Wellington ![1] I think this must frighten them, or they must have immensely altered since I raided 'the isles of Greece.'

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. KNOWSLEY, *Jan.* 2, 1859.—. . . I have received the 'Chancery brief,' 87 folios! . . . As far as I can see, the main objections are to the assimilation (in amount) of the county and borough franchises, and to *any total*, or more than a very slight partial disfranchisement. He does not object to the transfer of borough freehold votes to the boroughs in itself; but if necessarily attended with a £10 franchise, he objects to both. On the other hand, Henley would consent, apparently, to a considerable amount of disfranchisement, but objects as strongly as Walpole (and Peel is said to do so still more) to assimilation and transfer, and especially the latter. In this view, as you know, they will be joined by Pakington, perhaps by Salisbury, and I think by Stanley, if the county franchise does *not* come down to £10; and yet I am confident that this is the most Conservative provision in the Bill, and Rose writes me word that the evidence in favour of it is overwhelming! Walpole would close with a £20—I think with a £16—rating, and I have sometimes thought that we should have to adopt this. If we did, we might take an £8 rating as an alternative, but not as a substitute, for the £10 value, which we might still have.

I am glad you have succeeded in staying Lytton's resignation. . . .[2]

[1] The 2nd Duke.

[2] Lytton tendered his resignation once more on similar grounds just before the dissolution ('Ecce iterum Crispinus!' wrote Derby); but was persuaded to hold it over till after the General Election, when the Government was defeated and resigned.

Disraeli returned from his annual visit to Torquay to meet these Cabinet difficulties, as well as to consult on the threatening situation in Europe. 'When we arrived at Grosvenor Gate,' he wrote on January 3 to Mrs. Willyams, 'we found Lord Stanley at the door, inquiring for me; and I induced him to stay and dine with us. We talked over everything.' Resourceful as ever, Disraeli suggested to Stanley that, if Sir Charles Trevelyan refused the Governorship of Madras, it might be offered to Walpole. Stanley was quite ready to oblige. 'Nothing,' he said, 'ought to be conceded of the proposed Reform Bill. Better break up than bring in a worthless measure.' Trevelyan, however, accepted; and Disraeli, if he could not remove the difficulty of Walpole, was able at any rate to complete an arrangement which he had much at heart—to give G. A. Hamilton, then the Parliamentary Secretary, the permanent headship of the Treasury in succession to Trevelyan, and bring in Sir Stafford Northcote as Parliamentary Secretary. He had taken note of Northcote from the beginning of his Parliamentary career in the spring of 1855; had paid special attention to his maiden speech; had marked his adherence to the peace policy of the *Press* in the autumn of that year; and had made use of him as a go-between for negotiations with the Peelites in the summer of 1856. The fact that Northcote had been Gladstone's private secretary would be a special recommendation to Disraeli at a time when Gladstone was giving a general support to the Derby Government—support which Disraeli was constantly endeavouring to convert into alliance in office. Northcote had been one of Palmerston's victims at the General Election of 1857; Disraeli found for him in July, 1858, a seat for the pocket borough of Stamford, with a promise of office in the next few months. At their meeting in June, 1858, 'Dizzy talked,' wrote Northcote, 'as if he had always had my interests in the very centre of his heart.' If there was at first something of pose and affectation in this attitude, Disraeli at least

acted up to it afterwards, promoting Northcote on every opportunity, and finally leaving him leader of the House of Commons when he himself went to the Lords. It is creditable to Disraeli's discernment that he should have picked his man so early and so surely. At once a country gentleman, a Churchman, and a scholar, Northcote had many of the qualities which were complementary to Disraeli's; his training in administration under Gladstone was valuable in a party, few of whose members had had experience of the kind; his high character and unselfish aims would have made him an ornament of any party. The relations thus pleasantly begun developed into real friendship in the few short months of joint office in 1859. 'I expect,' Northcote wrote, quite early, to his wife, 'that my relations with Disraeli will be very agreeable. He consults me upon a variety of matters connected with general politics, as well as upon strictly departmental business.'[1]

Derby was disposed, in order to keep Walpole and Henley, to give up the principle of identity of franchise, and only reduce the county franchise to £20 or perhaps £16. Here, however, he found resolute opposition from Stanley, who told his father, on January 13, that such a franchise had not a chance of passing in the House of Commons. 'It would end no quarrel, satisfy no party, meet no demand that the public has made. You cannot carry it through.' Moreover, 'Parliament would with difficulty believe that a scheme so certain of rejection was put forth with any intention except that it should be rejected.' Disraeli entirely agreed with Stanley's view, and he tried in vain to obtain Walpole's concurrence. Walpole, with considerable force, wrote, on January 25, that he could not believe that the £10 identic franchise could be a final settlement. 'I am confident that no line which is purely arbitrary, which rests on no imaginable principle . . . ever can constitute a safe, sound, and permanent resting-place.' Ministers would soon be driven from it.

[1] Lang's *Northcote*, p. 95.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

WINDSOR CASTLE, *Jan.* 21, 1859.—. . . I am here on a visit for two or three days, and am taking the opportunity of getting thro' some work in the mornings, which requires solitude. In the evening all is brilliant and musical—a band at dinner, bagpipes after dinner, and a complete orchestra in the evening. At the same time, a host and hostess who have the art of conversation, and who, as they know everything that is interesting, can entertain without compromising their dignity.

Rumors of war.

The Cabinet accepted the £10 franchise, in spite of Walpole's and Henley's objections, and of the intimation that they would resign. But no sooner was this matter disposed of than fresh difficulties arose on the question of redistribution of seats; and, in despair of arriving at any agreed settlement, Derby proposed to leave this branch of the subject alone, and Disraeli, marking the public apathy, was disposed to consent. Stanley immediately protested once more to his father. There could be no settlement of the question without disfranchisement, and to omit it would expose Ministers to severe Parliamentary attack and cast doubt on their sincerity. Though he had anticipated troubles of this kind when the Government was formed, the idea that no disfranchisement whatever would be proposed was one that had never entered his mind. Disraeli, whose patience and adroitness in composing differences among his colleagues were at this time conspicuously shown, immediately tried to arrange a compromise.

To Lord Derby.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Feb.* 8, 1859.—I have had separate interviews with my colleagues, and have then held a prolonged Cabinet. These are the results: Stanley, Pakington, J. Manners, Henley (by proxy), are of opinion that general expectation demands some measure of disfranchisement and redistribution; that there shall be two Bills, tho' one statement; that the Suffrage Bill shall be passed before the second reading of the Disfranchisement Bill is moved; that its defeat

will not prejudice the fate of the preceding Bill; that, if carried by a bare majority, it will be open to the Government not to proceed with it; that this course will secure a fair and unprejudiced consideration of the Suffrage Bill, no one's fate being involved in the result; that, on the whole, it would seem to be expedient that there should be no total disfranchisement; that, under these circumstances, partial disfranchisement up to 10,000 *population* would afford 47 seats, as much as the House of Commons would care to digest; that the first four acts of distribution should be to unrepresented places; then Yorkshire (W.R.), Lancashire (S.), and Middlesex divided, and the rest apportioned as we contemplated. It is thought that this scheme would get us out of our difficulties in an honorable and practical manner. All which is submitted for your consideration.

I am rather nervous about Peel from what I have heard: Walpole and Henley hopeless. It is time to reconsider our *personnel*.

I can say no more, but that God is great!

Approaching war is believed in Paris, and the Emperor's speech has relieved no one.

This proposal did not commend itself to Derby, and another much smaller measure of redistribution, affecting only fourteen or fifteen seats, was put forward. Stanley was very indignant. He thought it worse than postponement, bad as that was. Mere delay, he wrote to Disraeli, would deprive no one of hope; this new plan shut the door altogether, beyond the petty change suggested. He believed the existence of very small constituencies to be an abuse, and was satisfied the country thought so too. He could not assent; and he declared that his views were shared by Pakington, and to a certain extent by Manners and Malmesbury also.

We have hitherto, against many difficulties, maintained our position with the public, and administered affairs in a liberal spirit. We may do it still, with care and firmness. But what you now suggest (or rather assent to, for I do not believe the suggestion can be yours) will simply throw us back into the old track of obstruction and resistance, from which we have emerged with so much trouble. I, at least, have had enough of that work, and I do not mean to have any more.

To Lord Stanley.

DOWNING STREET, *Feb.* 10, 1859.—I send you this, not to produce or prolong controversy, but that you may really clearly comprehend the motives which influence me in the policy I have ventured to recommend for the consideration of the Premier, and which I would wish you to adopt, not merely from a sentiment of devotion to him, but because, after mature deliberation, you may be of opinion it is the one best adapted to the emergency.

By the proposal I have made I never intended to commit the Government or myself to what is called *finality*. I have no abstract wish to save small boroughs, but I do not want to take away their members until I know what we are to do with them.

Although the standard of population may be the only one which will bear the test of criticism, remember that it has never been accepted by any man who has dealt with the question under Ministerial responsibility.

In 1852 Lord John Russell's Government avoided disfranchisement by *grouping*.

In 1854 disfranchisement was proposed, but with the object of enfranchising the *minorities*. On this point the middle classes are against Brightism—witness their able organ, the *Economist*—and the educated classes are against it, as proved by the articles in the *Saturday Review*. That the opinion of the country is the same is sufficiently proved by the tone of *The Times*.

Bear Ellice, Horsman, and Lowe, and by implication Cornewall Lewis, have all taken the Conservative view of this question.

I do not wish you to pledge yourself to it, but I do not wish you to legislate upon a question with respect to which public opinion is obviously immature.

I want the Bill, above all, to be a Bill which we can carry.

Observe the difficulties, which will render it almost impossible for us to carry an extensive measure.

1. The experience of the India Bill proves how difficult it is to pass a Bill which injuriously affects individual interests, however inconsiderable they may be. In attacking the small boroughs, you will have to face an opposition of at least eighty interested men.

2. It is always hazardous in this country to attempt comprehensive legislation. The Bill of 1832 could only have been carried in the midst of a revolution.

3. You must remember that, as regards the franchise, the Bill is a large and important measure. It is, however, one of which it will be difficult to reconcile our friends. John

Stuart Mill says that it will annihilate the rural interest. We must, therefore, expect from some of them disaffection, and even desertion. Palmerston, as you well know, desires above all things to place himself at the head of the Conservative party. He is uncommitted to the population standard: all the declarations, public and private, of his organs and adherents lead to the conclusion that he will stand by the small constituencies. In this he will be supported by all their representatives, by the great houses of his party, and by two-thirds of his following in the House of Commons. What is to prevent him from placing himself at the head of our disaffected, and getting a majority against us? And, in such a case, what course would be left to us?

A dissolution would be vain, even disastrous. We should be driven into hopeless opposition, without a policy or a following.

At the worst they could only sneer at us for introducing the smaller measure, which, after all, is magnificent compared to Lord J.'s Bills. Practical men would see that we could not carry a larger measure, and would gratefully accept the considerable concessions which we have already agreed to make.

Once more, I do not profess, I do not believe in, finality; but I am anxious that we should carry our measure, and that we should not get the reputation of being theorists, pursuing an ideal perfection, and in that pursuit throwing away the opportunity of achieving a reasonable success.—Your faithful comrade, D.

P.S.—I would thus describe the *practical* position. We must accommodate the settlement of 1832 to the England of 1859.

Disraeli's counsels prevailed, and Stanley did not push his disagreement to the point of resignation. Even Walpole and Henley, though their resignation had been inevitable since the decision of the Cabinet to keep the identic franchise, attended Cabinet Councils at Derby's request till late in February, and only made their Parliamentary explanations on March 1, after the Bill had been introduced. Their places were filled by Sotheron Estcourt and Lord Donoughmore, politicians of worth but hardly of distinction. Disraeli's friend Chandos preferred to retain his railway chairmanship rather than accept precarious office as a Cabinet Minister.

Disraeli introduced the Bill on the last day of February. The interest of his speech was somewhat discounted by a premature revelation, in *The Times*, of the details of the plan.

To Lord Derby.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *March* 1, 1859.

MY DEAREST LORD,—Who could have told you that I gave the stuff to S. Northcote, and how could you believe such nonsense? It destroyed me. When I read the paper this morning I was half inclined to resign, only I thought that still more absurd.[1] I have sent and demanded how Delane got it. He told me frankly. He dined with Bear Ellice last night, who had the Bill!

The provisions of the measure, as expounded by Disraeli, have been for the most part anticipated in the Cabinet correspondence already quoted. It was proposed to reduce the occupation franchise in the counties from £50 to £10, but to transfer the votes of urban freeholders from the counties to the boroughs. The borough franchise was to remain at £10, but the borough constituency was to be enlarged by the creation of new franchises based on personal property, public service, and educational qualifications. These new franchises were not recommended, save to a very limited extent, by the Cabinet Committee, and, remembering Disraeli's frequent declarations in favour of increasing and varying the elements of suffrage, we may safely attribute their introduction mainly to his own initiative. Under this provision a vote was given to the possessors of £10 a year from the Funds, of £60 in the Savings Bank, or of a Government pension of £20; to dwellers in part of a £20 house, in other words, lodgers; to graduates at the Universities, ministers of religion, lawyers, doctors, and certificated schoolmasters. With regard to redistribution no absolute disfranchisement was proposed; but a single member was taken from fifteen boroughs with a population under 6,000 then returning two members, and these were allotted partly to the populous

[1] Writing to Lennox the same day, Disraeli said: 'The great *trahison*, in *The Times*, of the contents of the Bill completely upset me, and I could scarcely rally for the fight. I hardly came to time.' Lennox, in the next day or so, followed Walpole and Henley in resigning, on what seemed to Disraeli capricious and inadequate grounds; and the close friendship between leader and disciple was interrupted, only to be resumed after many months, and never, perhaps, on quite the old familiar terms.

counties of Yorkshire (West Riding), Lancashire (South), and Middlesex, and partly to some half-dozen hitherto unrepresented towns.

The keynote of Disraeli's speech was the idea suggested in the postscript of his letter of February 10 to Stanley. The object of the Government, he insisted more than once, was to adapt the settlement of 1832 to the England of 1859. Though he admitted that population must always be one of the elements of our representative system, he argued strongly throughout against basing that system on the numerical principle. The House ought to represent every interest, and so representation should be scattered all over the country, because interests are necessarily local, and a mere population or property basis would not effect the desired object. London, for instance, in spite of its wealth and population, ought not to have as many members as Scotland. If population were adopted—as it should not be—as the principle, then additional members should be given to counties rather than to boroughs.

After all, suffrage and seats were only means to an end —the creation of a representative assembly: that is, 'a mirror of the mind as well as the material interests of England.'

You want in this House every element that obtains the respect and engages the interest of the country. You must have lineage and great territorial property; you must have manufacturing enterprise of the highest character; you must have commercial weight; you must have professional ability in all its forms; but you want something more—you want a body of men not too intimately connected either with agriculture, or with manufactures, or with commerce; not too much wedded to professional thought and professional habits; you want a body of men representing the vast variety of the English character: men who would arbitrate between the claims of those great predominant interests, who would temper the acerbity of their controversies. You want a body of men to represent that immense portion of the community who cannot be ranked under any of those striking and powerful classes to which I have referred, but who are in their aggregate equally important and valuable, and perhaps as numerous. Hitherto you have been able to effect this object; you have effected it by the existing borough system, which has

given you a number of constituencies of various dimensions distributed over the country. No one for a moment pretends that the borough system in England was originally framed to represent all the classes and interests of the country; but it has been kept and cherished because the people found that, although not directly intended for such a purpose, yet indirectly it has accomplished that object; and hence I lay it down as a principle which ought to be adopted, that if you subvert that system you are bound to substitute for it machinery equally effective.

If the population principle were adopted, it would be impossible to carry on the executive in the House, because you would not get the variety of character and acquirement necessary for administration. The House would lose its hold, and would be governed, as before 1640, 'by a Court Minister, perhaps a Court minion.'

Disraeli defended his omission to lower the borough franchise on the ground that (say) a £5 qualification would produce a monotonous constituency in which there was one predominant class; it would, in fact, secure the predominance of a household democracy. The Savings Bank franchise would be an avenue to the mechanic, 'whose virtue, prudence, intelligence, and frugality, entitle him to enter into the privileged pale of the constituent body of this country.' The transference of the urban freeholders from the county to the borough register he justified by pointing to the artificial manufacture of such votes in order to overbear the residential opinion of the county. A man should vote for the place where he resides or in which he has an interest. An identity of occupation suffrage in counties and boroughs would bring about a general content and sympathy between the different portions of the constituent body, which 'should be numerous enough to be independent and select enough to be responsible.' He calculated that there would be an addition of 200,000 to the county constituency. Disraeli disclaimed finality, but he recommended the Bill as a Conservative measure, 'using that

epithet in no limited or partial sense, but in the highest and holiest interpretation of which it is capable.'

Mrs. Disraeli to Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *March* 1, 1859.—I send you the *Chronicle*, and you shall have some more papers to-morrow, to give you some idea of Dizzy's great success last night. Congratulations all day long. Even the *Daily News*, our enemy's paper, in the leading article, you will see, acknowledge his power. I am sure you will be happy to know he is quite well. A large meeting at Lord Derby's to-day—220. All right. . . .

Though the speech was admired, the reception of the Bill was cool. Palmerston reserved his opinion, and so did the Tory rank and file. But the Whig Reformers and the Radicals fastened at once upon the continued exclusion of the working classes from the constituent body; and Russell, Roebuck, and Bright (who ridiculed the new qualifications as 'fancy franchises'), threatened on that account determined opposition at every stage. Disraeli protested that the *élite* of the working classes would get the vote through the Savings Bank deposit and 40s. freehold clauses; but he must have been conscious of the exiguity of the provision. The Queen's judgment was laconic. She wrote next day to King Leopold: 'Here our Reform Bill has been brought in yesterday. It is moderate, and . . . [Lord John] has therefore allied himself with Mr. Bright and Mr. Roebuck against it! He has *no* other followers.'[1]

The prospects of the Bill were not improved by Walpole's and Henley's explanatory statements which immediately followed. They both based their resignation on the adoption by their colleagues of identity of suffrage. This was an unconstitutional principle, they held, and one which had always been resisted by the party, and in particular by Derby in 1854. Henley picturesquely said: 'I hold that, if you take a paint-brush to draw a line across the country, and say that all the people upon one side are to have the suffrage, and all the people upon

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

the other are not to have it, although you may have no trouble for a few years, yet as sure as the sun is in heaven you will have all the people upon the outside of the line, at some time or other, making a very ugly rush to break over it. . . . To draw a hard line and to leave the working people behind it is to lay the foundation of revolution.' He thought the borough franchise should be reduced, and Walpole also was prepared for such a reduction; but neither would consent to a reduction of the county franchise to an identity with the borough franchise.

In spite of this impeachment of the Conservative character of the Bill, the party generally were prepared to follow their chiefs, and an attempt to organise Conservative resistance had little success. Though there was no enthusiasm, Fraser was not justified in declaring that the party 'loathed' the measure. To the few dissentients Derby took a high line. He wrote to Disraeli on March 16: 'There shall be no mistake. We must command this Parliament, or throw the die for the next, and let our friends know that it is the last cast.' The Opposition was at first in some doubt as to how the Bill should be treated. But Russell's obstinate determination to destroy it prevailed, and Palmerston agreed to support a wrecking resolution which his rival was to draft. Interference with the freehold franchise in counties and failure to reduce the borough franchise were the blots in the Bill singled out for condemnation. For a resolution of this kind, both those who, like Palmerston, wished for either no Reform or as little as possible, and those who, like Bright, wanted much more Radical change, were prepared to vote. Palmerston's opposition was a disappointment to the Government. Anxious as he was to keep Reform within moderate limits, he might have been expected to welcome a Bill which bade fair to increase the power of the middle classes upon whom he rested, while hardly benefiting at all the Radicals, whom he wished to keep down. But the temptation to join hands with Russell

to regain power was irresistible, and he trusted to the chapter of accidents to prevent Russell's more thorough-going policy from being carried into effect—at any rate during his lifetime. In private, to a diplomat, he condemned the Bill as too liberal, and continued: 'M. Disraeli, coûte que coûte, recherche la popularité "out of doors." C'est un démocrate recouvert de la peau d'un conservateur.'

The debate on the second reading was begun on Monday, March 21, and occupied nearly a couple of weeks. It was conducted under curious conditions, for the interest it excited was due almost wholly to its effect on party fortunes, and extremely little to the question nominally at issue. In truth, for the present, Reform was merely a Parliamentary, and not a popular, question. Public opinion, as Lytton pointed out in the House, was extremely apathetic. 'Doubtless, nine out of ten said loudly, "We must have a Reform Bill"; but eight out of every nine whispered to each other, "Does anybody want one?"' Bright had undertaken a campaign in the country during the autumn, but had succeeded rather in disgusting people by his extreme views than in evoking public support for reform. The situation was caustically described by the Prince Consort in a letter to Stockmar. 'A Radical Reform Bill of a Conservative Ministry is denounced as not Radical enough by the Liberal party (who want no Reform, and are especially afraid of a Radical one), headed by Lord John, whom they will not have as leader.' Though the Opposition had numbers on their side, the better speeches were made, as the Whigs' friend Greville insists, by Ministers and their supporters. Conspicuous among these speeches was what Sidney Herbert called 'a splendid declamation' by Bulwer Lytton. Following Stanley's line, he advocated the measure as one to confirm and extend the political power of the middle class, and to lift into the franchise of that class the artisan who had risen by the exercise of economy and forethought. Russell's amendment, Lytton main-

tained in his peroration, would commit the House to a pledge to the working class—'a pledge which you can never redeem to their satisfaction until you have placed capital and knowledge at the command of impatient poverty and uninstructed numbers.'

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *March* 22, 1859.—. . . A night of immense power and excitement. Two of the greatest speeches ever delivered in Parliament—by Sir Edward Lytton and the Solicitor-General. . . . Both spoke in a crowded House: one before dinner, the other concluding, just down. Never was a greater contrast between two orators, resembling each other in nothing but their excellence.

Deaf, fantastic, modulating his voice with difficulty, sometimes painful—at first almost an object of ridicule to the superficial—Lytton occasionally reached almost the sublime, and perfectly enchained his audience. His description of the English Constitution, his analysis of democracy—as rich and more powerful than Burke.

Sir Hugh Cairns devoted an hour to a reply to Lord John's resolution, and to a vindication of the Government Bill, which charmed everyone by its lucidity and controlled everyone by its logic. When he had in the most masterly manner, and with a concinnity which none can equal, closed the business part of his address, he directed himself to the political portion of the theme, and, having literally demolished the mover of the amendment, sat down amid universal cheers.[1]

Russell's speech was very hostile in tone. Bright said this was not the sort of Bill which Disraeli thought best for the country, but was framed to meet the prejudices of the territorial interest. Palmerston, in Greville's judgment, was 'very jaunty, but very insincere.' He was also 'infinitely audacious,' as Disraeli told the Queen, even threatening a stoppage of supplies in the event of dissolution. Gladstone, however, though he disagreed with many of the provisions of the Bill, opposed Russell's resolution, as this was a golden opportunity for settling the question, and should not be let slip.

Disraeli, though he had to endure the inconvenience of being a Minister in a minority, was never, as he re-

[1] Martin's *Prince Consort*, Vol. IV., pp. 411, 412.

peatedly insisted, prepared to be a Minister on sufferance. Accordingly, he and the Government recognised in advance that a defeat on Russell's motion would entail either resignation or dissolution, though, as the Queen said in writing to Derby on March 21, 'a change of Government or a dissolution would be both very injurious to the best interests of the country.' Dissolution was clearly the preferable alternative, and Disraeli told Mrs. Willyams confidentially, as early as March 5, that it would be adopted.[1] A Parliament elected on a personal issue, which signally defeated two Ministries in two years, was a very unsatisfactory instrument of Government. In their present struggle Ministers received much more sympathetic treatment from the Court than in 1852.

From Lord Derby

Friday morning [*March* 25, 1859].—I have a long and very friendly letter from H.M. 'Anxious to give Lord D. every support he may require.' She sanctions the whole batch of peers and baronets. She wishes, before promising dissolution, to have a clearer view of our prospects of gain, as she says truly that our 'retirement after a defeat in a General Election would place her in increased difficulties.' She suggests doubts as to the prudence of our proposed course in making Johnny's the substantive motion, as in that case M.P.'s might vote for it who would oppose it as 'a factious move to displace a Government.' I hope you will not close even the first debate to-night. . . .

Wednesday [*March* 30, 1859].—Rose is to be here at 11, and I am going through his list with him. I am to see the Queen at 3. I shall not commit myself on the subject of *immediate* dissolution, but I shall not conceal my opinion that an *early* dissolution of the present Parliament is indispensable, and would be so whoever might be the Ministers. What may I say as to the prospects of the division? The Queen will be very anxious to know. I shall tell H.M. that in the event of our being beaten we shall immediately withdraw the Bill. I think you must, on the numbers being declared, if against us, move the adjournment of the House till Monday. We must have that interval to consider our course, and submit it to the Queen.

[1] In the same letter Disraeli wrote: 'Labor, anxiety and responsibility seem to act on me as tonics.'

Disraeli was sanguine, though it is difficult to see on what grounds, and reported to Derby: 'The division is necessarily dark, but I am inclined to believe we shall win.'

Disraeli replied to his critics at the close of the last night's debate.[1] He claimed that there were three principles in the measure: First, the addition to the constituent body of large numbers and a great variety of persons—not less than the 400,000 added by the Act of 1832; secondly, the extension of representation to large communities which had developed since 1832; thirdly, the maintenance of the existing borough system as the only means of obtaining adequate representation of the various interests of the country. All the rest was detail, open to revision in Committee. He maintained once more that the working classes, who already constituted, as occupants of £10 houses and as freemen, about a ninth of the constituency, would obtain a material augmentation by the provisions of the Bill. But he uttered a solemn warning against any large reduction of the borough franchise—a warning which his critics quoted against him in 1867.

> I have no apprehension myself that, if you had manhood suffrage to-morrow, the honest, brave, and good-natured people of England would resort to pillage, incendiarism, and massacre. Who expects that? But though I would do as much justice to the qualities of our countrymen as any gentleman in this House, though I may not indulge in high-flown and far-fetched expressions with respect to them like those we have listened to—for the people may have their parasites as well as monarchs and aristocracies—yet I have no doubt that, whatever may be their high qualities, our countrymen are subject to the same political laws that affect the condition of all other communities and nations. If you establish a democracy, you must in due season reap the fruits of a democracy. You will in due season have great impatience of the public burdens combined in due season with great increase of the public expenditure. You will in due season reap the fruits of such united influence. You will in due season have wars entered into from passion, and not from reason; and you will in due season submit to peace ignominiously sought and

[1] March 31.

ignominiously obtained, which will diminish your authority and perhaps endanger your independence. You will, in due season, with a democracy find that your property is less valuable and that your freedom is less complete. I doubt not, when there has been realised a sufficient quantity of disaffection and dismay, the good sense of this country will come to the rally, and that you will obtain some remedy for your grievances, and some redress for your wrongs, by the process through which alone it can be obtained—by that process which may render your property more secure, but which will not render your liberty more eminent. . . . That being my opinion, I cannot look upon what is called reduction of the franchise in boroughs but with alarm; and I have never yet met any argument which fairly encounters the objections that are urged to it. You cannot encounter it by sentimental assertions of the good qualities of the working classes. The greater their good qualities, the greater the danger. If you lay down as a principle that they are to enter the constituent body, not as individuals, but as a multitude, they must be the predominant class from their number; and if you dwell on their intelligence, you only increase the power they will exercise.

Disraeli's retorts on the great twin brethren of the Whigs were very effective. Palmerston and the moderate Whigs, who objected to reducing the county franchise below £20, had regularly voted for Locke King's motion for identity of suffrage; and Palmerston and his Whig and Peelite colleagues had agreed to propose a £10 county franchise in the Coalition Government's Bill of 1854. Russell, who was so shocked at what he called the disfranchisement of freeholders, had himself disfranchised freemen wholesale in 1832. Russell's constant recurrence, when in opposition, to faction afforded legitimate ground for severe criticism, and Disraeli did not spare him. It was 'a very effective philippic,' wrote Greville, 'and delivered with much dignity and in very good taste.'

I am sure the noble lord will not feel offended with me if I tell him that I think there is one quality in his character which has rather marred than made his fortunes. It is a restlessness which will not brook that delay and that patience needed in our constitutional government for the conduct of

public affairs. The moment that the noble lord is not in power he appears to me to live in an atmosphere of coalitions, combinations, *coups d'état*, and cunning resolutions. An Appropriation Clause[1] may happen to every man once in his life. But there is only one man living of whom it can be said that in 1835 he overthrew the Government of Sir Robert Peel upon an impracticable pretext; that in 1852 he overthrew the Government of Lord Derby with an objectless coalition; that in 1855 he overthrew the Government of Lord Aberdeen by a personal *coup d'état*; and that in 1858 he overthrew the Government of the noble lord the member for Tiverton by a Parliamentary manœuvre. Now, sir, I beg the noble lord at this moment to throw the vision of his memory for an instant back to the year 1852. He sat before me then, the head of a mighty host. He drew the fatal arrow that was to destroy our Government. He succeeded. He destroyed in breathless haste the Government of Lord Derby; but did he destroy nothing else? Did he not destroy also the position of a great statesman? Did he not destroy almost the great historic party of which he was once the proud and honoured chief? The noble lord does not sit opposite me now; but had he not hurried the catastrophe of 1852, and had he bided his time, according to the periodic habit of our Constitution, he would have returned to these benches the head of that great party of which he was once the chief and greatest ornament.

Disraeli at the close of his speech clearly anticipated defeat, and in dignified language recalled what the Derby Government had accomplished for the defence of the State and the welfare of the people, in spite of 'all the manœuvres of Parliamentary intrigue and all the machinations of party warfare.' The Government received in the lobby the unbroken support of their party, including the Ministers who had seceded, and all the reactionaries, such as Beresford, Newdegate, and Spooner, who had threatened at one time to be recalcitrant. By the aid of several independent members, such as Gladstone, Horsman, Elcho, and some Roman Catholic Irish, they reached the respectable total of 291, about thirty above the strict party strength. But the Liberal factions

[1] Peel was upset in 1835 on a motion by Russell insisting that the surplus revenues of the Irish Church should be appropriated to secular purposes; but three years afterwards in office Russell abandoned the principle, and accepted Peel's original arrangement. See p. 304.

had temporarily come together, and obtained a decisive majority of thirty-nine for the Resolution, more than half the whole House, 330 out of 650 odd, voting for it.

The Whig leaders destroyed the Reform Bill of 1859, and thereby made themselves responsible for the loss of a real opportunity of passing into law a moderate measure which would have been generally acceptable to Whig opinion. The Bill itself has sometimes been treated as if it were as purely a piece of tactics as undoubtedly much of the opposition to it was; and Disraeli, after his frequent fashion, at times used language in conformity with this view. 'We pricked the imposture,' he once said to Mr. Kebbel, contrasting the assumed eagerness of the Whigs for Reform in opposition in 1858-59 with their readiness to let it slumber during the subsequent six years of Palmerston's Administration. But both his letters and his labours, while the Bill was under consideration, are incompatible with any theory of the kind. He seriously meant to pass a measure which should content public opinion for the time, and he spared no effort to that end. The Bill contained one really bold feature—the sweeping reduction of the county franchise. But, of course, it was not his ideal, and was opportunist in its details. He would have preferred a larger working-class infusion and a less complete dominance of the middle class, and disfranchisement and redistribution on a bigger scale. But, after all, opportunism is hardly a serious reproach in a matter so essentially one 'of nicely calculated less or more' as Parliamentary Reform. Disraeli had to carry with him his party, containing a strong reactionary contingent; and his instinct for the movements of public opinion showed him that, while improvement of the representative system was desired, there was no demand for heroic or revolutionary remedies. It does not seem fanciful, in view of Disraeli's capacity for Parliamentary management, to suppose that, if the Bill of 1859 had been allowed to go into Committee,

it might have passed into law in a moderate and Conservative shape. Palmerston explicitly promised support to the general maintenance of the borough system, to the fancy franchises, and to the limited measure of redistribution. With the help of Russell and of the general sense of the House, the Government would easily have prevailed over the doubts of Palmerston and the Peelites, and of Walpole and Henley and the stiffer Tories, to carry the reduction of the county franchise to £10. They would probably have been forced into a slight reduction of the borough franchise, for which Disraeli was quite prepared, and into a compromise over the question of the freeholders. An Act of this character might well have lasted sufficiently long to enable us to 'educate our masters' before, instead of after, giving them the mastery.

The decision of the Government to dissolve Parliament was announced in both Houses on Monday, April 4. Derby consulted Disraeli as to the nature of the statement which he should make.

To Lord Derby.

DOWNING STREET, *Sunday, April* 3, 1859.—. . . It is an address not merely or principally for Parliament, but for the country, to guide and to animate them, *and which should be read by every man.* The real issue, the broad great issue, is whether Parliamentary government is compatible with our existing institutions.

The House of Commons is broken into sections which, although they have no unity of purpose or policy, can always combine to overthrow the Queen's Government, however formed. Under present circumstances there is no reason why there should not be a dissolution, or a Ministerial crisis, every February. One is certain next February, if Lord Palmerston form a Government, such as he contemplates, and the Radicals are excluded.

This is the state of affairs which the country ought to be called upon to comprehend, and to remedy. Nothing more completely proves the total want of cohesion on the opposite benches than the fact that this flimsy resolution was the only means by which they could be brought together for the moment, and that, when carried, had we proceeded with the

Bill, the two leaders of the coalition were pledged to an exactly contrary policy: Lord John to defeat the Government measure, Lord Palmerston to support and, with amendments, carry it.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, *Sunday*.—I quite concur in the spirit of your memorandum. Whether I shall be able to execute the task it indicates is another matter. I have this moment received a *most* cordial letter from the Queen, anxious to know what are the feelings of our party, and 'what is going on in the *enemy's* camp.' Can you give me any information on the latter point for H.M. ?

Derby was not well, and did not do himself justice in the House of Lords. 'I am better than I was yesterday,' he wrote next day, 'but not satisfied with my speech last night. I was not up to the mark, and was too long. *You* seem to have done very well, and to have been well received.' Disraeli spoke in the general sense of his letter to Derby, but with due acknowledgment of the courtesy he had received throughout from the House. On the same day he issued his address to his constituents. 'A Parliamentary majority,' he wrote, 'composed of discordant sections, has availed itself of its numerical strength to embarrass Her Majesty's Government, and, by a disingenuous manœuvre, to intercept the discussion of their measures.' This blow had deprived Government of authority; but there was no unity of sentiment in the Opposition.

It is for the country to comprehend and to remedy these evils. The moment is critical. England has engaged to mediate between two great monarchs, and, if possible, preserve for Europe the blessings of peace. It is necessary that the Queen's Government should be supported by a patriotic Parliament.

Disraeli or his wife kept Mrs. Willyams constantly informed of all the phases of this critical time.

Mrs. Disraeli to Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

GROSVENOR GATE, *April* 4, 1859.—You will see, my dearest Mrs. Willyams, by all the papers early to-morrow that Ministers *do not resign*. Dizzy is just gone to the House, which we are

told is crowded inside and out—all the streets, etc., etc.—to see and hear the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech on the intentions of Government. It is a great comfort to me to write to you and to say that dear Dizzy is *quite well,* to everyone's great astonishment; for how much he has constantly on his mind, and not a moment to himself! All the papers on every side mention his last speech as fine, wonderful, etc., etc.

We are very popular in the country, the first time for 16 years. . . .

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

DOWNING STREET, *April* 9, 1859.—. . . Here all is convulsion. What did you think of our *coup d'état?* I hope and believe the country will rally round us, *as war seems at hand.*

DOWNING STREET, *April* 19, 1859.—I wound up the affairs to-day, and prorogued Parliament. Tho' not of a very vindictive nature, I must confess some satisfaction in paying off the gentlemen who thought themselves so very clever in placing Her Majesty's Government in a minority. I should think at least two hundred of them will never see the inside of a senate again, where they might have remained for three or four years had they been a little less factious. . . .

We shall preserve peace. The news of this morning is very favorable.

'War seems at hand'; 'we shall preserve peace.' War and peace were indeed trembling in the balance in Europe this spring. In their factious eagerness for place the Opposition had disregarded the claims of patriotism. What was the moment, Disraeli pointedly asked in his reply in the debate, which the Liberals had chosen to precipitate this party attack? A moment the most critical in the affairs of England and of Europe for many years past. Ministers were straining every nerve to keep the peace between France and Austria, who were rapidly drifting into hostilities owing to the patriotic intrigues of the great Italian statesman, Cavour. It was of vital importance that the authority of the Government should not be interfered with or embarrassed; and yet the Opposition deliberately paralysed it. The business community required nothing but peace. 'But for this untoward, this unhappy motion,' said Disraeli, it might have been preserved. While England was distracted by a General

Election, which was the direct result of Palmerston's and Russell's action, the war she desired to prevent broke out.

Perhaps no Ministry, however patriotically supported, could have averted it. Moved partly by the fears engendered by Orsini's plot, and partly by a dreamy idealism, Napoleon III., at Plombières in the previous summer, entered into engagements with Cavour which bound him to forward Italian unity in arms. The meeting was a secret one. It was followed by two public visits of the British Court abroad, which the Queen and Ministers hoped would improve international relations. On August 4, 1858, the Queen and the Prince attended the opening, by the Emperor of the French, of new docks at Cherbourg. The result was, perhaps, rather to make the Court and the people realise the naval menace to England than to draw closer the Anglo-French Alliance. Disraeli, however, was optimistic. He told Mrs. Willyams on August 28: 'The visit to Cherbourg has dissipated the vain fears and idle panic which were afloat.' Later in the autumn the Queen and the Prince paid a successful visit to Germany.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

HUGHENDEN, *Sept.* 14, 1858.—. . . I went once to Osborne to attend a Council, and was unexpectedly commanded to an audience. I found them both much pleased, and more excited, with their German visit, which was 'not sufficiently understood or rightly appreciated in our papers.' 'It was a homage of the German people—a demonstration that they were English, anti-Russian, anti-Absolutist.' They found out the Prince's birthday, and would celebrate it. Altho' incog., at Düsseldorf, where there was not even a guard of honor, 'and by our particular desire,' the people gave them a royal reception.

Still great alarm about Cherbourg, etc. 'The Emperor means all right,' but, etc. . . .

A cordial understanding with France was Disraeli's root-idea of foreign policy. But he, like other well-wishers of the alliance, had increasing difficulties to contend with. Her naval and military preparations,

following on the recent threats of her Colonels, disquieted both Ministers and the public; but a more certain danger was the steadily increasing divergence between her policy and that of Austria. On friendly relations with Austria Disraeli, along with Conservatives in general, placed a high value; but, if he had to choose, all his regard for Metternich would not prevent him from sympathising with France. Metternich, surveying politics from a detached and philosophic standpoint, foresaw what was coming, and endeavoured in vain to convince Disraeli that England and Austria were bound to act together.

From Prince Metternich.

DRESDE, *le* 28 *Octobre,* 1858.—. . . Le grand Empire maritime qui en Europe n'est pas continental, et la puissance continentale qui n'est point maritime, finiront toujours par se rencontrer quand il s'agira, soit de questions véritablement générales, soit de questions pouvant toucher à leur intérêt direct. Une grande confusion dans les situations et les relations les plus diverses pèse aujourd'hui sur le monde. Elle arrivera à son terme; ne me demandez pas ma prévision sur le *quand* et le *comment*—je l'ignore autant que vous—mais ce en quoi j'ai pleine confiance c'est dans l'heureuse influence que vous exercerez sur les dénoûments d'une mauvaise situation des choses.[1]

During his visit to Paris in the winter of 1856-57 Disraeli had come to the conclusion that Cowley, the British Ambassador, was not always sufficiently in touch with the real views and sentiments of the Emperor. As the year 1858 drew to a close, it appeared to him of great importance that the Derby Government should penetrate more completely into Napoleon's counsels. Not only had Palmerston, the British Minister with whom the Emperor had maintained the closest relations, been, along with Clarendon, an Imperial guest at Compiègne in the autumn; but also it was evident that France and Sardinia had been drawing together, and it looked as if the Emperor might be seriously con-

[1] Metternich, *Mémoires,* Vol. III., p. 435.

templating active interference in Italy. Cowley sent reassuring despatches, but Disraeli was not convinced. Moreover, public feeling in both countries was steadily getting more hostile. As Earle wrote to Disraeli on November 6: 'Ever since the Queen's visit in 1855 our sympathy with France has been diminishing. Our Court, Parliament, and people, look upon her with increasing distrust. . . . The Emperor, irritated by our invectives and hampered by the restlessness of his own subjects, will be more than ever disposed, perhaps driven, to adopt an arrogant demeanour abroad.' Disraeli considered, as he had shown in 1852, that nothing would do more to improve the relations between the two countries than a commercial treaty.

With these ideas in his head, Disraeli in December sent Earle, who had previously been attached to the Paris Embassy, on a confidential mission to the Emperor. Earle found that Louis Napoleon was in no humour for the discussion of commercial arrangements, as his whole mind was absorbed by Italy. He suggested that Disraeli should write him a letter of a reassuring character.

To Ralph A. Earle.

Confidential. DOWNING STREET, *Dec.* 20, 1858.—I write to you passing through town from Knowsley, hurriedly, but what I really feel.

'War with all the world, but peace with England,' was the dictum of the proud Spanish monarchy. I do not want His Majesty to adopt the letter of this principle, but its spirit is not beneath his notice.

I want to see His Majesty fairly reconciled with the people of this country. The great majority is not now even against him. The nation and the newspapers are different. The Press is against the Emperor, because he is against their trade; and the Orleanist party, taking advantage of this mistrust, are using the journals in order to poison the minds of the English people.

What I want the Emperor to do is to take an early opportunity of showing to the people of England that for them 'the Empire is peace.' The newspapers, under the influence

of the Orleanists, have persuaded them, or would persuade them, that for them 'the Empire is invasion.'

I have no jealousy of the external movement of France. I look upon the old political maxims about Spain and Italy as rococo in an age which has witnessed the development of America and the discovery of Australia. I have said this often to you: I have even expressed it, and in detail, to the Emperor himself.

I contemplate the possibility of the eventual increase of his dominions. He is an Emperor, and he must have an empire; but all this should be attempted with the sanction, or at least with the sufferance, of England, not in spite of her.

Let the Emperor take an early opportunity of referring to the state of the French Navy; let him allude with just pride to his efforts to restore the marine of France to its ancient and proper force; let him express his surprise that it should be looked upon with jealousy by the Power which he trusts will always prove the ally of France; that France seeks no undue supremacy on the sea; that she wishes to enter into no rivalry with England; that the careers of the two nations are different and distinct; that there would be no jealousy in France if the English fleet were twice the strength of that of France; and that France would then as little fear or believe in invasion from England as England does or ought to do from France.

Let him say something like this, and no one can say something so well, and the effect would be so great that, if in the spring there was any movement towards Italy, the public opinion of England would prevent interference in the quarrel, and no one would be persuaded, which otherwise, as in old days, would be the case, that an Austrian war was a good distraction from a French invasion from Cherbourg, and therefore that Austria should be encouraged and supported by England.

This is a policy which illustrates the Spanish maxim of State which I quoted.

From Ralph A. Earle.

[PARIS] *Dec.* 24, 1858.—I have a satisfactory report to make. Our efforts have proved successful.

The Emperor received me, a second time, to-day.

I began by explaining that, when you sent me here, you were under the impression that H.M. had abandoned his Italian views, otherwise you would have given to your communication another form. I referred, of course, in detail to Ld. Cowley's letter and to Ld. Malmesbury's reply,[1] which

[1] See Malmesbury's letter to the Queen, Dec. 10, 1858, in *Queen Victoria's Letters*. Malmesbury advised the Emperor to make an attempt, in conjunction with Austria, to improve the Government of the Papal States.

you were led to believe had convinced the Emperor to maintain the existing system in Italy.

The Emperor at once said, recapitulating what had occurred, that Ld. Malmesbury's letter had not produced any effect upon his opinions, that he thought that its arguments were unsound and would never be accepted by the English, but that, as no event had occurred to render an immediate decision necessary, he had declined to continue a discussion which offered no prospect of leading to any conclusion which could prove satisfactory to both parties.

I then said that I had reported faithfully to you all that had passed at the former audience, and that I had naturally not omitted to notice H.M.'s observations with respect to Italy. I was now, I continued, in possession of your views upon this question, and altho' it was evident from the form in which they were stated that they were not intended for direct communication to H.M., yet, as it was desirable that he should be made thoroughly acquainted with them, I had no hesitation in placing your letter in H.M.'s hands.

The Emperor read it with great attention. When he came to that part in which it is said that you desire H.M. to be reconciled with the public opinion of England, he stopped and exclaimed that that was the object he had most at heart. What new sacrifices could he make for it? He had done all in his power to strengthen the English alliance.

When he came to the end, he said that he had read it with great pleasure, and he used various phrases to express the satisfaction which he had derived from the statement of your views. He contrasted your opinions with the declarations of Ld. Malmesbury in a spirit decidedly unfriendly to his lordship.

I then observed that, if a new proof were required to convince H.M. that it was for the interest of his Government to follow your advice, I would point to the efforts which were pertinaciously made by H.M.'s enemies to attribute to him the intentions which you asked him to repudiate. Only the other day M. de Montalembert had recourse to this artifice, and it was one which members of the exiled family had frequently employed to influence the English Court.

I continued for some time to urge all the arguments which I thought would be likely to have weight with the Emperor, who listened to me with kind attention.

At last he said: 'Well, you may tell Mr. Disraeli that I will make the declaration for which he asks, in my speech at the opening of the Chambers.'

I thanked the Emperor for this assurance, which he subsequently repeated.

He then asked me to leave your letter with him, and, as

there can be no reason for treating him with half-confidence, I complied with his request.

You had better write him a letter of thanks for the kindness with which he has received your emissary. Assure him of the pleasure with which you have seized the opportunity of proving to H.M. that the sentiments which you expressed in opposition are still yours. Express your satisfaction at hearing that he intends to take a measure which you are sure will be attended with the happiest results, and offer the same confidential co-operation in future should H.M. desire or circumstances appear to require it.

To the Emperor of the French.

TORQUAY, *Dec.* 27, 1858.

SIRE,—I request your Majesty's permission to acknowledge the kind condescension with which your Majesty has received my first secretary, Mr. Earle.

It has afforded me satisfaction to prove to your Majesty that the views which I had the honor to express to your Majesty when I was the leader of Opposition are influencing my conduct as a Minister of the Queen.

The declaration which your Majesty has graciously intimated to Mr. Earle it is your Majesty's intention to make at the opening of the Chambers will have, I doubt not, the happiest results, and will revive and strengthen that complete alliance between France and England which, in spite of a thousand superficial difficulties, is the keystone of the only policy which can secure the greatness of both countries. I have the honor to remain, Sire, with profound respect, your Majesty's obliged servant, B. DISRAELI.

Earle came back to Disraeli with his full report, and the Emperor intimated to the whole world what he had avowed to Earle, by saying in a marked manner, at his New Year reception, to Baron Hübner, the Austrian Ambassador, that he regretted that the relations between the Governments of France and Austria were not more satisfactory. Malmesbury, however, was still unconvinced, and treated Disraeli's information as of small importance. He wrote to Derby on January 14: 'I do not believe the crisis so near as most people, who are frightened by foolish speeches of Napoleon's, whose hatred of Buol and his envoy Hübner is unbounded.'

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. DOWNING STREET, *Jan.* 4, 1859.—Affairs here are, as you no doubt well know, very critical, and I regret that we are again all scattered, as we were in the Portuguese affair,[1] when decision and energy are absolutely requisite.

I did not go to Aylesbury on Monday, because I received from Paris a letter by messenger on Sunday which rendered it absolutely necessary that I should see Malmesbury, whom I could only catch on his way to Heron Court, where he has gone for a week. I have no hesitation in saying to you that he ought to be at the F.O., and nowhere else. Any appearances of negligence and any vagueness of language under these circumstances will have the very worst effect, whereas I have reason to believe that a calm and decisive carriage would oblige Austria to consent to the evacuation of the Roman States, and that would conclude the business.

It is not the army that is pressing the Emperor, but his own personal anxiety to do *something* for Italy, and a diplomatic triumph would satisfy him. In the meantime you may rest assured that the great diplomats want to see the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. Personal interview is the main element of success in negotiation; writing does not do much good, and Cowley's letters are deceptive, even if they are unintentionally so.

The Emperor is anxious to put himself quite right with England again, but of this nettle danger we might extract a good result, menacing as it seems, if we are prompt and firm. But the Cabinet ought to be assembled. One false step at the commencement may ruin all.

Derby showed in his reply that he was disposed to agree with Malmesbury in thinking the danger not so imminent as it appeared to Disraeli; but he expressed his readiness to hasten his return to town if Disraeli held his presence to be necessary.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. DOWNING STREET, *Jan.* 7, 1859.—I could not bear your coming up to town on Saturday, so I telegraphed that it was not necessary, and shall endeavour in this mode, though very imperfectly, to convey to you some of my views of what is going on, that you may digest them on your journey,

[1] The case of a French ship, the *Charles et Georges*, seized by the Portuguese as a slaver. The British Government arranged the dispute.

and so, when we come to confer, shall not have lost much time.

I feel a difficulty in conversing with Malmesbury on these matters. I observe when I touch on them, which I do always with reluctance, an incipient reserve and jealousy, as if I were trenching on his manor: unwise, I think, and unfortunate, but perhaps natural, and a feeling, if it exist, against which it is useless to contend.

Malmesbury did not reassure me, and it was impossible that he could, because I perceived that he was himself very imperfectly acquainted with the state of affairs. Nor is this wonderful, since he relies solely upon Cowley, and Cowley, who has not yet recovered his surprise at what has happened, explains everything by the ingenious assumption that a personal feeling on the part of the Emperor against Hübner is at the bottom of all that has happened or may happen. Throughout all this Italian pother Cowley has been off the rails.

Ever since we have been in office the Emperor has been estranged from us: this is the reason of the Lisbon business, which might have been prevented, and which was persisted in to injure us. The Emperor has got Malmesbury's letter to Cowley upon Austrian affairs, and expresses himself as entirely dissatisfied with its reasoning and its illustrations. He says that he is surprised that an English Minister should admit that there is any analogy between the instance of Lombardy and those of Ireland and India.

With regard to Lord Cowley and his conversation with the Emperor on Austria, the Emperor found his views not only those of the time of the *blocus continental*, but Lord Cowley was so unfortunate as to impress on His Majesty that if he stirred in Italy he would probably revive the Northern Confederacy against France. Not very pleasing under any circumstances, but, with the existing relations between France and Russia, absurd. From that time the Emperor has never recurred to the subject with Lord Cowley, not because he was convinced, as Lord Cowley supposes, but because H.M. felt agreement was hopeless.

I will now attempt to convey to you some idea of the real state of affairs—*i.e.*, the real state of the Emperor's mind—for in this business he is Alpha and Omega.

Ever since the Orsini business he has been, more or less, fitful and moody, and brooding over Italy. The letter of Orsini produced a great effect on him. He is alarmed for his life. Having himself belonged to the Carbonaro Society, he knows that he is never safe while they continue to look upon him as a renegade. He is resolved, therefore, 'to do something for Italy.' It is purely a personal impulse in its origin,

but, indulged in, it necessarily mingles with political ideas. Some reconstruction of Italy has been developed by personal apprehension. Cavour, too, is always on the watch. But nothing is yet definite, though it may be resolved on in an instant. Sometimes he talks of placing himself at the head of the army of invasion, as he once talked of going to the Crimea. And he would do it, for in dealing with this personage we must remember we are dealing with a mind as romantic as it is subtle.

But the French army is not in a condition to move with effect. Its artillery is in a transition state. All its improvements have become obsolete—before they were completed—and they must work day and night in founding rifle cannon before they could venture on great campaigns. Next to, or perhaps equal with, his desire 'to do something for Italy' is the Emperor's wish—I might say passion—to restore the good opinion of the English people in his favor. For this he is prepared to make great sacrifices, to force free trade in France, perhaps even to reduce his marine.

At this moment he is meditating a great rhetorical *coup*. *This is a profound secret.* His Chambers, or whatever they are called, meet early in February. He will seize that opportunity, in a manner in which he excels, of taking a view of the state of public affairs, and he will make a great effort to put himself right with England. *Mind, England,* not the *English Ministry,* though we shall be blunderers if we permit the present estrangement to continue.

Now observe: there are two things at this conjuncture most urgent. First, to impress upon Austria that, in the event of war between her and France, England will not interfere. Malmesbury has, I believe, urged this upon Apponyi, who is a just and sensible man, and who, I doubt not, conveys accurate impressions to his Court. But Austria is unwilling to believe this: the relations between the Prince Consort and Germany tend to convey a different impression. On this you may rely. Messages have been conveyed (I will not say from H.R.H.) which neutralise the declarations of our Ministry. But if Austria is convinced that we shall be neutral, then she will be conciliatory, and she would agree to a revival of the Conferences at Paris to consider the condition of Central and Southern Italy. This overture on her part would enlist English opinion on her side, and on English opinion at this moment everything depends.

The Emperor is watching it with intenseness, down to an article in the *Daily News.* He will never risk a war which England disapproves. If opinion here sanction the conciliatory movement of Austria, he will agree to the revival of the

Conferences, and content himself with a diplomatic triumph. All immediate danger of war will certainly then be averted, and Malmesbury would meet Parliament with a feather in his cap.

But, to bring all this about in less than a month, every day, every hour, is precious, and a week is already lost—a week, too, of opportunities which may never occur again, for we should have had the advantage of counselling those who were in a panic.

You misunderstood my former letter on these matters, and I am not surprised. I was embarrassed, and I felt what I wrote was feeble and ambiguous. What I have said now I hope is clear, but I have been constantly interrupted, and have expressed only a tithe of what I wish to convey.

From Lord Derby.

Confidential. KNOWSLEY, *Jan.* 8, 1859.—. . . I think you are mistaken as to there being any feeling of jealousy in Malmesbury's mind as to your discussing foreign affairs with him, as being within his exclusive province. I have never heard him express any feeling of the kind, but I think, not knowing from what sources you derive your information, he is inclined, when accounts differ, to place greater reliance, which is not unnatural, on his recognised official channels of information than on private, and, so far as he is concerned, anonymous intelligence which reaches you. I do not know how far your obligations to your correspondents would allow of your removing this ground of partial mistrust.[1]

I believe you correctly estimate what is passing in the mind of the Emperor. . . .

Malmesbury has, as you are aware, spoken very strongly to Apponyi of the hopelessness of any assistance on the part of England to put down any insurrection, however fomented, in her Italian provinces, and from what he told me Apponyi seemed quite aware of the fact. I do not know that we can urge the conviction on him more strongly than we have done, but the tone which France habitually takes is such that resentment blinds Buol to the consequences, and leads him rather to provoke than to deprecate them. I cannot think that anyone in high places can have been so indiscreet as to hold out hopes to Austria in contradiction to the explicit declarations of the Government. . . .

[1] In a letter dated Jan. 7, which Derby had probably received when he wrote, Malmesbury had complained: 'Disraeli *never reads a word of my papers* which go round, and knows nothing but what the Jews at Paris and London tell him.' Malmesbury evidently thought that Disraeli's information came from the Rothschilds!

Malmesbury was soon driven from his optimism by the march of events, and forced to realise that Disraeli's information was correct. The entry in his diary on January 12 runs: 'The King of Sardinia has made a speech which can only mean war. Things look bad all over Europe'; and on January 16: 'I fear war cannot be avoided. The Emperor of the French seems determined, though his country is strongly against it.'

To Lord Derby.

DOWNING STREET, *Jan.* 14, 1859.—. . . The alarm in the City is very great: 'the whole of the Mediterranean trade is stopped.'

The reduced value in securities is not less than 60 millions sterling, the greater part in France. Another such a week will break the Paris Bourse.

'And all because one man chooses to disturb everything.' Only one feeling in the City—that the Government will have nothing to do with the affair. 'Though the thing were settled in a few days, months will pass before confidence is again restored, and we were on the eve of immense prosperity.'

The panic on the Bourse and the reluctance of the French people restrained Napoleon for the time from any forward movement. But it was generally felt that war was only postponed, not averted; and the desire of this country was so strong for peace if possible, and if not for neutrality, that, when Parliament opened on February 3, no attempt was made by Palmerston or Russell to attack the Government on Foreign Affairs, and Derby's and Disraeli's statements as to their efforts for peace were well received. The Government, said Disraeli, had given to all the Powers concerned the same frank, friendly, and cordial counsel. In particular they had impressed upon France and Austria 'the duty that devolves upon them of entering, not into hostile rivalry for the military command of Italy, but into that more generous emulation of seeking to advance its interests and improve its condition.' He recognised the popular sympathy in England for Sardinia.

The position of Sardinia is one which necessarily and naturally commands sympathy in a free Parliament, and there is no State in Italy which the English feelings have more clustered round than the kingdom of Sardinia, especially during the last few years. We have all hoped that Sardinia may be the means by which the improvement of Italy, morally and materially, in public liberty as well as in other respects, may be effected; and I do not relinquish—I will not readily relinquish—hopes which seemed so well founded, and which were so encouraging to every generous spirit.

'The high policy of an alliance with France' was once again the theme of Disraeli's peroration. Napoleon had proved a faithful ally, and he relied on his sagacity not wantonly to disturb the peace of the world. These sentiments earned for Disraeli the condemnation of the Liberal press for servility and sycophancy, and at the same time obtained no return from the Emperor, who, in spite of Earle's mission and his own promise, made a very ambiguous speech at the opening of the Chambers, and, believing that his projects would be furthered by the return of the Italophil Palmerston to office, sent Persigny back to London as Ambassador to intrigue for that result.

Disraeli has left a short memorandum, written in the sixties, about the origin of the Italian War of 1859:

The Emperor of the French was a very romantic man. The Queen of England had a great personal influence over him. Unfortunately, the Prince Consort hated him. He said to me once: 'He is always a conspirator: it is the key-note of everything.' When the Italian War seemed to be inevitable, brought about by the intrigues of Cavour with the Emperor, and when there were secret understandings, it was supposed, between the parties, etc., as a last resource to maintain the peace of Europe, the Queen was advised to avail herself of her presumed personal influence with the Emperor, and write to him a private letter.[1] I did not see this letter, though I have no doubt it was well conceived and well expressed, with the advantage of Lord Derby's advice and criticism; but I was permitted to see the Emperor's reply,[2] which was only shown to Lord Derby, Lord Malmesbury, and

[1] Dated Feb. 4. [2] Dated Feb. 14.

myself. To me it was one of the most interesting and most satisfactory communications under the circumstances possible. Full and frank, it told everything: how Cavour came, what he said, what was said to him, what was contemplated. It assumed that all must agree, that the position of Italy was most unsatisfactory to all, and reminded the Queen that at the Conferences of Paris the Emperor had wished to anticipate what seemed to him inevitable by joint action. But whatever the state of Italy, whatever the necessity of acting on the part of France, whatever the conversations and contemplated conduct with Sardinia, etc., etc., such was his value for the friendship and esteem of *ma très chère sœur* that he pledged himself, and in the language the most solemn, affectionate, and precise, that, notwithstanding all that had passed, he would never attack Austria unless she previously attacked Piedmont.

These letters between the Queen and the Emperor were printed in the fourth volume of Sir Theodore Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort*, published in 1879. The Emperor's reply was not quite so full and frank as Disraeli in retrospect thought it. Napoleon did not mention Cavour by name, though he wrote about the confidential communications which he had received from Sardinia; nor did he refer to the Conferences of Paris. But he stated his policy to be in general such as Disraeli has recorded. He said he had told the Sardinian Government that his Government 'could not encourage an aggressive line of conduct on the part of Piedmont, nor support her in a struggle in which right would not be upon her side, but that, on the other hand, she might rely upon being vigorously backed, either if attacked by Austria or if she became involved with this Power in a just and lawful war.' He declared—it was an audacious declaration—that he was under no engagements to Sardinia, and denied that he was preparing for war.

The memorandum proceeds:

With this card in our hand, peace seemed secure, and with this Lord Cowley went to Vienna. Who could believe that after this Austria should have attacked Piedmont without any intimation to England, and, having attacked her and released the Emperor of the French from his personal pledge,

should have behaved with such military imbecility that for a long time nobody actually knew where the Austrian army were. They crossed and recrossed the frontier, ravaged some of the enemy's land and then retired, and then wandered about like idiots. Nothing could have justified their conduct but a direct march to Turin. . . .

The young Emperor of Austria[1] was very conceited. He was literally sick of hearing the praises of the Emperor of the French. He had a fine army, and longed to command it, for which he had no quality. He said to Lord Cowley: 'I know that the French artillery may be superior to mine, but in no other branch have they any pre-eminence.'

In one of the long, frequent, and troubled interviews which took place between the Emperor[2] and the English Ambassador before the war broke out, the Emperor suddenly turned round and said, 'Cannot France and England understand each other?' and hinted at partition. But Lord Cowley would not listen to it. . . .

My opinion is that, even if Lord Cowley had been our Ambassador at Vienna, certainly if Lord Stratford or Sir Henry Bulwer had been there, there would have been no war. There wanted the unceasing vigilance of a commanding character to baffle the intrigues of a miserable camarilla. Our Ambassador, Lord (*sic*) Loftus, was not fit to be resident at a third-rate German Court, and was quite despised and disregarded by that of Vienna. He was a pompous nincompoop, and of all Lord Malmesbury's appointments the worst; and that is saying a good deal.

In defence of Malmesbury, it should be said Lord Stanhope had refused the post, and Malmesbury always said he was driven in that and other instances to the office list; but the first quality of a Minister is to select competent instruments.

An interesting note from Malmesbury to Disraeli shows his policy of neutrality—a right one in itself, but perhaps hardly maintained with sufficient adroitness and firmness.

From Lord Malmesbury.

[*Undated.*] The policy of insisting and threatening is Palmerstonian, and would commit us to one side or the other. From the moment we show a bias to one side our influence is gone, because they are now *bidding* for our friendship. We never can, I hope, be induced to join a protectorate of Italy. We have enough of the protectorate of Belgium, who will

[1] The Emperor Francis Joseph. [2] Of the French.

probably be invaded by one of its protectors, and now of the Principalities, whose protectors are all pulling different ways. England always acts *de bonne foi* in these cases, and therefore has the disadvantage of being like a respectable clergyman cotrustee with 5 horsedealers.

That Malmesbury, with the most admirable intentions, was not strong enough for the post of Foreign Secretary at a time of European unrest is the view that emerges very clearly from Disraeli's correspondence and memoranda relating to this crisis. Palmerston's opinion of Malmesbury was the same. To a foreign diplomat he said: 'Il ne manque pas d'un certain aplomb et d'un certain don de parole, mais il est paresseux, insouciant, et ignorant au suprême degré dans tout ce qui regarde les affaires de son département.' On another occasion he called him 'our Magdalen in politics,' adding: 'Dans tout ce ministère un seul homme, M. Disraeli, entend quelque chose à la politique extérieure, et encore ne s'y entend-il guère.' Whether, however, Disraeli's amateur diplomacy and spasmodic interventions were calculated to benefit our foreign policy during this period may perhaps be doubted. His insight, as in the case of Napoleon's character and intentions, was far quicker and more penetrating than Malmesbury's; and, had he been at the Foreign Office, his despatches would have carried the weight of a statesman of the first class. But, not being either Foreign Minister or Prime Minister, he could not exercise regular control; and Malmesbury's irritation at his interference was not unnatural.

None of the various expedients which were tried, neither the appeals of England to France, Austria, and Sardinia, nor Cowley's mission to Vienna, nor Russia's proposal of a European Congress, succeeded in averting the war. After the defeat on the Reform Bill, the British Government was felt to be in suspension till the election was decided, and Malmesbury's advice necessarily lost half its weight abroad. But it was not the wavering Napoleon after all, but Austria, who, losing patience, precipitated

hostilities by peremptorily demanding, on the very day[1] on which the British Parliament was prorogued, the disarmament of Sardinia. Disraeli remained hopeful to the last, and said in debate on the previous day that the elements of a settlement were in existence. But he did not disguise the seriousness of the prospect if peace were broken.

> A war in Italy is not a war in a corner. An Italian war may be, and probably will be, an European war. The waters of the Adriatic cannot be disturbed without agitating the waters of the Rhine. The port of Trieste is not merely an Italian port; it is a port which belongs to the Germanic Confederation, and an attack on the port of Trieste is not an attack on Austria merely, but on Germany. If, then, a war spread beyond the precincts of Italy, England is interested, not only from those enlightened principles of civilisation which make her look with an adverse eye on any attempt to disturb the peace of the world, but England may be interested from material considerations of the most urgent and momentous character.

Simultaneously Derby said in the House of Lords:

> If war break out, whatever may be the consequences, it is indispensable and necessary that, as long as our neutrality shall last, it must be to a certain extent an armed neutrality, enabling us in any case to take our part, on which side soever it may be, that honour and justice and dignity require us to take.

These apparently harmless words of Derby's were perverted by party spirit, during the elections and afterwards, into a hint that Government were contemplating a breach of neutrality on the unpopular Austrian side; a slander which was not even abandoned when Derby promptly denounced Austria's action in launching her ultimatum as hasty, precipitate, and criminal.

While the immediate issue absorbed the attention of the ordinary man and the ordinary politician, Disraeli, as was his wont, took a far wider view, and in his speech on the hustings at Aylesbury contrasted the imperial position of England with the local strifes of Europe.

[1] April 19.

The day is coming, if it has not already come, when the question of the balance of power cannot be confined to Europe alone. . . . You have on the other side of the Atlantic vigorous and powerful communities, who will no longer submit to your circumscribed theory of authority. The Australian colonies, though now in their youth, but in the youth of giants, have already, as it were, thrown their colossal shadow over Europe. And it is for old Europe I lament, that she is exhausting her energies and her resources in these wars. I could wish that she would rather prepare for that awful competition which in coming times she must encounter. I would rather see France and Germany and Russia develop their resources, improve their agriculture, increase their population, and cultivate the arts of life, social and scientific, instead of wasting their strength, risking their stability, and sinking, when the era to which I have referred arrives, by their own mismanagement and want of prescience, into an inferior and exhausted position. Remember always that England, though she is bound to Europe by tradition, by affection, by great similarity of habits, and all those ties which time alone can create and consecrate, is not a mere Power of the Old World. Her geographical position, her laws, her language and religion, connect her as much with the New World as with the Old. And although she has occupied not only an eminent, but, I am bold to say, the most eminent, position among European nations for ages, still, if ever Europe by her shortsightedness falls into an inferior and exhausted state, for England there will remain an illustrious future. We are bound to the communities of the New World, and those great States which our own planting and colonising energies have created, by ties and interests which will sustain our power and enable us to play as great a part in the times yet to come as we do in these days, and as we have done in the past. And therefore, now that Europe is on the eve of war, I say it is for Europe, not for England, that my heart sinks.

A noteworthy utterance indeed, whose full meaning can be much better appreciated now than in the far-off heyday of *laisser faire* in 1859; a year, it may be added, in which there were rejoicings in England as well as in Prussia over the birth of Queen Victoria's eldest grandson, afterwards William the Second, German Emperor and King of Prussia.

CHAPTER VII.

From Government to Opposition.

1859.

In the General Election of 1859, Disraeli, as he always felt, had no luck. The conditions were favourable to Conservative success. The Indian Mutiny had been suppressed; affairs in China were improved. There were no burning questions between parties, for the country was comparatively indifferent to the Reform which had agitated its representatives. Men's minds were largely occupied with the European situation; and the policy of neutrality pursued by the Government was universally accepted, though eager friends of Italy suspected them of a partiality for Austria. The daring, skill, and good-humour, with which Disraeli had conducted affairs for more than a year in a House of which three-fifths were against him, had won him both sympathy and admiration. The Opposition were still divided, and neither Palmerston nor Russell enjoyed his former measure of public esteem.

That the Conservatives would increase their numbers was certain. Would they gain only twenty or thirty seats, and so be liable to ejection on the Address; or as many as forty or fifty, and so be able to maintain themselves in power? Either result seemed equally possible. Luck would decide. Disraeli was very hopeful, and made an elaborate calculation, in which the element of luck received generous recognition. He considered that thirty-five seats were certain to be gained, and

thirteen to be lost—net gain, twenty-two. In addition, twenty-three other Liberal seats would fall to the Conservatives, if they had moderate luck; while, if they had great luck, they would win twenty-five more. By assuming the capture of two-thirds of those which moderate luck would give them, fifteen seats, and one-third of those which only great luck could secure, eight seats, and adding these to the certain net gain of twenty-two, he obtained a final estimate of forty-five seats, not counting Ireland. He told the Queen on April 14: 'The general accounts from the country respecting the impending elections far exceed the most sanguine estimates of the Government.' His hopes were disappointed. The movement in favour of the Conservatives was not sufficient; they only gained about thirty seats. The luck ran against them. There was less change in *personnel* than at any of the preceding elections in which Disraeli was concerned. Instead of 200 unreturning members, as he predicted, there were but little over 100. He took the result with his wonted fortitude and good-humour.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

DOWNING STREET, *April* 29, 1859.—The great battle commences to-day, and in eight-and-forty hours we shall know whether we are mice or men. . . . It is nervous work. . . .

DOWNING STREET, *May* 20, 1859.—The elections are over, and altho' of late, and especially in Ireland, they have been extremely favorable to the Government, I was much disappointed with the early returns from the English boro's. We had no *luck*, and ought to have gained ten more seats, which we lost by units !—in one case, my own county town, a tie ! These additional ten would have given us an absolute majority of the House, and we should have been on a rock of adamant: as it is, our position is critical, and nothing can describe to you the constant anxiety, vigilance, and labor, which it requires to manage this vast, however inadequate, host, and to cope with the perpetual menaces and stratagems of the enemy. . . .

I have written to you very little, but no language can convey to you the absorbing character of my life. It is that of a general in the field, and the sense of responsibility pre-

vents one from doing anything but what is a fulfilment of pressing and immediate duty. I have two[1] excellent private secretaries, both young men, and very good-looking and clever. The first secretary, Mr. Earle, has been returned to Parliament, tho' he is only 23, but a man in matured thought and power of observation. Without his assistance I could not get thro' my work. I can trust him with interviews. He can see men and manage them.

Earle's election for Berwick was a mere flash in the pan, as, under an arrangement with his opponent, he resigned the seat in August, and did not reappear in the House of Commons until he was returned in 1865 for Maldon. Disraeli's own return was unopposed, and he was able to devote the more attention to the general management of the elections. There are some indications in his correspondence that he instigated the Conservative Central Office to support Radical candidatures against Whigs in cases where no Conservative was standing—a defensible policy, as the Radicals had often been willing to give the Government fair-play, while the factious opposition of the Whigs had been almost unremitting. Derby thought this policy shortsighted. 'The Whigs,' he wrote, 'are disgusted with Johnny, and are hanging back. We must avoid irritating them by supporting Radicals against them—at least in England.' One electoral move which Disraeli earnestly pressed, for the benefit both of his friend Stanley and of the party, was brought to naught by Stanley's obstinacy.

To Lord Stanley.

April 8, 1859.—From some information which has reached me, I believe that you will be returned for London at the head of the poll. It is the opinion of your opponents. All I want now from you is *to hold your tongue*, and to throw no cold water on the movement, which is hourly assuming gigantic proportions. If you are returned, it would do us more good than ten small borough seats, and give a tone to the whole election. I have much to say to you on this head,

[1] The other Secretary was C. L. Ryan, then a clerk in the Treasury, who afterwards became Sir Charles Ryan, Comptroller and Auditor-General.

but all I wish for now is reserve on your part—a grand talent for silence.

Stanley had gained golden opinions in the City by his management of the transfer of India from the Company to the Crown, and by the business-like qualities which his administration of the new India Office had displayed. But he declined to respond to the enthusiasm of the City Conservatives, hesitating now, as throughout his career, to take risks.

While the election was still in progress, but when it had become clear that Ministers, though their following would be considerably increased, would fail to command an independent majority in the House of Commons, Disraeli made a final attempt to bring about that union in office of Palmerston and Derby which general similarity of political views and a certain correspondence in personal tastes and position rendered natural, and which would have been popular in the country. The elections showed that the conservative forces, in the non-party sense, were the strongest in the constituencies; a conservative Administration, consisting of Tories and Palmerstonian Whigs, would be the logical outcome. It was yet another favourable opportunity to form that 'manly alliance which 'Manilius' had advocated in the *Press*.[1]

To Lord Palmerston.

[? *May* 3, 1859].—I address you in our ancient confidence. Consider well the views I am taking the liberty of placing before you.

Lord Derby will count at the meeting of Parliament not less than 300 followers, probably a little in excess of that number. He has the offer of some irregular assistance which may be relied on at an emergency.

If you were to unite with him in forming a Government, and bring with you a following of about 20 or 30 gentlemen, you would have more than an absolute majority of the House, which would constantly be increasing.

Considering the state of affairs on the Continent, the

[1] See pp. 1311-1314.

extreme opinions professed on domestic politics by leading members of the Opposition, and the ample means of official promotion which could be placed at your disposal, it may be not an unreasonable assumption that such a number at least would follow your advice.

You would then be entire master of the situation. The foreign policy of every Government of which you are a member must be yours, even if you might not think it expedient to undertake the Foreign Office.

As for domestic policy, when the occasion serves, you could bring in your own Reform Bill, which, with our increased force, may be as conservative as you please. You could dictate your terms.

There is yet one point on which I speak with delicacy, but without reserve. I have worked with Lord Derby for ten years, and a shade of disagreement or estrangement has never risen between us, and for the seven last years I have possessed his unlimited confidence. A point of honor alone attaches him to the party post which he fills. He feels that he can never desert the Conservative party while it is in a minority, and while there is no member of it to succeed him.

I have not written this with his knowledge. When I called on him this morning he was at Roehampton. I have, however, frequently and amply brought the general views of this letter before him, and he has received them always with approbation. Indeed, one of our reasons for the dissolution was that it must so much increase our strength that it would facilitate the reconstruction desirable.

I say nothing on this occasion about individual arrangements. When I cheerfully set the example of personal sacrifice for a public purpose, I feel there is no one of my colleagues who can demur at any change deemed necessary for the public interest.

For myself, I can truly say that my principal object has ever been the consolidation of the Conservative party, and that what I am now proposing is only an arrangement that I have long meditated, and more than once endeavoured to accomplish. You would receive from me, not merely cordial co-operation, but a devoted fidelity.

Let us consider for a moment, if you do not embrace these views, what is probable to occur.

It is possible that Lord J. Russell, by some resolution or amendment on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, with no definite pledge, but with a radical bias, may place the Government in a minority. Whatever may be the disposition of the Court, and whatever may be our desire to support your nomination, I think it would be impossible for the Queen to

send for anyone but Lord J. Russell. It is possible that under those circumstances you might become a member of his Government, but you would sit with men who do not sympathise with you, and probably in the natural course of events would quit his Administration. But even if Her Majesty were to send for your lordship, what would be your position? The extreme party would watch their opportunity to destroy you, and no Government can permanently depend on the forbearance of an Opposition.

You must be aware that, if the union between Lord Derby and yourself were now to take place, it would be one gratifying to an anxious Court and to the country.

From Lord Palmerston.

BROCKET, *May* 3, 1859.

MY DEAR MR. DISRAELI,—I am sorry I was out when your messenger arrived, and that I have thereby caused him to be detained here longer than he ought to have been.

I am much obliged to you for the kind and friendly terms of your letter, and if I say in answer that many reasons which it is unnecessary to go into would prevent me from entering into such an arrangement as that which you suggest might be possible, I trust it is needless for me to assure you that no want of personal good feeling towards Lord Derby or yourself, or towards any other members of your Government, could form part of those reasons.—My dear Mr. Disraeli, yours sincerely, PALMERSTON.

Palmerston, it may be assumed, was confident that the outcome of the elections would be a Palmerston Administration. But to other competent observers that did not appear certain. His position was not nearly so strong as after the 1857 election, when a large majority was returned with no other mandate than to support him. The prospective Liberal majority of 1859 would contain many who followed Cobden and Bright, many who followed Russell, some who followed Gladstone, besides Irish members who looked to their own leaders. Without Conservative support Palmerston's power would be very insecure. That support he no doubt hoped to obtain; but he meant to do so, if possible, without paying for it with office.

Disraeli already foresaw this, for himself, uninviting

future, and, after receiving Palmerston's refusal, did all he could to prevent its realisation. He 'reconnoitred' for support both among Roman Catholic Irish and among independent Liberals; and in particular applied to Horsman, an independent Liberal who had played a considerable part, generally friendly to the Government, in the debates of 1858 and 1859. In the draft of Disraeli's letter to him, which has been preserved among the Beaconsfield papers, there is the following illuminating passage, which, however, was apparently struck out before the letter was despatched:

> If the usual combination throws us out, Ld. Palmerston is to be the next man, and will form a Government with his friends, and is to be supported, not generally, but unvaryingly, by mine, sitting opposite to him. I have no doubt he will govern the country well, but I do not see why he should do it better than us, nor do I see why this hocus-pocus should be perpetually repeated.

Disraeli perfectly understood that Derby, as well as Palmerston, was prepared to regard a prospect of this kind with complacency. In order to avoid it, he offered Horsman one of the highest posts in the Cabinet, with provision also for his friends and followers, adding:

> The occasion is a great one, and not for ordinary men. But you have energy, courage, and resource, equal to it. A following of fifteen would do the business. It would be a *coup d'état*, a great triumph, and the final blow to those personal traditions whose pompous mediocrity for a quarter of a century has oppressed the House of Commons.

It looks at first sight as if Disraeli, in making offers of this dazzling kind to that 'superior person' but second-rate politician, Horsman—who refused because he was himself conscious of his inadequacy—had lost for the moment his usual shrewd appreciation of Parliamentary values; but his report to Derby suggests a different explanation.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. GROSVENOR GATE, *May* 8, 1859.—I called on you yesterday, after the Court, to give you the result of my

reconnoitring and consult over affairs. Time is so precious, and so much depends on the manner in which the next three weeks are employed, that I forward this to you at once.

I estimate our pure gains, for they must still be an estimate, at 26. There are six borough seats, in addition, which really have been won from the enemy. The 'independent' Irish party will, I hear, probably be increased to 15. This would make a force on which we could now depend, on a trial of strength, to the amount of 322, out of a House of 652, deducting the Speaker and Aylesbury.

Horsman has been confidentially sounded. He recognises the critical state of affairs, foreign and domestic, believes that the strongest man cannot change his political connection without sacrifices which pursue him through life, but would not hesitate to do his duty, though it might embitter his future existence. Fortunately, however, he is spared the cruel dilemma, as he feels he is not important enough for such an occasion, and that his adhesion would only destroy himself, without aiding us. I expected this sort of response to the appeal; it will, however, prevent him from precipitating himself into any combination against the Government.

Mr. Lindsay,[1] who is supposed to be the type of some dozen men of doubtful Liberal allegiance, has also been sounded: replied very favorably, but expressed a wish for an interview with myself, which he will have.

What effect the growing impression, that Palmerston is to be the new Minister, will have on the Manchester party I have not yet ascertained, though I have made arrangements which will probably obtain us that information ere long.

P. will serve under no one, and considers himself already installed. J. R., it is said, is starved out, and would serve under P. if he could manage to get rid of his new allies with decency and the appearance of honor.

The Whigs wish to precipitate the attack, that Liberal claims and Liberal dissensions should not have time to develop. They want a vague vote on which all would be obliged to unite, and then a Whig Administration under Palmerston. I suppose you observed the Marquis of Stafford's speech.

My own opinion is that a permanent working majority may be obtained from the present House of Commons on two conditions:

1. That we gain time.

2. That the Cabinet should obtain some additional weight and character.

I will reserve for conversation the tactics by which I think

[1] M.P. (L.), Tynemouth, 1854-1859; Sunderland, 1859-1865.

time may be obtained, and the scheme for an immediate vote be baffled.

I will consider now the second point, for it is urgent.

There is no doubt a very general wish, not confined to the unattached Liberals, that the Cabinet should be strengthened. Any scheme by which numerical force could be secured through a process of reconstruction I think must be abandoned. We must confine ourselves to an addition which will increase its intellectual authority. The following are the only persons by which, it appears to me, this result could be obtained: Lord Elgin,[1] Mr. Gladstone, Stuart Wortley,[2] Frederick Peel.[3] The latter is not popular: I think highly of him.

If Lord Elgin in one House, and Mr. Gladstone in the other, joined the Administration, I think it would rise in public estimation, and would permanently be established. When Gladstone was reconnoitred two months ago, it resulted that no personal feeling any longer existed which prevented him joining the Administration; that he could not join alone; and, thirdly, that he wished all invitations should be direct from yourself. This latter point was also much insisted upon by Mr. Gladstone in private conversation with Sir Stafford Northcote. You would, of course, be careful that this direct communication, if you decide upon it, should not take place by letter; you would send for him, confer on the state of public affairs, and ask him really what he wanted. The application to Lord Elgin would probably greatly influence him.

With regard to Lord Elgin, who is at Paris, any mere offer forwarded to him would probably be fruitless. The Court, our own Ambassador there, and *The Times* newspaper, form Lord Elgin's opinion as to the political position; and, of course, he thinks we are in an overwhelming minority, as the Emperor does himself, and Lord E. would decline. He must be informed, if you resolve on the step, that you are about to reconstruct the Government, and that you wish, consequently, to confer with him in London. Mr. Gladstone's knowledge of the House of Commons would permit him to form a juster estimate of our Parliamentary position than Lord Elgin, and you would have a natural and easy opportunity of enlightening him on the subject.

But what is Lord Elgin to be? He must have a post of high administration, and it is difficult to place any other than that of the Foreign Office in the House of Lords. Lord

[1] The eighth Earl, who had just distinguished himself in China, and was afterwards Viceroy of India.

[2] Son of first Lord Wharncliffe; Solicitor-General, 1856-57.

[3] Sir Robert Peel's second son; afterwards Chief Railway Commissioner.

Malmesbury once told me, but in absolute confidence, that, if we succeeded in obtaining a majority at the General Election, he intended to retire from his post, and recommend you to take Lord Elgin in his stead. I cannot presume to give an opinion on such a subject. I think it would be a great misfortune to lose Malmesbury from the Cabinet, and that he should under any circumstances remain there, in as high a post as is practicable.

If Mr. Gladstone joins, I think that India should be his office. It is the only post which would absorb his superfluous energies. This arrangement would not be disagreeable to Stanley, who wishes to return to the Colonial Office.

Assuming that it may be desirable to provide for others, Stuart Wortley might be Chancellor of Lancaster, and Frederick Peel might be Secretary of the Admiralty, Henry Corry succeeding to the Chairmanship of the Inland Revenue.

My dear Lord, I have now placed before you my general views, which it would have been much more agreeable and more easy to have discussed in conversation, but I feel that no time can be lost in their consideration. There is a great deal at stake: I think, really, the welfare of the country: certainly your honor in history. For myself, I will merely observe that I am prepared to take any step and make any sacrifice, provided you remain at the head of the Administration. If, therefore, any other arrangements more feasible than I have submitted for your consideration occur to you, you can have no delicacy in intimating your opinions to me, which I shall in that, as I hope I have done in every other instance, loyally endeavor to assist you in carrying into operation.

Derby deprecated any change at the Foreign Office, where it was, he wrote, of great importance to have a man 'who has at his fingers' ends the whole thread of the complicated negotiations in which we have been engaged.' But he made overtures to Gladstone, which, however, in spite of Disraeli's hopes, met with a more unfavourable reception than in the previous year. 'It is fair I should say,' Gladstone wrote, 'that I am not an approver of the dissolution, and that I am not able to flatter myself that in the present position of affairs I can make any useful suggestion.' This was, as Gladstone himself admitted, an 'uninviting preface,' and Derby went no farther.

Disraeli's attempts to procure support among the Irish brigade were the natural corollary of the good political relations which he had by now established with English Catholicism;[1] but they brought him up against the Irish Government. He wrote to Eglinton, Naas, and Whiteside, urging, in accordance with his habitual policy of toleration, that appointments must cease to be purely Orange, and that places must be given to Roman Catholics, even though they were opponents. All three replied more or less indignantly and convincingly. Naas, indeed, turned the tables rather neatly.

From Lord Naas.

Private. DUBLIN CASTLE, *May* 17, 1859.—I agree with you this is a great emergency, and we are bound to do all we can to get every vote. We have made no Orange appointments. That is only the hustings cant of the Whigs, infuriated at our success. We all feel that it would be most advisable to make a few Catholic appointments, but the difficulty is how to do it. . . . Our policy has been to appoint competent men to every office. Ten years of Whig rule has crammed every department with Catholic incapables, appointed solely on account of their religion. We cannot follow that example. It is both dishonest and impolitic. Our friends would never support us if they saw political opponents of inferior merit put over their heads.

Whatever our policy has been, it has been successful, for we have won 8 seats in Ireland, and will bring 58 men of our own and 6 or 7 Independents into the field, making 64 on the first division. . . .

There is one way in which you can promote Catholics without offence: give them a fair share of the Colonial and Indian legal appointments. We have been very badly treated on this head. We give you a larger support than any other portion of the United Kingdom, and you have not given either to the Irish Bar or Church a single Indian or Colonial office. We can give you competent men for both. Pray, therefore, insist on this. . . .

[1] On June 25 Disraeli asked a Roman Catholic M.P. to 'convey to Cardinal Wiseman my sense of the generous and courageous manner in which His Eminence accorded us his assistance. It was given ungrudgingly, without solicitation, and without condition, and with that true feeling which can only be prompted by a sense of duty.' (Wilfrid Ward's *Wiseman*, Vol. II., p. 449).

With Lindsay and the independent Liberals, who included a person of the considerable Parliamentary importance of Roebuck, Disraeli had more success. What they mainly wanted was a more comprehensive measure of Reform. Disraeli, as we know, was himself in favour of a more generous Bill than the timidity of some of his colleagues had allowed him to propose. He had, therefore, no difficulty in giving a general assent to the programme outlined by Roebuck in a letter which he wrote to Lindsay.

J. A. Roebuck to W. S. Lindsay.

May 22, 1859.—A Reform Bill which proposed a six pound value franchise for boroughs, a ten pound franchise for counties, and also the disfranchisement of a large number of the smaller boroughs, would, I think, command the confidence of the country. At this time, however, men's minds are very intently fixed upon foreign affairs; and what is required of our rulers by the people on this matter is that every means should be adopted to maintain an honest neutrality, and at the same time that every precaution should be taken to render England secure against foreign attack. I feel sure that if this course were pursued, respecting home and foreign politics, the country would support an Administration that thus showed itself truly patriotic. We are not at the present moment possessed of much confidence in the so-called leaders of the Liberal party, but the people have made up their minds that there shall be no return to the old Tory practices or principles, but they are not determined to have their ends sought by particular men only. They were content to see Catholic Emancipation and Free Trade carried by Sir R. Peel, and they would be quite ready now to receive Reform, and a wise foreign policy, from the present possessors of power. . . .

Lindsay explained that by 'large disfranchisement' Roebuck did not contemplate disfranchisement to anything like the extent proposed by Bright; and he proceeded to draw up a paper which he submitted to Disraeli, on behalf of Roebuck and himself, embodying the views agreed upon. Disraeli was asked, and consented, to rise at the beginning of the debate on the Address and make a statement on behalf of the Government in harmony with these views; and Lindsay undertook, if that were

done, that Roebuck and his other friends—in sufficient number, he believed, to secure a clear majority—would support the Government in a confidence division. In consequence of these arrangements, Disraeli contemplated the approach of the session with serenity.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. DOWNING STREET, *May* 26, 1859.—Everything looks well. Be careful to keep all your places open. Also a bold mien and confident tone. Any despondency under your roof is noticed and repeated, and then people will not believe we are going to win. If Stanley is with you, just give him a hint in this direction. I have my reasons for all this.

Up to yesterday, Palmerston and J. R. had agreed on all points of foreign policy; on Reform; and on their Cabinet; but not as to mode of attack. This you may rely on. J. R. was strong for an amendment on Reform, but it was urged that we should be great fools if we did not cut the ground from under them in that respect; and then also, I am assured, the real Whigs don't want to come in on Reform. There is a small section for censure on dissolution, and they urge that Gladstone has promised to vote for that, and also speak. But this proposition is not favorably received. Lord Palmerston is for want of confidence, but whether on Address or on a subsequent and substantive motion hesitates; but the chances are it will be on the Address, the precedent of 1841, which is in the mouths of Charles Wood and Ben Stanley. These, I am assured, are the most violent. There are several opponents, however, to want of confidence on the Address. The hitch is that 'many Radicals hold aloof.' I believe Bright and Gibson are secured by the Palmerston-Russell coalition. A long time was wasted by a mutual desire of each of these chiefs that the other should go to the Upper House; ultimately they both declined. They therefore remain in the Lower House. The form of settlement is—the one sent for is to be acknowledged Premier, and the rest serve under him; but J. R. said he knew the Queen would send for Lord Palmerston.

Sir John Ramsden is to move the amendment.

Gladstone will vote against want of confidence. I wish, now, you had seen him, and then we should have had all his reasons against dissolution, and been able to discount his objections before he spoke.

My plan of the battle would be this: to rise myself immedi-

ately after Ramsden, and state our case, and divide the same night if possible. But my reasons for this unusual course I will reserve till we meet. Peel, however, if I remember right, did it once. . . .

Disraeli's information that the Opposition were coming together was quite correct. They had fought in the elections a common enemy, and therefore were less disposed for the moment to fight one another. Moreover, the Whig leaders wanted office. All sections, represented by Palmerston and Russell, Sidney Herbert and Milner Gibson, joined in a requisition for a meeting at Willis's Rooms to settle the plan of attack. The meeting was held the day before the Queen's Speech, and was entirely successful. 'The two leaders,' says Greville, 'gave the required assurances that each would serve under the other in the event of either being sent for. There was a general concurrence in the plan of attacking the Government at once, in which even Bright and Ellice joined.' It was determined, in order to insure harmony, to avoid naming any special subject of censure, and simply to move as an amendment to the Address that the Government did not possess the confidence of the House. The motion was entrusted to a promising young member, the representative of a great Whig house, who was eventually to become one of his country's most trusted and respected leaders—Lord Hartington.

An accusation of bias in favour of the unpopular Austria seemed to be the most plausible form that the attack on the Government could take. Accordingly, Disraeli had supported his chief very strongly, as against the Court, in insisting that the terms of the paragraph in the Queen's Speech indicating the intention of the Government to preserve neutrality should be of the most unmistakable character; and the Queen gave way before their united representations.

To Lord Derby.

GROSVENOR GATE, *June* 2, 1859.—I humbly think the 'neutrality' paragraph, as amended, will endanger the

Government, and retard and embarrass the very policy which Her Majesty would wish to favor. At this moment there is great jealousy and suspicion of France in this country, but its open expression is modified, and even prevented,

1. By some genuine sympathy for Italian freedom.

2. By a general impression, industriously circulated by the Opposition, that the Court and the Ministry are favoring Austria.

It is of the utmost importance to discredit and discourage this general impression. The notice of neutrality in the Speech will be the test.

All distrust in the public mind on this head averted, the more unsuccessful Austria may be, the more public feeling will develop itself against France, and the interference of England will, at the ripe moment, be called for by the general voice.

All this will be postponed, and with a change of Ministry possibly definitively prevented, if there be a predominant feeling in the public mind that we have now an Austrian Government. . . .

With prudence, we have a majority on any amendment; but if they can raise a colorable point on Austrian bias, or imminence of war from our policy, the Opposition would at this moment succeed, though in a month hence it might be different. . . .[1]

The Opposition amendment was moved, and issue joined, directly the Address had been moved and seconded. The debate, which lasted three nights—June 7, 9, and 10—gained much in interest owing to the uncertainty of the result. Though Palmerston and Russell, Sidney Herbert and Bright, had met together and kissed one another, there were known to be still Liberal, Irish, and Peelite dissentients; and the Liberal majority was not sufficient to admit of much wastage. The Beaconsfield papers contain a sample of the bets that were made: 'Lord Lyndhurst has paid Mr. Charles Greville 20 sovereigns to receive one every week while the present Government continue in: Mr. G. stopping at 100.'

To Queen Victoria.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Tuesday, quarter past eight o'clock* [*June* 7].—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his humble

[1] For the correspondence between the Queen and Lord Derby, see *Queen Victoria's Letters*, under this date.

duty to your Majesty. Lord Hartington spoke like a gentleman; was badly seconded. Chancellor of Exchequer rose immediately at six o'clock, and is just down. The House very full and very enthusiastic. The Chancellor of Exchequer presumes to say he thinks he satisfied his friends.[1]

In rising at the beginning of the debate, Disraeli was acting in accordance with his understanding with Roebuck and Lindsay; and in the course of his speech he made, in no ambiguous terms, that advance on the Bill of the previous session, in regard to the borough franchise and redistribution, which, in accordance both with their wishes and with his own conviction, he had promised. He ridiculed the claim of Russell to a monopoly of the question which he had been 'handling and fumbling' for so long. The Conservatives, forsooth, were not to be allowed to have an opinion on the subject, but Palmerston, who did not conceal his disinclination for any Reform, was yet the popular candidate for the command of 'the united sections of the Liberal party,' with the consent of Bright, who had abdicated his 'portentous opinions' in a 'lamb-like manner.' Disraeli himself maintained—surely with good sense—that no measure of Parliamentary Reform could be, or ought to be, passed which was not a compromise between Conservative and Liberal opinions. 'The happier the compromise, the more successful will be the measure; and the great aim of whoever is to carry it must be to bring forward a large, enduring, and satisfactory measure, which, on the whole, the great parties in the State will agree ought to pass.' The Government had dealt boldly, he claimed, with the county suffrage in their Bill, and they had been able to do so because that franchise had been frequently and maturely discussed in the House. The borough franchise was not in that condition of maturity, and so there they proceeded cautiously. Their plan of a variety of franchises had not found favour; but the question must be dealt with, so as to promote the introduction of the working classes. That was the opinion of Parliament and of the country.

[1] *Queen Victoria's Letters.*

We cannot be blind to that result. We do not wish to be blind to it. We have no prejudice against the proposition. All that we want is to assure ourselves that any measure that we bring forward is one which is required by the public necessities, and will be sanctioned by public approbation and support; and therefore we are perfectly prepared to deal with that question of the borough franchise and the introduction of the working classes by lowering the franchise in boroughs, and by acting in that direction with sincerity; because . . . if you intend to admit the working classes to the franchise by lowering the suffrage in boroughs, you must not keep the promise to the ear and break it to the hope. The lowering of the suffrage must be done in a manner which satisfactorily and completely effects your object, and is at the same time consistent with maintaining the institutions of the country. . . . It is, in our opinion, best for the country that a measure of Parliamentary Reform should be brought forward which is of as conclusive a character as human circumstances will admit of. To obtain that result, it must meet all those fair demands which are now recognised, and which the opinion expressed by the General Election has stamped with public approbation. . . . I claim for Her Majesty's Government the right to deal with the question of Parliamentary Reform, not fettered or hampered by the proposition which they made in the last session, any more than the noble lord has been by his own proposals, but at the same time I assert our intention to deal with it in a large, liberal, and conclusive manner.

The bulk of the Liberal Reformers scoffed at this passage as an instance of rapid and interested conversion in which no confidence could be placed, though for Disraeli, as a student of his speeches on the subject would recognise, it was no conversion at all, but an expression of views long held, but recently subordinated in order to obtain unity in the Cabinet. Bright, forgetful that he had repented his vote to overthrow Derby and Disraeli in 1852, prepared to overthrow them once more, in the fond hope that Russell's presence in the new Government would insure an ampler Reform Bill.

The passage in Disraeli's speech which attracted most attention was an attack on Graham, whose goodwill of the previous year had changed to hostility, and who had

condescended during the election to make use against the Government of reckless charges of bribery and corruption. Graham was introducing to the electors, as his colleague, his nephew, Sir Wilfrid Lawson, afterwards well known as a wit and a temperance reformer, and Disraeli affected to think that the 'impudent fabrication' must have been retailed by the nephew rather than by the uncle.

When I saw in the newspapers the name 'City of Carlisle,' I naturally looked at what was taking place in that quarter. But reading, I fear a little incorrectly, I confess I did mistake, at the time, the speech which appears to have been made by a distinguished member of this House for that of the young gentleman that he was introducing to his constituents. When I read that charge upon the Ministry which we were told was to be the basis of a Parliamentary vote of want of confidence, when I read statements made without the slightest foundation and with a bitterness which seemed to me to be perfectly gratuitous, I could not help saying: 'Young men will be young men.' Youth is, as we all know, somewhat reckless in assertion, and when we are juvenile and curly one takes a pride in sarcasm and invective. Nevertheless, one could not refrain from an interest in a young relative of a distinguished member of this House, and, although the statements were not very agreeable to Her Majesty's Ministers, one was glad to recognise a chip of the old block. I felt—and I am sure my colleagues shared the sentiment—that when that young gentleman entered this House, he might, when gazing upon the venerable form, and listening to the accents of benignant wisdom that fall from the lips of the right hon. gentleman the member for Carlisle—he might learn how reckless assertion in time may mature into accuracy of statement, and how bitterness and invective, however organic, can be controlled by the vicissitudes of a wise experience.

Lyndhurst wrote to Disraeli next day: 'Is it true that Graham took prussic acid on his return from the Commons last night?' Graham, however, was quite able to defend himself, and retorted, later on in the debate, that Disraeli presented in his own person 'a contradiction to the Horatian maxim, "Lenit albescens animos capillus," because by experience he knows that one may lose one's curls and still retain one's taste for sarcasm and invective.' He added that he regarded Disraeli 'as the Red

Indian of debate. By the use of the tomahawk he has cut his way to power, and by a recurrence to the scalping process he hopes to prevent the loss of it.' It was a retort quite in the Disraelian vein.

Graham was not the only Opposition leader to receive punishment. Disraeli was satirical over the Liberal meeting at Willis's Rooms, which were formerly Almack's.

> In the days of our youth Willis's Rooms were managed by patronesses. The distinguished assemblies that met within those walls were controlled by a due admixture of dowagers and youthful beauties, young reputations and worn celebrities, and it was the object of all social ambition to enter there. Now Willis's Rooms are under the direction of patrons, and there are two of those patrons below the gangway. They are the noble lord the member for the City of London [Russell], and the right hon. gentleman the member for North Wiltshire [Sidney Herbert], who have signed the vouchers for the reconciled sections. . . . Well, we have some experience of those great statesmen. We know how the noble lord conducts negotiations. We know how the right hon. gentleman conducts war.[1] You say that we have failed in our negotiations, and that we cannot be trusted in the event of a possible war. Well, then, the noble lord and the right hon. gentleman won't help you much.

Disraeli replied in detail to the various charges brought against the Government, and claimed to have shown that they were 'flimsy and feeble and illusive.' But he made no complaint about the vote of censure. It was of paramount importance to know at once whether Ministers had the confidence of the House. The decision should not be delayed even four-and-twenty hours.

To Mrs. Disraeli.

June 7, 1859.—The grandest speech I ever made: all say so. The Speaker very much. I never heard such cheering.

We have got a majority if they divide to-day; but that they will try not to do, as they know it. Our fellows don't mean to speak, but to rest on my speech.

I attribute it all to your getting up so often, and especially

[1] Sidney Herbert replied that, if the Liberal party formed a Government, they would be 'exposed to the opposition of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and we all know how he carries on war.'

to the laudanum, for, though I did not sleep, it soothed my head.

There was a very large mob, and I was enthusiastically cheered.

Greville describes the night's debate thus:

On the first night Disraeli made a capital speech, and nobody else on their side would speak at all. This was a sort of manœuvre and attempt to bring about a division that night, for they found out that seventeen of the Opposition had not taken their seats, which would have secured a majority to the Government. The Whigs therefore refused to divide, and put up one man after another to keep the debate open, and eventually obtained an adjournment. Palmerston's speech was in accordance with his declaration at Willis's, and with his ancient practice; it was violently pro-French and anti-Austrian, and it was full of gross falsehoods and misrepresentations, which he well knew to be such. In his seventy-fifth year, and playing the last act of his political life, he is just what he always was.

Disraeli probably had another reason for endeavouring to force the division on the first night. He wished the independent Liberals to vote under the immediate impression of his offers about Reform, before party pressure had had time to work upon them. When the division was taken, on the third night of debate, it was found that very few of the men whose support had been promised followed Lindsay and Roebuck into the Government lobby—not more than half a dozen in all. Others voting with the Government were a few Irish Roman Catholic Liberals; Lord Elcho, afterwards Lord Wemyss, in whom independence was almost a foible; and Gladstone. The vote of censure was carried by thirteen—323 to 310; and the Government immediately resigned.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

DOWNING STREET, *June* 11, 1859.—The second campaign of the year 1859 ended last night, after an engagement of three days, in the defeat of our cause. The result was evident since the close of the last General Election, and the general engagement could not be avoided, tho' it might perhaps have

been postponed for a few weeks. I preferred, however, quitting office with a numerous and well-organised army, untarnished and undamaged by a succession of struggles and defeats, and full of confidence in their numbers and their future. . . .

Malmesbury insisted at the time, and has maintained in his *Memoirs*, that the Government would not have been defeated had the Blue Book containing his Italian despatches been laid before Parliament. He declared that 'at least twelve or fourteen members of Parliament who voted against us in the fatal division came out of their way at different times and places to assure me that, had they read that correspondence before the debate, they would never have voted for [the] amendment'; and this favourable opinion was shared by Cobden and by Delane of *The Times*. The papers had been promised in the Queen's Speech, and Malmesbury was urgent with Disraeli to have them distributed early enough to affect the division, as the charges of Palmerston, Russell, and their followers, against the Government largely turned on the supposed mismanagement of foreign policy. Disraeli refused, or at any rate neglected, to lay the papers in time, and no satisfactory explanation was offered either then or since. Malmesbury says that Disraeli never gave him any reason, but that he himself was convinced that Disraeli had not read them, and so could not fight them in debate. That does not sound likely when we remember Disraeli's unremitting industry, and especially his omnivorous passion for Blue Books. 'How could I produce them when they were not printed?' was Disraeli's somewhat tart reply to Mr. Kebbel's request for enlightenment. But this suggestion is quite inconsistent with Malmesbury's statements in his appeals to Disraeli during the debate and in his *Memoirs*. The Beaconsfield Papers contain no direct explanation of this puzzle; but Disraeli's correspondence, as we have seen, shows that, while he and Malmesbury were agreed at this crisis in the aims of their foreign policy, he was

frequently dissatisfied with Malmesbury's methods and with his management of the Foreign Office. It may be assumed with some confidence that he doubted whether the papers would produce a favourable impression, and thought it safer to take a vote without them. His judgment in this case was apparently in fault; and, that being so, he characteristically took refuge in silence.

Though the change of Government did not take place till the second week of June, Disraeli never brought in his Budget, but left the financial provision for the year to his successor. The defeat of Ministers on the Reform Bill and the consequent dissolution had postponed the consideration of Ways and Means till the new Parliament. The elaborate preparations which Disraeli made in the autumn and winter for his financial schemes were therefore wasted. But he may have consoled himself by the reflection that the kind of Budget which he originally contemplated, based on a reduction of expenditure, had, principally owing to the demands of the navy, been rendered quite impracticable by the spring of 1859. Few Chancellors of the Exchequer, hardly even Gladstone, have been more profoundly convinced than Disraeli of the necessity of public economy, or more anxious to secure it. He recognised fully, moreover, that economy depends upon policy. We find the Secretary of the Treasury (G. A. Hamilton) writing to him in August, 1858: 'One of your terse axioms is that expenditure hangs on policy'—an axiom which hardly originated with Disraeli, but on which he certainly acted.

When the time came in the autumn of 1858 for the framing of the estimates, he directed his private secretary, Earle, to draft a memorandum, for circulation among his colleagues, on the financial condition of the country. In this he pointed out that, as the income tax was generally condemned, and it was the settled policy of the Government that it should be extinguished in 1860, there would be a large prospective deficit in that year, which must be met either by the imposition of taxes or by the reduc-

tion of expenditure. Parliament could not well be asked to increase the taxation either on necessaries of life or on luxuries; the least objectionable suggestion that had been made was to tax coals.[1] Fresh taxation seemed therefore out of the question. Could not the military establishments, already costing six millions more than in 1853—itself a year of increased estimates—be reduced? He suggested to his colleagues a serious inquiry into this expenditure. If no convincing evidence in its favour could be adduced, a great reform would be effected; if the contrary, they would have the opportunity of making satisfactory provision for the safety of the country. Political considerations recommended economy to a Conservative Government. A Reformed Parliament, such as they would shortly have, if it had to provide for a large expenditure, would neither practise economy nor tax the masses; it would increase the taxes on property, the income tax and succession duty—a prophecy abundantly fulfilled in our subsequent history.

In this Treasury spirit Disraeli waged war against waste and extravagance and increased estimates in the great spending departments.

To Lord Derby.

Confidential. GROSVENOR GATE, *Oct.* 9, 1853.

The troublesome theme of my daily business, and, I may say, nightly thoughts, [is] the highly unsatisfactory state of the War Department as regards its finance.

Although the financial management of the Admiralty, under the audit of Sir R. Bromley, is of a different character from that of the War Department, I have reason to believe the professional management is not one whit superior. I am sorry to hear you talk of increased expenditure. There ought to be reduction, and it is quite compatible with increased efficiency. But we have, I know, a thousand difficulties to contend with. Still, a good management of their finances is the only thing which really will get the country with us and make us independent of Court and Parliament.

[1] See above, Ch. 2. Earlier in a note of this period writes: 'We want a Treasury spy—a Bromley—in each department, to warn us of fraudulent demands and to check the expenditure of the various grants.'

I am satisfied with the revenue. If we could only control the military departments in their ignorant waste, I think I could carry the Government through the session with flying colors, come what may.

Confidential. Downing Street, *Nov.* 26, 1858.—I enclose a confidential memorandum, which you can digest before our meeting to-morrow. This mem. refers to the case of France only, but the Surveyor-General in his submission, lays down a policy—viz. that England should be superior in naval force to the world *united*. In case of war, we are to assume that France, Russia, the United States, and the Scandinavian Powers, are all to be allied against us! This is the reproduction, applied to the navy, of the same frenzy which a *reductio ad absurdum* demolished a year ago with respect to our home defences on land, when for a time it was maintained that every part of our coast ought to be fortified or guarded.

Extravagant and wasteful demands Disraeli might be able to check, but he had to yield to the cumulative evidence pressed on him steadily by the Queen and the Prime Minister, as well as by the departments themselves, of the necessity for considerable establishments. The state of Europe was restless, the intentions of France were ambiguous, but suggestive of adventure. The introduction of steam for the motive power, and iron for the material, of warships involved complete naval reconstruction, and the naval activity of France was a challenge that must be met. 'We must take care that "Rule Britannia" does not become an old song,' said the King of the Belgians to Disraeli. Hence an increase of a million in the navy estimates was imperative; and defence on land being needed as well as defence on sea, there could be no corresponding reduction in the army estimates. Indeed, the threats of the French Colonels had called into being a considerable Volunteer movement for additional home defence, and the new force thus produced was first organised by Derby's War Minister, Peel, whose work was taken up and carried through by his successor. It is to the credit of the Derby Ministry that they vigorously forwarded the transformation of the navy, and gave official recognition to the Volunteers, as they had in 1852

constituted the Militia; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer, though he realised that increased estimates could not be avoided, was, as in official duty bound, rather the critic than the inspirer of these valuable measures. Moreover, he pressed economy on the new Government in debate, and urged them to bring it about by a policy of general reduction of armaments.

As in 1852, so in 1858-59, Disraeli, as was inevitable from the awkward situation in the House of Commons, was the animating spirit of the Ministry, though there was a much closer agreement this time between him and Derby on the main issues than there had been over the necessity of abandoning Protection. His ascendancy both in the party and in the House of Commons had become more marked; but at the same time his steady pursuit of a progressive policy, dictated not merely by his convictions, but by his deficiency in Parliamentary numbers, had alarmed the higher Tories.[1] The difficulties to be faced by a Minister in a minority are well illustrated by a letter which he wrote in the winter to Pakington—a letter which throws, moreover, considerable light on the principles on which Disraeli acted in regard to patronage. It is characteristically free from cant, and outspoken on the claims of party; but at the same time it shows how party claims can be duly reconciled with the public interest.

To Sir John Pakington.

Confidential. TREASURY, *Dec.* 19, 1858.—A complaining letter to a colleague is not a very pleasant Xmas offering, but I feel confident you will not misinterpret it.

We suffered much last session from the numerical weakness of our staff in the House of Commons. It ought not to be less than 35. The importance of this cannot be overrated.

[1] Greville on Dec. 25, 1859, writes that Disraeli had 'raised himself immensely . . . more perhaps with his opponents and the House of Commons generally than with his own party; but it is universally acknowledged that he led the House with a tact, judgment, and ability, of which he was not before thought capable. While he has thus risen, no rival has sprung up to dispute his pre-eminence.'

Vivian's motion,[1] which was a blow to the Government and the Court, and which may yet lead to serious consequences, was only carried by two votes.

Our staff last session only counted 30, tho' we gained one Cabinet Minister by an accident.[2] It is now reduced to 29 by the retirement of the late Lord Advocate. Its deficiency in numbers is occasioned by the absence of 1 Lord in Waiting, 1 Groom in Waiting, 1 Irish Solicitor-General, 1 Lord Advocate, 2 Lords of the Admiralty. I have given unremitting attention during the recess to attempts to mitigate, at least, this evil. By providing for George Dundas in the Colonies, I hope to secure a seat for the Lord Advocate.

The generous offer of the Duke of Northumberland to place a seat at the disposal of the Government by the retirement, if necessary, of Josceline Percy, indicated a mode in which one Lord of the Admiralty might be provided for, and it was thought, through the same influence, by a peculiar combination, the Parliamentary representation of the Admiralty might have been otherwise strengthened.

The recent passing over of —— has entirely destroyed these contemplated arrangements, and I cannot refrain from expressing my surprise and great mortification at the course you have taken in this respect.

High as the interests of party rank, I have no wish that they should be supreme. Efficient service is, without doubt, the superior consideration. But —— was a much younger man than his favored rival, and was distinguished in his profession, which the present Commander-in-Chief at —— is not.

If there be any individual whom, both from interest and inclination, we ought to consider, it is certainly our former colleague, the Duke of Northumberland;[3] and if there be any member of the present Cabinet who ought to be most careful in showing respect for him, permit me to say it is the present First Lord of the Admiralty.

I cannot but feel that there is a great error on the part of some of my colleagues on the subject of patronage. They are too apt to deem the preferment at their disposal to be merely a personal privilege. In my opinion, it partakes of a corporate character. No doubt the head of a department should exercise a chief and general control over the distribution of its patronage; but there should be habitual communication on this head with his colleagues, and especially with those who

[1] The motion to combine the War Office and the Horse Guards under one responsible Minister. See above, p. 1572.

[2] Lytton, a commoner, filled the seat in Cabinet vacant by Ellenborough's resignation.

[3] First Lord of the Admiralty in the first Derby Ministry.

are charged with the management of the House of Commons, never a light task, doubly difficult when the Administration is carried on in the teeth of a majority.

The spirit of the party in the country depends greatly on the distribution of patronage: none can be more aware of this than Lord Derby and myself. The whole patronage of the Treasury is devoted to public purposes—one of its chief Secretaries is known by the title of the Patronage Secretary—but the patronage of the Treasury alone is not enough for the Government to rest upon; and subsidiary aid is required from the other chief departments.

The interests of the party can never require an improper appointment: an improper appointment is a job, and nothing injures a party more than a job. But at the same time, there is nothing more ruinous to political connection than the fear of justly rewarding your friends, and the promotion of ordinary men of opposite opinions in preference to qualified adherents. It is not becoming in any Minister to decry party who has risen by party. We should always remember that, if we were not partisans, we should not be Ministers.

Pakington in reply vindicated on professional grounds the appointment in question, which, he said, had been submitted to and approved by the Prime Minister. He regarded the Admiralty patronage as a most serious responsibility, did not think party motives should be carried into such matters, and believed that the exercise of patronage with strict regard to public interests was the real way to strengthen an Administration—sentiments in which he assumed that Disraeli would concur. The correspondence shows how wise has been the change which made naval lordships purely professional appointments, involving no liability to hunt for a seat in Parliament and when elected, to vote with the Government.

Disraeli fittingly closed a term of office, in which he had shown, over and over again, in his generous offers to Palmerston, Graham, and Gladstone, his readiness to sink personal claims for the good of the national cause, by a yet more remarkable instance of self-abnegation. In his speech on the Address he had intimated his own and his colleagues' readiness to retire in favour of any other Conservatives 'more willing and more able to advocate the views of their party,' and had continued:

'I have at all times—and what I say is well known to many hon. members—been so anxious to see the efficiency of the public service studied, and the interests of a great political party, the existence of which I believe to be advantageous to the country, preserved, that I have ever been ready to waive my own personal claims.' In this spirit he made a most unexpected proposal to Derby a few hours before the critical division.

To Lord Derby.

Secret. HOUSE OF COMMONS, *June* 10, 1859.

MY DEAREST LORD,—No one can tell how this will exactly end. Some say a tie, and the Speaker is rather of this opinion, and then he goes with us; but, so far as I can judge, it will be two or three one way or another.

Sending for Palmerston or John Russell is no solution of the difficulty. The result would be a Government without a majority. And for a third man—where is he?

There is only one man who at this moment, with our influence, could combine the whole of the Conservative party, and would immediately obtain a considerable section of those opposite. *It is Stanley.* He could *reconstruct the Cabinet*, which you cannot. My friendship for him is so complete, and his confidence in me so perfect, that if I sate below the gangway he would know I was only there for his interests. Personally, I would have no objection to take office under him, but, for reasons which I will not enter into now, my course is clear. I have long made up my mind never to take office except under yourself, having never had a cloud between us through ten years, always of difficulty, sometimes of mortification. Besides, it is our united withdrawal, under such circumstances, that would give authority and sanction to Stanley. It would entirely sell the Whigs.

I say it with regret, but Malmesbury must go—at least, from his present position—and Clarendon would serve under Stanley. I won't go into detail as to this course. *Depend upon it, it is the solution*, and—under such circumstances, greatly influenced by you, and in some degree by myself, Stanley would be able, and would be willing, to take a more Conservative course than any living man.

My personal fortune is slender enough, but if I require it I have a right to a pension,[1] which Sir George Grey and Lord

[1] Disraeli obtained a Cabinet pension of £2,000 a year on quitting office at this time.

Glenelg and others have taken. I mention this that you may not think I am recommending, in the common view of affairs, a too rash course. I have no *arrière pensée*. I think it would be a solution advantageous to the country and agreeable to our own feelings. I am sure it would succeed.—Yours ever, D.

At any rate, it is better than Mr. Addington, for Stanley is a clever fellow, and his Pitt and Dundas would be his father and his friend.

It was a generous, though most fantastic, conception, characteristic of one who retained to the end his romantic belief in youth and its possibilities. But Stanley, who was only thirty-three, was, with all his capacity for public life, as unlike as possible to a Vivian Grey or even a Coningsby, and could never have become a puppet like Endymion. He was much too cautious to take a risk of the kind suggested; and, though no doubt he was regarded with favour among moderate men of all parties, such a novice could hardly have reconciled a statesman of Clarendon's standing to service under him. Impracticable, however, as the proposal was, there is no reason to doubt that it was for the moment seriously meant. What Disraeli foresaw and dreaded was that the great historic and national party whose past he idealised, whose present was largely his own work, and in whose future he believed, should be condemned for a long period to support the conservative Premier of a Liberal Government against his extreme followers, when, by the general prevalence of Conservative opinion in the country, that party was itself entitled to guide the nation. This is the key to all his attempts at combination since the General Election, culminating in this letter to Derby.

Nothing, of course, came of the suggestion, as, after a failure first by Granville—to whom, on Derby's resignation, the Queen had recourse in order to avoid making an invidious choice between Palmerston and Russell—and then by Russell, Palmerston formed a Government. Russell claimed the Foreign Office, where Palmerston would have preferred to have Clarendon; but the Prime

Minister no doubt consoled himself with the thought that the Foreign Secretary would have his hands too full to prosecute Reform with success. Gladstone, who distrusted Palmerston on almost every subject except the liberation of Italy, then being forwarded by French troops in Lombardy, surprised the world by accepting the Exchequer after voting against a change of Government; and the Peelite leaders in general became absorbed in the Liberal party.

The Conservative Ministry retired from office in good order and in good heart. No definite fault had been found with them, save the undeniable one of not having a majority in the House of Commons. But the party was not altogether happy; and there was considerable discontent with Disraeli on two grounds. Some thought that, in not producing the Italian papers, he had committed a tactical blunder; others were suspicious of his further advances on the question of Reform. He was, however, well received at the party meeting, where Derby discouraged disaffection by the warmth of his acknowledgments to his lieutenant. Mrs. Disraeli wrote to Mrs. Willyams on June 21: 'A great meeting of the Conservatives this morning at Lord Salisbury's. Lord Derby expressed great gratitude to Dis., that he could not get on without him, etc., etc. Dis. much cheered by all.' Derby had already in the House of Lords promised that there should be no factious opposition to the new Ministry; on the contrary, he earnestly hoped he might be able to give them an independent support. Disraeli, in thanking one of his Whips for his services, showed his sense of the difficulty involved in this attitude. 'We shall have,' he wrote, 'to keep together a great party, as Peel had in 1835, whose strength will really increase in proportion to their inaction. But a party does not like to be inert; and to combine repose with a high tone of feeling in the troops is difficult.'

The war in Italy, which the Derby-Disraeli Ministry were condemned for not preventing, was brought, after

the Franco-Sardinian victories of Magenta and Solferino, to a hurried end by Napoleon in the Peace of Villafranca.

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

House of Commons, *Wednesday, July* 13, 1859.—You have heard the great news, I suppose? Peace! I could not write last night, not being able to leave my place. The moment I came into the House, Lord John Russell came over to me, and told me the peace was signed, and that the Government would be obliged to me to ask a question, so that the announcement might be publicly made to the Parliament and the country. Lord John seemed much chagrined our Government not having been consulted in any way on the matter, and all his fine despatches and new Constitutions for Italy, and all the reputation and historic glory he expected to reap, being as completely gone as if they had been thrown into the Mincio.

These are wonderful times! Wars are as brief as the lightning and as quick as the telegraph!

This was begun in order to put down the Pope, and ends by placing him at the head of all Italy. As for Austria, her power is not sensibly diminished. She has lost a rich and fertile plain, which she can regain whenever the occasion offers and she sallies from her famous fortresses.

The King of Sardinia obtains Lombardy, with its vast debt. He will have to lay heavy taxes on his new subjects, who will seize the first opportunity to pay them in the shape of a rebellion.

In the meantime, Napoleon, mounted on a magnificent charger, which he bought a few days ago for 500 guineas of Mr. Anderson, a fashionable horsedealer in Piccadilly, is to enter Paris in triumph on the 14th. A magnificent spectacle which has only cost 100,000 lives and 50 millions of pounds sterling!

The Peace of Villafranca, and the developments to which it gave rise, were the principal topics with which Disraeli dealt in this short session. He was anxious to limit our European entanglements where British interests were not involved, and accordingly advised Ministers to have nothing to do with a Congress to settle the fate of Italy after the War. He was also alarmed at our rapidly rising expenditure and the vanishing prospect of that

abolition of the income tax to which he was committed, and urged the advisability of coming to an understanding with the Emperor of the French for a general reduction of armaments. In a speech on the Budget he asked, What ought to be our course?

> Not to go to Congresses and Conferences in fine dresses and ribands, to enjoy the petty vanity of settling the fate of petty Princes. No; but to go to your great ally, the Emperor of the French; give him credit for the motives which have animated and influenced him, and say: 'If you are in favour of peace, if at a great hazard to the mere reputation of the hour you have terminated this war, join with us in securing that peace by the only mode in which peace can be secured. Revive and restore, and even increase, the good feeling which once existed, which I hope still exists, between the great countries of England and France; prove by the diminution of your armaments that you are sincerely anxious, as we believe you are, for the peace of Europe and of the world, and we will join you in a spirit of reciprocal confidence, and animating alike the industry of both nations, thus achieve conquests far more valuable than Lombardy, far more valuable than those wild dreams of a regeneration ever promised, but never accomplished. . . . Instead of going to Congresses and Conferences for petty objects in which England has no interest, and which may involve England in great disaster, let the noble lord prove to the world that England is a Power that possesses and exercises a great influence, especially with France, by accomplishing that which is much more important than formal articles of peace; by bringing about that which will put an end for ever to the doubts of the sincerity of Princes; which will speak to every cabin and cottage in both countries, as well as to the Houses of Parliament and places of high resort; which will prove to the national conviction of the great countries of Europe that peace is the policy of their rulers. Let us terminate this disastrous system of rival expenditure, and mutually agree, with no hypocrisy, but in a manner and under circumstances which can admit of no doubt—by a reduction of armaments—that peace is really our policy. Then, sir, the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer may look forward with no apprehension to his next Budget, and England may then actually witness the termination of the income tax.

Again and again he protested in the House against sending a British representative to a Congress to revise

the Treaty of Villafranca.[1] We had nothing to do with the war, he said, and nothing to do with the peace. It would be the height of rashness and precipitation to involve ourselves in the responsibility of a settlement occasioned by the war. Let France and Austria work out their sketch, and give the world a finished picture. Should we ultimately have to put our hand to it, we should interfere with immensely more effect if we now exhibited a proper and dignified reserve.

Disraeli had two opportunities this summer and autumn to hearten his followers and propound his view of the duties and situation of the Conservative party. The first was at a dinner given to the late Ministry in Merchant Taylors' Hall on July 16; the second at a banquet in October to Derby at Liverpool. At Merchant Taylors' Hall he pointed to the increasing sympathy and influence which the party had gained in the country. It was a great confederation, prepared to assist progress and to resist revolution, and it had arrived at a commanding position though it had had to abandon power.

> I can truly say that, from the earliest moment when I gave my attention to public affairs, I have ever had it as one of my main objects to restore the power and repute of the great party to which we are proud to belong, and which I believe to be intimately bound up with the welfare and renown of this country. . . . In attempting, however humbly, to regulate its fortunes, I have always striven to distinguish that which was eternal from that which was but accidental in its opinions. I have always striven to assist in building it upon a broad and national basis, because I believed it to be a party peculiarly and essentially national.

Disraeli paid for his unceasing labours of the past year and a half by prolonged lassitude and weakness in the autumn. He and his wife remained quietly at Hughenden, with only an occasional visitor like Stanley, who came for 'Cabinets under the beeches,' until they went to stay at Knowsley for the Liverpool demonstration.

[1] After some hesitation, the Government determined to send a representative; but the rapid march of events in Italy in 1860 put a European Congress out of the question.

To Lord Derby.

CARLTON CLUB, *Oct.* 27, 1859.—Affairs have been so ambiguous since the prorogation, and so very critical and perplexing during the week I have been in town, that I have found myself quite unable to offer you any hint as to the course to be adopted in your observations on Saturday; but this morning I received from the highest authority a communication which throws considerable, not to say complete, light on the general state of affairs abroad—the only topic which in reality interests the country. It is impossible at this moment to enter into details, but I thought it best to write by this post, to express my strong opinion that, with regard to our external relations, you cannot take too high a tone as to the condition, moral and material—*i.e.*, the high spirit and great resources of this country.

Although none know better than the French Government the power and resources of England, it is at this moment the fashion of the Court of France, and the example circulates in all circles, to speak disparagingly of England; that by not taking part in the Italian war we have sunk into a second-rate Power; that 'we have no men,' 'our energy exhausted,' the country distracted with factions, and all is a struggle for place.

1. It would be well to dwell on the immense wealth of England (a subject of which they are well aware, and which makes them mad with envy). That wealth not only enormous, but unprecedented. We can raise any sum of money at 3 per cent.; the highest credit of the Continent only at 6 per cent.

2. The extent and soundness of our commerce; never so vast and never so void of mere speculation.

3. The prosperity and content of the working classes.

4. The high spirit of the community, etc., etc.

At Paris they expect only a fiery criticism of your opponents. Your words will be watched, but when they find that, if England is called upon to put forth her strength, all parties will rally round the Throne, the effect will be considerable.

It may help the present Government out of some difficulties, though I think they will at all events extricate themselves; but as a matter both of duty and policy I feel confident it is the line you should take.

A most hurried letter.

Derby acted on his lieutenant's advice, so far as to avoid anything like a party attack; but it was left to

Disraeli himself to develop in his peroration the precise line of thought he had suggested to Derby. Supporter as he was of a peaceful policy, he could not, he said, be blind to the signs of the times.

> If there be any foreign Government or foreign potentate who, in the supposed distractions and political dissensions of our form of Government, believes that he has found elements on which he may calculate for pursuing with success any scheme of aggression or of violent ambition, then I can assure that Government and that ruler that they mistake the character and the genius of the English people and the English Constitution. And if they count on our dissensions and on the noble rivalries of our public life as the means for the successful prosecution of those designs, they will count on them to their confusion. They will find, if ever the time should come when the independence of this country or the Empire of our Sovereign should indeed be menaced, that the Sovereign of these realms rules over a devoted people and a united Parliament.

The danger of the moment passed away, but Disraeli's prophecy had ample fulfilment in 1914. In the rest of his speech he claimed, as the principal result of his ten years' leadership in the House of Commons, to have put an end to the monopoly of Liberalism—a theory by which half the public men of England were held up as individuals incapable and unqualified to attempt any measures which might improve the institutions or administration of the country. They had brought about a healthy state of political parties; men would now be judged by their policy and their measures, not by traditions, which are generally false, not by promises, which are seldom fulfilled. But they must not suppose that party had no importance because there were no great public questions to settle. The duties of vigilance and criticism perpetually existed. He was prepared, however, to follow the advice which Derby formulated at this banquet, not to compass the early overthrow of Palmerston's Administration, many of whose members and supporters were thoroughly conservative. Derby, in his speech, formally deprecated a succession of

ephemeral Governments liable to be displaced at any moment by the caprice of half a dozen votes in the House of Commons. It could not be for the advantage of the Conservative party that for the third time it should be prematurely called upon to form a Government without sufficient strength to maintain itself. The party must look to the future and prepare for it.

From Liverpool Disraeli passed to Manchester, where he discoursed in the Free Trade Hall to mechanics' institutes on the benefits of popular education. He did not question that knowledge was its own reward; but he maintained emphatically that in the England of his day it also contributed materially to advancement in life. It was an incontrovertible principle, a moral dogma, that every man had his opportunity, and it was his business to prepare himself so as to be ready to seize it. Life was not a lottery but a science; certain qualities and certain talents, properly handled and properly managed, must lead to certain results. And what a source, he would not say of amusement, but of interest and excitement, was the continual preparation for the inevitable occasion! Like all discourses of the kind worth hearing, this speech of Disraeli's was clearly based on his own life and his own experience. It was as if he had said to the young mechanics of Manchester: 'Use your opportunities as I have done, and you, too, may climb as high.'

To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.

CARLTON CLUB, *Nov.* 7, 1859.—We returned to town on Saturday night, after a week of triumphant progress. The papers have given you some, tho'a faint, impression of the brilliant banquet at Liverpool, and the colossal meeting at Manchester, where there were more than 6,000 persons in the Free Trade Hall—a most beautiful building, and so well proportioned that the voice, without effort, is heard with ease in all parts.

Besides these two great gatherings, we have been guests at three houses—Knowsley, Abney Hall, and Heaton Park, Lord Wilton's—so we have seen and done a great deal. . . .

GROSVENOR GATE, *Nov.* 27, 1859.—We arrived in town on

Friday night, having stayed a day at Pynes with my l colleague, Sir Stafford Northcote.[1] . . .

We dined at Rothschild's yesterday—a banquet—and m among other notabilities, the French Ambassador and t Austrian Minister, Comte Apponyi. They were on very co fidential terms. Who could have supposed this six month ago ?

The year ended sadly for Disraeli, in the death of his devoted sister. She had been staying at Hughenden in September, and Mrs. Disraeli had written of her to Mrs. Willyams: 'She is very delicate. I am sure it is from not following your system—no doctors, no medicine.' The delicacy was much more serious than Mrs. Disraeli supposed.

To Frances Anne Lady Londonderry.

GROSVENOR GATE, *Dec.* 12, 1859.—. . . We have returned to unspeakable sorrow—to the bedside of my only sister, our nearest and dearest relative, and who is soon, most unexpectedly and suddenly, to be lost to us ! She was a person of great intelligence and charm—one of those persons who are the soul of a house and the angelic spirit of a family. . . .

Sarah Disraeli died on December 19. To her brother, who had experienced to the full what he called in one of his novels 'a sister's mystical affection,' it was indeed, as he wrote to his friends Manners and Lennox, a 'great grief. You know,' he added, 'the blessing of a sister. Alas ! mine was an only one—my first and ever faithful friend !'

[1] Northcote had been one of the party at Knowsley, and had written from there to Lady Northcote: 'Mrs. Disraeli is great fun, and we made capital friends in the train, though I could not help occasionally pitying her husband for the startling effect her natural speeches must have upon the ears of his great friends. Still, there is something very warm and good in her manner which makes one forgive a few oddities. She informed me she was born in Brampford Speke (see page 434), and I told her they must come and see her birthplace some time when they are in Devonshire. What do you say to the idea of asking them to Pynes ? It would complete the astonishment of our neighbours. Lang's *Northcote*, p. 98.

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