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THE EARL OF BEACONSFIELD.



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THE EARL OF
BEACONSFIELD:

HIS LIFE AND WORK.

BY

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JOHN M^cGREADY,
GLASGOW AND SYDNEY.

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Preface.

IN a Biographical Series intended to deal with the "Memorable Men of the Nineteenth Century," it was of course natural and necessary that the two most prominent statesmen of modern times, Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield, should occupy a foremost place. Thus the first volume of this Series was devoted to *William Ewart Gladstone: His Life and Times*, whilst in the present volume our subject is *The Earl of Beaconsfield: His Life and Work*. Though more than one excellent biography of both these statesmen had already been published, it was unreasonable that they should on this account be excluded from the list of Memorable Men who have left their mark upon the century. And it is equally unreasonable that important facts in the life of a great man should be left practically unmentioned and undiscussed by a new biographer because they have been specially dwelt upon, or perhaps first brought to light, by one of his predecessors. Yet this contention is occasionally made, for all the world as though the first biographer in such a case had acquired a copyright in his facts by the mere virtue of having industriously

assembled them. It would almost seem that one who undertakes to treat the life of a memorable man from a fresh point of view is expected to invent fresh incidents, to arrange events in a different chronological order, and to deny to his readers any specially interesting matter which they might obtain by purchasing another book.

That which is necessary, and which appears to be amply sufficient, is that a new biographer should fully, frankly, and honestly express his obligations to those who have preceded him, and should not strut on a beaten track as though he were an adventurous pioneer. If he does this, he discharges himself not only in the matter of duty but also in the matter of loyalty and gratitude to a fellow-workman; for it is quite conceivable that the first biographer may owe as much to the second as the second owes to the first.

In the following pages the chief stress is laid upon the literary work of Lord Beaconsfield; all his romances being analysed and criticised with a fulness not hitherto attempted in a comprehensive form. In several of the earlier chapters I have referred to the more striking incidents in Lord Beaconsfield's early career which Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., was the first to bring back to the memory of the present generation. I hereby very gratefully acknowledge my debt (as I have done in the text itself) to Mr. O'Connor's extremely interesting work, as well as to the works of Mr. Barnett Smith and other writers whom I have consulted.

L. A.

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CHAPTER I

THE RULING PASSION.

THERE are various modes in which a biographer may set about writing the Life of a public man ; some of them depending on his own taste and judgment, some on the character and achievements of the person whose career he has undertaken to trace.

He may, for instance, have formed a favourable or an unfavourable estimate of his subject, and may make it his business to collect arguments and illustrations calculated to support his view. He may write in eulogy, or in reprehension, or satirically ; he may write to instruct, or merely to please and amuse. Again, the events in the life of a public man may be of a commonplace or of a striking kind ; they may impress a spectator with admiration or with something akin to antipathy. For the reader of a biography, therefore, it is necessary, or at any rate desirable, that he should have his mind open not only to the recorded facts but also to the way in which the writer has chosen to deal with his subject.

In the case of Lord Beaconsfield this is especially true. The career of the successful statesman, orator, diplomatist, and novelist might be treated in half-a-dozen different ways, according as prominence was given to one or another aspect

of his life and character. His Parliamentary triumphs would justify us in dealing with them as the main incidents in his history, and in tracing his progress from session to session, everything else being regarded as unimportant by comparison. Such a method, however, would be less appropriate than it was in the case of Mr. Gladstone, whose biography occupied the first volume of this series. The manner in which the two great rivals approached and pursued their work in the House of Commons affords a contrast in itself; and perhaps this contrast has been sufficiently marked in the volume referred to, without following it up on the same lines of thought. Moreover, the reader of Mr. Gladstone's *Life*, having therein somewhat closely watched the course of political events during the greater part of the century, will doubtless prefer to contemplate Lord Beaconsfield from another point of view.

Of all the characteristics which have distinguished this remarkable man—first, as Benjamin Disraeli, young, ambitious, and with few personal advantages which could promote his lofty aims, and lastly as the Earl of Beaconsfield, Knight of the Garter, no less ambitious as an old man than he was as a young man—perhaps the most conspicuous of all has been the desire, the determination, the struggle to succeed in an object set steadily before him, nursed carefully when it seemed most hopeless, and often obtained triumphantly when it was thought most unlikely. His whole life has been a series of such struggles and such successes, of ambitions that appeared to be overweening, crowned by attainments that have almost the character of romance. Audacity in the conception of his plans, ingenuity and patience in their realisation—these have been the most striking features in the career of Lord Beaconsfield; and it is a record of Successful Ambition that will be found in the following pages.

There are many kinds of ambition, differing with the

objects sought after. Some men are content to strive for a single end, and to resist every other temptation in its pursuit. Some shape their career on a series of ambitions, the realisation of one being a mere stepping-stone to the next. Others are vaguely and irresolutely ambitious, grasping at every prize that seems to be within their reach, and often losing all by attempting too many things. Others, again, are ambitious in two or three well-defined paths, not satisfied to achieve greatness in one respect only, but planning out their future from the beginning, and distributing their efforts over a limited and not too exclusive field. Such appears to have been the ambition of Mr. Disraeli. The son of a fairly successful literary man, he was fired in his youth with literary ardour, and resolved to do something in this line which should attract, startle, and earn the praise of the public. Akin to his literary ambition was the desire to shine in oratory. With little natural gift, and less early training in the rhetorical art, he brought great courage and indomitable perseverance to the task, and achieved his aim where many would have predicted a failure. But stranger than both these ambitions, bolder and loftier when we consider the starting-point of his career, was the resolution to excel in politics. Here, in particular, he set no bounds to his hopes, and maintained the fervour of his ambition in spite of every disadvantage and every discouragement.

A curious illustration of the force with which this political ambition had seized on Mr. Disraeli's mind in early youth is recorded by Mr. M'Cullagh Torrens in his *Life of Lord Melbourne*. At a dinner-party given by Mrs. Norton there were present, in addition to others, Lord Melbourne and the comparatively unknown son of Isaac D'Israeli. Mrs. Norton introduced her young guest to the Home Secretary, who treated him with his natural urbanity, and drew him out by his frank and familiar conversation. Mr. Disraeli spoke freely and eagerly, not concealing the high aims which

he had already adopted—and probably delighted with the opportunity of making them known to a prominent statesman. “The Minister,” we are told, “was attracted 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.’”

It would be a difficult task to determine when and in what degree any particular ambition might be considered justifiable, or justified by the attainment of the desired object. That is a task on which we need not enter in the following pages, wherein it will be sufficient, as a matter of interest and a matter of utility, to contemplate merely the ambitions of Lord Beaconsfield and their fulfilment, with as much as possible of the process by which means were adapted to ends, difficulties were turned into opportunities, and defeats converted into victories. So far as the subject of our biography may be said to have had a method of success, we shall be able to observe that method in operation; and it seems worth while to point out at the beginning some of the principal devices or characteristics by which Mr. Disraeli managed to raise himself to the pinnacle of fame and power.

All the most necessary qualities of an ambitious man he of course possessed—such as boldness to conceive a possibility when the power to realise it is not immediately discernible, resolution to persist in spite of drawbacks and disappointments, with self-command and self-denial, whereby one is enabled to advance by the shortest road towards the goal, never turning aside for any temptation or distraction. But the more brilliant triumphs a public career need even higher qualities than these, in an aspirant who has neither rank, nor wealth, nor influential friends. Mr. Disraeli had

that supreme confidence in himself which amounts to virtual genius, because it does not recognise incapacity, or improbability, or ineligibility, but meets every obstacle by "the magic of patience," and thus eventually gains its object by being always ready to take advantage of the opportunity. He has had to contend not only against the disqualifications above-named, but also against personal dislikes and unpopularity, and, still worse, against disinclinations in his own mind, and a want of sympathy, scarcely concealed, with the land of his birth and the people amongst whom he lived. At different periods in his public career he has been one of the most and one of the least popular of men. If he has had his moments of triumph, he has on the other hand, as we shall see, had his intervals of eclipse and reproach, when it has seemed to be in the last degree unlikely that he would ever again come back into general favour. In such intervals as these, however few may have been the friends or disciples who clung to him, he himself has never shown discouragement. He alone has always believed in his lucky star; and his star has been lucky because he believed in it.

Another explanation of Lord Beaconsfield's success may be found in the fact that he does not seem to have valued the material results of his victories so much as the simple pleasure of having succeeded. He has set himself a work to accomplish—to win a certain position, to wield a certain power, to be ranked in a certain class; and having gained his end, as he had expected and predicted to the world, he has apparently cared little for the fruits of the struggle. The relish has been in the long, laborious ascent, not so much in that which followed the achievement. He has not grown rich—that was not one of his ambitions. If he made himself an earl, it was perhaps as much to further his designs at the moment as for the sake of the dignity which it brought to him. He has, in fact, held his victories dear and his gains cheap; and hence, it may be, has come the

elasticity and ease of recovery with which, after a great triumph or a humiliating fall, he has instantly nerved himself for a fresh effort. With each fulfilment of ambition, whether the spoils have been snatched from him or not, has come the desire and the resolution to achieve a new object.

From this facile accommodation to circumstances, this readiness to find a device in the hour of defeat, even though the device may not be altogether consistent with former professions and actions, it has sometimes been concluded that Lord Beaconsfield's motives and ambitions have been lacking in sincerity. That is a question on which in this biography it is not proposed to dwell. Whether any particular line of conduct is inspired by selfish or by beneficial feelings; whether the ambition is purely personal and patriotic; whether the public pretext is sincere or not,—these are alternatives which must be left for the choice of the reader. All that is here attempted is the narrative of an ambitious life, in which the ambition has been for the most part fulfilled. The fulfilments will interest us more than the motives of the ambition; and we will trace the career of Lord Beaconsfield rather for its external incidents than for what may seem to be the lessons conveyed in them.



CHAPTER II.

D'ISRAELI THE ELDER.

IT is a saying attributed to Mr. Gladstone, in a drawing-room utterance not many years ago, that there were at any rate two things for which Lord Beaconsfield greatly cared, and about which he was thoroughly in earnest—his wife and his race. There was another object of his esteem and solicitude, for whom he preserved a sincere affection to the end of his life, and to whom he owed much of his earlier repute in the world. This was his father, Isaac D'Israeli, a scholar and *littérateur* of considerable note. In 1848, a year after his father's death, the son wrote a short memoir of his life, from which we may gather some interesting biographical facts.

The grandfather of Benjamin Disraeli, a man of the same name as his famous grandson, who settled in England in 1748, is described as an Italian descendant from one of those Hebrew families whom the Inquisition forced to emigrate from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, and who found a refuge in the Republic of Venice. "His ancestors had dropped their Gothic surname, 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 D'Israeli, a name never borne before or since by any other family, in order that their race might be for ever recognised."

Benjamin D'Israeli, for some unexplained reason, though Lord Beaconsfield suggests that it may have been from a feeling of contempt for the Jews of northern Europe, does not appear to have been on intimate terms with the bulk of the community in London. He married in 1765; and his wife, though a Jewess herself, had conceived a hatred of her race, which seems even to have displayed itself in a captious spirit towards her own son Isaac. Yet the early tastes and predispositions of this son were such as might have disarmed so unworthy an aversion. Mrs. Benjamin D'Israeli, according to her grandson, "not incapable of deep affections, but so mortified by her social position that she lived until eighty without indulging in a tender expression, did not recognise in her only offspring a being qualified to control or vanquish his impending fate"—that is, to forswear money-making, to abjure Judaism, and become a professing Christian. "His existence only served to swell the aggregate of many humiliating particulars. It was not to her a source of joy, or sympathy, or solace. She foresaw for her child only a future of degradation."

Thus the boyhood of Isaac D'Israeli was full of mortification and misconception. His father, though he had already retired on a competence, and possessed some acquaintances of literary tastes, was very anxious that the boy should devote himself to mercantile pursuits, and contribute to the foundation of a great family. In this design he was continually disappointed and defeated by the disposition of Isaac, who was of a poetical nature, given to reading and dreaming, and steadily refusing to adopt the prosaic career recommended to him. He was sent at the age of fourteen to a school in Amsterdam, and here he imbibed, from a tutor of whom Lord Beaconsfield speaks in somewhat con-

temptuous terms, the Liberal sentiments which were at that time so widely professed upon the Continent. "Before his pupil was fifteen he had read the works of Voltaire, and had dipped into Bayle. Strange that the characteristics of a writer so born and brought up should have been so essentially English; not merely from his mastery over our language, but from his keen and profound sympathy with all that concerned the literary and political history of our country at its most important epoch. When he was eighteen, he returned to England a disciple of Rousseau." More than that, he had brought home in his pocket a long poem "against Commerce," and was fully resolved to embrace the calling of letters.

Some years later he travelled on the Continent. "He lived with learned men," his son informs us, "and moved in vast libraries, and returned in the earlier part of 1788, with some knowledge of life, and with a considerable quantity of books." Soon after his return he wrote a satire *On the Abuse of Satire*, directed against Peter Pindar, which attracted attention, and ultimately gained him the friendship of Wolcot. He also became intimate with the derided Poet Laureate Pye, whilst the latter was still a Member of Parliament, and with a few others of the mediocre literary men of that day. At length his father permitted him freely to follow the bent of his inclinations, and gave up the notion of making him a dealer in money. Isaac D'Israeli began to shake off the influence of his Amsterdam tutor when he finally set his back upon the desk and counting-house; and thenceforth he devoted himself to omnivorous reading, and to the industrious reproduction of what he read. Before he had completed his twenty-fifth year he had published, anonymously, the book on which his fame to this day principally rests. The *Curiosities of Literature*, a collection of "Anecdotes, Characters, Sketches, and Observations; Literary, Critical, and Historical," took the public taste. Books of

literary anecdote were at that time rare in England, and this compilation, which was afterwards enlarged and completed, has ever since enjoyed a wide popularity.

The poetic ambition, however, was not yet obliterated. Isaac D'Israeli wrote both poems and romances, which, anonymous as they were, were received, as Lord Beaconsfield tells us, in an encouraging manner. "How much there was of freshness, and fancy, and natural pathos in his mind may be discerned in his Persian romance of *The Loves of Mejnoon and Leila*. We who have been accustomed to the great poets of the nineteenth century seeking their best inspiration in the climate and manners of the East, who are familiar with the land of the Sun from the isles of Ionia to the vales of Cashmere, can scarcely appreciate the literary originality of a writer who, fifty years ago" (that is, in 1798), "dared to devise a real Eastern story, and, seeking inspiration in the pages of Oriental literature, compose it with reference to the Eastern mind, and customs, and landscape. One must have been familiar with the Almorans and Hamets, the Visions of Mirza and the kings of Ethiopia, and the other dull and monstrous masquerades of Orientalism then prevalent, to estimate such an enterprise."

We are reminded, as we read these words, that the son has been, even more than the father, a warm panegyrist of Oriental modes of thought, and that he has revealed deeper faith and stronger confidence than his father in the Asiatic type of character. Isaac D'Israeli, not many years after the publication of his *Loves of Mejnoon and Leila*, abjured the Hebrew religion. If Benjamin Disraeli had not been brought up as a Christian, it may be doubted whether he would ever have abandoned the creed of his ancestors, who had deliberately adopted a surname of such a character "that their race might be for ever recognised."

Between 1812 and 1822, that is during the boyhood of

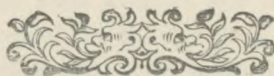
Lord Beaconsfield, Isaac D'Israeli published two other volumes, similar in kind to the *Curiosities*. These had for their titles, *The Calamities of Authors* and *Memoirs of Literary Controversy*. *An Essay on the Literary Character*—which Lord Beaconsfield describes as “the most perfect of his compositions”—and *An Inquiry into the Literary and Political Character of James the First*, belong to the same period; whilst the *Curiosities of Literature* were amplified until they occupied six volumes. But the voluminous author aimed at a higher repute, and cherished the hope that he might one day be acknowledged as a historian. His *Life and Reign of Charles the First* occupied him five years in preparation, and was published between 1828 and 1831. It was welcomed at the time as a fresh and even original work, but it has not lived as the compilations have.

Isaac D'Israeli married a Miss Basevi of Brighton, and by her had four children—Sarah, Benjamin, Ralph, and James. Sarah, who acted as her father's amanuensis in his old age and infirmity, and who was the companion of her brother Benjamin in one of his Eastern journeys, died in 1859. James Disraeli died in 1868; and Ralph is the Deputy Clerk of Parliaments, an office in the House of Lords. From what has already been said it might have been surmised that Isaac D'Israeli had not grown up to be a very devout observer of the Jewish faith; and it is certain that at some time subsequent to the birth of his children he had completely severed his connection with the communion of his forefathers. But there can be no doubt that these children were practically born Jews, and that the subject of our narrative was duly circumcised. Before he had grown to man's estate, however, he was christened (according to one story, by the intervention of the poet Rogers), and thus formally became a member of the English Church. The entry of his baptism is to be found in the books of the parish of St. Andrew, Holborn, where he is

described as being "about twelve years old."* The date of this entry is 31st July 1817. There has been a question as to the year of Lord Beaconsfield's birth; but the date is specified in the Parliamentary Companions as 21st December 1805, which is most likely to be correct. The place of birth is supposed to have been a house in Bloomsbury Square, London.

The father lived for some time after his son's entrance into public life. He died in the year 1847, and thus witnessed the sharp division of parties which signalised the political history of England during the debates on the Corn Laws.

* *The Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1875.



CHAPTER III.

DISRAELI THE YOUNGER.

BENJAMIN D'ISRAELI (who retained this spelling of his name to about the year 1835, when he styled himself "Disraeli the Younger" in the title-page of a printed letter to Lord Lyndhurst) received a fair education, but not such a good one as might have been expected from the character and position of his father, and by no means such as might compare with the education of the best of the statesmen with whom he was afterwards brought in contact and rivalry. He went to more than one private school. He has never displayed much knowledge of the subjects usually taught at public schools and universities, nor even of the modern languages, nor of history—except, of course, the history which must of necessity be known by any man who devotes himself seriously to the career of a politician. But this he did not do until he was nearly thirty years old; and the knowledge of which he gave evidence up to that time was the knowledge of a *littérateur*, of a traveller, and of a man of the world.

Naturally enough, the son of Isaac D'Israeli was well read in the kind of subjects which had chiefly attracted his father, in the more or less recondite lore of his father's book-

shelves, in the works of English literary men, in the history of his own race, and in the glories, the sufferings, the aspirations of the East. As he grew up, many of his father's friends became his own, and all his earlier associations were with men who could write and talk. Before he was twenty years old he had become the companion, and in some instances the favourite, of men and women whose lives were constantly before the world. He had the *entrée* to the house of the Countess of Blessington, where he met Count d'Orsay, Rogers (probably the one who had introduced him there), Moore, Louis Napoleon and his friend de Morny, Theodore Hook, Singleton Copley, the artist's son whom Canning was presently to make Lord Chancellor, and the rest of that brilliant set of Bohemians who seem to have drawn a sort of wild inspiration from the clever and lawless Irishwoman.

For a time, the young Disraeli's ambition seems to have been confined in the main to shining as a bright light in the social world, and afterwards in the world of literature. That he did to some extent attain this ambition is evident from the accounts we have of him during this period of his career. He made up his mind to dazzle, and he succeeded. What was more to the purpose, he appears to have turned the introductions which he secured to the best account, making useful friends, and freely availing himself of their goodwill. He was perhaps one of the most earnest of the Blessington circle, and most bent upon ambitious projects. One there may have been who excelled him in these qualities—the man who was destined to wield the power of the French nation, as Disraeli was destined to wield the power of England.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., in his *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, has brought together two or three sketches of Disraeli by men who had seen him engaged in the contest of wit and ostentation, or who had recorded the evidence of his

acquaintances at the time of his social triumphs. Three of these sketches may be transferred to our own pages:—

“Disraeli,” writes Mr. J. C. Jeaffreson, in his *Novels and Novelists*, “was an egregious dandy. Foppery to an extreme of extravagance was the mode with lads thirty years ago ; but he outstripped every one of his competitors in personal adornment. At this day matrons of fashion often recall the graces, the separate trappings, and the entire appearance of Disraeli the younger, as he made his first essay in the great world ; his ringlets of silken black hair, his flashing eyes, his effeminate air and lisping voice, his dress-coat of black velvet, lined with white satin, his white kid gloves, with his wrists surmounted by a long hanging fringe of black silk, and his ivory cane, of which the handle, inlaid with gold, was relieved by more black silk in the shape of a tassel.”

“Disraeli,” writes N. P. Willis (*Pencillings by the Way*), describing an evening at the Countess of Blessington’s, “had arrived before me, and sat in the deep window looking out upon Hyde Park, with the last rays of daylight reflected from the gorgeous gold flowers of a splendidly embroidered waistcoat. Patent leather pumps, a white stick with a black cord and tassel, and a quantity of chains about his neck and pockets, served to make him, even in the dim light, a conspicuous object. Disraeli has one of the most remarkable faces I ever saw. He is lividly pale, and, but for the energy of his action and the strength of his lungs, would seem to be a victim of consumption. His eye is black as Erebus, and has the most mocking lying-in-wait sort of expression conceivable. His mouth is alive with a kind of working and impatient nervousness, and when he has burst forth, as he does constantly, with a particular successful cataract of expression, it assumes a sort of triumphant scorn that would be worthy of Mephistopheles. His hair is as extraordinary as his taste in waistcoats, and a thick heavy mass of jet-black ringlets falls over his left cheek almost to his collarless stock, while on the right temple it is parted and put away with the smooth carefulness of a girl’s, and shines most unctuously—

‘With thine incomparable oil, Macassar.’”

The conversation, on the evening Mr. Willis celebrates, turned on Beckford of Fonthill. “Disraeli,” continues the writer, “was the only one at the table who knew him (Beckford), and the style in which he gave a sketch of his habits and manners was worthy of himself. I might as well attempt to gather up the foam of the sea as to convey an idea of the extraordinary language in which he clothed his description. There were at least five words in every sentence that must have been

very much astonished at the use they were put to, and yet no others apparently could so well have conveyed his idea. He talked like a race-horse approaching the winning post—every muscle in action, and the utmost energy of expression flung out into every burst. Victor Hugo, and his extraordinary novels, came next under discussion, and Disraeli, who was fired by his own eloquence, started off, *apropos des bottes*, with a long story of impalement he had seen* in Upper Egypt. It was as good, and perhaps as authentic, as the description of the Chow-fow-tow in *Vivian Grey*. The circumstantiality of the account was equally horrible and amusing. Then followed the sufferer's history, with a score of murders and barbarities heaped together like Martius's *Feast of Belshazzar*, with a mixture of horror and splendour that was unparalleled in my experience of improvisation. No mystic priest of the Corybantes could have worked himself up into a finer frenzy of language. Count d'Orsay kept up during the whole conversation and narration a running fire of witty parentheses, half French and half English; and with champagne in all the pores the hours flew on very dashingly. Lady Blessington left us towards midnight, and then the conversation took a rather political turn, and something was said of O'Connell. Disraeli's lips were playing upon the edge of his champagne glass, which he had just drained, and off he was again with a description of the interview he had had with the agitator the day before, ending in a story of an Irish dragoon who was killed in the Peninsula. His name was Sarsfield. His arm was shot off, and he was bleeding to death. When told he could not live, he called for a large silver goblet, out of which usually he drank claret. He held to it the gushing artery, and filled it to the brim with blood. Looking on it for a moment, he turned it slowly upon the ground, muttering to himself, 'If that had been for Ireland!' and expired. You can have no idea how thrillingly this story was told. Fonblanque, who is a cold political satirist, saw nothing in the man's 'decanting his claret,' and so Vivian Grey got into a passion, and for a while was silent."

"Many years ago, upwards of twenty," writes Mr. Madden, the biographer of the Countess of Blessington, "I frequently met Mr. Disraeli at Lady Blessington's abode in Seamore Place. It needed no ghost from the grave, or rapping spirit from the invisible world, to predict even then the success of the young Disraeli in public life. Though in general society he was usually silent and reserved, he was closely

* It may be observed that in a note to *Alroy* he says, "A friend of mine witnessed this horrible punishment in Upper Egypt."

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 his mind, that enabled him to seize all the points of any subject under discussion, persons would only call in question who had never been in his company at the period I refer to."

The pictures may be overdrawn, or there may be a touch of spite in them. But even if they are exact, and if the Disraeli of 1825 or 1826, barely come of age, and intoxicated with the pleasures of society and success, was actually such a man as is here described, we must judge his character in connection with the age in which he lived, and the circles into which he had been thrown. Lord Beaconsfield himself would scarcely ask so much indulgence as this. The affectation of his manners was not put on for idle amusement, nor for the sake of mere social distinction. He always had aims and ambitions beyond the present. In one of his prefaces he claims that a man has a right to be conceited until he is successful. In another, speaking of the publication of *Vivian Grey* in 1825-6, he says: "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 ;" and that which is applicable to the publication of a book is also applicable to a deliberately adopted mannerism, style of speech and thought, not to say also a style of dress and hair.

We come now to the consideration of Mr. Disraeli's first literary efforts, which contributed, perhaps as much as his father's name and his social notoriety, to give him the publicity which he afterwards found useful in seeking an entrance into Parliament. His earliest published work, the novel above-named, was published before he was twenty-one ; it was signed on the title-page by "Disraeli the Younger,"

and cannot be described as having been very successful. The second work was published anonymously ; but it does not appear that the author withheld his name from many of his printed productions. *Alroy*—one of his most characteristic fictions—was in part conceived in 1826-7, but was not completed until after his return from a visit to Jerusalem in 1832. *Contarini Fleming* was published about the same time, and may be taken as closing the first literary period of Lord Beaconsfield's life—to which also belong *The Young Duke*, *Ixion*, *Popanilla*, *The Infernal Marriage*, and *The Revolutionary Epick*. The second period includes certain political tracts, hereafter to be mentioned, *Henrietta Temple* and *Venetia*, published in 1837, the year of the author's election to the House of Commons ; the tragedy of *Count Alarccos* ; what he has called the trilogy of *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*, published in 1844-6 ; and the *Memoir of Isaac D'Israeli*, accompanying an edition of the works of his father, in 1848. To the third period, following a long interval of literary barrenness, must be assigned the historical romances of *Lothair* (1870) and *Endymion* (1880), with the interesting "General Preface" attached to a fresh edition of the former work in October 1870.*

In this "General Preface" Lord Beaconsfield gave the world some particulars as to the moods in which his various works have been written, and of the ideas by which they have been governed. One passage is especially significant as showing what, in the author's own opinion, were the influences which in his father's home, and in his earlier years, went to form the social and intellectual scheme on which he framed his stories. "Born in a library," he says, "and trained from early childhood by learned men who did not share the passions and prejudices of our own political

* See Appendix, for a tabulated list of Lord Beaconsfield's works.

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."

We shall see how Mr. Disraeli worked out this distinction when he became a candidate for political honours. But before we deal with the politician a few chapters may be devoted to the first, and more imaginative, period of his literary activity.



CHAPTER IV.

VIVIAN GREY.

IN addition to being the offspring of his early youth, in which he first courted the fame of an author, the novel of *Vivian Grey* deserves special attention, because in it all the world has agreed to discover distinct traces of Lord Beaconsfield's personal character and opinions. In so far as this is true, the work has a biographical value; and indeed this has been so generally recognised that the name of the hero, usually employed in a political discussion, would be readily interpreted as indicating the author himself in his younger days.

Vivian Grey was published, as already mentioned, in 1826; and Mr. Disraeli does not seem to have been very proud of his work. What he thought of it (he himself tells us) is shown by his having published his next volume anonymously—as though he would challenge the opinion of critics a second time without allowing the first attempt to affect their judgment. In an “advertisement” prefixed to a new edition in 1853, he writes that “for more than a quarter of a century its author has refused to reprint it; but the action of the foreign presses in the present day, especially in the United States and Germany, renders an

author no longer the master of his own will." At the same time he apologises for the crudeness of the story, admitting it to be "founded on affectation," and "the result of imagination, acting upon knowledge not acquired by experience." False taste, exaggeration, a total want of art—such are the condemnations which Lord Beaconsfield has heaped upon the production of his boyhood; and he claims that it should be exempt from criticism, and should be "looked upon as a kind of literary lusus."

The plea may be allowed, so far as literary defects are concerned; but the question of biographical value is distinct from this. For such a purpose the book is in every way public property; and, moreover, it is sufficiently entertaining to please its readers on its merits.

Vivian Grey was kept in drawers and under nursery governesses up to the age of ten, when he was sent to school to learn the alphabet. At Dr. Flummery's establishment, to use his mother's words, "nothing can exceed the attention which is paid to the pupils. There are sixteen young ladies, all the daughters of clergymen, merely to attend to the morals and the linen; terms moderate: one hundred guineas per annum for all under six years of age, and few extras, only for fencing, pure milk, and the guitar." Three or four years of Dr. Flummery teach the youngster to drink claret, to swear at the butler, and to expend "a portion of his infant income" in the purchase of Macassar oil, wherewith to cultivate his curls. After this he spends a year at home, and, "living so much among books, he was insensibly attached to those silent companions, that speak so eloquently." For Mr. Grey, having succeeded to a life-interest of two thousand a year, had been converted from a young loungeur about town into something like a bookworm, and held himself independent of household cares in his "magnificent library." At about fifteen, Vivian goes to a private school in Hampshire, where he becomes popular as a dandy,

treats his master with *sang-froid*, and finds himself "in talents and various acquirements immeasurably the superior" of his companions. Evidently, the autobiographical vein is already opened.

After nearly breaking up the new school, and extracting all the philosophy out of his father's library, he develops a keen taste for politics, and, begging off the Oxford course which had been proposed to him, throws himself into the sea of adventures wherein he has resolved to make his fortune. The motto on the title-page, it should be mentioned, is the familiar saying of one of Shakespeare's characters—"Why, then, the world's mine oyster, which I with knife will open." Vivian Grey's soliloquy, after he has conceived the idea of entering the political lists, is worth quoting :—

"The Bar: poh! law and bad jokes till we are forty; and then, with the most brilliant success, the prospects 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!"

Then he hits on what he considers to be the grand discovery, that to rule men we must be men; to prove that we are strong, we must be weak; to prove that we are giants, we must be dwarfs. "Our wisdom must be concealed under folly, and our constancy under caprice." Mankind shall be his great game. "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 "laughed an answer of bitterest derision."

He has not long to wait for his opportunity. Happening to meet the Marquis of Carabas, he artfully secures his good opinion, gives him a recipe for making tomahawk punch, ingratiates himself little by little, and then instils into his mind the idea of creating a Carabas party. By much flattery and cajolery, making enemies as he went along, but always advancing straight to his goal, he brings his patron to the point, and plays a busy and successful game in collecting recruits for the "New Union" of aristocrats and democrats. Lord Courtown, Lord Beaconsfield, all the greater and smaller fry of the Marquis's political acquaintance, are gathered into the young man's net with supreme cleverness. "He developed the new political principles, demonstrated the mistake under the baneful influence of which they had so long suffered"—that is, the mistake of refusing democratic aid in defeating the exclusive Whig magnates—"promised them place, and power, and patronage, and personal consideration," and showed himself a perfect master of the "splendid juggle of politics."

It is all very improbable, but the greater part of it is extremely plausible. The story proceeds with indescribable lightness, with ceaseless variety, with constant persiflage, with spirit and invention, and with a most skilfully assumed knowledge of the world, almost as ingenious where the assumption is manifest as it is charmingly impudent where the picture is accurate. As the work of a boy of twenty years, *Vivian Grey* is a remarkable tale, and bears witness to nothing more distinctly than the vivid appetite of the writer for political life, and his constitutional aptitude for political conspiracy.

Most of Lord Beaconsfield's earliest works deal freely with social intrigue. He paints some of the blackest

scoundrels, both men and women, that it is possible to imagine, and his politicians deal with human hearts, and with the lives and souls of all who cross their path, as though they were the most worthless counters. Mrs. Felix Lorraine, the sister-in-law of the Marquis, is a shameless intriguer, who connives at Vivian Grey's plots against her own connections, who indulges her desires and destroys those who have gratified her, who is at once the tool and the deadly enemy of the hero. As odious as she is unreal, Mrs. Lorraine is a type which Lord Beaconsfield has repeated more than once; and yet she is probably less true to nature, or to any living model whom the author had met or heard of, than any other of his creations. There is a Mrs. Dallington Vere, in *The Young Duke*, who strongly resembles her in certain features; but the author fortunately saw fit to abandon the character in his later works.

Vivian Grey himself is a heartless and unscrupulous youth, though he has his passions more under control than Mrs. Lorraine, and is infinitely superior to her in intellect, tact, and foresight. It is, therefore, not a very artistic notion to make the lady triumph over him with his own weapons, and ruin his plans before his face. This, however, she does. The Marquis of Carabas detects and discards him. Cleveland, one of his dupes, a fairly honourable man—though he is responsible for such philosophy as this: "There is no act of treachery or meanness of which a political party is not capable; for in politics there is no honour"—strikes him at his club; and, in the duel which follows, Vivian shoots him dead. The game of his ambition is played out; after taking a horrible revenge on Mrs. Lorraine, he flees from England, and the story is virtually finished.

Judging by bulk, indeed, the greater part of the volume is yet to come; and in many respects the later adventures of Vivian Grey are more interesting and amusing than those at which we have already glanced.

The hero travels ; he goes down the Rhine, plays the hero at Ems, the diplomatist at "Turriparva;" he has *bonnes fortunes* wherever he goes, and manages Princes and Ministers as cleverly as he had managed the Marquis of Carabas. He dupes the men, and is courted by the noblest and most charming women, who invariably declare their love to him, and offer him everything before he has vouchsafed them a tender word. This division of the romance ends with an extraordinary storm, amidst which—but the catastrophe is too good to pass over.

"Every terror sank before the appalling roar of the cataract. It seemed that the mighty mountain, unable to support its weight of waters, shook to the foundation. A lake had burst on its summit, and the cataract became a falling Ocean. The source of the great deep appeared to be discharging itself over the range of mountains; the great grey peak tottered on its foundations! It shook! it fell! and buried in its ruins the castle, the village, and the bridge! . . . 'The desolation is complete!' thought Vivian. At this moment the wind again rose. . . The tree fell! Vivian's horse, with a maddened snort, dashed down the hill; his master, senseless, clung to his neck; the frantic animal was past all government; he stood upright in the air, flung his rider, and fell dead! Here we leave Vivian!"

This is the spasmodic ending of a spasmodic story; and, as the reader will perceive, the spasms increase in vehemence from the beginning to the close. One can scarcely avoid the suspicion that the latter portion of *Vivian Grey*, in which there is no mention whatever of the characters to whom we had been introduced in the former portion, was written at a distinct and earlier period—that is, before the writer was out of his teens. The idea is supported by a sort of *envoi*, printed on the last page of the book, in which the writer says:—

"I am, as yet, but standing without the gate of the Garden of Romance. True it is that as I gaze through the ivory bars of its Golden Portal I would fain believe that, following my roving fancy, I might arrive at some green retreats hitherto unexplored, and loiter among some leafy bowers where no one has lingered before me, But these expectations may be as vain as these dreams of Youth over which all have

mourned. The Disappointment of Manhood succeeds to the Delusion of Youth, let us hope that the heritage of Old Age is not Despair."

Perhaps the most remarkable feature in *Vivian Grey*, considering that it was its author's first publication, the offspring of his youth, showing the original and natural bent of his mind, is that the hero should be represented as scheming for the construction of a new party in the State, and a party of much the same kind as that which Mr. Disraeli afterwards advocated in the actual politics of his country. No one could fairly regard this novel as being in any sense autobiographical in its most lurid passages, or in the moral obliquity assigned to the hero; but it may be reasonably thought to be so—though by anticipation rather than by retrospection—in the more purely political portions.

The quality of Mr. Disraeli's humour, extravagant and yet frequently diverting to a high degree, is well exemplified in the second part of *Vivian Grey*. The traveller falls in with a mountebank at a fair, whom he rescues from the maltreatment of a crowd. He takes this man for his personal attendant, and much of the rollicking fun that abounds in the story is made to centre in him. The words in which the mountebank first introduces himself to his deliverer are scarcely capable of quotation, but they may be given as showing how slight was the constraint which the author imposed on himself in his earlier works:—

"I knew there was gentle blood under that cloak. If you like to see the Mystery of the Crucifixion, with the Resurrection, and real fireworks, it begins at eight o'clock, and you shall be admitted gratis. I knew there was gentle blood under that cloak, and some day or other, when your Highness is in distress, you shall not want the aid of Essper George!"

With this man for his companion, Vivian has many strange experiences, romantic and amusing. One autumn evening they are riding through a forest, when they lose their way, and begin to think that they will have to pass

the night without shelter, when at length they find themselves before the gate of a large and ancient mansion. There are lights in the lodge, and a loud noise of "a rude and roaring chorus," which they make out to be something of this kind :—

"A prayer to St. Peter, a prayer to St. Paul !
A prayer to St. Jerome, a prayer to them all !
A prayer to each one of the saintly stock,
But devotion alone, devotion to Hock !"

After a good deal of trouble they make their presence known, and a few ingenious lies from Essper George gain them admission to what proves to be a very castle of delirium. The porter who admits them is drunk, and five or six other servants whom they find inside are drunk to the last man. Vivian, who has been described by his companion as a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, is ushered into the mansion at the other side of the quadrangle ; and there, in a large and brilliantly lighted hall, he finds eight very singular-looking personages, dressed in white hunting-suits, and sitting at a table laden with goblets and drinking-cups. The master of the feast was a man "with a prodigious paunch," a broad face, eyes set wide apart, long ears "almost down to his shoulders," and a "prodigious" nose, reaching nearly to his chest, "too monstrous for a dream."

This worthy gave Vivian a hearty welcome on behalf of himself and his friends. They were not much given to words, he said, "holding it for a principle that if a man's mouth be open, it should be for the purpose of receiving that which cheers a man's spirit ; not of giving vent to idle words, which produce no other effect save filling the world with crude and unprofitable fantasies, and distracting our attention when we are on the point of catching those flavours which alone make the world endurable. There-

fore," continued the host, "briefly, but heartily, welcome! Welcome, Sir Stranger, from us, and from all; and first from us, the Grand Duke of Johannisberger."

Here he pulled out a large ruby tumbler from the file, and all present, including Vivian, did the same. He then produced from under the table "an ancient and exquisite bottle of that choice liquor from which he took his exhilarating title." The cork was drawn, the bottle circulated, and the Grand Duke's health (apparently on his own invitation) was drunk by all.

"Again, Sir Stranger," continued the Grand Duke, "briefly, but heartily, welcome! Welcome from us, and welcome from all; and first from us, and now from the Archduke of Hockheimer!"

Then the Archduke of Hockheimer, "a thin, sinewy man, with long, carroty hair," leaned under the table and produced a bottle of Hockheimer. Justice having been done to this bottle without delay, the Grand Duke went once more through the same form of words, but this time substituting the name of the Elector of Steinberg, "a short but very broad-backed, strong-built man." The Elector was as silent as the Archduke, but he produced his bottle of Steinberg from under the table, and his health was duly pledged. Next came the Margrave of Rudesheimer, "a slender man of elegant appearance." He also spoke no word, but "gave a kind of shout of savage exultation as he smacked his lips after dashing off his glass of Rudesheimer; and scarcely noticing the salutations of those who drank his health, he threw himself back in his chair, and listened seemingly with a smile of derision" while the Grand Duke made his calls on the Landgrave of Grafenberg, the Palsgrave of Geisenheim, "a dwarf in spectacles," the Count of Markbrunnen, and the Baron of Asmanshausen. The Baron, who, unlike his associates, was dressed in a purple suit, produced a bottle of "the only red wine that the Rhine boasts."

By this time Vivian began to think that full justice had been done to the wines of the country and the healths of his entertainers, and thanked Heaven that the last man had been reached. But he was alarmed by the Grand Duke's next words:—"And now, having introduced you to all present, we will begin drinking." He made a feeble protest, declaring that, much as he admired the flavour of their wine, he stood in need of more solid sustenance. Instantly the whole company turned round on him, and shrieked out that he was a traitor. The Grand Duke, however, calmed their excitement, and, addressing Vivian, said:—

"Know ye, unknown knight, that you are in the presence of an august society who are here met at one of their accustomed convocations, whereof the purport is the frequent quaffing of those most glorious liquors of which the sacred Rhine is the great father. We profess to find a perfect commentary on the Pindaric laud of the strongest element in the circumstance of the banks of a river being the locality where the juice of the grape is most delicious; and holding, therefore, that water is strongest because, in a manner, it giveth birth to wine, we also hold it as a sacred element, and consequently most religiously refrain from refreshing our bodies with that sanctified but most undrinkable fluid. Know ye that we are the children of the Rhine, the conservators of his flavours, profound in the learning of his exquisite aroma, and deep students in the mysteries of his inexplicable n^äre. Professing not to be immortal, we find in the exercise of the chase a noble means to preserve that health which is necessary for the performance of the ceremonies to which we are pledged. At to-morrow's dawn our bugle sounds, and thou, stranger, may engage the wild boar at our side; at to-morrow's noon the castle bell will toll, and thou, stranger, may eat of the beast which thou hast conquered; but to feed after midnight, to destroy the power of catching the delicate flavour, to annihilate the faculty of detecting the undefinable n^äre, is heresy, most rank and damnable heresy! Therefore, at this hour soundeth no plate or platter, jingl^eth no knife or culinary instrument, in the Palace of the Wines."

Vivian pleads hard for a Dutch herring; "and, as you have souls to be saved, grant me one slice of bread;" but the Grand Duke is obdurate. Then they proceed with their

accustomed ceremonies. "Let us drink 1726," says the president; and "they honoured with a glass of the very year the memory of a celebrated vintage." 1748, 1766, 1779 were pledged in turn; and then Vivian began to observe in his hosts the signs of incipient insanity. "1783! hallooed the Grand Duke in a tone of the most triumphant exultation, and his mighty proboscis, as it snuffed the air, almost caused a whirlwind round the room. Hockheimer gave a roar, Steinberg a growl, Rudesheimer a wild laugh, Markbrunnen a loud grunt, Grafenberg a bray, Asmanshausen's long body moved to-and-fro with wonderful agitation, and little Geisenheim's bright eyes glistened through their glasses as if they were on fire."

Vivian held on as best he could; and when they had got down to 1802, "from the excellency of his digestion and the inimitable skill with which he emptied many of the latter glasses under the table, he was perhaps in better condition than any one in the room." But worse remained behind. After a little horseplay amongst the presiding geniuses of the wines of Rhineland, the Grand Duke declared that it was time to prove that they were capable of better and worthier things. He called for the horn of the Fairy King, and, giving it to the next man to hold, emptied into it with great care three bottles of Johannisberger. "All rose. The Grand Duke took the goblet in one hand, and with the other he dexterously put aside his most inconvenient and enormous nose. Dead silence prevailed, save the roar of the liquor as it rushed down the Grand Duke's throat, and resounded through the chamber like the distant dash of a waterfall."

Vivian was now at bay. When the horn came round to him he demanded an indulgence; but he was met with so much noise, roaring, growling, hissing, and sneering, that in despair he poured the liquor down his throat, and inverted the horn on his nail to prove that he had not shirked a

drop. The Grand Duke praised him warmly, and congratulated the company on the acquisition of a worthy mate. In consideration of their guest's long journey and noble achievement he proposed that they should drink lightly that night ; but by way of reward and act of courtesy to the accomplished stranger he called for nine bottles of sparkling champagne. With the corks of these immense bottles the eight toppers extinguished eight burners of the chandelier ; but Vivian was not so skilful. His cork went astray, and struck with great force the mighty nose of Johannisberger. Every one present demanded a forfeit, and the Grand Duke condemned him to drink Oberon's horn full of champagne.

Vivian now made his stand. He refused to drink, demanded to be shown to his apartment, threatened to swing the Grand Duke round his castle by "that sausage of a nose," and defied them all. Then they cried out that he should be drowned in a butt of Moselle ; and they set upon him forthwith. "Vivian took the dwarf and hurled him at the chandelier, in whose brazen chains the little being got entangled, and there remained." He floored Grafenberg with an unexpected cross-buttocker, laid open Rudesheimer's head with the horn of Oberon, upset Johannisberger and Asmanshausen, and rushed to the door. All but the dwarf followed pell-mell, and a chase ensued round the large octagonal hall.

Suddenly the hall door was dashed open, and Essper George, who had been in a plight somewhat similar to his master's, rushed in, with the porter and the other servants in full pursuit. A general scrimmage followed, and presently all the inhabitants of this remarkable mansion were sprawling on the ground. While Essper George keeps down the struggling inebriates with a boar-spear, Vivian covers them with a huge fishing-net ; and so at last they make their escape and ride away.

CHAPTER V.

AN ARISTOCRATIC NOVEL.

THE next production, *The Young Duke*, described on the title-page as "a moral tale, though gay," appeared in 1829. Of the spirit in which it was written Mr. Disraeli himself said, in an "advertisement" to the edition of 1853, "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."

It is no doubt a fact that the style of this romance is marked by the qualities here attributed to it; but it is not so turbid, and not often so recklessly extravagant, as *Vivian Grey*. The Duke of St. James is a spoiled child of fortune. His coming of age "created almost as great a sensation among the aristocracy of England as the Norman Conquest." A minority of twenty years had made his house one of the richest in Europe. The Duke possessed "estates in the north and in the west of England, besides a whole province in Ireland." He had two palaces, three castles, four halls, and lodges *ad libitum*; "a very handsome square and several streets in London, which brought him in

yearly more cash than all the palaces of Vicenza are worth in fee-simple, with those of the Grand Canal of Venice to boot;" a coal mine, canal shares, and so forth. The "whole province in Ireland" is an apt illustration of Mr. Disraeli's supreme contempt for probabilities, where his object was simply to produce an effect; and we are greeted by another improbability in the statement that, with all this fabulous property, and a rent-roll of two hundred thousand pounds, the result of twenty years' nursing by a most scrupulous and careful guardian, was no more than half a million.

This guardian, Mr. Dacre, was a Roman Catholic, and he is treated very badly by his ward, owing to the machinations of the Earl and Countess of Fitz-pompey, the uncle and aunt of the young Duke, who scheme to secure him for a son-in-law. We need not follow the fortunes of this golden youth in detail. He is courted and caressed in the society of the metropolis; matrons and maids angle and sigh for him; married women run after him, and turn his giddy head. One of these is drawn in the most exaggerated style, and the most improbable actions are ascribed to her. Represented, to begin with, as pure, refined, and haughty in the extreme, she is yet made to fall in love with the Duke at first sight, with no better motive than because she has a callous and hypocritical husband. At the second meeting with St. James she thoroughly compromises herself, and not long afterwards she is pressing him to elope with her! This is the most glaring instance of Mr. Disraeli's want of insight into character; but there are several others in the same volume.

Two seasons are sufficient to ruin the young Duke, who, by engaging Sir Carte Blanche to restore his two palaces, by scattering rings, and bracelets, and diamonds amongst his chance acquaintances, by horse-racing, gambling, and the rest of it, not only spends his half-million, but manages to

encumber his estates very deeply. Meanwhile, he had fortunately healed the breach between himself and his guardian, for whose lovely daughter—pure beyond the possibility of corruption—he had formed a pure attachment in the midst of his dissipations. To Mr. Dacre, then, he flies in his distress. The shock of discovering to what an extremity his folly has brought him effectually sobers his mind, and henceforth he begins to display his better qualities and his great talents. He had been twice rejected by May Dacre, and has reason to believe that she is engaged to her cousin, Arundel Dacre. He introduces Arundel into Parliament for one of the family boroughs. May talks in his hearing about the Catholic Emancipation question; and talks of what she would do if she were a man. He instantly posts down from Yorkshire to London, makes a telling speech (apparently without having taken the oath), and gets back in time to hear her reading his eloquent periods to her astounded and delighted father. This puts the finishing touch to his conquest of May's heart; and the reader is equally surprised with himself to find that she was not betrothed to Arundel, who had all along been engaged to Caroline Fitz-pompey—the Duke's own cousin, with whom he had himself had something like a love-passage before he left town. Now, of course, our hero is in a state of bliss. Mr. Dacre once more nurses the St. James estates, and the story ends with a far better moral than that of *Vivian Grey*.

The conceit and affectations of which the author subsequently accused himself in connection with *The Young Duke* are manifested in his general assumption of a perfect knowledge of the world, in his frequent references to his own individuality, his opinions, his achievements (as where he boasts of having "lent a name" to a sauce—possibly one of the delicacies recommended by Vivian Grey to the Marquis of Carabas); in his constant laudation of the

aristocracy, and of family pride and exclusiveness ; in the very large demand which he constantly makes on the credulity of his readers, and, above all, in his florid and self-conscious style.

There is a peculiarity in this style, perhaps more conspicuous in *The Young Duke* than in any other of Lord Beaconsfield's works, except *Alroy*, which is sufficiently curious to be pointed out. The prose is perpetually tending to become blank verse—occasionally even rhyme verse ; so that one can scarcely help thinking that the author utilised his early poems in certain passages of the book, or at any rate cut up his words into decasyllabics with deliberate intent. It will be interesting to quote one or two examples of this peculiarity.

Take, for instance, the following "Ode on Dinner," first as it occurs in the text,* and then as it might be arranged with very slight variation :—

"'Tis dinner ! hour that I have loved as loves the bard the twilight ; but no more those visions rise that once were wont to spring in my quick fancy. The dream is past, the spell is broken, and even the lore on which I pondered in my first youth, is strange as figures in Egyptian tombs.

"No more, no more, oh ! never more to me, that hour shall bring its rapture and its bliss ! No more, no more, oh ! never more for me, shall Flavour sit upon her thousand thrones, and, like a syren with a sunny smile, win to renewed excesses, each more sweet ! My feasting days are over : me no more the charms of fish, or flesh, still less of fowl, can make the fool of that they made before. The fricandeau is like a dream of early love ; the fricassee, with which I have so often flirted, is like the tattle of the last quadrille ; and no longer are my dreams haunted with the dark passion of the rich ragoût. Ye soups ! o'er whose rich creation I have watched, like mothers o'er their sleeping child ! Ye sauces ! to which I have even lent a name, where are ye now ? Tickling perchance the palate of some easy friend, who quite forgets the boon companion whose presence once lent lustre even to his ruby wine, and added perfume to his perfumed hock !"

* *The Young Duke*, ch. 8.

Now for the verse:—

ODE ON DINNER.

“’Tis dinner! hour that I have loved,
As loves the bard the twilight; but no more
Those visions rise that once were wont to spring
In my quick fancy.
The dream is past, the spell is broken, and even
The lore on which I pondered in my youth
Is strange as figures in Egyptian tombs.
No more, no more, oh! never more to me
That hour shall bring its rapture and its bliss!
No more, no more, oh! never more for me
Shall Flavour sit upon her thousand thrones,
And, like a syren with a sunny smile,
Win to renewed excesses, each more sweet!
My feasting days are over: me no more
The charms of fish, or flesh, still less of fowl,
Can make the fool of that they made before.’

The rest needs a little, but very little, manipulation:—

“The fricandeau is like a dream of love;
The fricassee, with which so oft I’ve flirted,
Is like the tattle of the last quadrille;
No longer now my idle dreams are haunted
With the dark passion of the rich ragoût.
Ye soups! o’er whose creation I have watched,
Like mothers o’er their sleeping child! Ye sauces,
To which I lent a name, where are ye now?

Tickling perchance

The palate of a friend, who quite forgets
The boon companion whose presence once
Lent lustre even to his ruby wine,
And added perfume to his perfumed hock!”

The author of *The Young Duke* lingers over the episode of his hero’s journey to London, for the purpose of taking part in the debate, with a manifest feeling of relish; and he introduces (too abruptly for art) a survey on his own behalf of the principal Parliamentary speakers of the time. Mr. Brougham in the Commons, and the Duke of Well-

ton in the Lords, obtain his warmest commendation; though he expresses the opinion that "we never have had oratory in England." His criticism ends with a remarkable paragraph, having the character of a prophecy—though at the moment of writing it may have seemed to the author as a touch of badinage, and little more:—

"One thing is clear," he writes, "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.'"

The italics are our own. Rarely has a prediction been made with so much apparent impudence, and fulfilled under such remarkable conditions.



CHAPTER VI.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ROMANCE.

THERE is none of Lord Beaconsfield's romances which is not strongly marked by the psychological tendency of the author, or which does not afford psychological study to the reader by its subjective tone and constant self-analysis. But in *Contarini Fleming* Mr. Disraeli had a conscious intention of tracing the development of a human soul, through all its phases and transformations, from the germ of intelligence to the fruit of self-knowledge.

He wrote an interesting preface to a new edition, printed in 1845, which explains the circumstances under which it was composed, and the task which he had attempted to perform. Written, as he tells us, with great care, after deep meditation, and in a beautiful land, the book was published anonymously in the midst of a revolution (1831-2); and "it seemed that it must die. But gradually it has gained the sympathy of the thoughtful and the refined." Elsewhere we are told that Goethe, Beckford, and other men of acknowledged genius had expressed admiration of it; so that at least it comes to us stamped with the approval that wise men chiefly covet—the praise of men that are praised.

Contarini Fleming is the story of a poetic mind, intensely sensitive, governed throughout by natural predisposition, struggling perpetually for objects just beyond reach ; guided, limited, and checked by agencies half-concealed, half-manifest ; steeped in a sense of the mysterious, and shaped by imagination and faith, as well as by circumstance. The king of psychological romancers who have taken such a theme as this for their subject was Goethe, whose *Wilhelm Meister* is admittedly the antetype of *Contarini Fleming*.

The hero, as his name might imply, is the child of an Italian mother and a Scandinavian father ; and much of the mystery of the book arises from the fact (carefully concealed from him, as from the reader, until his probation is at an end) that Baron Fleming, the Prime Minister of a northern State, attempts with great deliberation and assumption of callousness to overcome the morbidly poetic temperament of his son. His motive in this short-sighted and unsuccessful effort is confessed by him on his death-bed ; he had himself been a prey to the same temperament in his youth, had suffered by it, and had eventually conquered it by a mighty struggle—leaving terrible wounds behind from which he would fain have saved his secretly idolised son. But the father had more to struggle against in the soul of the child than the tendencies which he had himself transmitted to him ; there was also the hot and impassioned spirit of his Venetian mother—the mother who had died in giving him birth, thus obscuring for ever the romance of Baron Fleming's existence.

Contarini's childhood and youth were miserable enough. His stepmother had no sympathy for him, his companions did not understand him, he grew up amidst delusions, unsatisfied yearnings, self-distrust and wild aspirations ; always verging on the reign of insanity, the dupe of the world which he despised, and the victim of efforts too great for his unassisted faculties. It was a cruel ordeal through

which his father had condemned him to pass. He felt himself a poet, and strove to create before he had learned even to imitate.

"They know not," he exclaims in his autobiography, after describing his pitiable failure, "they cannot tell, the cold, dull world; they cannot even remotely conceive the agony of doubt and despair which is the doom of youthful genius. To sigh for fame in obscurity is like sighing in a dungeon for light; yet the votary and the captive share an equal hope. But, 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."

Something has already been said of Lord Beaconsfield's characteristic individuality in his earliest published works; and perhaps in none of them does he draw so constantly on his own experience, his own feelings, ambitions and despair, as in *Contarini Fleming*. He may elsewhere have shown his hand more distinctly, but nowhere has he presented us with a picture bearing stronger internal evidence of self-representation than in this story. The autobiographical form contributes to produce this effect upon the reader's mind, but the conviction will rest on a firmer basis for those who carefully compare the romance with the reality.

Contarini runs away from school, runs away from college, joins a troupe of travelling actors, leads a band of robbers, turns fop, satirist, politician, is constantly in difficulty of some kind or other, and yet easily escapes the most serious consequences, by his own adroitness or his father's watchful care. The advice given to him by the Baron on his approaching manhood is full of shrewd philosophy, and is as well worth quoting as anything in the book:—

"To enter society with pleasure, Contarini, you must be qualified for it. I think it quite time for you to make yourself master of some

accomplishments. Decidedly you should make yourself a good dancer. Without dancing you can never attain a perfectly graceful carriage, which is of the highest importance in life, and should be every man's ambition. You are yet too young fully to comprehend how much in life depends upon manner. Whenever you see a man who is successful in society, try to discover what makes him pleasing, and if possible adopt his system. You should learn to fence. For languages at present, French will be sufficient. You speak it fairly ; try to speak it elegantly. Read French authors. Read Rochefoucault. The French writers are the finest in the world, for they clear our heads of all ridiculous ideas. Study precision.

"Do not talk too much at present ! Do not *try* to talk. But whenever you speak, speak with self-possession. Speak in a subdued tone, and always look at the person whom you are addressing. Before one can engage in general conversation with any effect, there is a certain acquaintance with trifling but amusing subjects which must be first attained. You will soon pick up sufficient by listening and observing. Never argue. In society nothing must be discussed ; give only results. If any person differ from you, bow and turn the conversation. In society never think ; always be on the watch, or you will miss many opportunities and say many disagreeable things.

"Talk to women ; talk to women as much as you can. This is the best school. This is the very 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. It is impossible to get rid of those thousand bad habits which we pick up in boyhood, without this supervision. Unfortunately, you have no sisters. But never be offended if a woman rally you ; encourage her, otherwise you will never be free from your awkwardness or any little oddities, and certainly never learn to dress."

Aided by his father's influence, Contarini becomes a statesman, and (improbable enough) is soon made an Under-Secretary. Of course he has a marvellous access of audacious genius in the presence of the King and foreign Ambassadors, confounding the Russian, Austrian, and Prussian representatives by an outrageous tirade of defiance. The King is astounded ; and his delighted father hails him as a future Prime Minister. But the "wild poet" in his nature breaks

out again. He writes a book lampooning all the famous people of the capital—such a book as *Lothair* or *Endymion* might have been, if they had been written in their author's youth. His secret is discovered; and one fine morning he is calmly informed by his father that he has been appointed Secretary of Legation in London, with a year's leave of absence, which he is desired to spend in Paris.

Expostulation would have been useless. Contarini does not utter a single word, but sets out at once with the confidential servant whom his father had attached to him. At Paris, however, he takes the bit in his teeth, and resolves to go to Venice in search of his destiny. On his way he has mysterious previsions and presentiments; and, once in the city of his mother, he lights without delay on the last of the Contarinis. Aleesté is his destiny, and is of course subject to the same mysterious previsions which had visited his own soul. She is betrothed to another, to escape whom she secretly pledges herself to take the veil. But Contarini relies on the omnipotence of fate, claims Aleesté for his own, triumphs over every obstacle, and carries her off, a willing victim, to the island of Candia. A year of bliss falls to their lot, and then the father's agony is reproduced in the son. Aleesté dies in childbirth; Contarini attempts suicide; and when his body recovers, his mind relapses into a condition of stupor.

Restored at length, he spends some time in travelling; and the rest of the story is little more than an account of his journey through Spain, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt. In these pages we probably have the mere idealised record of the author's own travels, the diary of his impressions and thoughts. It was an interesting crisis in which to make such a voyage as is here described. Greece was just being liberated from the Turkish yoke, and a panorama is unrolled before us of some of the most striking features of that memorable epoch. The traveller

sees Ali Pasha at Janina, visits the camp of Redchid Pasha, sails in the squadron of Halil Pasha, muses amongst the ruins of deserted Athens. Listen to the words of Benjamin Disraeli, which he vainly asks us to accept as the utterance of Contarini Fleming :—

“My meditations,” he says, “will disappoint those who might justly expect an ebullition of classic rapture from one who has gazed upon Marathon by moonlight, and sailed upon the free waters of Salamis. I regret their disappointment, but I have arrived at an age when I can think only of the future. A mighty era, prepared by the blunders of long centuries, is at hand. Ardently I hope that the necessary change in human existence may be effected by the voice of philosophy alone ; but I tremble, and I am silent. There is no bigotry so terrible as the bigotry of a country that flatters itself that it is philosophical.”

Surely a curious premonition from the mouth of the future plenipotentiary at Berlin ! And a curious illustration of the forecasts inspired in every intelligent mind by the stirring events of Greek regeneration ! Another political prophecy, more defined and confident, occurs on the last page of the book ; and it is equally curious as having proceeded from the future Tory Premier of England :—

“When I examine” says Contarini Fleming, “the state of European society with the unimpassioned spirit which the philosopher can alone command, I perceive that it is in a transition from feudal to federal principles. This I conceive to be the sole and secret cause of all convulsions that have occurred and are to occur.”

A short story of *The Rise of Iskander* was apparently written about the same time as *Contarini Fleming*. It relates the adventures of the famous Skanderbeg, or Iskander Bey, who in the time of the Sultan Amurath, before Constantinople had fallen into the hands of the Turks, succeeded in liberating Epirus from the Mahomedan sway, and establishing his authority in the land of his birth. John Hunyades, the victorious Hungarian, figures in the tale and his daughter Iduna, the bride of Iskander, and

Nicæus Prince of Athens—who, with Iskander, rescues Iduna from the seraglio at Adrianople. This historical romance is full of interest, but it is not specially characteristic of the genius of its author.



CHAPTER VII.

MR. DISRAELI AS A POET.

THE *Wondrous Tale of Alroy*, as already mentioned, was begun at a very early period in the life of its author, though it was not published until 1832. "Being at Jerusalem in the year 1831," Lord Beaconsfield has told us, "and visiting the traditionary tombs of the Kings of Israel, my thoughts recurred to a personage whose marvellous career had, even in boyhood, attracted my attention, as one fraught with the richest materials of poetic fiction." The story is indeed full of interest. Alroy, the nephew of a Prince of the Captivity, settled at Hamadan in the twelfth century, rebels against the Seljukian Sultan of Bagdad, and eventually against the Caliph. He himself becomes Prince of the Captivity. His life is full of adventure; he triumphs over his enemies, lays the Seljukian empire at his feet, makes himself king of the Hebrews, weds Schirene, the Princess of Bagdad, marries his sister to the Viceroy of the Medes and Persians. Then his trouble begins. Jabaster, the High Priest, who had dreamed that Alroy was to have restored the kingdom of Israel in a truer and more sacred sense, condemns and reproaches him; but Schirene contrives to secure her lord's signet, and causes

Jabaster (whom Alroy, divided in mind and duty, had always revered) to be put to death. Alp Arslan, at the head of a vast army of Moslems, fights against him, his generals and counsellors betray him, he becomes a fugitive in the desert, and at last falls into the hands of his enemies. But although he had married an infidel, and had compromised the cause and the faith of the Hebrews, his heart was still true to the God of his fathers. Tempted in his noisome dungeon by the offer of liberty and wealth, on condition that he would bow to the Prophet, and admit that he had triumphed by demoniacal aid, he sternly refuses—even when Schirene, played upon by his traitorous friends, adds her arts to theirs. He is brought before Alp Arslan and the assembled army, and there, threatened with immediate impalement, repeats his denial and defies his bloodthirsty conqueror. The terrible torture is escaped only by the vehemence of his defiance and his taunts, which so enrage the Turk that he draws his scimitar in ungovernable fury, and strikes off the head of Alroy at a stroke.

A number of explanatory notes are added to this volume, which bear witness to Mr. Disraeli's knowledge of the history and customs of the Hebrew race. His subject was derived from an old Jewish tradition, which is mentioned in a Latin version of an ancient manuscript, referred to by Mr. Disraeli in one of the notes aforesaid. According to this account, when David-el-David, or David Alroy, was being questioned previous to impalement, "the Sultan asked him if he were the Messiah, and he said, I am. And the monarch asked him, What sign do you give? And he answered, Cut off my head, and I will come to life again. Then the monarch bade them cut off his head: and so he died. But this he had said in order that the Sultan might not slay him with excessive tortures."

Mr. Disraeli has described the story of *Alroy* as "fraught with the richest materials of poetic fiction" and he was

justified in the description. There can be little doubt that a considerable portion of the romance was originally written in verse, and that the writer subsequently turned it all into the form of prose. There are evidences of this on almost every page, far more striking than the isolated passages mentioned above in our examination of *The Young Duke*. Here, for instance, is an entire chapter (Part x, ch. 1) re-written in stanzas instead of paragraphs, without the alteration of a single word :—

1.

“She comes not yet ! Her cheerful form,
Not yet it sparkles in our mournful sky.
She comes not yet ! The shadowy stars
Seem sad and lustreless without their Queen.

She comes not yet !

Chorus.

We are the watchers of the Moon,
And live in loneliness to herald light.

2.

She comes not yet ! her sacred form,
Not yet it summons to our holy feast.
She comes not yet ! Our brethren far
Wait mute and motionless the saintly beam.

She comes not yet !

Chorus.

We are the watchers of the Moon,
And live in loneliness to herald light.

3.

She comes, she comes ! Her beauteous form
Sails with soft splendour in the flitting air.
She comes, she comes ! The beacons fire,
And tell the nations that the month begins.

She comes, she comes !

Chorus.

We are the watchers of the Moon,
To tell the nation that the month begins.”

This is a song for the feast of the new moon ; and perhaps Mr. Disraeli had no wish to conceal its poetic expression,

though for some reason he chose to have it printed as though it were simple prose. There are other passages transparently metrical, and even in rhymed metre, which do more to bear out the suggestion above made. Thus:—

“It is the tender twilight hour
 When maidens in their lonely bower
 Sigh softer than the eve !
 The languid rose her head upraises,
 And listens to the nightingale,
 While his wild and thrilling praises
 From his trembling bosom gush :
 The languid rose her head upraises,
 And listens with a blush.
 In the clear and rosy air,
 Sparkling with a single star,
 The sharp and spiry cypress-tree
 Rises like a gloomy thought
 Amid the flow of revelry.
 A singing bird, a single star,
 A solemn tree, an odorous flower
 Are dangerous in the tender hour
 When maidens in their twilight bower
 Sigh softer than the eve !”

This is of course less finished than it would have been if the original intention had been adhered to ; but perhaps nothing would have been gained if the poetry had been cut into lengths. On the other hand, the re-conversion into prose might with advantage have been more thoroughly done. The following paragraphs look irresistibly comical, as they stand in the text:—

“Ah ! bright gazelle ! ah ! bright gazelle !” the princess cried, the princess cried ; “thy lips are softer than the swan, thy lips are softer than the swan ; but his breathed passion when they pressed, my bright gazelle ! my bright gazelle !”

“Ah ! bright gazelle ! ah ! bright gazelle !” the princess cried, the princess cried ; “thine eyes are like the stars of night, thine eyes are like the stars of night ; but his glanced passion when they gazed, my bright gazelle ! my bright gazelle !”

More legitimate than this is the professed poetry of *Count Alarcos*, a tragedy in five acts, whereof the blank verse is in parts more than passable. The drama is based on an old Spanish ballad; and the author, in a preface signed with a single Greek initial, and dated 1839, admits that he has no historical basis for the action of his play, which he assigns to the thirteenth century, and locates in Burgos, the capital of Castille. It will be observed that this work properly belongs to the second period of Lord Beaconsfield's literary activity. But *Count Alarcos* seems to have been his last serious attempt at poetry, and it may be more conveniently dealt with now than later on.

The story is a thoroughly unpleasant one. Count Alarcos, a noble high in favour at the Castillian court, aspires to the hand of Infanta Solisa; but the Queen herself conceives a guilty passion for him, and by her vengeful spite he is banished from Spain. In France he marries Florimonde, a lovely Frenchwoman, who bears him children, and consoles him in his exile. Meanwhile the Queen of Castille dies, and Alarcos is recalled. Immediately his old ambition revives, and the Infanta sets her heart on securing him, in spite of obstacles. She dismisses the Prince of Hungary, to whom she was on the point of being betrothed; and little by little the weak-minded Count falls a prey to the temptation held out before him.

Once more, it is a vaulting ambition that the author has taken for his subject.

The scenes are very pathetic in which Count Alarcos prepares the mind of his wife for the new existence which awaits her at Court, and even seeks to corrupt her innocence, in order that there may be one barrier the less between himself and the Infanta. Husband and wife are together in their new home; and Alarcos has been giving her subtle hints as to her conduct. "I stand right well at Court," he says; "and with thine aid will stand e'en better." "Mine!" she sighs—

"I have no joy but in thy joy, no thought
But for thy honour, and yet, how to aid
Thee in these plans or hopes, indeed, Alarcos,
Indeed, I am perplexed.

ALAR.

Art not my wife ?
Is not this Burgos ? And this pile, the palace
Of my great fathers ? Let it be
The eye of the town, whereby we may perceive
What passes in his heart : the elustering point
Of all convergenee. Here be troops of friends
And ready instruments. Wear that sweet smile
That wins a partisan quicker than power ;
Speak in that tone gives each a special share
In thy regard, and what is general
Let all deem private. O ! thou'lt play it rarely.

COUNTESS.

I would do all that may become a wife."

The Count Sidonia, whom Alarcos had introduced to Florimonde, and who has already begun to sigh for her, has all this time been serenading her under her window, and Alarcos tells her who it is, pretending that he sees a smile of satisfaction in her face.

"Florimonde,

Smile on him ; smiles cost nothing ; should he judge
They mean more than they say, why, smile again ;
And what he deems affection, registered,
Is but chaste mockery."

In such a man, everything is possible ; but the Countess recoils with horror from the course proposed to her, and takes refuge with her children. The Infanta, in the meantime, has talked over her father, and secured from him a promise of his assistance in her terrible plot against the happiness of Florimonde. The king works upon Alarcos by holding out to him the most lofty ambitions, if he will only place himself in a position to marry Solisa. Little by little, with many struggles, self-reproaches, and temporary reactions, the Count steels his mind for the desperate work.

Bravos are set on him by Sidonia, but he foils them; and after a while he is desperate enough to set one of them to murder his wife.

This is the climax. The fifth act introduces us to Florimonde at the Castle of Alarcos, at Arlanzon, near Burgos, where Oran, a Moor who had attempted the life of the Count, and had been spared by him (as it turns out, for a most sinister purpose), watches over her. In the second scene we have a grand ball at the royal palace, where the king and the Infanta urge Alarcos to complete the bargain into which he has entered. It is ten o'clock. His castle is an hour's ride from Burgos. Solisa bids him act.

"O could I see thee but re-enter here,
Ere yet the midnight clock strikes on my heart
The languish of new hours—I'd not ask thee
Why I had missed the mien that draws to it ever
My constant glance. There'd need no speech between us;
For I should meet—my husband."

Alarcos, his brain on fire, rides off to his castle through a most terrible storm of thunder and lightning. Arrived there, he reminds Oran of the promise which he had given him—according to a tradition of Moorish faith—when the Count had spared his life in Burgos. In brief, he demands that Oran shall kill Florimonde in her sleep. The Moor is horror-struck; pressed by Alarcos, and admitting that he owes him a life for a life, he stabs himself, and begs mercy for the Countess with his latest breath. Florimonde comes in, and overhears his words; but Alarcos bids her go and kiss her children, for she is to leave the castle that night, and cannot take them with her. She retires, full of terror. The clock strikes twelve; and Alarcos, with the name of Solisa on his lips, "moves hastily to the chamber, which he enters; the stage for some seconds is empty; a shriek is then heard; Alarcos re-appears, very pale, and slowly advances to the front of the stage." His mind is already

unhinged. "I would I had not caught her eye," he exclaims. He is nerving himself for the part he has still to play, when suddenly two messengers arrive from the court. They have ridden at the top of their speed, and bring him terrible news.

"1ST COURTIER.

Unheard-of horror !

The storm, the storm—

ALARCOS.

I rode in it.

1ST COURT.

Methought

Each flash would fire the citadel ; the flame
Wreathed round its pinnacles, and poured in streams
Adown the pallid battlements. Our revellers
Forgot their festival, and stopped to gaze
On the portentous vision. When, behold !
The curtained clouds re-opened, and a bolt
Came winged from the startling blue of heaven,
And struck—the Infanta !

ALAR.

There's a God of Vengeance.

1ST COURT.

She fell a blighted corpse. Amid the shrieks
Of women, prayers of hurrying multitudes,
The panic and the stir—we sought for thee ;
The King's o'erwhelmed.

ALAR.

My wife's at least a Queen ;

She reigns in Heaven. The King's o'erwhelmed—poor man !
Go tell him, sirs, the Count Alarcos lived
To find a hell on earth ; yet thus he sought
A deeper and a darker."

And he falls, slain by his own hand.

It would be difficult to imagine a dramatic climax of more unrelieved horror.

One other poem Lord Beaconsfield has published—first in 1834, again in 1864 ; but it is not now issued amongst his collected works, and for this reason we shall not examine it

at length. *The Revolutionary Epick* was conceived (though only a portion of the conception was worked out on paper) in order to embody the spirit of the age—the spirit of progress and revolution. Suggested to the author's mind on the plains of Troy, this idea was at once ambitious in its scope and impracticable in realisation; and the author of the poem has admitted its failure. "I am not," he wrote in the preface, "one who finds consolation 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 judgment of the public was decidedly adverse; and perhaps no second edition of the work would have seen the light if it had not been for a Parliamentary passage-of-arms with Mr. Bright in 1864, to which it may be as well to refer at once.

The controversies which had arisen in England over the Italian revolutions waxed very warm at this period, and Mr. Disraeli took an active part in them. He vehemently attacked Mr. Stansfeld (who had permitted the Italian patriot, Mazzini, to have his letters addressed to his house), accusing him of complicity with the "assassins of Europe," of "men who point their poniards at the breasts of our allies." Mr. Bright, who followed him in the debate, referring to certain quotations which had been made from Mazzini's writings in palliation of tyrannicide, observed: "I think I have read that the right hon. gentleman who just sat down, in one of his early writings, expressed opinions—it may be merely to excite a sensation amongst his readers—but still opinions very much like those to which the hon. baronet has alluded to-night." Mr. Disraeli at once denied the truth of this statement; and, not content with this, he presently republished the *Revolutionary Epick*, by way of self-justification.

Mr. O'Connor, in his *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, accuses him of making such alterations in the poem as entirely to destroy the value of the new edition as evidence in support of his denial. The reader will find the whole matter elucidated in Mr. O'Connor's book; and we may here confine ourselves to the citation of a single parallel from the two editions:—

1834.

“Pharaoh's doom
Shall cool those chariot-wheels
now hot with blood;
And blessed be the hand that
dares to wave
The regicidal steel that shall re-
deem
A nation's sorrow with a tyrant's
blood.”

Lyridon. Canto xxiv, 127.

1864.

“Dark Pharaoh's doom
Shall cool your chariot-wheels;
and hallowed be
The regicidal steel that shall re-
deem
A nation's woe.”

Lyridon. Canto xxii, 107.



CHAPTER VIII.

SATIRE

IT would be superfluous to remind any one acquainted with Lord Beaconsfield's character and public utterances that he has in his composition a strong tinge of the satirical. His lighter view is not broad enough or free enough for what we generally understand by humour, though his satire is frequently of a humorous complexion. We have had evidence of it already in *Vivian Grey*; but it is more clearly exemplified in three shorter productions, which may be glanced at before we proceed to the more serious passages of Lord Beaconsfield's career.

Ixion in Heaven is based on a Greek myth, according to which a Thessalian king of that name, having treacherously murdered his father-in-law, and being an outcast from his country, repudiated alike by his wife and his neighbours, inspired the pity of Jupiter, who took him up to heaven. We may understand at once how this theme arrested the attention of "Disraeli the Younger," for whom an unbounded ambition, and unlimited opportunities of gratifying ambition, had an irresistible charm. Ixion, introduced to the society of the gods, takes in the situation at a glance. He is frank and off-hand with Jove, discusses Homer with

Apollo, is politely impervious to the wiles of Venus, avoids the traps set for him by Minerva, tells Juno, with a bold stare, that he is "perhaps more unreasonable than she imagines," and orders Mercury and Ganymede about with easy impudence. Minerva presses him to write in her album, and gives him a pen plucked from a sacred owl. After some demur he writes:—

*"I have seen the world, and more than the world: I have studied the heart of man, and now I consort with immortals. The fruit of my tree of knowledge is plucked, and it is this—"*ADVENTURES ARE TO THE ADVENTUROUS.'

"Written in the album of Minerva, by

"IXION IN HEAVEN."

Ixion had written a genuine motto for ambitious men; and in fact he had already embarked in an adventure which was to make him famous for all time. He had resolved to make the most of the slight encouragement which Juno had already given him, and to test the virtue of the queen of heaven. On the third day of his visit to the celestial regions he is musing in the garden of the gods, when, suddenly, he is accosted by a most beautiful youth, who "had attained about the age of puberty," and who carried a bow in his hand. This was Cupid; and to him, after much adjuration, Ixion mentions his infatuation for Juno. The god of love repeats her name in amazement, and at that instant "the stately form of the queen of heaven advanced from a neighbouring bower. Ixion stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground, with a throbbing heart and burning cheeks. Juno stood motionless, pale, and astounded. The god of love burst into excessive laughter." Before he leaves them to their own devices he transfixes the heart of each with one of his arrows.

The consequence was that the divine dinner was kept waiting, and Jove was "in a sublime rage." When the gentlemen rejoined the ladies, Ixion, forgetting all prudence,

went straight to Juno. Mercury, playing piquette with the king of gods, fanned the flame of his wrath, and insinuated grave suspicions with regard to the "miserable mortal." Suddenly Jove throws down his cards, and looks round for Juno. She is not to be found. Nor is Ixion visible. Mercury, despatched in search of them, returns with the announcement that "Her Majesty is resting herself in the pavilion of Cupid, with the King of Thessaly."

"'Confusion!' exclaimed the father of gods and men; and he rose and seized a candle from the table, scattering the cards in all directions." Every one present seized a candle, and followed Jove on the terrace. Cupid, alarmed for his victims, encounters a winged Genius, who describes himself as a cloud, and who, at the other's request, immediately renders the pavilion invisible. Meanwhile the god of love flies to Juno:—

"Juno, Juno," whispered the god of love, "we are all here. Be contented to escape, like many other innocent dames, with your reputation only under a cloud."

Then the mist disperses, and the gods enter the pavilion helter-skelter. Ixion is discovered alone. Jove, thoroughly aroused, will not give his guest the benefit of a doubt. Ixion assumes an air of injured innocence, and prepares to "defend himself;" but Hercules is sent for, and soon has the unfortunate mortal in his grasp:—

"Shall I fetch your thunderbolt, Jove?" inquired Ganymede.

"Anything short of eternal punishment is unworthy of a god," answered Jupiter, with great dignity. "Apollo, bring me a wheel of your chariot."

"What shall I do to-morrow morning?" inquired the god of light.

"Order an eclipse," replied Jove. "Bind the insolent wretch to the wheel; hurl him to Hades; its motion shall be perpetual."

"What am I to bind him with?" inquired Hercules.

"The girdle of Venus," replied the Thunderer.

* * * * *

“Celestial despot!” said Ixion, “I defy the immortal ingenuity of thy cruelty. My memory must be as eternal as thy torture; that will support me.”

The whole fable might have been written for the last sentence. Ambition, even when it o'erleaps itself, often has glorious memories; and even eternal torture (Mr. Disraeli's moral would imply) is supportable, with the eternal memory of fruition.

The Infernal Marriage, published not long after *Ixion in Heaven*, relates the abduction of Proserpine by Pluto, her descent into the infernal regions, her initiation of reforms during the honeymoon, when she set all Hades by the ears, scarcely gaining thanks from Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Ixion, whom she relieves from their torments. After the month had passed away, the physicians order a visit to Elysium; and on those delightful plains the queen of hell recovers the gaiety and lightness of heart which she was fast losing in the company of Pluto, the Fates, and the Furies. The fable ends abruptly, being manifestly in an incomplete form; but so far as it goes it is sufficiently connected in its apparent signification. It is, in fact, an apologue of human life. A worldly marriage, for the sake of “an establishment” rather than of love; the inevitable *ennui*; the solace obtained by the bride in fashionable society; the gradual hardening of the heart induced thereby;—these are the motives of Mr. Disraeli's story, which is more distinctly of a satirical character than *Ixion*.

The worldly parent in this case is the father, not the mother. Ceres complains to Jove of the lot of her daughter, and the god consoles her by speaking of their daughter's “brilliant match” and splendid “establishment.” She thinks that Mars would have made a better husband, but Jove sneers at him. “A young officer only with his half-pay, however good his connections, is surely not a proper

mate for our daughter." She mentions Apollo, but the king of heaven has no opinion of a literary son-in-law. "These scribblers are at present the fashion, and are very well to ask to dinner; but I confess a more intimate connection with them is not at all to my taste." Apollo is courted because everyone is afraid of him. "He is the editor of a daily journal, and under the pretence of throwing light upon every subject, brings a great many disagreeable things into notice, which is excessively inconvenient. Nobody likes to be paragraphed; and for my part I should only be too happy to extinguish the *Sun* and every other newspaper, were it only in my power."

The Elysium in which Proserpine seeks relief from her *ennui* is manifestly a transcript of London society, as Mr. Disraeli had found it; and the description is full of shrewd observations on the manners of high life—not all original, perhaps, but yet sufficiently telling. Thus he remarks that "whatever they did, the Elysians were careful never to be vehement; a grand passion, indeed, was unknown in these happy regions." If two young people of different sexes "took an irrational interest in each other's society," they were immediately subjected to a wholesome and severe discipline by their eminently moral associates:—

"All the world instantly went about, actuated by a purely charitable sentiment, telling the most extraordinary falsehoods concerning them that they could devise. . . . This curious process of diffusing information was known in Elysium under the title of '*being talked about*;' and although the stories thus disseminated were universally understood to be fictions, the Elysians ascribed great virtue to the proceeding, maintaining that many an indiscreet fair one had been providentially alarmed by thus becoming the subject of universal conversation; that thus many a reputation had been saved by this charitable slander. There were some malignant philosophers, indeed, doubtless from that silly love of paradox in all ages too prevalent, who pretended that all this Elysian morality was one great delusion, and that this scrupulous anxiety about the conduct of others arose from a principle, not of Purity, but of Corruption. The woman who is '*talked about*,' these

sagos would affirm, is generally virtuous, and she is only abused because she devotes to one the charms which all wish to enjoy."

Thus Dido, "one of the finest creatures that ever existed," holds her own with difficulty, whilst Helen is "the very queen of fashion;" and all because Helen has favoured fifty instead of one, and through all her scrapes has contrived to retain the countenance of her husband.

There is an amusing instance of the author's "conceit," introduced in the conversation of the three victims of the gods to whom Proserpine had given a respite. Tantalus observes to Sisyphus that they were both acquainted with the cause of their companion's presence in the infernal region, "since his daring exploit had had the good fortune of being celebrated" (at the date of Proserpine's marriage to Pluto!) "by one of the fashionable authors of this part of the world."

"'I have never had time to read his work,' interrupted Ixion. 'What sort of fellow is he?'

"'One of the most conceited dogs I ever met with,' replied the King. 'He thinks he is a great genius, and perhaps he has some little talent for the extravagant.'

"'Are there any critics in hell?'

"'Myriads. They abound about the marshes of Coeytus, where they croak furiously. They are all to a man against our author.'

"'That speaks more to his credit than his own self-opinion,' rejoined Ixion."

Another satire, *Popanilla*, was published in 1827. It is more of a pure "extravagance" than a satire, and belongs to the class of which *Gulliver's Travels* is perhaps the best existing type. The reader will probably consider that enough has been said of Mr. Disraeli's earlier writings, and that it is time to pass on to his political achievements.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE.

IT was at the age of twenty-seven that Mr. Disraeli made his first attempt to enter Parliament. Literature had not brought him all the fame to which he aspired, though to be sure his novels and *jeux d'esprit* had increased the repute which he inherited from his father, and to which his manners and conversation in London drawing-rooms had in some measure contributed. This repute was of a kind more generally valued in those days than it would be now. It was the repute of an eccentric genius, of a man who strove not unsuccessfully to amuse and dazzle, but who strove apparently for little besides; of a man who laid himself out, whether in his writings or in everyday life, to please, to conciliate, and to get on. Disraeli went, as we have seen, to the house of the Hon. Mrs. Norton; he went yet more frequently to the house of the Countess of Blessington, and he never lost an opportunity of gaining an influential friend.

The first thing necessary for him, after making up his mind to seek political employment, was to take stock of the times, to consider the chances that presented themselves, and to select the colours, the standard, the leader under

whom the battle of ambition should be fought. We shall presently see how he made use of his social and literary acquaintance in pushing his political fortunes.

The political situation in 1832 is well described by Mr. T. P. O'Connor in his *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*. The Ministry of Earl Grey had just passed the Reform Bill. The Whigs were content with what they had done, and deprecated further agitation for reform, whilst the more pronounced Liberals were still anxious for a movement in advance.

"In their eyes the Reform Act was but one step on the road of progress. The State was still worm-eaten by many evils. There was need for a reform of the Corporations; the franchise ought to be further lowered; the voter ought to be protected by the ballot; and the duration of Parliaments should be made shorter. And there was another point on which the difference between the two Liberal sections was aggravated by personal considerations. In those days a monstrous proportion of the revenues of the State went into the hands of sinecurists, and the abolition of this public burden appeared to the more earnest Liberals one of the most crying wants of the time. But very different were the feelings of Lord Grey; for even in that period of lavishly bestowed ministerial favours he was notorious for his liberal, if not shameless, indulgence in the arts of nepotism. The result of all this was that the more advanced Liberals entertained feelings of bitter hostility against Whigs in general, and still more rancorous sentiments against the particular Whigs then in office."

This condition of parties was, for the Liberals, an unfortunate sequel to the carrying of the Reform Act, and it resulted, not long afterwards, in placing the Tories in office. Meanwhile the dissensions between Whigs and Reformers, which were indulged in even on the hustings, stimulated the efforts of the Opposition, and in some cases a Tory was returned by the division of the Liberal vote. Amongst the places where a supporter of Lord Grey was opposed by a Reformer—the term corresponding to "Radical" in our time—was High Wycombe, a petty borough in Buckinghamshire, not far from Mr. Isaac D'Israeli's home at Bradenham.

The Ministerial candidate (at the by-election in June as at the General Election) was Colonel Grey, the third son of the Premier ; and the Reformer who opposed him was Benjamin Disraeli.

Wycombe returned two members for a few score voters—the constituency being practically identical with the Corporation and burgesses. The number polled for Mr. Disraeli in the June election was just one dozen, which seems to have been the aggregate of Tory and Radical voters who cared to endorse the claims of the future Prime Minister. This contest, which preceded the General Election by a few months, would not call for more than a passing word, if it were not for the fact that it was on this occasion that Mr. Disraeli first made a public profession of his political faith. The faith which he professed was very much the same as the faith of Vivian Grey, in his novel of that name ; it was the principles of the “New Union” that he sought, with such a meagre result, to preach and establish at Wycombe. He chose the Whigs as the object of his attack, and he opposed them by a combination of Tories and Reformers. Given the object, and given the combination, it was still open to him to incline personally to either of the two parties in the alliance, and to call himself by the name of Reformer or Tory. Unfortunately for himself, he seems to have been comparatively indifferent on this point, and to have made his profession before he had made up his mind. He declared himself a Reformer, and adopted almost off-hand the tenets of Joseph Hume, O’Connell, Roebuck, Burdett, and the other Radical leaders.

Mr. Disraeli had before him at this moment one of the ambitions of his life, and he had thrown himself with characteristic fervour into the stream of politics. Postponing all other considerations to that of his ambition, he seems to have cast about him for the best means of attaining his end ; and perhaps we may find in his acquaintance with Mr. E.

Lytton Bulwer (afterwards Lord Lytton), one great reason why he elected to set out in his political career as a Reformer. Mr. Bulwer was at this time a Liberal, and was on intimate terms with Hume, O'Connell, and others. To him Mr. Disraeli applied for an introduction to these prominent men; and though they knew nothing of him personally, and nothing of Wycombe, both Hume and O'Connell wrote letters expressing a hope that he would be returned. These letters were placarded throughout the borough, and it was upon the strength of them that the young Reformer entered on the contest.

The Reform Act, though passed, had not come into operation at the June election. Parliament was dissolved in August, and at the end of the year 1832 the General Election took place. Mr. Disraeli was once more the advanced Liberal candidate, and as such he issued an Address in which he promised to vote for the ballot, for triennial Parliaments, for the abolition of "the taxes upon knowledge," for "the most rigid economy and the most severe retrenchment," for the abolition of slavery, for a revision of the Corn Laws and the commutation of tithes. This was, in brief, the programme of the Reformers after the passing of the Reform Act. At the same time Mr. Disraeli assured the electors that he came forward "wearing the badge of no party, and the livery of no faction." He claimed the support of "every man who values the independence of our borough;" he opposed "the disgusting system of factious and intrusive nomination"—this being a hit at Colonel Grey, the son and private secretary of the Premier—and appealed for support in "this 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."

The conclusion of this fervid Address—which was in several senses too strong meat for the voters of Wycombe—was in the following terms :—

“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 shipowners 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 the 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 !”

The most genuine and uncompromising Radical might have written this. It is interesting to think what would have happened if the Wycombe electors had taken Mr. Disraeli at his word, and made him their member. How long would he have remained the ardent advocate of reform, and how far would he have pushed his democratic zeal as a unit in the party to which Lord John Russell was even then attaching himself, and to which Mr. Gladstone was, some twenty years afterwards, to belong ? And would Mr. Disraeli have passed, as a Liberal, the second electoral Reform Bill, which he passed as a Tory in 1867 ?

But the Wycombe electors once more refused the young enthusiast, as they did also a third time, at the end of 1834, when he came forward as a moderate Tory. His final determination to adopt the Tory side in his advocacy of the “New Union” seems to have been suggested or strengthened by his acquaintance with Lord Chandos, one of the most uncompromising of the Tory leaders. There is evidence that, up to the beginning of December in this year, the ambitious young politician, bent on getting into Parliament

by one means or another, was wavering between the two extremes.

There was a reaction in politics at this moment; not of any considerable magnitude, as events were presently to show. But, so far as it went, it was a reaction towards Conservatism; and Mr. Disraeli (who, as we have seen, was conscientiously unscrupulous in pursuing an approved end by every available method) had cast in his lot with the Tories. He delivered a speech at Wycombe in support of Sir Robert Peel, and subsequently published it in a pamphlet under the title of *The Crisis Examined*. In this speech he still condemned Church rates, both in Ireland and England, as well as some other abuses which had roused his indignation in 1832; but he no longer demanded the ballot or triennial Parliaments. This declaration of opinion is specially notable for a passage in which Mr. Disraeli gave his ideas on the position and duty of a statesman—ideas which were by no means novel at the time, and which have since fallen into greater disrepute than they were wont to labour under forty or fifty years ago.

A statesman, Mr. Disraeli considered, is "the creature of his age, the child of circumstance, the creation of his times." It was not so much his duty to form, guide, and elevate opinion as it was to fall in with and be guided by opinions which he might find serviceable to him in his quest of power. He must be above all things practical. "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 beneficial and the most feasible manner in which affairs are to be carried on." Expediency more than propriety is to be the rule of his conduct; opportunism more than consistency is to be set before him as his standard. "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."

This political philosophy, it will be observed, is not extracted from a novel, but from a speech addressed to the voters in a provincial borough, and afterwards printed in a pamphlet. The passage may be regarded as a sort of apology for Mr. Disraeli's public conduct up to that moment ; but it is undoubtedly opposed to what we in these days understand by political morality.

Speaking soon after his third defeat at a Conservative banquet, Mr. Disraeli took occasion to say that he was in no way disheartened. He did not feel like a beaten man, but likened himself to a famous Italian general, who, being asked in his old age why he was always victorious, replied that it was because he had always been beaten in his youth.

The saying was crude and confident, but we can detect in it now the spirit that foretold a future success.



CHAPTER X.

LORD BEACONSFIELD'S CONSISTENCY.

IN April 1835, Mr. Disraeli made another attempt to enter Parliament; and this time it was more distinctly as a democratic Tory that he preferred his claims. It is instructing to mark how the eagerness of his ambition displayed itself in this election, how he adapted his efforts, his profession of political belief, his public writings and speeches, to the end which he had in view. He was bent on success, and he omitted nothing which might help him to gain it. His determination and courage were never more conspicuous; and certainly both virtues were necessary in order to carry him through the ordeal.

Sir Robert Peel's first short Administration had lasted barely five months, ending in April of the year just mentioned. Mr. Labouchere having received the appointment of Master of the Mint, with a seat in Lord Melbourne's Cabinet, it became necessary for him to appeal to his constituents at Taunton for re-election; and the thrice-rejected suitor of Wycombe at once made up his mind to do battle with the Cabinet Minister. Now, Mr. Labouchere was a Whig; and Mr. Disraeli had sworn that the Whigs should repent the opposition which they had offered him.

He might have fought Mr. Labouchere as a Radical; but, as we have seen, a change had been coming over the mind and prospects of the young politician. His latest friendships had been made amongst the Tories; and the Tories were anxious to beat Mr. Labouchere. It seemed to follow as a matter of course that he should contest Taunton as a supporter of Sir Robert Peel.

The outspoken prints of the day passed some very severe comments on Mr. Disraeli's change of front. In spite of his failures at the polling-booths, he continued to bring himself into great prominence; and his action in the West-country borough was freely canvassed. "An Elector of Westminster," writing to the *Morning Chronicle*, expressed doubt as to the truth of a statement that "Disraeli the Younger" had been sent to Taunton by the Conservative Club. "This statement," the writer declared, "(so far, at least, as the Conservative Club is concerned) must, I think, be a gross mistake, seeing that Mr. Disraeli professes to be a Liberal, and, in proof thereof, is actually a member of the Westminster Reform Club, established last year in Great George Street, Westminster, by Messrs. Tennyson, Hume, and others of the Liberal party. Nay, more, proposed to offer himself as a candidate for Marylebone, and, on being told that his principles were considered somewhat doubtful, he upon a recent occasion put forth a pamphlet, entitled, *What is He?* in which he recommends triennial Parliaments, election by ballot, and that the Tories should coalesce with Radicals." Mr. Disraeli, however, denied in one of his election speeches that he had ever been a member of this club; and the fact appears to have been that, although he was put up in July 1834, by Mr. H. Lytton Bulwer, and duly elected, he had never paid his subscription; and he had withdrawn from the Club in February, on the ground (as stated in his letter to the secretary) that his engagements had not permitted him to avail himself of its privileges.

This was a comparatively trifling matter. Tho Taunton election was distinguished by other controversies of a more bitter and serious kind.

The elasticity of Mr. Disraeli's political principles at this period is worthy of special note, and it is interesting to compare his change of party with the more slow and commonplace conversion of Mr. Gladstone from Toryism to advanced Liberalism. The contrast affords a testimony to the great versatility and ingenuity of the former. It has been seen that in his pamphlet on Ireland, *The Crisis Examined*, Mr. Disraeli had condemned the Irish Church Establishment, and had declared that "twelve months must not pass over without the very name of tithes in that country being abolished for ever." This was at the end of 1834. In his Taunton election address the Conservative candidate "could not understand the principle by which the Whigs would reform, as they call it, the Church of Ireland. It appeared to him that they offered a premium to the Whiteboys to destroy the Catholics." And on the question of tithes, he said:—"If the Irish Church has always been the intolerable nuisance it is described, why has this nuisance been so lately discovered? It is upon record that, twenty years ago, tithes were paid more readily than rents are now in England. Gentlemen, it is agitation that has made the nuisance, and it is the Whig party who, for their own ends, have encouraged the agitation."

The remarkably rapid change attested by these words is an instance of the speaker's versatility, which has been so often and so conclusively proved in the course of his public career. And it is an instance of his rhetorical art and imperturbable coolness that he declared, in the same speech, "If there is anything on which I pique myself it is my consistency."

Mr. Disraeli's explanation of this claim to consistency ought, in fairness, to be quoted:—

"Here," he said, "is my consistency. I have always opposed with my utmost energy the party of which my honourable 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 into public life, I found the high places of the realm filled by the party of which my opponent is a member. . . . I considered it my duty to oppose the Whigs, and to ensure their discomfiture, and, if possible, their destruction as a party. There was then no constitutional opposition to keep the Government in check. That great Tory party, which is now so strongly constituted, was a shattered, a disabled, and a dishonoured fragment, self-confessing their own inability to carry on the King's government, and announcing the impending revolution. Gentlemen, had I been a political adventurer, I had nothing to do but 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 for a party to keep the Government in check, and to bring together the old constitutional balance? I thought they existed in the Liberal Tories, and in those independent Reformers who had been returned to Parliament independently of the Whigs. I laboured for their union, and I am proud of it. Remember the Whig policy. They had a packed Parliament. They had altered the duration of Parliament once before."

Mr. Disraeli referred to the time, in the reign of George I. (1716), when the Septennial was passed. The plea then urged in favour of the change from triennial to septennial elections was that a "popish faction were designing to renew the rebellion in this kingdom," and that a foreign invasion was feared, in the interests of the Pretender. These being the reasons that were given, of course the Act was made to apply to the House of Commons then in existence; so that, apart from the alleged necessity of the moment, the measure was undoubtedly a bad constitutional precedent.

Mr. Disraeli continued:—

"I wished to break their strength by frequent appeals to a misgoverned people. Therefore I advocated the recurrence to those triennial Parliaments which it was once the proudest acts 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. And now, where is my inconsistency?"*

It must at any rate be allowed that Lord Beaconsfield has throughout his life been consistent in his resolute opposition to the Whigs. To "dish the Whigs" has always been his aim and his boast. He has been pre-eminently a man of party, rather than of political principles; and thus he has shown a kind of paradoxical consistency even in adopting irreconcilable principles at brief intervals, holding himself fully justified so long as he was on every occasion promoting the same personal cause. This is a consideration which, if it be fairly weighed and followed up, may go far to explain the public conduct of Lord Beaconsfield; though, to be sure, it explains that conduct on grounds which will not be equally satisfactory to all—which can only be satisfactory to Tories, and amongst them only to such as believe that it is justifiable to adopt Radical measures in order to out-bid the Whigs.

The most noteworthy incident of this Taunton election, which must occupy a place in any biography of Lord Beaconsfield, was the quarrel which he had with Daniel O'Connell. In the first Wycombe contest a letter of recommendation from the Irish patriot was placarded, as we have seen, in the interests of the young Radical candidate. A good deal of courage had been required in Mr. Disraeli, with his personal associations in London society, before he could have approached O'Connell for such a purpose, even though it was done indirectly through his friends. The Irish question was in a bitter and almost desperate phase, and O'Connell was regarded by many Englishmen as an arch-agitator, responsible for much of the mischief which had befallen his countrymen. Mr. Disraeli had risked the good opinion of many by publishing a letter of recommendation from so

* See Mr. T. P. O'Connor's *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, p. 92.

unpopular a man in 1832; but he set himself right again with these, and also displayed his undoubted courage, by bringing it as a charge against Mr. Labouchere in 1835, that he had been party to a Whig alliance with Mr. O'Connell. He called the latter an "incendiary" and a "traitor;" and perhaps his excuse for these terms might have been that O'Connell had done much in the course of three years to justify such a reproach, even against a man who had gone out of his way to do him a service.

When the Irish leader read of this in the papers he took a signal vengeance on his critic. In a speech at Dublin he declared that "in the annals of political turpitude there was not anything deserving the name of blackguardism to equal that attack." He related the circumstances under which the Wycombe letter had been written; and continued:—

"At Taunton this miscreant had the audacity to style me an incendiary! Why, I was a greater incendiary in 1831 than I am at present, if I ever were one; and if I am, he is doubly so for having employed me. Then he calls me a traitor. My answer to this is—he is a liar. He is a liar in action and in words. His life is a living lie. He is a disgrace to his species. . . . England is degraded in tolerating, or having upon the face of her society, a miscreant of his abominable, foul, and atrocious nature."

These were hard and stinging words, which could scarcely be employed by a public speaker in our own times: but O'Connell went on to say something yet more bitter. He referred to Mr. Disraeli's Hebrew origin:—

"I have the happiness," he said, "of being acquainted with some Jewish families in London; and more accomplished ladies, or more humane, cordial, high-minded, or better-educated gentlemen I have never met. It will not be supposed, therefore, that when I speak of Disraeli as the descendant of a Jew, I mean to tarnish him on that account. They were once the chosen people of God. There was miscreants among them, however, also, and it must have certainly been from one of those that Disraeli descended. He possesses just the qualities of the impenitent thief who died upon the cross, whose name, I verily believe, must have been Disraeli. For aught I know, the

present Disraeli is descended from him ; and, with the impression that he is, I now forgive the heir-at-law of the blasphemous thief who died upon the cross."

This was punishment more grievous than the offence. It very naturally enraged Mr. Disraeli, who replied by sending a challenge to O'Connell's son—the father having, as was well known, registered a vow that he would never fight another duel, after killing one of his compatriots twenty years before. The challenge was declined, whereon Mr. Disraeli wrote defiant letters both to father and son ; and the affair ended for the moment, amidst general ridicule.

The election at Taunton ended in the return of Mr. Labouchere by a large majority.

O'Connell's bitter attack has never been forgotten ; and in the heat of party controversy the "impenitent thief" has more than once been made to do service. The whole quarrel was revived at the end of the same year in the *Globe* newspaper, then a Whig organ. This paper having criticised a short political work, entitled, *A Vindication of the English Constitution, in a letter to a Noble and Learned Lord, by Disraeli the Younger*, the author wrote a letter to the editor, complaining especially of a reference to the O'Connell incident ; and hereupon the *Globe* republished the full account of the quarrel. Mr. Disraeli rejoined in a letter to the *Times*, in which he declared that "the Whig Samson should never silence him by the jaw of an ass." It should be stated that the *Globe* had not wantonly introduced the reference to the Taunton business, since Mr. Disraeli had in his pamphlet himself reopened the matter by a vehement assault on his adversary. "The authorised agitator of the Administration itself," he wrote, "is sent upon a provincial tour of treason . . . the vagabond and overrated rebel—vomiting his infamous insolence in language mean as his own soul !" *

* A full narrative of the circumstances, from beginning to end, will be found in Mr. O'Connor's very pungent work.

The "Vindication" was addressed to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Lyndhurst; and it consisted of a half philosophical, half historical examination of the nature of representative institutions in England. The most striking notion of the author was that the Commons were only one Estate of the realm, "a very limited section of our fellow-subjects"—by no means the general residuum after the King and the Lords had been accounted for—and that the House of Commons was not "the House of the People," nor were the members of the House of Commons the representatives of the People.

This idea, so contrary to the general conception of the character and functions of the English Parliament, is from time to time trotted out by Tory writers, and no one has done more to expound it in our days than Lord Beaconsfield. It recurs in different forms, but always to the same effect—that of detracting from the authority of the representative House as the supreme legislator for the entire people. The members, we are asked to believe, represent simply their own Estate, though they are "invested, for the general advantage of the commonwealth, with certain high functions and noble privileges." The franchise, in its successive extensions, gradually widens the borders of the third Estate; but the bulk of the people, left outside these borders, are either not represented at all in Parliament, or are represented by King, Lords, and representative Commoners impartially. This view has a superficial appearance of correctness; but it may be met by pointing out that the unfranchised masses are potentially identified with the enfranchised; that the possession of the suffrage is only an arbitrary mark of distinction, conferred of necessity by law, and not by grace or privilege, on any one who pays taxes up to a stipulated figure. It is virtually the people themselves who decide upon the exclusion of certain classes from the right of electing representatives; and every unit of the people, paying taxes in some degree, though not in such

a manner as to acquire the title to vote, is necessarily represented by the only branch of the Legislature which can decide the amount of his taxation.

Mr. Disraeli proceeded in his letter to claim for the Tories, and especially for the Tory Commons, the title to be regarded as the national party in English politics. He held up Lord Bolingbroke as a model Tory, and praised him for having "eradicated from Toryism all that absurd and odious doctrine which Toryism had adventitiously adopted." And, generally, he indicated the notion which he subsequently elaborated in a fuller manner, and which has undoubtedly been his most consistent political idea—that of a Tory democracy, the union of the landed and monied gentry with the aspirants for radical reforms, against what he called the Whig oligarchy. It had the appearance of a device rather than of a principle; for the Whigs also had professedly combined the same extremes in the English commonwealth. The device is a very skilful one, though its morality and even its efficiency have ever been contested. The position of Tories (under this interpretation) and of Whigs is necessarily open to the suspicion that they ally themselves with the champions of democratic progress only for the purpose of arresting that progress, and that they quarrel with each other only in rivalry for the alliance with these champions.

Certainly without such alliance neither Whigs nor Tories would be able to pull the reins of power, or to taste the sweets of office; and the Tories who obstinately defy both Whigs and Radical Reformers seem to have a better claim to respect on the ground of honesty. But, as a political theory, Lord Beaconsfield's idea is evidently ingenious and serviceable. And in enunciating, elaborating, and making use of that idea, from his entrance into political life down to the present moment, he does merit the claim for consistency which he preferred before the electors of Taunton.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. DISRAELI IN PARLIAMENT.

THE occasion of Mr. Disraeli's first entrance into Parliament was the General Election of 1837, which was rendered necessary by the death of William IV., on the 20th June. A new monarch must have a new House of Commons, and the accession of Queen Victoria required that her future advisers should receive the direct sanction of the nation.

English politics were in a very unsatisfactory condition towards the end of the late king's reign. Lord Melbourne was a Premier of considerable tact and popularity, and his Cabinet, including Lord John Russell, Lord Palmerston, and Lord Brougham, was by no means a weak one; but the Whigs only counted a majority of about thirty in the Commons, Radicals and Irish members included; whilst in the Upper House they were opposed by an aggressive majority of Tories, under the Duke of Wellington, Lord Lyndhurst, and their friends. The king, moreover, had no fondness for Melbourne. He had dismissed him once, and certainly liked him no better for having to receive him again as his Minister. He was constantly hoping that the Cabinet would resign; and the Tory lords did their best to promote a

result which they knew would be pleasing to His Majesty, though they could scarcely hope to carry on the business of the country with an adverse majority in the representative House.

The Irish question chiefly occupied the attention of Parliament. The Tithes Bill, with its appropriation clause, accepted by Mr. O'Connell and most of the Irish members, had been thrown out by the Lords in 1835, and was brought forward again in 1836. The Government contemplated an arrangement by which the Lords might have got rid of the appropriation, accepting the remainder of the Bill; but the Radicals made such forcible objections to this course that they were obliged to cling to the measure as a whole. Of actual legislation, however, there was hardly any, for the aggressive majority in the Upper House threw out almost every Bill which came up to them from the Commons. "The Lords," Mr. Greville wrote on the 13th August, "have been bowling down Bills like ninepins. This certainly cannot go on; either the Tories must come into power again, or the Whigs must do something to control the House of Lords, or the Lords must lower their tone and adopt more moderate counsels." Out of doors, the same writer thought, people did not care. "While the revenue presents an excess of two millions, and everything flourishes, political excitement is impossible." But according to the Radicals—men like Sir William Molesworth, Leader, Grote, Joseph Hume, O'Connell, and their friends—it is not so much the people as the Premier himself who ought to be reproached with apathy.

When the country was called upon to elect a new House of Commons, Mr. Disraeli asked the suffrages of the Maidstone electors, in the Tory interest. He coalesced in his candidature with Mr. Wyndham Lewis, their Radical opponent being Colonel Perronet Thompson, one of the agitators for a repeal of the Corn Laws, and author of the

Corn Law Catechism. In his address to the constituency, Mr. Disraeli declared himself to be "an uncompromising adherent to that ancient constitution which once was the boast of our fathers, and is still the blessing of their children;" and in one of his speeches he claimed that he was "filling the same place, preaching the same doctrine, supporting the same institutions, as I did at Wycombe."

Possibly, as we have already admitted, he was in one sense consistent, inasmuch as he held certain views which he believed to be worthy of the adoption of his countrymen. But he no longer advocated triennial Parliaments and the ballot; he no longer protested against the Irish tithes, or pledged himself to uncompromising economy.

The issue of the election was that Mr. Disraeli stood second on the poll, Colonel Thompson being defeated. The appeal to the country had given the Whigs a slight majority. They numbered 337, against 321 supporters of Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington; and thus it was necessary that Lord Melbourne should again be entrusted with the formation of a Ministry.

Parliament met in December, and Mr. Disraeli took the earliest opportunity of plunging into the surges of political controversy. At any rate his courage did not fail him, for it was with his old friend O'Connell that he first crossed swords. Irish affairs were uppermost in all men's minds; the sister kingdom was in one of its chronic states of agitation and ferment. At the beginning of the session a warm debate arose out of the Spottiswoode subscription for assisting the Protestant candidates in Irish constituencies, and O'Connell had bitterly replied to a bitter attack from Sir Francis Burdett, when the junior member for Maidstone rose to make his maiden speech. The circumstances under which he attempted and failed to gain a hearing are familiar enough. In his bottle-green frock-coat, his white waistcoat, his "network of glittering chains," and his fancy

pantaloons, he offered an irresistible temptation to his critics, on the other side of the House; and the Ministerialists, tickled at once by his appearance and his eccentric mode of delivery, undoubtedly gave him a cruel reception. He made an injudicious beginning also, by attacking O'Connell, for everyone of his hearers must have known the particulars of their long-standing quarrel. The speech, therefore, was a decided failure; but the concluding words were destined to be remembered and recalled many years after they had been uttered. "I am not at all surprised," he said, "at the reception which I have received. I have begun several times many things, and I have often succeeded at last. Aye, sir, and though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me."

It is impossible not to admire Mr. Disraeli's courage and determination. He knew his own strength; they who laughed at him only knew his weakness. The treatment accorded to him might have crushed a feebler man, but it only goaded him to fresh exertions. It was on the 7th of December when he was laughed to scorn; yet, on the 14th of December, he was found once more challenging the judgment of the House.

During the remaining year of the Melbourne Administration, Mr. Disraeli spoke frequently, and for the most part secured attention to what he said. He so far justified his old boast of consistency as to advocate, whenever an opportunity offered, the scheme of political compromise which had suggested itself to him in his boyhood, which he had indicated in *Vivian Grey*, and which he expounded to the electors of Wycombe. During the Chartist troubles in 1839, he boldly expressed his sympathy with the people, and endeavoured to show that the agitators had no quarrel with the aristocracy, who might fairly and reasonably champion their interests against the neglect and misgovernment of the Whigs. The Chartists, he said, complained only

of the rule of the middle class, led by the exclusive Whig families. They complained of the unequal franchise—not of the older franchise, but of that which was the basis of the Government of the day. Let the Tory lords put themselves at the head of the people, and undertake the great social duties which Lord Melbourne and his friends had overlooked, and, on this “new union,” a powerful and popular party might be built up.

Evidently the ambitious politician had an idea in which he believed, and to which he clung with tenacity. It took him many years to inscribe it in the creed of the Tory party; but in this also he was ultimately to succeed.

In 1839 Mr. Disraeli, being then thirty-four years old, married the widow of his late colleague, Mr. Wyndham Lewis. By this step he gained an accession to his fortune, and a wife entirely devoted to his interests, though he abandoned the hope of founding a family. Mrs. Lewis was some fifteen years his senior.

Lord Melbourne’s small majority had practically disappeared in 1841. In the month of May in that year Sir Robert Peel brought forward a vote of censure against the Ministry, which was carried; and a general election was held in the following month. The country declared for the Conservatives, and Peel was charged with the task of forming an Administration. Amongst his colleagues were the Duke of Wellington, Lord Lyndhurst, Mr. Goulburn, Sir James Graham, the Earl of Aberdeen, Lord Stanley, afterwards Earl of Derby, and (at first without a seat in the Cabinet) Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Disraeli had been elected, not for his former borough but for Shrewsbury. He had doubtless expected, or at any rate desired, a post of some kind or other in Sir Robert Peel’s Government; but he was disappointed. It was necessary for him to exercise “the magic of patience;” and he did so, for a time, with a very good grace. He continued his support to the Premier,

though occupying a position during this Parliament somewhat analogous to the position of the so-called Fourth Party in our own times. His force of character, ingenuity of conception and fertility of resource, enabled him to form and lead a section of Conservatives who were christened the Young England Party. Mr. Disraeli, Mr. George Smythe, and Lord John Manners claimed a certain independence in action like that which was claimed nearly forty years later by Mr. Gorst, Sir H. Drummond Wolff, and Lord Randolph Churchill—not in the obstruction of Parliamentary business, but as regards their attitude as a party within a party. We shall presently see, in our examination of the books written by Mr. Disraeli at this period in his career, of what kind were the political maxims and conclusions impressed by him upon his aristocratic friends.

The Young England Party did not come to much. The elements of which it was made up did not easily coalesce. There was ambition, there was (at least in one mind) astuteness, there was loyalty, faith in the saving virtues of aristocracy, audacity in claiming the chief direction of affairs for the younger generation, at the same time that ancient manners and customs were preferred above those that were modern. But the creed was too newfangled to commend itself to a large number of influential men, and it is not to be wondered at that the heads of the great political houses on the Tory side looked with uneasiness and suspicion on the doctrines themselves, and on their principal exponent. It is on record that the fathers of Lord John Manners and Mr. Smythe—the Duke of Rutland and Lord Strangford respectively—saw with regret the influence which Mr. Disraeli exerted over their sons, and even attempted to counteract it. With such forces at work against him it could not be expected that his bold scheme should lead to immediate practical results.

During the Parliament of 1841 Mr. Disraeli displayed

considerable interest in the relations of England with foreign Powers, as well as in the Colonial government of the country. He took frequent occasions of participating in debates on foreign affairs, and manifested an animosity against Russia, and a belief in the policy of strengthening Turkey against her northern neighbours, which he has since developed in so notable a manner. He more than once elicited information or expressed opinions on Eastern affairs when no one else seemed to be disposed to draw attention to them. He also spoke vigorously and effectively on the Afghan War, the Cabul massacre, and the circumstances arising out of it.

Speaking on this latter subject during the session of 1842, Mr. Disraeli took occasion to condemn the foreign policy which had been pursued by Lord Melbourne's Cabinet, which he held responsible for the misfortunes in our eastern dependency :—

“Five years ago,” he observed, “there had been a surplus revenue in England and India of £5,000,000 ; and at present there was a deficiency of £5,000,000. It was rather curious that the deficiency occurred almost simultaneously in the two countries. It was not very unreasonable to infer that the same cause at the same time had destroyed the surplus revenue in both countries. And what was that cause ? It was the foreign policy of the late Government which had had this disastrous effect, and rendered necessary the present increase of taxation. What was the policy that had produced the great expenditure, and consequent deficiency ? The country knew little about it. We were engaged in a war which had never been announced to Parliament by the Sovereign, which had never been developed by the Ministry, and which had never been sanctioned by the nation. Nothing could have been more remarkable than that a Government should have commenced a war without consulting the House of Commons, that they should have experienced the greatest disasters, destroyed the supplies of two great empires, involved both empires in debt, and escaped from office without the slightest comment or inquiry. The first duty they ought to perform was, without reference to party, without giving any opinion on what was past, to investigate the causes which led to the wars in India, and to the financial difficulties which had followed them.”

Meanwhile the Irish question continued to grow more and more serious. This was a subject on which, as we have seen, Mr. Disraeli had at an early age expressed a special interest; and in the session of 1844 he took a somewhat remarkable course in reference to it. Lord John Russell brought forward, early in February of that year, a motion for inquiring into the condition of Ireland, and severely criticised the action of the Executive during the past two or three years. Now, Lord John Russell has himself observed,* in referring to this particular question, that Sir Robert Peel, "powerful, popular, and successful" though his Ministry was, "did not hesitate, when he thought it essential for the public good, to risk the fate of his Ministry on behalf of an unpopular measure. He felt deeply that Ireland was his difficulty; he had abandoned in 1829 those doctrines of Protestant ascendancy, and those exclusive laws which maintain a Protestant garrison in Ireland—doctrines and laws to which he had clung with so much tenacity in the earlier part of his political career. But he had not gained the confidence of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and they obstinately refused favours at his hands which they would have been willing to accept from a Liberal Administration. To a man of the large mind of Sir Robert Peel the alienation of Irish opinion and affection must have appeared a serious evil in the presence of domestic embarrassments and foreign complications." He therefore made efforts to conciliate the Catholics; and one of his proposals for the endowment of Maynooth College, was supported by Lord John Russell and a few other Liberals. But the Maynooth grant was practically the limit of Sir Robert Peel's courage in regard to Irish legislation. He thought he had gone far enough, and that what remained to be done might be safely left for others who should succeed him. It

* *Recollections and Suggestions*, p. 211.

is worthy of note that Lord John Russell, having voted with the Conservative Premier in 1842 on an Irish question, turned him out of office on another Irish question in 1846. The point of departure was found in 1844, when the Opposition affirmed the responsibility of the Ministry for the unsettled and disorderly state of the country. It was then that Lord John Russell proposed his resolution for an inquiry; and he was supported in the demand by Mr. Disraeli, who pressed with considerable force the main arguments of those who at different times have contended for Irish reform.



CHAPTER XII.

DISRAELI AND SIR ROBERT PEELE

THE period of Sir Robert Peel's memorable Administration was the period of the Free Trade movement, when, in spite of the Conservative majority elected in 1841, the agitation against the Corn Laws, conducted by Mr. Cobden and his friends, thoroughly converted public opinion, and when great commercial depression and industrial distress had convinced the majority of intelligent men that the trade of the country must be revived by the abolition of all checks and restrictions upon its growth. Peel himself, whilst driven to impose an Income-Tax in order to extinguish a heavy deficit, and whilst denying the cogency of the arguments brought forward by the Free Traders, was gradually affected by these arguments; and the modification of his earlier views on the subject was marked by the admission of Mr. Gladstone to his Cabinet, and by the abolition or reduction of duties, in the Budget of this year, in respect of more than seven hundred articles of trade. An Act known as the Corn Act further recognised the necessity of advancing in the direction of commercial freedom, for it provided a modification of the sliding scale by which the duty on foreign corn was regulated. It was

in reference to these measures of the Government that Mr. Disraeli, addressing his constituents in 1843, and replying to certain Conservative critics who had reproached the Premier for opposing the interests of his warmest supporters, declared that Sir Robert Peel was not in office as their tool, but as their Minister.

The complaints, however, of the Conservative malcontents grew continually louder and deeper. The old protective laws, it must be remembered, and especially those relating to corn, were favourable to English growers, and to all connected with the landed interests, to the detriment of the people at large. The landlords and the farmers clung to the discredited system of monopoly as long as it was possible to do so; they considered their prosperity to be bound up in it, although there were not wanting sensible men who reminded them that the general increase of national welfare must of necessity be shared by them; and, consequently, they were enraged to think that the very men whom they had assisted into power in 1841, and on whom they had looked as the advocates and champions of their own particular interests, should now show signs of tampering with those interests, and yielding to the clamour for free trade. Little by little, Sir Robert Peel became very unpopular in the counties, and there were ominous signs of discord in the Conservative ranks.

Peel was too open to conviction to please his most uncompromising followers, some of whom doubted the strength of his Tory principles, and did not scruple to call him a traitor to his party. Both in and out of the House he was attacked and accused; and the nearer his views approached to those of the Free Traders, the more bitterly was he assailed by men who had been elected to support him. Amongst the Conservatives who, between 1843 and 1845, began to fall away from his leadership, and to form an irreconcilable group of the majority, was Mr. Disraeli

himself. He had hitherto followed, praised, and even flattered Peel; but it is manifest that at this time his feelings underwent a complete revulsion. He made himself one of the spokesmen of the opposition on the Ministerial side of the House, and began to taunt and abuse his former leader. He was nothing if not rhetorical; and when a man has been very rhetorical on two opposing lines of argument, he is sure to have committed himself to statements in distinct contrast with each other.

It was not at first on the tariffs and the other liberal commercial measures of the Peel Administration that Mr. Disraeli based his criticism. He indulged the bitterness of his tongue on several occasions in 1844 and 1845. A memorable instance of this occurred in the latter year, during a debate on the conduct of Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, who was supposed to have authorised the opening of Mazzini's letters in the Post Office. In the course of his speech he made some sarcastic remarks on the Premier's sincerity, and went on to suggest that he himself had heretofore had relations with men implicated in designs against the State. "One of the intimate friends of the right hon. gentleman," he said, "was concerned in Despard's plot, and now holds office in the right hon. baronet's Administration."

In his reply, Peel showed himself quite a match for the vigour and bitterness of his opponent. Referring to the charge of want of sincerity, he said: —

"It is certainly very possible to manifest great vehemence of action, and yet not 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. . . . The hon. gentleman 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."

In mere word-contest, however, and in the use of phrases that clung to the memory and passed current as political

catch-words, Mr. Disraeli was not easily excelled. A week after the occasion above referred to, he spoke again; and in a fresh attack upon the Premier he gave utterance to a grotesque simile which has often been quoted in later times. "The right hon. gentleman," he said, "caught the Whigs bathing, and walked away with their clothes. He has left them in the full enjoyment of their liberal position, and he is himself a strict conservative of their garments."

Another famous saying of Mr. Disraeli's was begotten of the heat and passion of the Free Trade controversy. A Tory member, Mr. Miles, had proposed a resolution that some part of the surplus which existed in 1845 should be applied in affording relief to the agricultural interest. Mr. Disraeli supported this motion, and without much difficulty he brought his argument round to the vexed question of Protection:—

"For my part," he said, "if we are to have free trade, I, who honour genius, prefer that such measures should be proposed by the hon. member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden), 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 repressing thus publicly my belief that a Conservative Government is an organised hypocrisy."

What Mr. Disraeli meant by this last phrase was more clearly shown in a speech which he made later on in the same session, on the motion of the Government to increase the Maynooth grant from nine to twenty-six thousand pounds—a proposal which he strenuously protested against. "It is not Radicalism," he said, "it is not the revolutionary spirit of the nineteenth century, which has consigned 'another place' (the House of Lords) to illustrious insignificance; it is Conservatism and a Conservative dictator." The political system of his romances, then recently published,



is illustrated in these philippics. What Mr. Disraeli contended for was a Tory party, combining the older aristocracy with the young men of genius and the confiding masses of the people, in place of a Conservatism living on compromises, relegating the young men eager for political life "to a railway committee," and led by "a great Parliamentary middleman."

Whilst Mr. Disraeli was thus defining his position as a Tory, in anticipation of the split in the Conservative ranks which he was one of the first to foresee, his great rival in the future, who had already made his mark in the House, and who was amongst the most favoured and faithful friends of Peel, was playing a most important part in the great controversy of the day, and contributing as much as anyone else to the triumph of the Free Trade movement. Mr. Gladstone was without a seat in the session of which we have been speaking—he having retired from Newark when he adopted a course to which his patron, the Duke of Newcastle, was vehemently opposed. One good result of this temporary abstention from Parliament (as pointed out in the first biography of the present Series) was the publication of a pamphlet on *Recent Commercial Legislation*.

"In this important work, which indicated the tendency of the writer's mind towards inevitable conclusions on the economical questions of the day, Mr. Gladstone reviewed the measures passed within the previous four sessions, and showed that in every case the modification or abolition of duties had stimulated trade, and improved the condition of the country. He expressed a belief that the truest statesmanship would thenceforth consist in removing the fetters from industry, and seeking rather to liberate the hands of working men than to protect isolated classes of the community.

"We may never know how much Sir Robert Peel owed to the clear and energetic mind of his former colleague and friend; but perhaps we shall not err in assuming that this pamphlet, and the practical conversion which it attests, had something to do with the apparent conversion of the Premier to the views of the Manchester school. Be this as it may, the year was not to expire without furnishing a remark-

able confirmation and sanction of his ideas. The time had come for the frank adoption of the principles of free trade. Cobden and the Manchester school had triumphed; Sir Robert Peel had been converted. The fact was allowed to transpire through the newspapers. Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleuch declined to follow the Premier in his new policy; and Sir Robert thought it right to place his resignation in the hands of the Queen."

Lord John Russell not caring to form a Parliament which clearly offered a majority for Sir Robert Peel alone, the latter was induced to withdraw his resignation; and his reconstituted Cabinet proposed and carried the Corn Law Abolition Bill. In the stormy debates of the session of 1846 Mr. Disraeli bore his part prominently enough. During the debate on the Queen's Speech he made an attack on Sir Robert Peel as trenchant and bitter, as shrewd and malicious, as any of his previous ones. He distinctly accused the Premier of betraying his party and his friends, comparing him to a Turkish admiral in the late war between Turkey and Greece, who, at the head of a new fleet, after being embraced by the Sultan, and prayed for by the muftis, quietly sailed his ships into a Greek port, from an earnest desire to bring the war to an end.

Mr. Disraeli has published a very interesting narrative of the circumstances of this memorable session in his *Life of Lord George Bentinck*. Bentinck, a son of the Duke of Portland, had begun his public life as private secretary to his uncle, Mr. Canning, and he was now adopted as the leader of the group of Tories who in the House of Commons resisted the combination brought about by Sir Robert Peel. The Duke of Richmond occupied the corresponding position in the House of Lords; and here certainly were two head-pieces for the "new union" well calculated to assist in such a scheme of party government as the author of *Vivian Grey* and the later political novels had drawn up—a scheme in which the "young men of genius" would have abundant scope for their abilities, if only by virtue of the meagre

talents of the leaders. And, in fact, these ambitions were destined to be in a large measure fulfilled. Though Lord George Bentinck died a few years later, and though the talents of Lord Stanley, afterwards Earl of Derby, were too great to be overshadowed by those of Mr. Disraeli, the latter did, before long, establish himself as the leader of the county party in the Lower House, and did eventually sway the Tory lords, and secure for them the co-operation of a Tory democracy, proudly based upon the "Conservative working-men."

The Corn Law Abolition Bill was actively opposed by the Protectionists, who mustered 242 against it on the second reading; but there was a majority of 97 in its favour. If our purpose, in this volume, were to dwell especially on the Parliamentary career of Lord Beaconsfield—which it is not—we should deal at greater length with the circumstances of the Peel Administration, with Mr. Disraeli's conduct during the Free Trade movement, and with the sequel of the session of 1846. There are, however, two special reasons why we should here pass lightly over this period; one, because our space is limited, and another, because we must reserve for Lord Beaconsfield's writings the pages which might otherwise be devoted to an examination of controversies and political motives. The reader who would care to see in what light Lord Beaconsfield's actions present themselves to the mind of an unsparing critic, will find both text and commentary in the vigorous narrative of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, whose conclusions may here be cited in his own words:—*

"As long as Mr. Disraeli had anything to hope from Sir Robert Peel, he poured upon him the most abject flattery; whether writing in newspapers or in works of fiction, whether speaking on the hustings or in the House of Commons, Mr. Disraeli was never tired of sounding the praises of Peel, and protesting his own devotion to him. On the other

* *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, ch. 11.

hand, we have seen that Mr. Disraeli, when he had lost all hope from Peel, was as lavish in abuse as he had formerly been in praise. In the session just described, we have seen this system of attack reaching its climax and receiving its reward. The reader has now all the material complete for forming a judgment of the motives and conduct of the opposition to Sir Robert Peel, which Lord George Bentinck and Mr. Disraeli led. I believe that I am justified in saying that never was any opposition to any minister conducted with less scruple. I have shown, I think, that no trick was deemed too low for use, that personal vituperation was employed to an extent that nothing could justify; and that vile charges were made against the minister without any foundation, and urged without any decency. And again, I ask the reader not to forget the great central fact of this controversy, that Sir Robert Peel endured all these attacks in a right cause. Events, as everybody now knows, have realised his predictions. A potato blight *did* occur in Ireland, thousands *did* die of starvation; and the repeal of the Corn Laws *has* made enormous additions to the welfare and happiness of the English people. And, therefore, I say that in all this controversy, justice, truth, the welfare of the people, were arrayed on the side of Sir Robert Peel; and injustice, falsehood, and the greed of the few on the side of Mr. Disraeli. Let us not be carried away by the fact that, in a personal sense, Sir Robert Peel for the moment failed, and Mr. Disraeli for the moment succeeded. Let not our judgment be warped by the fact that Mr. Disraeli helped to break up a great party, and to overthrow an all-powerful minister; nor by the fact that he played a great game with great skill. Mr. Disraeli did play for high stakes, and Mr. Disraeli played well. But I have shown the motives with which he entered on the game. The sublimity of the stakes cannot exalt the meanness of his passions."



CHAPTER XIII.

A LOVE STORY.

THE year of Mr. Disraeli's entrance into Parliament, which was the realisation of his greatest youthful ambition, was the year wherein he gave to the world one of the most pleasing of all his works—a love story pure and simple, almost entirely destitute of the mention of politics, in which ambition is only casually spoken of, and from which the repelling glitter and cynicism of the writer's earlier novels are, by comparison, excluded.

Henrietta Temple, dedicated in 1837 to Count d'Orsay, aims at the treatment of a familiar subject in a thoroughly natural and primitive manner; and in some parts, for about one-third of the entire story, we have the simple passion of two ingenuous hearts portrayed for us with a freshness and candour which could scarcely have been expected from the author of *Vivian Grey* and *The Young Duke*.

For the first few chapters the hand that traced the fortunes of the Duke of St. James is easily recognised. In his account of the family of Armine, which came in with the Conqueror and figured more or less honourably in every succeeding reign—always loyal, traditionally Catholic, chronically poor—Mr. Disraeli has a congenial theme. He

describes with manifest relish the career of Sir Ferdinand Armine, the grandfather of his hero, "one of those extraordinary and rarely gifted beings who require only an opportunity to influence the fortunes of their nation, and to figure as a Cæsar or an Alcibiades." Sir Ferdinand left home at eighteen, and entered the service of the Empress Queen of Austria, led a successful expedition against the Turks, and almost contrived to make himself King of Poland. Obligated to flee from Vienna because he had too greatly dared at the Imperial court, he went to Constantinople, turned Mussulman, gained the Sultan's favour, and turned the tables against Austria in the field. After this he became the rage in London, indulged in "fantastic dissipation and frantic prodigality," "married the Lady Barbara Rateliffe, whose previous divorce from her husband, the Earl of Fauleonville, he had occasioned," separated from her within the year, and then "became apparently devout" at Rome. Failing in his bid for a Cardinalate, he returned to England, spent sixty thousand pounds in prosecuting a hopeless claim to an extinct peerage, and probably as much more in beginning to raise a castle near Armine Place. When the French Revolution broke out he "hastened to Paris, became a member of the Jacobin Club and of the National Convention. The name of Citizen Armine appears among the regicides." Soon afterwards he was accused of offering to save the lives of the royal family, and to raise an insurrection in La Vendée, in return for which he was to be made Lieutenant-general of the kingdom. He died theatrically under the guillotine, though the charge against him was false and malicious, because "he could not resist the dazzling celebrity of the imaginary crime."

This is a Beaconsfieldian portrait, which, to be relished, must be accepted without demur or question; and it casts its influence over the whole book. Of course the Armine family was ruined. It was as much as Sir Rateliffe could

do to maintain himself on a pittance at Armine Place. His character is as colourless as that of his father had been full of dazzling tints. A love-match with the daughter of Lord Grandison brought him sober happiness, but no money; and for the next quarter of a century, living quietly in "a fragment of a vast Elizabethan pile, that in old days bore the name of Armine Place," he struggled to avert the sale of the family estates. In the lodge of the new and unfinished castle Sir Ratcliffe gives an asylum to his mother's confessor, Mr. Glastonbury, an altogether delightful character, an antiquary and student devoted to the Armine race, who venerated the memory of Lady Barbara, collected materials for the history of the family, turned the neglected gardens and pleasure-grounds into an earthly paradise, educated Sir Ratcliffe's son, and became his good genius throughout his life. By his self-sacrifice the young Ferdinand obtains a commission in the army, which his father could never have bought for him, and, whilst yet a boy, is sent with his regiment to Malta. Believing himself destined to become his grandfather's heir, after the death of his only male cousin, he is tempted into extravagance, and falls into the hands of the Jews; then, the whimsical old man having died and left his wealth to one of his granddaughters, Captain Armine hurries home at the earnest request of his mother, and engages himself to his cousin Katherine, in order to secure the money which he had expected to inherit.

All this is preface. Now the love story is to begin.

Ferdinand leaves his parents and his cousin at Bath, and seeks his old tutor, Glastonbury, at Armine Place. The intercourse between the guileless man and the fresh and noble, though somewhat unstable youth, is admirably described. Captain Armine eagerly reports his triumph to Glastonbury, and the two begin to dream of the glorious restoration of the family which is to be effected by means of

Katherine's money. But now, standing as a man on the estate of his ancestors, with the influence of his famous grandfather descending upon him, and with the feelings of manhood revealing themselves to him in a new and more romantic light, Ferdinand's soul is tormented by doubts and questionings hitherto strange to him. He has accepted the duty imposed upon him, and has unhesitatingly grasped at the opportunity afforded him of setting up the fortunes of his decayed house by a convenient marriage. But has he, in so doing, practically closed his ambitions and limited his future life? Is he anything better than a sacrificial victim? Alone, in the grounds of Armine Place, he throws himself on the turf and falls into a reverie.

"Conceal it as I will," he exclaimed, "I am a victim; disguise them as I may, all the considerations are worldly. There is, there must be, something better in this world than power and wealth and rank; and surely there must be felicity more rapturous even than securing the happiness of a parent. Ah! dreams in which I have so oft and so fondly indulged, are ye, indeed, after all, but fantastical and airy visions? Is love indeed a delusion, or am I marked out from men alone to be exempted from its delicious bondage? It must be a delusion. All laugh at it, all jest about it, all agree in stigmatising it the vanity of vanities. . . . Let me believe then, oh! let me, of all men, then believe, that the forms that inspire the sculptor and the painter have no models in nature; that that combination of beauty and grace, of fascinating intelligence and fond devotion, over which men brood in the soft hours of their young loneliness, is but the promise of a better world, and not the charm of this one.

"But what terror in that truth! what despair! what madness! Yes! at this moment of severest scrutiny, how profoundly I feel that life without love is worse than death! How vain and void, how flat and fruitless, appear all those splendid accidents of existence for which men struggle, without this essential and pervading charm!"

So he raves, the young man yearning for sympathy, with his soul for the first time opened to the mysterious influences of nature, and acknowledging the strength of unsatisfied passion. It is at such moments that the heart is most

vulnerable—at such a crisis that the strongest and bravest men are led captive.

A trifle decides the fate of Ferdinand. A dog barks. He rises, follows the sound, and a few minutes later is in the presence of Henrietta Temple. A lovely girl, with brilliant complexion, delicate regularity of features, large violet eyes, fringed with long dark lashes; with dark and lustrous hair, and a superb figure of “startling symmetry”—such was the fair creature to whom Ferdinand yielded up his heart from the moment when he first saw her. “There is no love but love at first sight,” the author exclaims. “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. Miserable man whose love rises by degrees upon the frigid morning of his mind!”

Captain Armine gazes at this beautiful apparition until he is interrupted by the voice of her father, who has been on a fruitless search for the gardener of Armine Place. Mr. Temple had thought that none of the family were at home, and he had wished to show the beauties of the gardens and pleasure to his daughter. The disappointment of Henrietta is too much for Ferdinand’s endurance; he comes forward and offers himself as their guide. Without giving them to understand that he is an Armine, he takes them over the estate, showing them all its treasures, including the pictures, armour, and curiosities of Armine Castle—basking all the while in the fascination of Henrietta’s presence. At last they stand before the portrait of Sir Ferdinand, and discover the identity of their cicerone by the remarkable likeness.

Thus the acquaintance is begun. Mr. Temple, who has rented Ducie Bower, about ten miles away, asks Captain

Armine to his house; and the young man jumps at the invitation. For the next few days he is in a state of exaltation. He has already determined that Henrietta is indispensable to him, that he cannot live without her; that all other ties must be broken in order to make her his own. It is not a cold abandonment of duty, but a frenzied and irresistible impulse, against which it would be impossible to struggle.

“Armine—without her, is a desert, a tomb, a hell. I am free, then. Excellent logician! But this woman; I am bound to her. Bound? The word makes me tremble. I shiver: I hear the clank of my fetters, Am I indeed bound to her? Aye! in honour. Honour and love! A contest! Pah! The Idol must yield to the Divinity!”

This former engagement, and Ferdinand's resolution to be rid of it, is the flaw in his otherwise perfect bliss, the snake in his Garden of Eden. Is it a flaw in the love story, or only an artistic heightening of the effect? Certainly there are few romances in the English language which, to a reader who will generously throw his soul into the book, and glide on the current that is made for him, will seem more exquisite and engrossing than the next hundred and fifty pages. Ferdinand flutters and circles round his mistress in absolute fascination. He is consumed and overwhelmed by his passion, which makes him tender and simple as a child. He cannot rest out of her sight, and forgets every care when he is by her side. “Why was there any other world but Ducie? All his brave projects of war, and conquest, and imperial plunder, seemed dull and vain now. He sickened at the thought of action. He sighed to gather roses, to listen to songs sweeter than the nightingale, and wander for ever in moonlit groves.” Whilst he is in this plight, Mr. Temple is unexpectedly called away from home. Calling at the Bower in the morning, and finding the master of the house gone, Ferdinand sees its mistress alone. He is awkward, silent, like a hobbe-

dehoy instead of a well-bred English officer ; he is almost rude, and lets his secret slip out in clumsy acts and sentences. Henrietta, instinctively on her guard, and perhaps thinking that his call ought to come to an end, presently goes out to look at her flowers. He follows her, clings about her, never dreams of leaving her ; and so at length his courage surges up in one great wave. He confesses his love, pleads to her passionately—and tastes the ineffable bliss of knowing that his love is returned.

Henrietta, too, had loved at first sight ; and thenceforth we see both strong torrents of passion rolling side by side. In Mr. Temple's absence the lovers are constantly together ; he is at Ducie Bower all the day, and sleeps by night at a neighbouring farm-house. Of course she is troubled by the thought that for the first time in her life she is deceiving the parent who loves her so much ; but love has overmastered her. Five days have barely passed since she saw Ferdinand for the first time, and he is already more to her than her father. Ferdinand, for his part, had concealed the fact of his former engagement. He had not had the courage to tell her, though he had tried ; and meanwhile he was deceiving his own parents, and Katherine, and Glastonbury—to say nothing of himself. It was cowardice, and even a crime ; and it brought upon him a terrible punishment. But one must read the story itself before judging either his motives or the art of his creator.

The few days that followed were days of supremo bliss for our infatuated lovers. Every word is a caress ; and yet withal there is the freshness, the ingenuousness, and the purity of primitive love. It is Paul and Virginia over again, but a Paul and a Virginia who had seen much of the world before their passion made them children again, Henrietta's excuses for her quick surrender of her heart are delightfully fresh. They must believe in destiny, she tells him ; or he would surely think some ill of her.

“‘I had read of such feelings,’ she says, ‘but did not believe in them. I did not believe, at least, that they were reserved for me. And yet I have met many persons, and seen something more, much more than falls to the lot of women of my age. Believe me, indeed, my eye has hitherto been undazzled, and my heart untouched.’

“He pressed her hand. ‘And then,’ she resumed in a moment; ‘but it seemed not like common life. That beautiful wilderness, that ruined castle! As I gazed around, I felt not as is my custom. I felt as if some fate were impending, as if my life and lot were bound up, as it were, with that strange and silent scene. And then he came forward, and I beheld him so unlike all other men, so beautiful, so pensive! Oh, Ferdinand! pardon me for loving you!’ and she gently turned her head, and hid her face on her breast.

“‘Darling Henrietta,’ lowly breathed the enraptured lover, ‘best, and sweetest, and loveliest of women, your Ferdinand, at that moment, was not less moved than you were. Speechless and pale I had watched my Henrietta, and I felt that I had beheld the being to whom I must dedicate my existence.’”

The dream of happiness comes to an end at last. Mr. Temple returns. Ferdinand awakes to the necessity of disentangling himself from his dangerous perplexities, and bids adieu to Henrietta, having first exacted from her a promise that she would conceal their engagement from her father. He hastens to Bath, on the pretext of gaining his own father's consent before broaching the matter to Mr. Temple; but his real object is to break off his engagement with Katherine. His heart, however, fails him; he cannot do it. The days go by, and poor Henrietta is worn out with anxiety. Presently she hears, by the merest accident, that he is about to be married to another; the gossip of a woman makes her believe that he has deceived her, in weakness if not in sport, when it was impossible he should marry her. Then she sinks under the terrible burden which has been cast upon her, and only the love of her father enables her to survive it.

The remainder of the tale is more thickly peopled with men and women of the world. The “primitive” love-story is at an end, though the memory of it lingers to the end of

the book. And even in this second part we retain the good impression of the author's skill with which we originally set out. There is little that is hollow, little that is wildly extravagant, however much there may be that appears to be improbable. And even the love-story itself continues to entrance us, though after a somewhat different fashion.

The art of the narrator is now displayed in creating a moral balance between the two lovers. Ferdinand's passion had had its birth in the midst of unfaithfulness and deceit. He had cruelly wronged Katherine, and humiliated Henrietta. If the passion itself were anything less than an overmastering revolution of the heart, absorbing and eternal, it would be impossible that he should stand excused. But, from the moment when his secret is revealed, when he lies at death's door in a raging fever, and when, by Glastonbury's delicate intervention, the unhappy Katherine is undeceived, Ferdinand's conduct is without a reproach. The best qualities of his nature have been developed by his sufferings, his levity of soul has departed, and it is clear that for the remainder of his life every thought and fancy will be true to Henrietta Temple.

He would, however, still be unworthy of her, if she remained entirely worthy of him. There is every excuse for her conduct; but nevertheless it creates the artistic balance which was necessary. She travels on the continent with her father, who devotes himself to recalling her heart from the abyss of pain and humiliation into which it had been cast. Lord Montfort becomes acquainted with her, and, by the most delicate approaches, attempts to gain her favour. Her father makes himself the ally of the future duke; and Henrietta has no better ambition than to prove her gratitude to a parent on whom she has brought so great a sorrow. The two men could not fail to exert a powerful influence over her. She believes that Ferdinand is married to his cousin; she professes that she has nothing left to give

but affection and esteem ; but in the end she allows Lord Montfort to consider her engaged to be his wife.

Meantime Katherine Grandison, who has fortunately as much strength of mind and sense as she has money, has freely and nobly forgiven the faithless Ferdinand. He, who has been maddened by the loss of Henrietta, and who is now a mere wreck of his former self, suddenly sees in the paper an announcement of Miss Temple's approaching marriage to Lord Montfort. He is once more almost driven to madness ; he declaims against the fickleness of women ; and his heart is turned to gall. He refuses to go into society ; takes rooms at an hotel in order to escape the restraints of his parents' house, and sinks into a profound melancholy, admitting none but the devoted Glastonbury to his presence. Henrietta, who has become one of the richest of heiresses, returns to England ; and thus the two lovers of Ducie Bower are brought together again.

The character of Glastonbury is now developed in an admirable manner. The good old man, resolved to attempt a reconciliation, meets Henrietta at the house of a common friend, and manages to lead the conversation to the past. She trusts that "all his friends are well ;" and he needs no better opportunity of putting his plan in execution. Their dialogue is worth quoting :—

" 'My dear young lady,' said Glastonbury—but his voice faltered as he added, 'we have had great unhappiness.'

" 'I regret it,' said Henrietta. 'You had a marriage, I believe, expected in your family?'

" 'It has not occurred,' said Glastonbury.

" 'Indeed !'

" 'Alas ! madam,' said her companion, 'if I might venture indeed to speak of one whom I will not name ; and yet—'

" 'Pray speak, sir,' said Miss Temple, in a kind, yet hushed voice.

" 'The child of our affections, madam, is not what he was. God, in His infinite mercy, has visited him with great afflictions.'

" 'You speak of Captain Armine, sir?'

“‘I speak indeed of my broken-hearted Ferdinand ; I would I could say yours. O Miss Temple, he is a wreck.’

“‘Yes ! yes !’ said Henrietta, in a low tone.

“‘What he has endured,’ continued Glastonbury, ‘passes all description of mine. His life has indeed been spared, but under circumstances that almost make me regret he lives.’

“‘He has not married !’ muttered Henrietta,

“‘He came to Ducie to claim his bride, and she was gone,’ said Glastonbury ; ‘his mind sunk under the terrible bereavement. For weeks he was a maniac ; and though Providence spared him again to us, and his mind, thanks to God, is again whole, he is the victim of a profound melaucholy, that seems to defy alike medical skill and worldly vicissitude.’

“‘Digby, Digby !’ exclaimed Isabella, who was at the harp, ‘Henrietta is fainting.’ Lord Montfort rushed forward just in time to seize her cold hand.

“‘The room is too hot,’ said one sister.

“‘The coffee is too strong,’ said the other.

“‘Air,’ said the young duchess.”

Glastonbury has discovered that she loves Ferdinand yet, and he hastens with the news to his old pupil. Armine is delighted ; but his heart sinks again as he finds that the new engagement continues ; and then Henrietta contributes to the restoration of the balance by discussing Ferdinand’s condition with Lord Montfort, and plotting to bring about his marriage to Katherine.

We need not pursue the story in detail—how Katherine taunts Henrietta and her betrothed for their precious plot, refusing to be disposed of in this fashion ; how she unites with Glastonbury, with Lady Bellair (one of Lord Beaconsfield’s most diverting creations), and with a certain Count Mirabel, to unite the two hearts that so manifestly belong to each other. Assisted by Ferdinand’s creditors, who lodge him in a spunging-house, and thus bring matters to a crisis, their exertions ultimately succeed ; and Lord Montfort himself, concluding that Katherine, who loves him, will be likely to make him as happy in the future as a wife whose

heart is pledged elsewhere, becomes the chief instrument of reconciliation.

Thus the lovers, each with something to forgive, are made happy at last ; the day-dream of Ducie Bower is fulfilled ; and the fortunes of the Armine family are restored.

Such is Lord Beaconsfield's love-story, conceived as a fiction pure and simple. We may pass on to consider another love-story, published in the same year, which is based in part upon the experience of actual human beings.



CHAPTER XIV.

BIOGRAPHICAL FICTION.

IT is a fair question how far any author is justified in taking the private lives of actual men and women for the basis of a fictitious narrative, in which certain facts must be represented inaccurately, and actions must be attributed to incorrect or inadequate motives. In the case of public men the same objections do not hold; our history may be a bad one, but it cannot be said that we had no right to put our own interpretation on what concerns the people at large. Private individuals, however, may reasonably claim that their actions should not be made public, or, if the world desires to hear about them, that they should be kept within the limits of a straightforward biography. And the surviving relatives and friends of such persons, especially when these are but recently dead, have a right to claim the same exemption on their behalf. It is difficult to conceive a case in which a work of fiction, made up of bare facts and new creations, would not give pain to the nearest connections of those who have thus unconsciously sat for a fancy portrait.

Lord Beaconsfield has frequently introduced living and recently deceased persons into his romances, and perhaps in most instances there has been no ground to complain of the

spirit in which he has done so. Statesmen, indeed, are public men in a special and peculiar sense, and it would be idle to contend that they should not be brought into the fictions of a writer such as Mr. Disraeli was, who had a political moral to convey in almost every book that he wrote. Poets, again, are public men ; and the poets to whom we are introduced in *Venetia* lived constantly and by preference before the eyes of the public. But the wives and children of Byron and Shelley were not, in the ordinary meaning of the word, public characters. They were not all dead when Mr. Disraeli published his romance (in 1837), and he has often been blamed for making use of them in a work of fiction.

He has been blamed for another reason ; and yet it is a reason which goes far to conceal any reproach that may be made against him on the former account. Possibly with this very object, and in order to minimise the objection which he saw might be raised by his critics, Lord Beaconsfield confounded the character and personality of Shelley and Byron ; made the former—or rather the personage most resembling him—some score years older than the latter, gave the pseudo-Byron to him as a son-in-law, and in various other ways confused and obscured the identity of his puppets. Whatever may be thought of the good taste of *Venetia*, on the one hand, its art, on the other, cannot be regarded very highly.

Venetia was dedicated to Lord Lyndhurst, as *Henrietta Temple* was dedicated to Count d'Orsay—the original, in some sense, of Count Mirabel. In the “general preface” to his works, Lord Beaconsfield has spoken of these two men as the best friends he ever had. The “inimitable d'Orsay” was “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.” Of Lord Lyndhurst his friend observes that the world has recognised his political

courage, versatile ability, and masculine eloquence; "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."

It may be remarked, in passing, that one of the intimates of Lord Lyndhurst, at any rate in his youth, was Chief-Justice Campbell, who does indeed bear testimony to Copley's "political courage," but only by pointing out that he had been bold enough to accept the offers made to more than one clever young barrister by the Liverpool Government, and to change his political principles for the bribe of office and emolument.

The story of Byron's and Shelley's life is familiar enough to their countrymen. Let us see how the abundant materials for a romantic history have been manipulated by Lord Beaconsfield.

Venetia is the beautiful and only child of Marmion and Lady Annabel Herbert. When we are introduced to her she is living in close retirement with her young mother at Cherbury, away from all society, and free from all conventionality. Of her father she has not been told a single word, except that he is still alive; and she is consequently very eager to know all about him. Near to Cherbury is Cadurcis Abbey, and thither comes to live its boy-proprietor, Plantagenet Lord Cadurcis, in the charge of a rude and vulgar, albeit well-born mother. Lady Herbert, breaking through her reserve, on the recommendation of the rector of Cherbury, pays a visit to Mrs. Cadurcis; and very soon a warm attachment has sprung up between the two young folks. This connection is interrupted by a desperate quarrel between the young lord and his mother. The latter strikes her son in a fit of ungovernable rage, and Cadurcis, according to previous warning, rides off from the abbey on his pony. He falls in with a family of gipsies, who give him a hearty welcome, trusting at all events to make something

by him before they part. Of course there is vast consternation at Cadurcis Abbey and Cherbury; but at length a clue is obtained, the boy is recovered, and he is brought home again to find his mother dead. After this he lives for a while at Cherbury, and becomes a fast friend of Venetia. Then he is sent to Eton, and the Herberts see no more of him for five years.

In the meantime Venetia, during the temporary absence of her mother, has the luck to discover a secret chamber, in which she finds a portrait of her father—a sublimely beautiful man, who enchants and fascinates the daughter as she gazes on his features. She also finds a volume of poems in manuscript, and one of these, written “on the night our daughter was born,” is quoted in full—the thoughts of a Shelley as interpreted by Benjamin Disraeli.

When Lady Herbert returns to Cherbury, Venetia is at death’s door with a fever; and in her delirium she betrays the secret. Thereupon the distressed mother, whose concentrated resentment against her poet-husband is well suggested, betakes herself to the private chamber, and calmly destroys the portrait with an “ancient dagger,” tears up the inspired volume, locks once more the room which had been her bridal chamber, and casts the key into a well. Venetia recovers; and though the painful subject rankles in the hearts of the unfortunate mother and daughter, it is never referred to.

Cadurcis returns, is soon more than ever in love with his old playmate, proposes to her, and is refused. She acknowledges that she loves him—as a brother, and perhaps more dearly still; but her father’s image fills her mind; and on this point Cadurcis, who has imbibed the prejudice of society against Marmion Herbert, takes offence. He leaves Cherbury without taking leave of the ladies; and they next hear of him in London as an original but very unorthodox poet. His last words to Venetia had contained an insult

which she thought it impossible to forgive. She had spoken of her father as a genius and a poet, and Cadurcis, stamping with passion, had exclaimed :—

“A genius and a poet ! Are these fit terms to use when speaking of the most abandoned profligate of his age ? A man whose name is synonymous with infamy, and which no one dares to breathe in civilised life ; whose very blood is pollution, as you will some day feel ; who has violated every tie, and derided every principle, by which society is maintained, whose life is a living illustration of his own shameless doctrines ; who is, at the same time, a traitor to his king and an apostate from his God !”

After this impertinence and priggishness, Venetia is not a little surprised to hear that Lord Cadurcis has himself followed very closely in her father’s footsteps, that he is fast acquiring the reputation which he had bestowed on Marmion Herbert. It is easy to divine what might have followed from this curious development of Plantagenet’s character ; but Lady Herbert also has heard the news, and, taking alarm, exacts a promise from her daughter that she will never marry without her consent. In London the old friends meet once more ; Cadurcis renews his offer, and is again refused. He expends on her mother language quite as violent as that which he had formerly lavished on her father ; and indeed the author paints him as a man subject to ungovernable passion, and even a mean vindictiveness.

“Your mother,” he exclaims, “your devoted mother has driven one man of genius from her bosom and his country. Now there is another. Deny me what I ask, and to-morrow’s sun shall light me to another land ; to this I will never return. I will blend my tears with your father’s, and I will publish to Europe the double infamy of your mother. I will swear it solemnly.”

Venetia is firm, and Cadurcis, with another curse for Lady Herbert, leaves her.

Meanwhile a scandal of an extraordinary character, arising out of an affair in which he was more victim than sinner, leads to a duel, in which Cadurcis, on the day following his rebuff

from Venetia, seriously wounds an offended husband. The author here introduces a commentary on the famous text of Macaulay (written, it will be remembered, in reference to Byron) about the spectacle of the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. The idea is carried out to the length of describing an attack on Lord Cadurcis in Palace Yard by an infuriate mob of British novelists, in which the scapegoat is all but murdered. After this he leaves England, swearing that he will never return.

On the Continent he seeks Marmion Herbert, and they become firm friends. After a while Lady Herbert and her daughter travel in Italy; and one day, taking refuge from a violent storm in a small inn at Rovigo, Venetia sees and recognises her father. This brings about a conversation between the husband and wife who had so long been separated; and a reconciliation is almost effected when a certain majestic, handsome, jealous, Italian woman comes into the room and surprises Marmion Herbert on his knees. This is the companion whom he had taken to solace his loneliness; and of course Lady Annabel is outraged, and once more bids her husband "good-bye for ever."

Not long after, by the intermediation of a monk, Marmion again prays for her forgiveness; he humbles himself in the dust, appeals to her on behalf of their daughter, and finally obtains her pardon. Their happiness implies that of Venetia and Cadurcis. At any rate he is able to prosecute his suit with her, and the four live happily together in a villa above Spezzia. There they are visited by Captain Cadurcis, cousin and heir-presumptive of the young lord. They wander about the country, sail and float on the quiet Mediterranean, talk of poetry, philosophy, and love. The imaginary conversations of Shelley and Byron are not so subtle as Landor would have made them, but there is a manifest effort on the author's part to reproduce the characteristics of the two men as far as he could. Thus:—

“ ‘There are passages in Dante,’ said Herbert, ‘not inferior, in my opinion, to any existing literary composition, but, as a whole, I will not make my stand on him. I am not so clear that, as a lyric poet, Petrarch may not rival the Greeks. Shakespeare I esteem of ineffable merit.’ ”

“ ‘And who is Shakespeare?’ said Cadurcis: ‘We know of him as much as we do of Homer. Did he write half the plays attributed to him? Did he ever write a single play? I doubt it. He appears to me to have been an inspired adapter for the theatres, which were then not as good as barns. I take him to have been a botcher-up of old plays. His popularity is of modern date, and it may not last; it would have surprised him marvellously. Heaven knows: at present all that bears his name is alike admired; and a regular Shakespearian falls into ecstasies with trash which deserves a niche in the *Dunciad*. For my part, I abhor your irregular geniuses, and I love to listen to the little nightingale of Twickenham.’ ”

This was not an impossible piece of self-satire in the mouth of Byron. As a poetic judgment, perhaps Mr. Disraeli would desire to appropriate it neither for himself nor for the poet.

Amidst this happiness and reconciliation, the end comes upon them, sudden and swift. The two poets sail out into the bay, on a calm and lovely morning. After noon the sky lowers, a squall overtakes them, and their boat is upset. No help is near. George Cadurcis hunts for traces of them, all that day and night; and at length he finds the corpses of his friends washed ashore, Herbert with a copy of Plato thrust into his bosom.

The reader may judge how near Mr. Disraeli kept himself to the facts with which all England was once so thoroughly familiar. In some details he is as precisely biographical as it was possible for him to be, though in the links that bind his characters together he is, as we have said, purposely wide of the mark. And he still further emphasises the distinction between fiction and reality by making Venetia the wife of the new Lord Cadureis.

CHAPTER XV.

"THE NEW GENERATION."

BETWEEN 1837 and 1845 Mr. Disraeli wrote nothing. It was, as we have seen, the period of his first entry and rising importance in the House of Commons. He had now more serious considerations to occupy his mind, the daily strife of politics employed the faculties which had been devoted to literary ambition and creative romance. The effervescence of early youth, the poetry and satire which had found such strong expression at the outset of his ambitious career, the love stories with which he took leave of the age of adolescence, had now given place to a graver spirit and a more serious intention. Satire, humour, and poetic thought, no doubt continued amongst the characteristics of Mr. Disraeli's style; but they were more distinctly qualified. Political problems had always had a great attraction for the author of *Vivian Grey*; and by the time that he had neared his fortieth year they became the chief and dominant, not to say the exclusive, interest of his life. Everything which Lord Beaconsfield has written since 1840 has been essentially political, in its scope, aim, and achievement.

The novels of *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*, published in

1844, constitute a trilogy of works treating of the same subject, and attempting to treat it in a complete and exhaustive manner. This the author himself has declared to be the design and plan of the stories. He has given us, in a notice prefixed to the last collected edition of his works, an explanation of the trilogy, which is of no slight interest even from the biographical point of view. We have already cited from this statement the passage in which Lord Beaconsfield describes the influence on his mind of his early reading, and the ideas which he had conceived in regard to the divisions of English political parties. From his youth up, Mr. Disraeli was possessed with a high respect for the ancient aristocracy of the country of his birth, and even in his most Radical days he seems to have been persuaded that the power of the great families must always continue to be vast and salutary, if only they had the wisdom to adapt themselves to the circumstances of each succeeding age.

Speaking in the preface above mentioned—which was written in the year 1870—of the “strange mystification by which that which was national in its constitution had become odious, and that which was exclusive was presented as popular,” he gives it as his opinion that the main cause of this confusion of thought and uneasiness of society is “our habitual carelessness in not distinguishing between the excellence of a principle and its injurious or obsolete application. 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.”

Our national institutions were the ramparts of the multitude against the power of privileged classes. The liberty of the masses and the prerogatives of the sovereign, which had

grown up together, also waned together. "Under the plea of liberalism, all the institutions which were the bulwarks of the multitude had been sapped and weakened. The people were without education, and relatively to the advance of science and the comfort of the superior classes, their condition had deteriorated, and their physical quality as a race was threatened. Those who in theory were the national party, and who sheltered themselves under the institutions of the country against the oligarchy, had, both by a misconception and a neglect of their duties, become, and justly become, odious." The oligarchy, having seized on the possessions of the Church or the domains of the Crown, professed certain general principles of liberality and equality, which they did not fairly apply, had acquired the character of a popular party. But there was no national party. One was exclusive and odious, the other liberal and cosmopolitan.

"To change back the oligarchy into a generous aristocracy round a real throne ; to infuse life and vigour into the Church as the trainer of the nation, by the revival of its Convocation, then dumb, on a wide basis, and not, as has been since done, in the shape of a priestly section ; 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 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, appeared to be the course which the circumstances of this country required, and which, practically speaking, could only, with all their faults and backslidings, be undertaken and accomplished by a reconstructed Tory Party. When I attempted to enter public life, I expressed these views, long meditated, to my countrymen, but they met with little encouragement. He who steps out of the crowd is listened to with suspicion or with heedlessness : and forty years ago there prevailed a singular ignorance of the political

history of our country. I had no connection either in the press or in public life. I incurred the accustomed penalty of being looked on as a visionary, and what I knew to be facts were treated as paradoxes."

Ten years later, Lord Beaconsfield adds, affairs were found to be in a more satisfactory condition for the promulgation of these original views. He was in Parliament, and he had found friends and disciples in the House of Commons. He mentions George Smythe and Henry Hope, and he refers to Lord John Manners and others "who have since taken some part in the conduct of public affairs." Of Mr. Hope, the eldest son of the author of *Anastasi*, he says: "Master of a vast fortune, his house naturally became our frequent rendezvous; and it was at the Deepdene that he first urged the expediency of my treating in a literary form those views and subjects which were the matter of our frequent conversation."

The result was seen in the publication of *Coningsby, or the New Generation*. "The derivation and character of political parties," Lord Beaconsfield adds; "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."

The New Generation are the men who came to the front after the Reform Act of 1832; and they are so christened by the Marquis of Monmouth, a Tory magnate deprived of his boroughs and his peace of mind by that terrible revolution, who prophecies evil days for "this Radical-ridden country." The earlier part of the story owes much of its interest—apart from the narrative of the hero's experiences at Eton, which is given with much freshness and spirit—to

Mr. Disraeli's account of the political ideas and parties of 1832-4. It is a subject on which he had formed decided conclusions. The substance of more than one closely-reasoned pamphlet seems to have been worked in with an attractive fiction, for which, after his wont, he has selected aristocratic heroes and heroines, and in which he treats the Government of the nation as a simple matter of intrigue and arrangement in the cabinets of dukes and earls, and the drawing-rooms of duchesses and countesses. His titular hero is the grandson of Lord Monmouth, and around him is woven a delightful romance of friendship and love; but this romance is continually interrupted by disquisitions on the origin of the House of Commons, the representation of the people, the logical sequences of events in English history, the relations and oppositions of the great political parties. Coningsby himself is a Tory by birth and education, but at an early age he conceives that the new Conservatism is a mere delusion and compromise, neither strong enough nor bold enough to face the Whig oligarchy which had assumed and worn the name of Liberalism. In 1832 he had heard his grandfather predict all kind of evils for "the new generation." Two years later he saw the accession of the Conservatives to office—for however short an interval—and already he began to tell his friends that the party was moving on the wrong track, and that they would never be able to save the country.

Mr. Disraeli, it will be observed, wrote this book at the very time (1844) when he displayed in Parliament the first symptoms of revolt against Sir Robert Peel, and it is extremely interesting to note the manner in which he criticises the work of the Conservative Premier. Whether in his own person as the author, or in the person of Coningsby or one of his intimate friends, he gives abundant evidence of the feelings which actuated him at this epoch in his career; and thus there are few of his works in which we can find

more valuable materials for a study of his character and political motives. *Coningsby* reveals the political mind of Disraeli as clearly as *Contarini Fleming* reveals his moral and metaphysical nature.

Within the first few pages the author introduces a sketch of "the political manœuvres of May 1832," when Lord Grey had tendered his resignation on account of the difficulty experienced in passing the Reform Bill. Speaking of the negotiations which were then carried on between the King and the Duke of Wellington, he says: "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. It savoured rather of restlessness than of energy; and, while it proved in its progress not only an ignorance on his part of the public mind, but of the feelings of his own party, it terminated under circumstances which were humiliating to the Crown, and painfully significant of the future position of the House of Lords in the new constitutional scheme."

This opinion, expressed in the lifetime of the popular Duke, was a tolerably bold one; but it is only the beginning of criticism. Sir Robert Peel, who had held aloof from the negotiations of 1832, but who came to the front in 1834, is dissected with more pungency and shrewdness. The Reformed Parliament broke up, as Mr. Disraeli points out, from an "apoplectic plethora" of strength, and from the absence of a legitimate Opposition. When the dissolution took place, at the instance of the King, Sir Robert was in Rome with his family, and Mr. Disraeli acquits him of possessing any "previous and sinister knowledge of the intentions of the Court;" but he proceeds to analyse the position and character of Peel in two or three very interesting chapters, wherein he traces the history of the Tory party from the outbreak of the French Revolution. The Cabinet

of the Mediocrities, presided over by Lord Liverpool, is scarified. Mr. Disraeli scarcely finds a single statesman amongst them, even when the Duke, Canning, and Peel had been introduced to strengthen the Government. He shows how Peel, "the hero of the University and the favourite of the House of Commons," had shrunk during many years from association with "men naturally of inferior abilities, and unfortunately, in addition, of illiterate habits"—how he "escaped from Lord Liverpool, escaped from Mr. Canning, escaped even from the Duke of Wellington in 1832," and how he was "at length caught in 1834; the victim of ceaseless intriguers, who neither comprehended his position nor that of their country."

The author does justice to Peel's talents, to his probity, his self-restraint, and his ambition, and only pities him for having been called on to govern a "perplexed, ill-informed, jaded, shallow generation, repeating cries which they did not comprehend, and wearied with the endless ebullitions of their own barren conceit." It was from such materials, "ample in quantity, but in all spiritual qualities most deficient; with great numbers, largely acried, consollod 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." The Tamworth Manifesto of 1834 is described as "an attempt to construct a party without principles; its basis, therefore, was necessarily Latitudinarianism, and its inevitable consequence has been Political Infidelity."

In short, Mr. Disraeli, though as we have seen he accepted Peel for his leader when he entered Parliament, and spoke highly of him as late as 1841 and 1842, had matured his ideas on the subject of Conservatism when he wrote *Coningsby* in 1844, and gave it as his deliberate opinion that the Premier misused both his opportunities of reconstituting the party on a sure foundation. His estimate of the creed enunciated by Peel in 1834 is well worth reading:—

“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. 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. In the meantime, while forms and phrases are religiously cherished in order to make the semblance to a creed, the rule of practice is to bend to the passion or combination of the hour. Conservatism assumes in theory that everything established should be maintained, but adopts in practice that everything that is established is indefensible. To reconcile this theory and this practice, they produce what they call the ‘best bargain;’ some arrangement which has no principle and no purpose, except to obtain a temporary lull of agitation, until the mind of the Conservatives, without a guide and without an aim, distracted, tempted, and bewildered, is prepared for another arrangement, equally statesmanlike with the preceding one. 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 connections. Conservatism discards prescription, shrinks from principle, disavows 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 impassioned system is even calculated ultimately to create, all power of resistance will be wanting: the barren course of political infidelity will paralyse all action, and the Conservative Constitution will be discovered to be a *Caput Mortuum*.”

Coningsby is happy in the friendships which he has made at Eton, as well as those which he makes in after life. Lord Henry Sydney, Lord Vere, Sir Charles Buckhurst, Eustace Lyle, Lord Eskdaile, Sidonia, Oswald Millbank, men of various ages and various moods, combine with him and with their common creator to develop the views which it is Mr. Disraeli's object to elucidate. More than one of them, including the hero, refuse to go into Parliament as supporters of what they call the party of political infidelity. Coningsby himself declares that, "if Democracy be combated only by Conservatism, Democracy must triumph, and at no distant date. This, then, is our position. The man who enters public life at this epoch has to choose between Political Infidelity and a destructive Creed." The comments of some of the younger men on Conservatism in 1837 is very amusing. Buckhurst comes into Coningsby's rooms at Cambridge to announce the triumph of an old Etonian who had been elected for the borough of Cambridge. But he adds, 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.

“ ‘By Jove!’ said Lord 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.’”

Mr. Disraeli is fond of the term, “Venetian constitution,” as applied to the State constructed by the Whig oligarchy, who, he suggests, originally enriched by the plunder of the Church, sought to establish a kind of aristocratic republic in England, to reduce the monarch to the condition of a Doge, and to surround themselves with guarantees for the maintenance of their properties and privileges. Coningsby entreats his friend Vere, the son of a Whig magnate, to hold himself aloof from the parties of the day. “The constitution introduced by your ancestors having been subverted by their descendants, your contemporaries, beware of still holding Venetian principles of government when you have not a Venetian constitution to govern with.” And Vere goes so far as to admit, in agreement with his friends, that “the Whigs are worn out, Conservatism is a sham, and Radicalism is pollution.”

Oswald Millbank, a man whose life Coningsby had saved at Eton, was the son of a Manchester manufacturer, a great Reformer, and a sworn enemy of Lord Monmouth. The hero falls desperately in love with Oswald’s sister Edith, whom he eventually marries, and meanwhile, he labours to convert his future brother-in-law to the new party. In this he succeeds very fairly. At the end of a long conversation on party creeds, on democracy, on the secondary value of representation, on the value of the Church when duly honoured and upheld, the manufacturer’s son exclaims:—

" 'I have immense faith in the new generation.'

" 'It is a holy thing to see a state saved by its youth,' said Coningsby; and then he added, in a tone of humility, if not of depression, 'But what a task! What a variety of qualities, what a combination of circumstances is requisite! What bright abilities and noble patience. What confidence from the people, and favour from the Most High!'

" 'But He will favour us,' said Millbank. 'And I say to you as Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man!'"

This is a great success; and the reader must decide for himself whether the probabilities are too severely strained in making the elder Millbank resign a Parliamentary candidature in favour of Coningsby.

Such is the spirit of this political romance, which will be read with pleasure by any man who takes an interest in the political history of his country during the nineteenth century. It does much to explain the times that have gone by since it was written, as well as the times of which it actually treats; and it certainly affords a key to the character of Lord Beaconsfield himself. His opinions are constantly impressed on his readers, not only directly, and through his leading characters, but in many a chance expression from the mouths of subordinate personalities. Amongst these are three hangers-on of the party of Political Infidelity: Mr. Rigby, an unprincipled adventurer, a toady and a pamphleteer, who beats everybody with whom he comes in contact; and Messrs. Tadpole and Taper, finely-drawn quidnuncs and glozers, inventors of watchwords and phrases, who in 1834 declare for "A sound Conservative Government—Tory men and Whig measures;" and in 1837 devise the admirable motto, "Our Young Queen and our Old Institutions."

In the concluding paragraph of the book we have an aspiration for the future which Mr. Disraeli must have written with a special significance for his own friends and companions—for Smythe, and Hope, and Lord John Manners, and even Lord George Bentinck—who, indeed,

have sometimes been recognised by sundry traits of character in the personages of the novel itself.

“They stand now on the threshold of public life. They are in the leash, but in a moment they will be slipped. What will be their fate? 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?”

These are grand phrases; and at least we may acknowledge that Mr. Disraeli stood on a far higher level, both literary and political, than when he conceived the crude fancies of *Vivian Grey*. The ambitions of Coningsby were his own ambitions. The dangers which he foresaw for Coningsby's new party were the dangers which he foreboded for himself and his friends. Confident in his own strength, it was impossible for him to be thoroughly confident in the strength of his associates; and time was to bring him the fulfilment, in a large measure, of his forebodings if not of his political hopes.



CHAPTER XVI.

"THE TWO NATIONS."

IN *Sybil, or The Two Nations*, published in 1845, as the second work in his contemplated trilogy, Mr. Disraeli undertook to consider the condition of the people. It was written in a period of agitation—for the growth of which he had already, in *Coningsby*, held the "Government of the Mediocrities" responsible—the period of the Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League. The author had, as he tells us in his general preface, obtained through his friend Thomas Duncombe 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," he further states, "visited and observed with care all the localities introduced; 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."

Here there is promise of abundant interest; for the Chartist movement can never fail to be one of engrossing concern to Englishmen. Once accepting the point of view

from which the author treats his subject, the story amply fulfils these anticipations. It is dedicated "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;" and it bears on its title-page this citation from Bishop Latimer:—"The commonalty murmured, and said, 'There never were so many gentlemen, and so little gentleness.'"

These two sentences give the cue to the pages which follow. *Sybil* is a historical romance in which the author deals with the condition of England between 1837 and 1842; it is based on such authentic facts as the National Convention, the Birmingham riots, the agitations for the Five Points, the trade disturbances by which these notable events were surrounded and succeeded. It records at least one phase of the struggle between the two Nations of the Rich and Poor—"two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws." The contrast is well marked in Mr. Disraeli's story; and if it may be contended that there is some exaggeration or caricature in the description of either class of the community, yet it will be admitted by candid critics that he has drawn neither the one nor the other at its worst. His picture of the straits to which the labouring class had been reduced, at the epoch of which he writes, is extremely vivid, and it is a terrible one in every sense of the word. *Sybil* was written five years before Canon Kingsley, the Parson Lot of those times, wrote his *Alton Locke*, and three years before he wrote *Yeast*. No doubt some courage was necessary to enable the writer, with the connections

which he had formed, to publish all that he has brought together in this candid transcript of the age in which he lived. For matters had scarcely begun to mend in 1845, and Mr. Disraeli wrote at the very moment when men's minds were most deeply agitated on both sides.

It will of course be understood that there is considerable discrimination in apportioning the blame for these disorders, and in suggesting the remedies which might be applied. Outside the ranks of the people themselves, the men who sympathise most, and who go farthest in seeking to effect a cure, are young Tories—not the young Tories of the New Generation whom we encountered in *Coningsby*, although some of the other characters of that book are introduced in *Sybil*—but men who might fairly have been associated with Coningsby himself, with Millbank and Lyle, and the rest of them. And the workers of the mischief, the heartless and selfish rich men who ground down the poor, who refused or neglected to aid them, who preached up their Poor Law as a panacea, and salved their consciences with hypocritical talk about the duties of wealth, are found either amongst the grasping manufacturers or amongst the Venetian nobility. We have in particular two types of noble villains upon whom Mr. Disraeli lavishes his scorn and satire, without a single word of palliation to excuse them. One of these is Lord Marney, the descendant of one of the reporters on the monasteries in the reign of Henry the VIII., who had been enriched out of the plunder of the Church; whilst the other is the son of one of Pitt's "plebeian aristocrats"—a club waiter who had managed to convert himself into an Indian nabob, and who, in some manner not very skilfully described, had secured the reversion of an ancient title.

These worthies, it is true, are represented as Conservative lords; but we have seen what opinion Mr. Disraeli had of the Conservatism of the times of Peel. Lord Marney and Lord de Mowbray are not acknowledged as members of the

genuine Tory party—the party of which “Sir Robert Peel is not the leader,” 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 negotiated 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.”

This was Mr. Disraeli's conception of the virtues and achievements of his favourite statesmen—of St. John, of Wyndham, of Bolingbroke, of Shelburne. It is assuredly not a political scheme of the highest or soundest kind—as the author himself has since had reason to admit, since he has in part revised it, and in part acquiesced in its suppression. But we would do justice to Lord Beaconsfield's talent and enthusiasm; and we may do it the more readily in connection with his literary efforts, wherein the consequences of erring judgment and false conclusions are not so serious as they become when applied directly to the management of national affairs. And we repeat that there was boldness, as well as a certain degree of truth, in the opinions advanced by Mr. Disraeli on the great “Condition of England question” in 1845. Indeed it may well be doubted whether such a book as *Sybil*, with its warm advocacy of popular liberties, and its pungent, bitter exposure of so large a section of the aristocracy, was precisely calculated to advance the

formation of the new political party which he was at this period so anxious to establish. We know that he experienced not a little difficulty in his task, and that he had excited jealousies and suspicions in the families of some of his young associates. Is it not conceivable that the candour of this romance of the *Two Nations* had offended other aristocratic minds besides those of the oligarchical and Venetian party?

Sybil Gerard, the heroine of the story, is descended from an ancient family of Catholics, one of whom had fought at Agincourt, and who had been deprived of their estates and impoverished. Her father is foreman at a mill, where the hands are kindly treated—in marked contrast with the other mills and factories described in the book—and he is a prominent member of the association by which the Chartists hoped to improve the condition of the lower orders. As he, with Sybil and their friend Stephen Morley, a local newspaper editor, are visiting the ruins of Marney Abbey—the last abbot of which had been a Gerard—they are encountered by Charles Egremont, brother of Lord Marney, who is fascinated on the spot by the beauty of the young girl. Egremont cultivates his acquaintance—though under an assumed name—and hears many wholesome truths from his new friends, not merely as to the relative duties and responsibilities of the "two nations," but also as to the confiscated families, the lords of sacrilege and plunder, the race of oppressors, whereof he, unknown to them, was an offshoot. The man of the world, whose life had hitherto been frivolous, though not vicious, is touched and impressed; he begins to think more seriously of his position in the world; he shrinks from the ennobled vulgarities amongst which he is expected to pass his future life; and, treated outrageously by his despicable brother, he openly quarrels with him, and forfeits such family interest as he might have laid claim to. But he is a member of the House of

Commons, and there, after a while, he makes a speech on behalf of the poor which scandalises his party friends and connections.

Meanwhile, Gerard and Morley are sent up as delegates to the National Convention—Sybil coming up with her father—and Egremont is recognised under his true name. This hastens the catastrophe. Morley, a self-seeking man, rendered desperate by his passion for Sybil, and suspecting her attachment to his more manly rival, betrays his friend at a secret meeting. Gerard is arrested, and Sybil, in despair, appeals to Egremont for assistance. The aristocrat rescues her, and secures a confession of her love for himself; but she declares the gulf between them to be impassable. Her father is convicted of conspiracy, and serves eighteen months in York Castle. This brings us to 1842—the year of deepest popular distress. There are riots in the north; and one of the mobs, incited by Morley, at the instigation of a successful and very respectable archæologist from London, breaks into Mowbray Castle, and burns it to the ground. The yeomanry are called in from the neighbouring station at Marney. One troop, under Lord Marney, meets a mob under Gerard, which he had succeeded in restraining from violence, and which he was about to lead back to Mowbray. But a conflict takes place, owing to Marney's sanguinary haste, and the leader on either side is killed. Another troop, under Charles Egremont, had reached Mowbray Castle, where bloody vengeance was wreaked on the rioters. Here Morley is killed—but not before he had contrived to steal the box containing proof of Gerard's title to the estates, and to send it by another hand to Sybil. Less than two years afterwards, the new Lord Marney is married to the heiress of Mowbray. The daughter of the murdered popular leader marries the brother of his virtual murderer; the votaress of liberty surrenders to the instrument of the State; the "impassable gulf" is bridged over by inherited gold;

the Two Nations are united—let it be admitted—by the bond of a pure and disinterested love.

There are many improbabilities in the story of *Sybil*; and, as we have already said, not a little unsound teaching. But there is romantic interest of a high order, and there is also much generous sentiment and valuable suggestion. In the last few paragraphs the author reverts to the scheme which he had promulgated in *Coningsby*, and claims to have distinctly advanced it. From a consideration of the state of parties in England, the reader is invited to a consideration of the state of the people. The evils in each case are identical, and so is the cure; "it is the past alone that can explain the present, and it is youth alone that can mould the remedial future." The written history of England for the last ten reigns Mr. Disraeli considers to have been "a mere phantasma," and therefore practically useless for the remedial purposes to which he refers; he would, to the best of his power, re-write that history; and he indicates the line on which he would proceed. In the mystifications of Hume, Macaulay, and their fellow-historians—

"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. . . . 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 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."

Unfortunately for the vaticinations of the author, the extension of popular liberties and popular welfare—vast as it has been during the last forty years—has not been attended by any expansion of the royal prerogatives. The nation has prospered (amongst other causes) by the acts of the Peel Administration, against which Mr. Disraeli so stoutly protested. There was indeed in that Administration a youth who did great things for his country, and has been an excellent trustee for posterity; but he was not one of Mr. Disraeli's New Generation.



CHAPTER XVII.

"THE NEW CRUSADE."

WITH Mr. Disraeli all roads led to Jerusalem. We have seen something of the veneration which possessed him for the holy city—the city that was “more sacred than Rome,” which was the goal of his youthful travels, and the centre of some of his loftiest ambitions. In *Tancred, or the New Crusade*, he gives full play to his faith and fancy, travelling farther than ever before, and farther than most readers have been able to follow him, into the regions of the mysterious. *Tancred*, published soon after *Sybil*, is the concluding volume of the trilogy in which he sought to develop his personal ideas of government, and of political and moral truth. Some notion of the purpose which he had in his mind when writing this curious romance may be gathered from the general preface to his works of fiction; though it must be confessed that the notion is but dimly and vaguely explained.

Recognising the Church, as he informs us, as a powerful agent in the previous development of England, and possibly the most effectual means of renovating the national spirit which seemed to have passed away, it occurred to him that

“the time had arrived when it became his duty to ascend to the origin of that great ecclesiastical corporation, and consider the position of the descendants of that race who had been the founders of Christianity. Some of the great truths of ethnology were necessarily involved in such discussions. Familiar as we all are now 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 to be 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 sincerity of these views, and, with its sanction, in *Tancred, or the New Crusade*, the third portion of the Trilogy, I completed their development.”

With regard to this claim it must be said at the outset, that a candid critic will be unable to allow to Lord Beaconsfield the credit which he here assumes. *Tancred* does not trace the development of the Christian Church from Judaism; it does not go far to vindicate the position of the Jews in European society, or even to elevate our ideas of the race. Indeed, many of Lord Beaconsfield's readers will be inclined to maintain that their conception of the Hebrew race was higher when they sat down to the perusal of the book than when they had completed it; for his Jews are either great scoundrels, or mystery men who amuse without impressing us. And further, *Tancred* contributes absolutely nothing to advance the theory of national government in England which *Coningsby* and *Sybil* so ably set forth. The connection between the links of the trilogy is scarcely perceptible; and it is to be feared that the natural idiosyncrasies of the author led him to see a logical sequence where few others could discern it. It is

almost inconceivable that the men for whom *Coningsby* was written, the friends and companions who had begun to exercise faith in the "New Generation," could have detected anything like a development of the creed in this incomprehensible story.

Lord Beaconsfield observes (writing in the year 1870) that the general spirit of his three romances was opposed to that which had hitherto prevailed in England, and which he identifies to a large extent with what is called utilitarianism.

"They recognised imagination in the government of nations as a quality not less important than reason. They trusted much to a popular sentiment, which rested on an heroic tradition, and was sustained by the high spirit of a free aristocracy. Their economic principles were not unsound, but they looked upon the health and knowledge of the multitude as not the least precious part of the wealth of nations. In asserting the doctrine of race they were entirely opposed to the equality of man, and similar abstract dogmas, which have destroyed ancient society without creating a satisfactory substitute. Resting on popular sympathies and popular privileges, they held that no society could be durable unless it was built upon the principles of loyalty and religious reverence."

Here at any rate we approach nearer to the comprehension of the author's ideas. The bold claim for "imagination in the government of nations" is striking and picturesque; and the extravagance of putting that quality of statesmanship on a par with reason is skilfully toned down in the sentences which follow. Even the rivalry with Adam Smith seems plausible when it professes to aim at "the health and knowledge of the multitude." The vindication of religious reverence as a mode of government is well calculated to enlist the support of the average reader; but when we apply the moral to the romance of *Tancred*, we are compelled to say that the proof afforded in its pages is more likely to satisfy the mind of a son of Israel than of one to whom the Israelitish race appeals through history, and not through blood. Mr. Disraeli may have established

his theses for men of like ancestry with himself; but he could hardly imagine that he had done it for Englishmen gene ally.

It is impossible to do justice to Lord Beaconsfield's argument without quoting the remainder of the homily in which he seeks to elucidate his ideas on the subject of religion. The passage, though long, is especially interesting as a transcript of the author's more serious and contemplative mood.

"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. Nor do I now doubt that if, a quarter of a century ago, there had arisen a churchman equal to the occasion, the position of ecclesiastical affairs in this country would have been very different from that which they now occupy. But these great matters fell into the hands of monks and schoolmen; and little more than a year after the publication of *Coningsby* the secession of Dr. Newman dealt a blow to the Church of England under which it still reels. That extraordinary event has been 'apologised' for, but has never been explained. It was a mistake and a misfortune. The tradition of the Anglican Church was powerful. Resting on the Church of Jerusalem, modified by the divine school of Galilee, it would have found that rock of truth which Providence, by the instrumentality of the Semitic race, had promised to St. Peter. Instead of that, the seceders sought refuge in mediæval superstitions, which are generally only the embodiments of pagan ceremonies and creeds.

"It cannot be denied that the aspect of the world and this country, to those who have faith in the spiritual nature of man, is at this time dark and distressful. They listen to doubts, and even denials of an active Providence; what is styled Materialism is in the ascendant. To those who believe that an atheistical society, though it may be polished and amiable, involves the seeds of anarchy, the prospect is full of gloom. This disturbance in the mind of nations has been occasioned by two causes: first, by the powerful assault on the divinity of the Semitic literature by the Germans; and secondly, by recent discoveries of science, which are hastily supposed to be inconsistent with our long received convictions as to the relations between the Creator and the created.

"One of the consequences of the Divine government of this world,

which has ordained that the sacred purposes should be effected by the instrumentality of various human races, must be occasionally a jealous discontent with the revelation entrusted to a particular family. But there is no reason to believe that the Teutonic rebellion of this century, against the Divine truths entrusted to the Semites, will ultimately meet with more success than the Celtic insurrection of the preceding age. Both have been sustained by the highest intellectual gifts that human nature has ever displayed ; but, when the tumult subsides, the Divine truths are found not to be less prevalent than before, and simply because they are divine. Man brings to the study of the oracles more learning and more criticism than of yore; and it is well that it should be so. The documents will yet bear a greater amount both of erudition and examination than they have received; but the Word of God is eternal, and will survive the spheres.

"The sceptical effects of the discoveries of science, and the uneasy feeling that they cannot co-exist with our old religious convictions, have their origin in the circumstance, that the general body who have suddenly become conscious of these physical truths are not so well acquainted as is desirable with the past history of man. Astonished by their unprepared emergence from ignorance to a certain degree of information their amazed intelligence takes refuge in the theory of what is conveniently called Progress, and in every step in scientific discovery seems further to remove them from the path of primæval inspiration. But there is no fallacy so flagrant as to suppose that the modern ages have the peculiar privilege of scientific discovery, or that they are distinguished as the epochs of the most illustrious inventions. On the contrary, scientific invention has always gone on simultaneously with the revelation of spiritual truths; and more, the greatest discoveries are not those of modern ages. No one for a moment can pretend that printing is so great a discovery as writing, or algebra as language. What are the most brilliant of our chemical discoveries compared with the invention of fire and the metals! It is a vulgar belief that our astronomical knowledge dates only from the recent century when it was rescued from the monks who imprisoned Galileo; but Hipparchus, who lived before our Divine Master, and who among other sublime achievements discovered the procession of the equinoxes, ranks with the Newtons and the Keplers; and Copernicus, the modern father of our celestial science, avows himself, in his famous work, as only the champion of Pythagoras, whose system he enforces and illustrates. Even the most modern schemes of the day on the origin of things, which captivate as much by their novelty as their truth, may find their precursors in ancient sages, and after a careful

analysis of the blended elements of imagination and induction which characterise the new theories, they will be found mainly to rest on the atom of Epicurus and the monad of Thales. Scientific like spiritual truth has ever from the beginning been descending from Heaven to man. He is a being who organically demands direct relations with his Creator, and he would not have been so organised if his requirements could not be satisfied. We may analyse the sun and penetrate the stars, but man is conscious that he is made in God's own image, and in his perplexity he will ever appeal to our Father which art (*sic*) in Heaven."

The hero of Lord Beaconsfield's story neither possesses these views, to begin with, nor arrives at them in the *dénouement*. He is, however, an ardent inquirer and a good listener, and one who would certainly govern the world by aspiration and inspiration. His father turns on a bishop to satisfy his disquieting doubts; but he is too unreasonable even for episcopal guidance. He tells his catechist that he has no faith in self-government; he prefers divine government. The Church, says the bishop, represents God on earth. "But the Church no longer governs men," Tancred objects. "True; yet there is a great spirit abroad; the Church is going to be strong again; we can't tell what may happen. We shall soon see a bishop at Manchester." "But I want to see an angel at Manchester," says Tancred. "Why should there not be heavenly messengers, when heavenly messages are most wanted?"

So the bishop makes little enough of him, and the "visionary" resolves to seek heavenly messengers at the fountain-head of Jerusalem.

Tancred, Lord Montacute, is the son of the Duke and Duchess of Bellamont. For people in their exalted rank they live a very quiet life, being wrapt up in their only child. The Duke is an upright, moral, and most estimable man, and the Duchess is equally admirable and devout. The story opens with preparations for a great banquet, in honour of Tancred's coming of age; and there is some pretty

by-play of French cooks and confectioners in the first few chapters. When the festivities are at an end, the Duke, having kept a pleasant surprise in store for his son, informs him that one of the county members, by a curious coincidence, was anxious at that moment to resign his seat, which will be at the service of Lord Montacute. But Tancred can argue even with his father, albeit he is warmly attached to his parents. He confesses that he is loth to enter the House of Commons, that he has no politics, does not understand the meaning of the State, questions the value of parties, and is even at sea in his mind on the question of religious belief. He ends by proposing that he shall pay a visit to the Holy Sepulchre, apparently in quest of angels; and the Duke of Bellamont, after drawing in his breath as though a bucket of cold water had been thrown in his face, promises to make arrangements. The Duchess takes the matter still more to heart, and begins to lay her plots in order to keep him at home.

The first device of these fond parents is to bring their son in contact with a worthy bishop, who, having in his time been all things to all men, from a Protestant missionary in Ireland to a Puseyite in England, was deemed a suitable counsellor for Tancred in his emergency. We have seen what the result of this interview was. After the bishop, the Duchess of Bellamont bethinks her of "our cousin" Lord Eskdale—who, with sundry other characters from *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, makes his appearance in *Tancred*. Lord Eskdale is a thorough man of the world, and he advises that the young man shall be plunged into society. The parents reluctantly consent, and the visionary is soon engaged in the purchase of a yacht, and in such mild dissipations as his friends can tempt him to engage in. Of course pretty women set their caps at him. Lady Constance Ranelagh is his first flame. She is handsome and clever, and for a time replaces the Holy Sepulchre in her admirer's heart. One day when he

is calling on her she begins to talk about a new book, *The Revelation of Chaos*. Tancred mildly observes that, to judge from its title, it is rather obscure. By no means, says Lady Constance; everything is explained. "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. . . . And the next change there will be something very superior to us, something with wings." Had Tancred come to the angels at last? Was it necessary to go to Jerusalem, if Lady Constance could show him how we might become angels in England? But she goes on: "Ah! that's it: we were fishes, and I believe we shall be crows. But you must read it."

Tancred has read too much of poor Lady Constance's mind without going to the book. He turned and fled, sought out Lord Eskdale, and assured him that he must be off to the Holy Land. Eskdale introduces him to Sidonia. On his way to keep an appointment in Sequin Court he witnesses a carriage accident. A "chariot" is smashed by a dray, and the fair occupant consents to take refuge in Tancred's brougham. He is now for some time in the toils of Lady Bertie and Bellair, who, strange to say, has a desperate desire to visit Jerusalem. Before long she is even hinting that she should like to see the Holy Sepulchre in his company; and, being one day at her house, and the sympathy approaching rapidly to a climax, he is very nearly limed, when a servant enters with a note. Lady Bertie and Bellair opens it eagerly, gives a little shriek, and swoons. Tancred rushes to her assistance, and his eagle eye takes in the words before he is aware that he is reading them. "The Narrow Gauge has won," said this oracular epistle. "We are utterly done; and Snicks tells me you bought five hundred more yesterday, at ten. Is it possible?—F."

Tancred is down stairs and out of the house in a moment.

He hurries to Sequin Court, where he learns that the lady is the most inveterate female gambler in Europe. He begs letters of introduction from Sidonia, who gives them to him at once. One is to Adam Besso at Jerusalem:—"If the youth who bears this require advances, let him have as much gold as would make the right hand lion on the first step of the throne of Solomon the king; and if he want more, let him have as much as would form the lion that is on the left; and so on through every stair of the royal seat. For all which will be responsible to you the child of Israel, who among the Gentiles is called Sidonia."

We need not pursue the story in detail, though, as a narrative of adventure, it is more interesting in the latter part than in the earlier. Tancred goes to the Holy Land, and, before visiting Jerusalem, makes a pilgrimage to Sinai. Crossing the wilderness, he is captured by the Sheikh of the Rechabites, the father-in-law of Adam Besso, and held to ransom for two million piastres. Adam is ready to pay the fine himself, rather than be suspected of treachery; but Tancred is otherwise released. In the tents of the Sheikh he encounters an ambitious young Emir, Fakredeen, who is intriguing for the throne of Syria, and who is also attached to Eva, the beautiful daughter of Adam Besso. Fakredeen is the traitor who has delivered Tancred into captivity; but when he meets his victim in the desert he is fascinated by him, and desires to set him free. This he effects by betraying a caravan into the hands of the Sheikh; and Tancred, not suspecting his baseness, goes off in his company. But in the meantime he has visited the Holy Mount, and has at length seen an angel. It is "the angel of Arabia, the guardian spirit of that land which governs the world," who, whilst Tancred lies "senseless and in a trance," reveals to him the moral which he is to take home with him from the East.

Arabian intellect, Arabian ideas, the most ancient in the

world, had inspired the hearts of the rude races in the forests of Western Europe. Arabian principles had met them on the threshold of the old world, to guide and civilise them. The Cæsars had conquered the earth to place the laws of Sinai on the throne of the Capitol. Now once more, Europe is in the throes of a great birth. "The intellectual colony of Arabia, once called Christendom," is in revolt. "The eternal principles that controlled barbarian vigour can alone cope with morbid civilisation. The equality of man can only be accomplished by the sovereignty of God. The longing for fraternity can never be 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"—this is the summary of what the Angel of Arabia has to say to the English aristocrat abroad—"to seek in a vain philosophy the solution of the social problem that perplexes you. Announce the sublime and solacing doctrines of theocratic equality. Fear not, faint not, falter not. Obey the impulse of thine own spirit, and find a ready instrument in every human being."

Is this "the Asian mystery?" Is the mere enunciation of theocratic equality, as a remedy for the troubles of civilisation in the nineteenth century, the crown and sum of Mr. Disraeli's political scheme? And is it to be the last word of practical statesmanship that a clever man, who has confidence in himself, may find "a ready instrument in every human being?"

But some two hundred pages of the story remain untold, and there is an alternative fable for those who would attempt to understand what *The New Crusade* may really mean.

Tancred sets out with Fakredeen to visit Canobia, one of the castles of the Prince of Lebanon. Together they indulge in grand dreams of conquest—Tancred always taking the lead, more Oriental than the Oriental. They are

to begin by overrunning "the Babylonian and Assyrian monarchies;" their first enemy is to be the Turk: but we might not be very wide of the mark if we suspected that the farthest limits of Franguestan were ultimately to be redeemed by this new healing stream from the Arabian desert. Tancred yet might build an altar to the Angel of Arabia in the chancel of St. Paul's. But it must be confessed that they take their time about the fulfilment of their projects. As much from curiosity as for any other reason they pay a visit to the land of the Ansarcy, a people inhabiting the mountainous country north of Antioch; an exclusive, warlike race, who had beaten back the Egyptians; not Moslemin, not Christians, not Druses, not Jews, and indeed altogether mysterious and unknown.

They go. The Ansarey are governed by Queen Astarte, who—to cut the story short—falls in love with Tancred, and reveals to him the mysteries of her ancient faith. It turns out that the gods of Olympus have found a refuge amongst this tribe of northern Syria. In a magnificent temple the awe-struck Tancred—his "soul as it were unsphered" with amazement—beholds the father of gods and men himself; "goddess and god, genius and nymph and faun, all that the wit and heart of man can devise and create, to represent his genius and his passion, all that the myriad developments of a beautiful nature can require for their personification." And the queen of the Ansarey proclaims to the young Englishman the significance of what he has beheld. Here was "all that remains of Antioch; of Antioch the superb, with its hundred towers, and its sacred groves and fanes of flashing beauty. When all was over, when the people refused to sacrifice, and the gods, indignant, quitted earth, I hope not for ever, the faithful few fled to these mountains with the sacred images, and we have cherished them. I told you we had beautiful and consoling thoughts, and more than thoughts. All else is lost

—our wealth, our arts, our luxury, our invention, all have vanished.” The Ansarey are poor, they dress like the Kurds around them, but if they were to leave their mountains they would lose their precious charge, their sacred traditions, which still preserve them from being barbarians; “a sense of the beautiful and the lofty, and the divine hope that, when the rapidly consummating degradation of Asia has been fulfilled, mankind will return again to those gods who made the earth beautiful and happy; and that they, in their celestial mercy, may revisit that world which, without them, has become a howling wilderness.”

Is this, then, “the Asian mystery?” Tancred is almost as much overcome as he was on the top of Sinai. His catholic faith takes in the pagan mystery—for “this also is Asian and divine,” as the young queen reminded him—with the same reverence that he had bestowed on Judean mysteries.

We have devoted sufficient space to the incomprehensible romance of *Tancred*. Not even the young Lord Montacute himself could have made clear to us the condition of his mind, or the ideas developed in him by his remarkable experiences. In some way or other he connects the lessons of Astarte with those of the Angel of Arabia—by some means or other he hopes to effect the regeneration of the world and the establishment of a theocratic equality—though he admits with a sigh that he is but “sprung from a horde of Baltic pirates.” But meanwhile he confines himself chiefly to the task of escaping from the blandishments of the too human Astarte, and the treacheries of the too Oriental Fakredeem, and making an English duchess out of the grand-daughter of an Arabian sheikh.

He has just achieved the preliminary work of securing Eva’s heart when he is awoke from his day-dreams by the arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Bellamont in Jerusalem. Lord Beaconsfield leaves his readers to weave for themselves the inevitable commonplace which must follow

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. DISRAELI IN THE CABINET.

WE are now in a better way to comprehend the position and character of Mr. Disraeli, so far as his political action is concerned. His public acts would not have been enough to give us the necessary insight; but when we study his public acts in the light thrown upon them by his literary works, and when we remember the contemplative, enthusiastic mood of the romance-writer at the same time with the adventurous and unscrupulous activity of the Parliamentary tactician, we seem to obtain a more correct and natural conception of Lord Beaconsfield—at any rate of Mr. Disraeli in the fifth decade of the century.

It is idle, and indeed scarcely fair, to set out with the conviction that a public man, however great his mistakes may have been, was insincere and dishonest in every phase of his career, and to put the worst construction on everything which he has done. No man is wholly one-sided in his character. We all have our dark hues and sinister moods. It is more in accordance with the laws of humanity to conclude that any particular man, even if we dislike him for very sufficient reasons, has good and estimable qualities,

than to conclude that he must be all wrong because he is greatly wrong, or altogether unestimable because he is unestimable in a certain degree.

Lord Beaconsfield must be judged by his writings as well as by his political enterprises. We have seen cause for believing that his aspirations for the happiness of his country are lofty and genuine, and that his sentiment is humane and tender.

We come now to the Administration of Lord John Russell, first formed in 1846, and reconstituted practically in the same shape after the general election of 1847. This Whig Ministry was composed as follows :—

First Lord of the Treasury, . . .	Lord John Russell.
President of the Council, . . .	Marquis of Lansdowne.
Lord Chancellor,	Lord Cottenham.
Lord Privy Seal,	Earl of Minto.
Chancellor of the Exchequer, .	Sir Charles Wood.
Home Secretary,	Sir George Grey.
Foreign „	Viscount Palmerston.
Colonial „	Earl Grey.
First Lord of the Admiralty, .	Earl of Auckland.
President, Board of Control, .	Sir J. Cam Hobhouse.
„ „ Trade,	Earl of Clarendon.
Paymaster of the Forces, . . .	T. B. Macaulay.
Chief Secretary for Ireland, .	H. Labouchere.
Postmaster-General,	Marquis of Clanricarde.
Commissioner of Woods and Forests,	Viscount Morpeth.
Chancellor of the Duchy, . . .	Lord Campbell.

Mr. Disraeli had been elected without a contest as one of the three members for the county of Buckingham, a constituency which returned him steadily until he went up to the House of Lords just thirty years later. He and the gentlemen with whom he acted were somewhat uncomfortably sandwiched between the “Venetian” party on the Treasury benches and the Conservatives who still followed the lead of Sir Robert Peel; and, in the first instance, their support

could not be counted on by either of those parties. Lord George Bentinck and his friends continued to be advocates of Protection after it had passed away for ever; though Mr. Disraeli had gone so far as to declare, in addressing the Bucks electors, that they must give the new commercial policy a fair trial. Two years had elapsed since he praised, in *Sybil*, the principles of Utrecht, and perhaps he had already begun to consign those rhetorical laudations to the limbo of "musty phrases."

So long as Lord George Bentinck lived, Mr. Disraeli recognised him as his Parliamentary leader. The first notable division under the new Administration—on a proposal of the Premier's in regard to the importation of sugar—saw the two men, with a respectable following of 128, dividing against the Government, who carried with them Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Goulburn, and other ex-Ministers. The Bentinck party, however, made no great stand on behalf of principles which they must have seen that the country had definitely abandoned.

Lord John (afterwards Earl) Russell has himself told us how irresistible was the progress of Free Trade, when it had once been established. "Sir Robert Peel," he writes, "proposed that the duty on corn should be reduced to one shilling per quarter, which amounted to about two per cent. on the current price of wheat. I considered myself bound to carry on the march of the Free Trade army against monopolies in favour of Colonial sugar, of Canadian timber, and of English ships. Lord Derby predicted that this last concession to Free Trade"—that is, the Navigation Laws, which permitted English merchants to ship their cargoes, when it suited them, on foreign vessels—"would utterly ruin the merchant shipping of England. An English ship-builder, who had defended with perseverance the monopoly of England, showed his spirit by immediately ordering the building of twelve new ships for the mercantile marine."

The Whigs, the Radicals, and the Peelites united to carry these measures ; but the Bentinck party could not persuade themselves to do so. Their prophecies of evil were disproved by events. England soon began to teem with wealth ; and thus was fulfilled the dream of the early pioneers of commercial freedom, amongst whom one of the earliest had sung :—

“The time shall come when, free as seas or wind,
Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind ;
Whole nations enter with each swelling tide,
And seas but join the nations they divide.”

Lord George Bentinck resigned the leadership of the Protectionist party in 1847, after voting, against the wishes of many of his friends, in favour of the Premier's motion to repeal the Jewish disabilities. Mr. Disraeli also voted for this motion, though he strongly condemned Lord John Russell for bringing it forward. During the next few years—and especially after Lord George's death in the autumn of 1848—he was virtual, if not acknowledged leader of the Tory party in the House of Commons, as Lord Derby was in the House of Lords. In 1849 he moved for a Committee to inquire into the state of the country. The “Condition of England question” had recently, as we have seen, exercised his mind in a notable degree ; he was looked up to by the landed interests as their special champion ; and he was actuated by a belief, doubtless genuine at the time, that the removal of restrictions on trade had a tendency to ruin the agricultural industry, and thus to aggravate the sufferings of the people. He declared his opinion that the distress of the nation had been continually increasing since the abolition of the Corn Laws—and indeed it is a fact that the recovery of English trade was not very conspicuous until the century had passed its meridian. His motion gave rise to an important debate, extending over two nights ; and much of the discussion turned upon

Mr. Disraeli's recommendation of countervailing duties. This shows that he had already advanced from the position of a Protectionist pure and simple to that of an advocate of Reciprocity. It was Sir Robert Peel himself who made the most elaborate reply to the arguments of his former follower; and the motion was rejected by a very large majority.

In the following year Mr. Disraeli came much nearer to an equality with the Government—which has been gradually losing its hold on the country on other grounds—in a division on his motion for a reduction of the burdens on land. He scored 252 against 273; and it was now regarded as certain that on the next change of Government the member for Bucks would occupy the chief seat on the Treasury bench. The death of Peel in 1850 rendered his position yet more distinct and prominent; whilst the languid condition of the Whig party now promised an early realisation of his hopes. He persevered in his motions on the subject of popular distress—especially agricultural—and early in the session of 1851 he was defeated on such a motion by only 14 votes.

Lord John Russell somewhat hastily resigned office, after being outvoted on Mr. Locke King's motion for a reduction of the county franchise; but eventually he consented to carry on the Government of the country, and did so until the following session, when he definitely resigned after a defeat by Lord Palmerston (whom he had recently excluded from his Cabinet). Lord Derby now undertook to form a Ministry; and Mr. Disraeli attained the great object of his ambition by being appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, with the leadership of the Commons. The new Administration, which took office without much hope of support in the Lower House, and even amidst considerable ridicule from the Press, only retained its position for a few months. It was composed as follows:—

First Lord of the Treasury, . . .	Earl of Derby.
Lord President of the Council, . . .	Earl of Lonsdale.
Lord Chancellor,	Lord St. Leonards.
Lord Privy Seal,	Marquis of Salisbury.
Chancellor of the Exchequer, . . .	Benjamin Disraeli.
Home Secretary,	S. H. Walpole.
Foreign „	Earl of Malmesbury.
Colonial „	Sir J. S. Pakington.
First Lord of the Admiralty, . . .	Duke of Northumberland.
President, Board of Control, . . .	J. C. Herries.
„ „ Trade,	J. W. Henley.
Commissioner of Woods and Forests,	Lord John Manners.

The country was not a little alarmed by the accession to power of men who had spoken seriously about undoing the work of Free Trade. Mr. Cobden and his friends showed their sense of the danger of the situation by reviving the Anti-Corn Law League; and both public speakers and public writers daily expressed their dissatisfaction with the turn which affairs had taken. Under these circumstances a dissolution became necessary. Lord Derby appealed to the constituencies in the autumn, and reappeared in Parliament at the end of the year with a following manifestly insufficient to enable him to carry on the government.

The new Parliament was opened by the Queen in person on the 11th of November. In the course of the Speech occurred the following significant passage:—

“If Parliament should be of opinion that recent legislation, in contributing with other causes to the 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 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.”

Although this was accompanied by a qualified admission of the benefits which had occurred from Free Trade, the Liberals took fresh alarm, and it was soon evident that the

Ministry could not reckon on the support of the House of Commons.

The events of this session have been summarised in the first volume of the present series of biographies, and we may repeat what is there said of Mr. Disraeli's first essay in the task of leading the House of Commons:—

“On the 23rd of November Mr. Villiers moved to the effect that the improved condition of the country was the result of the free trade measures of 1846; that the repeal of the Corn Laws was ‘a wise, just, and benevolent measure; and that the maintenance and extension of the free trade policy was most conducive to the good of the nation. In opposing this motion the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Disraeli, in what he has since stigmatised as ‘musty phrasos,’ whilst he admitted that the vote of the nation implied that ‘unrestricted competition was to be in future the principle of our commercial legislation,’ described Mr. Villiers’s motion as unprecedented, impolitic, unwise, and unjust, and appealed to the House ‘not to become the tools and victims of an exhausted faction and obsolete politics.’ The difficulty was got over by the adoption of an amendment by Lord Palmerston, which acknowledged the good effects of free trade, resolved to maintain the principle of unrestricted competition, and affirmed that the House would consider any measures of the Government consistent with these principles. After an adjourned debate, in which Mr. Gladstone warmly supported the free trade doctrine, the amendment was carried by a large majority—though Mr. Villiers first secured 256 votes for his original motion.

“The main interest, however, of this session—which was literally a winter session, since it extended from November 11th, 1852, until December 31st, simply adjourning over Christmas Day—was connected with the Budget introduced by Mr. Disraeli. The chief points in this Budget consisted of proposals to relieve the shipping trade, to repeal half the malt tax, and half the hop duty, to reduce the tea duty, to extend the income-tax in various directions, and to levy the house duty down to a ten pound rent, doubling the existing duty of sixpence in the pound on shops and ninepence on dwelling-houses. These proposals were by no means favourably received in the first instance; and the objections to them, especially to the onerous house duty, increased from day to day. So marked was the disapproval in certain quarters, that Mr. Disraeli endeavoured to minimise the bad effect produced by stating that the Government was not pledged to stand or fall on the result of any single vote.

“The debate on the Budget was repeated on several successive occasions. Mr. Disraeli declared the principle of his financial scheme to be that the area of direct taxation should be increased; and on this principle he was vigorously opposed by Mr. Cobden, Mr. Lowe, Mr. F. Peel, Mr. Bernal Osborne, Mr. Hume, Sir James Graham, Sir Alexander Cockburn, and Mr. Gladstone. Before glancing at the speech of the latter, which was largely instrumental in causing the defeat of the Government, it will be interesting to remark on certain contributory causes which had tended to make Mr. Disraeli's leadership of the Lower House peculiarly unfortunate.

“In the debate on Mr. Villiers's motion, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had seen fit to asperse the character of Sir Robert Peel, and to reflect injuriously on the conduct of his Administration. He also declared, amidst loud cries of dissent from the Opposition, that ‘not a single attempt had been made in the House of Commons to abrogate the measure of 1846.’ With regard to this assertion, Mr. Bernal Osborne confessed himself astounded ‘that the Chancellor, in a November session of 1852, and with a face which he never saw equalled in a theatre, dared to tell the House that he had never attempted to reverse the policy of free trade!’ Mr. Sidney Herbert was yet more severe in stigmatising Mr. Disraeli's attack on Sir Robert Peel. ‘The memory of Sir Robert Peel,’ he said, in a memorable peroration, ‘requires no vindication. His memory is embalmed in the grateful recollection of the people of this country; and I say, if ever retribution is wanted—for it is not words that humiliate, but deeds—if a man wants to see humiliation, which God knows is always a painful sight, he need but look *there!*’ And the speaker extended his finger towards the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

“In his concluding speech on the Budget, Mr. Disraeli again gave place to his pointed invective. He attacked Sir James Graham amongst others; and this time it was Mr. Gladstone who administered the rebuke. He told the Chancellor that he was not entitled to charge with insolence men of high position and character. ‘I must tell the right honourable gentleman,’ he continued, amidst the cheers of the House, ‘that he is not entitled to say to my right hon. friend, the member for Carlisle, that he regards but does not respect him. And I must tell him that whatever else he has learnt—and he has learnt much—he has not learnt to keep within those limits of discretion, of moderation, and of forbearance, that ought to restrain the conduct and language of every member in this House, the disregard of which, while it is an offence in the meanest amongst us, is an offence of tenfold weight when committed by the leader of the House of Commons.’

"On the financial proposals of the Government Mr. Gladstone was severe and convincing. He described the whole scheme as unsound and delusive, and condemned the principle of increased direct taxation as a means of indiscriminate reductions. He urged the House most strongly to reject Mr. Disraeli's Budget: and it has been admitted by more than one of his hearers on this occasion that his exposure of the unsound policy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was crushing and irresistible. The division on the first resolution, which took place on the 15th of December, showed 286 votes for the Government, and 305 against, leaving them in a minority of 19. The result was that Lord Derby resigned; and thus his short Administration came to an end."



CHAPTER XIX.

THE COALITION MINISTRY.

IN the last week of 1853 a Coalition Ministry, composed of Whigs and Peelites, was formed by the Earl of Aberdeen. The Cabinet was constituted as follows:—

First Lord of the Treasury, . . .	Earl of Aberdeen.
Lord President of the Council, . . .	Earl Granville.
Lord Chancellor,	Lord Cranworth.
Lord Privy Seal,	Duke of Argyll.
Chancellor of the Exchequer, . . .	W. E. Gladstone.
Home Secretary,	Lord Palmerston.
Foreign „	Earl of Clarendon.
Colonial „	Duke of Newcastle.
First Lord of the Admiralty, . . .	Sir James Graham.
President, Board of Control, . . .	Sir Charles Wood.
Secretary of State for War, . . .	Sidney Herbert.
Commissioner of Parks and Public Buildings,	Sir W. Molesworth.
Without Office,	Marquis of Lansdowne.
„ „	Lord John Russell.

Lord Aberdeen made the most of the fact that at least four of his colleagues in the Cabinet, and many of his supporters in the House of Commons, were still in their own estimation Conservatives. He promised Conservative as well as Liberal measures, and his programme plainly showed that

he was bidding for Conservative votes. He had indeed purchased the alliance of Lord John Russell by promising the introduction of a Reform Bill in the following session ; but it is doubtful whether this promise could have been fulfilled, even if the Eastern Question had not come to the front in time to delay fulfilment.

The Opposition also, though greatly outnumbered, was not homogenous. Before the Derby-Disraeli Administration had left office there had been a minority of over fifty staunch Tories who had voted for Protection after their leaders had abandoned it. But Opposition has the effect of consolidating political parties, and Mr. Disraeli played his up-hill game with much perseverance and spirit. His taste of office had only stimulated his energies, and he had often found himself in more hopeless plights. His enemies suggested that he should resume his Eastern travels, or write a new romance ; but he declared that he had not the remotest intention of neglecting his duties in Parliament. And in fact his travelling days were over, whilst for twenty years his pen was practically idle. He did occupy a small portion of his leisure in issuing a new edition, with new prefaces, of some of his earlier works. The prefaces are dated 1854 ; but this labour will not account for much of the time which he had at his disposal. Between the publication of his *Life of Lord George Bentinck* in 1851, and the publication of *Lothair* nearly a score of years later, the world had nothing from him save a few volumes of collected speeches.

In the first week of the session of 1853, the leader of the Opposition drew attention to a speech of Sir Charles Wood to his constituents at Halifax, when the President of the Board of Control, seeking re-election after accepting office, had condemned the conduct of Louis Napoleon in the preceding December. Napoleon, the companion of Mr. Disraeli's youth, or at any rate his occasional fellow-guest in society, was in the flush of his usurped dignity as

Emperor of the French ; and Sir Charles Wood had only given expression to the public opinion of Englishmen at that moment by speaking with indignation of the manner in which the liberties of France had been outraged. Mr. Disraeli, in common with many others, took an opposite view of the same circumstances. His recollections of Louis Napoleon, during his residence in this country, doubtless had some effect upon his mind ; but he may also have been dazzled by the brilliant fortunes of the Imperial exile, and he would further be disposed to sympathise in an act which arrested the career of a successful revolution. Not satisfied with drawing attention to Sir Charles Wood's speech on the 14th of February, he raised a new discussion upon it on the 18th, in a set speech, wherein he dealt with our foreign relations in general, and demanded explanations of the activity which the Government had begun to exhibit in the naval construction yards. In this last demand he was joined by Mr. Cobden, who urged the Cabinet to approach the French Government in a friendly spirit, in order that the armaments of both countries might be checked at the same time. Lord John Russell, Sir James Graham, and others took part in the debate ; and, though the general tone was not adverse to the Halifax speech, it was manifest that the new Emperor had only to establish his authority at home, and to exhibit a settled government, in order to secure a condonation of his crime.

French affairs were the subject of frequent discussion in England for the next year or two, in which Mr. Disraeli more than once took part ; and it is matter of history how Napoleon gradually obtained the goodwill of the English public—beginning, of course, with the Court and Society. It was constantly argued that peace and order were impossible with Frenchmen so long as they had no despotic ruler, that they were incurably fickle, that their frequent internal commotions were a source of peril to their neighbours, and

that Louis Napoleon, however unjustifiable the *coup d'état* might have been, was the only man who could preserve the country from civil war.

Mr. Disraeli's position in the House of Commons had already brought him into rivalry and contrast with Mr. Gladstone. The two men had for some time belonged to the same party, and had fought in the same ranks. From 1846 Mr. Gladstone's mental development, and especially his sound and logical action in questions of finance, had alienated him from the Tories, whilst, as we have seen, Mr. Disraeli had thrown himself into the arms of the most obstinate champions of the exploded doctrines of Protection. But seven years had produced a change in the attitude of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer towards these same doctrines. He had accepted the inevitable. He saw that it was worse than useless to struggle against the policy which had been adopted; and he was not the man to struggle for ever in a hopeless cause. Moreover, it is only fair to suppose that he too, by this time, was a convert to the logical conclusions of his former adversaries, and that he had laid to heart the plain lessons of experience. At all events he had ceased even to argue for reciprocal tariffs; and in 1853 we find him advocating the extension of Free Trade principles to the sacred interests of agriculture itself. Few coincidences in the lives of the two statesmen are more strange and noteworthy than that which occurred in a division on Mr. Hume's motion on the 3rd of March, for the abolition of duties on foreign manufactured articles and agricultural produce, when Mr. Gladstone, one of the chief instruments in the legislation of 1842-6, voted against the motion, whilst Mr. Disraeli, the bitterest opponent of Free Trade in 1846, gave Mr. Hume his approval and support. The Conservative leader recommended the adoption of the proposal as "a measure of justice to the cultivators of the soil." Mr. Gladstone, we need scarcely add, was favourable

to the motion in principle; but as Chancellor of the Exchequer he felt himself compelled to oppose the immediate extension of his own policy.

There were other matters in which the leader of the Opposition was found acting without the united support of his party, and in which the lead was for the moment assumed by some more uncompromising Tory. Such, very naturally, was the question of the removal of Jewish disabilities. The election of Baron Lionel de Rothschild for the City gave occasion for a motion by Lord John Russell, early in the session, for a Select Committee to inquire into the subject of these disabilities, when Sir Robert Peel, the son of the late Premier, opposed the motion. The Committee, however, was appointed and sat; and a Bill was founded on its report, which passed its third reading on the 15th of April, by a majority of 288 against 230. Sir Robert Peel maintained his opposition to the last; and to judge from the report of the debates on this question nothing was lost, in the way of vigorous invective, by the substitution of the baronet for his nominal leader.

Meanwhile the Eastern Question was coming steadily to the front. Turkey was on bad terms with more than one of the Great Powers, whilst she had been waging war with Montenegro and quarrelling with her Greek and Syrian subjects. Russia, who had treaty rights of protection in regard to the Greeks, had been making fruitless representations at Constantinople; and Austria also had come to the verge of a rupture with the Porte, which was only avoided by the partial submission of the latter to Count Leiningen's demands. The Russian quarrel also might have been settled, and we might have been spared the unfortunate Crimean War, if it had not happened that the Emperor Napoleon was just then greatly in need of an active foreign policy. He carefully nursed the Eastern Question, skilfully angled for the English alliance, and in the end contrived to

draw us into a position from which Lord Aberdeen's Cabinet found it impossible to escape without a declaration of war.

There is no need to repeat the story of this costly and unsatisfactory struggle in the present volume. The work of criticism was an easy one, and even if Mr. Disraeli had not been at the head of the Opposition he would have found plenty of inducement to take part in the chorus of popular indignation which began to assail the Government towards the end of 1854. Of course so long as the war itself proceeded in its more active phases, he either held his peace or gave his support to the measures of Lord Aberdeen's Cabinet. No complaint can be made of Lord Beaconsfield's patriotism during this crisis. When the first stage of the war was over, and the armies before Sebastopol began to suffer the terrible consequences of our breakdown at home—not so much from the neglect, or even the incompetency of the Government as from the failure of individual officials, and of departments which had never been put to a severe test—Mr. Disraeli on various occasions condemned the mismanagement which had been shown to exist. After the appointment of the Committee of Inquiry, and especially after the fall of Sebastopol and the conclusion of peace, he took no very active part in the discussions which continued to arise on Eastern affairs. On the 5th of May 1856, he seconded, in his official capacity, a vote of thanks moved to the chaplain of the House of Commons for an "admirable sermon" in connection with the national thanksgiving; but he left it to Lord John Manners to criticise, on the occasion of an address to the Queen, certain alleged shortcomings in the Treaty of Paris—amongst others, the absence of a guarantee against future Russian aggression in Asiatic Turkey.

On the whole, the few years of this Administration were, for the leader of the Opposition, amongst the quietest of his

public career. Mr. Disraeli was exercising "the magic of patience." In 1857, however, his participation in the debates of the House appears to have become more frequent. Early in the session of this year he drew attention to certain recent negotiations between France and Austria, in the course of which he alleged that the former country had undertaken to guarantee to Austria the possession of her Italian dominions. This statement, which raised a question of great interest at the moment, drew forth a contradiction from Lord Palmerston, who thought that Mr. Disraeli must have been imposed upon by his informants. The only foundation for the suggestion, the Premier declared, was that, early in the Crimean War, the French Government had assured Austria that no encouragement should be given to any rising of the Italian provinces. This assurance, with the conditional promise of concerted action, had been held out as an inducement to Austria to combine with the Allies, and in order to allay jealousies which had been caused by the adhesion of Sardinia; but, as Lord Palmerston pointed out, an offer of a convention was a very different thing from a guarantee. Mr. Disraeli was probably satisfied for the moment; though he continued to draw attention to the posture of affairs between Italy and her neighbours, with an evident foreboding of the events of 1859 and 1860.

A two days' debate on the Budget, raised by a motion of Mr. Disraeli's, that the estimated income and expenditure ought to be adjusted before agreeing to the financial proposals of Mr. Gladstone, ended with a majority for the Government of 286 to 206. But, notwithstanding the ample majority of Lord Palmerston for all ordinary purposes, he was defeated on a vote for a Select Committee proposed by Mr. Cobden on the 26th of February, in connection with the high-handed policy observed towards the Chinese. After a three days' debate the motion was carried by a small majority; and Lord Palmerston im-

mediately declared that he would advise Her Majesty to dissolve Parliament. A general election took place in April, with the result that the Liberals once more obtained a majority.

The year 1857 is memorable in English annals for the Indian Mutiny. Parliament was sitting when the first news of the outbreak reached this country, and Mr. Disraeli took several opportunities of calling attention to the serious state of affairs in the East. Thus he put questions or made motions on the subject on the 30th of June, on the 27th of July, on the 11th of August, and on other occasions, in his character as leader of the Opposition; but a motion of censure on the Government, which he brought forward in July, was negatived without a division. There is little doubt, however, that the Government was weakened in the country by the troubles which at this time occurred in various parts of the empire, abroad and at home, and which produced a sense of dissatisfaction with Lord Palmerston's administration of affairs. This dissatisfaction was brought to a climax by the attitude of the Cabinet in face of a preposterous demand made by France. Early in the year 1858, an attempt was made to assassinate the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress, as they were on the way to the Opera. Three hand-grenades were exploded in the street, and, though the imperial party were unhurt, five persons in the crowd were killed, and fifty or sixty were injured. Two of the assassins, Orsini and Pieri, were condemned to death, and Dr. Bernard, who was domiciled in England, was condemned at the same time as an accomplice in the conspiracy.

The French Government made strong representations to our own, urging the injustice of harbouring men who had made attempts on the lives of friendly sovereigns, asking for the extradition of Dr. Bernard, and even suggesting that, if this were impossible under our existing laws, these laws might be altered so as to accord with the notions of French-

men on the subject. Dr. Bernard was actually arrested on the 14th of February, and placed on his defence ; but, after a trial of six days' duration, he was acquitted. Meanwhile Lord Palmerston made the great mistake of bringing in a Bill to amend the laws on Conspiracy to Murder, with a view to meeting the desires of the French Government. Englishmen felt very strongly on this subject, and they had been exasperated by the publication, in the French official *Moniteur*, of an address to the Emperor Napoleon signed by a large number of colonels in the army, and containing very unfriendly and even menacing expressions towards the English people. Lord Palmerston's action in view of all this excitement was unquestionably rash, and it caused as much annoyance as the conduct of his Cabinet on the Chinese question.

A debate took place on the second reading of the Bill, and an amendment was proposed by Mr. Milner Gibson to the effect that the House had heard with much concern that the recent attempt on the life of the Emperor had been devised in England, and that it desired to express its detestation of the act ; "that this House is ready at all times to assist in remedying any defects in the criminal law which, after due investigation, are proved to exist ; and that this House cannot but regret that Her Majesty's Government, previously to inviting the House to amend the law of conspiracy at the present time, have not felt it to be their duty to reply to the important despatch received from the French Government, dated Paris, January 20, 1858, which has been laid before Parliament."

This amendment had a large amount of support from the Liberal side of the House, Mr. Gladstone especially making an excellent speech in its favour. Mr. Disraeli also supported it, and pointed out that the question was one between Parliament and the Ministers, rather than a political or diplomatic question—that the issue was simply whether the

Government ought not to have immediately sent a dignified reply to Count Walewski's despatch, instead of keeping it in the background and requiring Parliament to pass an Act for the satisfaction of a foreign Government.

On a division it was found that the Ministry had lost the votes of nearly a hundred of their supporters, and that they were in a minority of 19, out of a House of 454. Lord Palmerston now resigned, and the Earl of Derby was asked to form a Cabinet. However unwilling the Earl or Mr. Disraeli might have been to undertake the duties of office with a large majority against them in the Lower House, there was really no alternative under the circumstances. It was necessary that Lord Palmerston should have time to meditate on the two lessons which he had received in the course of a twelvemonth; and after so short an interval another dissolution could not be thought of. The Conservative leaders accordingly responded to the summons, on the understanding that they would receive the general support of the House of Commons in a quiet and unaggressive policy.



CHAPTER XX.

THE SECOND DERBY ADMINISTRATION.

THE second Administration in which Mr. Disraeli held office was constituted as follows:—

First Lord of the Treasury, . . .	Earl of Derby.
Lord President of the Council, . . .	Marquis of Salisbury.
Lord Chancellor,	Lord Chelmsford.
Lord Privy Seal,	Earl of Hardwicke.
Chancellor of the Exchequer, . . .	B. Disraeli.
Home Secretary,	Spencer Walpole.
Foreign „	Earl of Malmesbury.
Colonial „	Sir E. Bulwer Lytton.
War „	General Peel.
India „	Lord Stanley.
First Lord of the Admiralty, . . .	Sir John Pakington.
President, Board of Trade, . . .	J. W. Henley.
„ „ Works,	Lord John Manners.

The position which Mr. Disraeli and his colleagues were now called upon to occupy was no less arduous and trying than that which they had occupied six years before. It was not merely their dependence upon a liberal majority in the House of Commons, and their consequent inability to propose or pass any measure on the lines of a distinctly Conservative policy, which troubled the new Government.

They were confronted by difficulties of various kinds and degrees, at home and abroad. The ill-feeling between England and France was tided over by a civil despatch from Lord Malmesbury to Count Walewski, in reply to the communication of the preceding January; and the French Government, understanding the effect of the vote in the House of Commons, ceased to expect impossibilities from us. The mere fact of a Conservative Cabinet having succeeded a Liberal one may have calmed the minds of the Emperor and his advisers; but some years elapsed before the animosities of the Imperialists against England sank to rest. They did not then foresee how Napoleon himself would live to be grateful for an asylum in the very country which harboured Dr. Bernard, and had been made a starting-point by Orsini.

India was settling down after the Mutiny, and it appeared to the Anglo-Indian Government—then still under the Court of Directors of the East India Company—that the time had come when at least an approach might be made to a policy of clemency. The Governor-General in 1858 was Lord Canning; and it seemed good to him, and to his council, to proclaim an amnesty, under certain conditions, to the people of Oude. By many Englishmen this act was welcomed as a good sign, and as showing that the reign of confidence and humane measures might now be re-established. But there were others who could not yet dismiss from their minds the vindictive feelings which had so naturally taken possession of them in the previous year. The Cabinet favoured this view of the situation, and Lord Ellenborough wrote a despatch to the Governor-General, conveying an expression of censure upon him for the proclamation above-mentioned. When the fact came to be known in England, Mr. Cardwell brought forward a motion in the House of Commons which would have proved fatal to the Government. But, acting on the advice of his political friends, he

withdrew the motion without going to a division, and thus the truce was maintained for some time longer.

Meanwhile, public opinion had declared in favour of bringing our Indian empire more directly under the government of the Crown ; and one of the principal labours of Mr. Disraeli, in 1858, was to conduct a measure for this purpose through the House of Commons. The Act, as eventually passed, provided that all the territories of the East India Company were thenceforth to be governed in the name of the Queen ; that all revenues and tribute were to be disposed of for the purposes of the government of India alone ; that a new Secretary of State should be appointed for India, with a seat in the Cabinet. The government of the dependency was to be by the Secretary of State and a council of fifteen in England, and by the Governor-General and a council in India. The appointments of clerks in the India Civil Service were to be made by the Crown after competitive examination, and the general service of the State in India was made an open career. The Bill, which dealt fairly with the Court of Directors, and the officials whose position was to be affected by it, was passed by majorities of from sixty to a hundred, against amendments proposed by Lord Palmerston and others.

Another measure of the same session was the Divorce Act, which was strenuously opposed by Mr. Gladstone and many members on both sides of the House, but was passed, on its third reading in the Commons, by a majority of one hundred to seventy. A Church Rates Abolition Bill, independently introduced and promoted, was thrown out by the House of Lords ; but the reformers had not long to wait for a more propitious opportunity.

As Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Disraeli was called upon to frame a Budget at a very difficult financial crisis. The previous twelve months had been a time of disaster for England. One of the first Acts of the Session had had for

its object to indemnify the governor and company of the Bank of England in respect of an extraordinary issue of notes, and to authorise further issues, intended to alleviate the crisis in the money market. Twenty-one millions had been appropriated from the Consolidated Fund for the service of the year, chiefly to defray the expenses of suppressing the Mutiny. Twenty-one millions had to be raised by Exchequer Bills, and two millions by bonds. The diminution of revenue and increase of expenditure left an estimated deficit of nearly four millions to be provided against. This Mr. Disraeli did by deferring the liquidation of three-and-a-half millions of debt, as previously arranged for the year, by a manipulation of the spirit duties (approved of by Mr. Gladstone), and by a stamp on bankers' cheques, calculated to yield £300,000. No opposition was raised to this financial scheme; and thus Mr. Disraeli emerged from the responsibilities of the session of 1858 with credit to himself.

Meanwhile the demand for Parliamentary Reform was growing louder and louder throughout the country. It was a demand which dated, as we have seen, from the morrow of the first Reform Bill; and amongst the Liberal leaders Lord John Russell in particular had long cherished an ambition to introduce a new scheme for the extension of the franchise, and for the readjustment of representative power. A Reform League had been constituted in London before Lord Palmerston quitted office, and the popular agitation had increased to such an extent that the Government had felt themselves compelled to promise a measure in 1859. But before the consideration of this first attempt of Mr. Disraeli at Parliamentary Reform could be brought to a head, the attention of the Government was diverted to the affairs of the Continent.

It has already been said that Mr. Disraeli had, when in Opposition, shown a special interest in the relations between

France and Austria in regard to the Italian movement; and he now had the opportunity of advising upon the attitude which England was to maintain in the impending struggle. Our late ally had given unmistakeable signs of her intention to befriend the Italian patriots; and there is no doubt that the action of France at this crisis did much to regain for the Imperial Government the goodwill which had of late been decidedly on the wane in this country. Englishmen heartily sympathised with the efforts of Cavour, Garibaldi, and their followers, and they watched with some anxiety the course taken in the matter by the Derby Administration. Thus the debates which took place in the two Houses of Parliament, early in the session of 1859, were of peculiar interest and importance.

“Not only were men scanning with anxiety the prospects of the struggling Italian populations, and the mutual attitude of France and Austria to each other, but it was also anticipated that the party of the majority of the House of Commons would soon reassert its power, and condone the offence of Lord Palmerston in regard to the Chinese action by replacing him in office. On the 25th of February a premonitory symptom was manifested in a speech of Lord Palmerston’s, calling attention to the state of affairs on the Continent, and especially to the jealousies known to exist between France and Austria. In reply to this speech Mr. Disraeli announced that the two Powers in question were about to evacuate the States of the Church—their joint occupation of which had done much to give rise to the jealousies of which Lord Palmerston spoke. Mr. Disraeli also stated that Lord Cowley had been sent to Vienna on a confidential mission, which was undertaken in the interest of peace.

“During the first three months of the year the diplomatists of Europe were doing their best to keep the peace, though it was well known that Sardinia was bent on fighting as the champion of the Italian nationalities in general. The mission of Lord Cowley was only one of many efforts made by the English Government to prevent the outbreak of war. The reply of Austria to the English overtures was to the effect that the crisis was due to the ambition and encroaching policy of Sardinia; that Austria herself had no desire to live on bad terms with the Sardinian King, and no intention of attacking the kingdom so long as the Italian troops kept within their own boundaries.

Cavour, however, the Sardinian Minister, made no secret of his belief that the complete solution of the Italian question could not be obtained by pacific and diplomatic means. Sardinia was therefore arming fast, and the general conclusion was that a conflict had become unavoidable. France did indeed warn Sardinia that she need expect no assistance if she broke the peace; but the Emperor Napoleon was notoriously favourable to the Italians, and inclined to side with them against Austria. The war was ultimately forced on by Austria demanding that Sardinia should disarm, under circumstances which made it impossible for the latter to comply. The Powers, whose good offices were rendered useless by this hasty action on Austria's part, remonstrated with the Government of Vienna; but the die was cast. France, which had already guaranteed Sardinia against attack, sent an army to Piedmont; and thus the war began.

"All Italy at once broke out in revolution against its petty tyrants, and volunteers poured in to the standard of Victor Emmanuel. The whole peninsula was ranged against the Austrian, except the established Governments and the troops which they were able to command. . . . The war was not of long duration, though it was stirring in its details and satisfactory in its results. France defeated Austria at Solferino and Magenta, and the Austrians were finally driven out of Lombardy and Venetia. Garibaldi's expedition in the Two Sicilies completed in the south the work which Sardinia and her ally had done in the north; and thus the dream of Italian unity was fulfilled."*

An international crisis like that which was being developed on the continent of Europe in 1859 could not but have an important effect, even on the home politics of England. It gave a spur to Liberal sentiment and an impetus to Liberal courage; and undoubtedly the hopes of English reformers were strengthened at each step in advance made by the Italian patriots. Mr. Gladstone, Lord Palmerston, Lord John Russell, gained in popularity by their sturdy advocacy of the cause of national emancipation; and the Government suffered by the commensurate distrust with which their attitude was, more or less justly, regarded.

In the matter of Parliamentary Reform, Mr. Disraeli and

* See Vol. I. of the present Series; p. 182.

his colleagues no doubt attempted quite as much as could have been looked for from a Conservative Cabinet ; but it was not to be expected that a politician like Lord John Russell would surrender to Mr. Disraeli without a struggle the position which he had always claimed as his own. It was manifest from the beginning of the year that the Liberal leaders would directly challenge the Ministry on their programme of Reform.

No time was lost in bringing this question to an issue. The session began on the 3rd of February ; and on the last day of the month Mr. Disraeli introduced his Bill. If any expectations had been formed beforehand that the Government would propose a genuinely Liberal measure, conceding the substance of the popular demands, the Chancellor of the Exchequer immediately disappointed them by his speech. The gist of the reform which was claimed by the country was an extension of the franchise in the large towns ; and the Cabinet had resolved that this could not be granted. Not population, but property and social standing was to be the recognised ground of enfranchisement ; and, observing this principle, Mr. Disraeli stated that he was prepared to equalise the county and the borough suffrage. Everyone with an income of at least ten pounds yearly from the funds, every pensioner to the amount of twenty pounds, every graduate of a university, every minister of religion, doctor, and lawyer, was to have a vote in his own borough or county ; and thus it was hoped that the intelligence and responsible stability of the country would without exception be gathered into the electoral body. This was the character of the reform which the Coningsby of real life proposed for the acceptance of his countrymen ; and he claimed for himself and his friends that they could consistently advocate it as a Conservative and consolidating measure, at once doing justice to the present and harmonising with the legislation of the past.

It was in some sense an attractive and promising scheme—especially to doctrinaires, to Conservatives of the “new generation,” and to the majority of the classes which would be benefited by the change; but it did not commend itself as practical or sufficient to the House of Commons. And indeed it may be questioned whether the country was yet ripe for a satisfactory Reform Bill. They who demanded reform most eagerly would be content with nothing less than an extension of the franchise far below its present level, and such a recognition of the “standard of population” as would give direct representation to the great industrial centres which had sprung into importance since the Act of 1832. And on the other hand there was a sort of reaction against the demand for reform, created amongst the more timid classes by the heat of the agitation which had logically proved its necessity. That this was so is shown by the fact that eight years were to elapse, mainly under a Liberal Government, before the Reform League could gain its end.

As soon as Mr. Disraeli had explained his proposals, Lord John Russell, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Roebuck criticised them in a very unfavourable manner; and on the following day Mr. Walpole, the Home Secretary, and Mr. Henley, the President of the Board of Trade, retired from the Cabinet on account of certain provisions contained in the Bill.

The second reading was moved on the 21st of March, when Lord John Russell moved as an amendment, “that it is neither just nor politic to interfere in the manner proposed in this Bill with the freehold franchise as hitherto exercised in the counties of England and Wales; and that no readjustment of the franchise will satisfy the House or the country which does not provide for a greater extension of the suffrage in cities and boroughs than is contemplated in the present measure.” This amendment obtained some

support, at least of a negative kind, even from the Conservative side of the House, some of the Ministerialists taking much exception to the clause which would have equalised the borough and county franchise. The bulk of the Liberal party was with Lord John Russell; for it was of course impossible that they should have accepted a measure in which the popular claims for representation were left absolutely untouched. Mr. Gladstone had not yet completely emancipated himself from his old ties, and had not freely declared himself in favour of the enfranchisement of the artizans. Perhaps there was something in the educational and professional franchises which caught his fancy; but, however this may have been, he took a middle course in the discussion. He did not oppose the Bill as it stood, and yet he was not prepared to go into the lobby with Lord John Russell. He would have granted the second reading, and then amended the scheme in Committee. Moreover, he expressed his anxiety to have the subject settled without further delay; for, as he said, it had long stood in the way of other measures. As far back as 1851, he reminded the House, Lord John Russell had set out with a promise of what was to be done twelve months afterwards.

“In 1852 he brought in a Bill, and it disappeared, together with the Ministry. In 1853 we had the Ministry of Lord Aberdeen, which commenced with a promise of Reform in twelve months' time. Well, 1854 arrived; with it arrived the Bill, but with it also arrived the war, and in the war was a reason for abandoning the Bill. Then came the Government of my noble friend the member for Tiverton, which was not less unfortunate in the circumstances that prevented the redemption of those pledges which had been given to the people from the mouth of the Sovereign on the Throne. In 1855 my noble friend escaped all responsibility for a Reform Bill on account of the war; in 1856 he escaped all responsibility for Reform on account of the peace; in 1857 he escaped that inconvenient responsibility by the dissolution of his Government.”

The division gave a majority of thirty-nine against the

second reading; and it was manifest that the Government would have to give way before so strong an expression of opinion. Mr. Disraeli candidly told the House that the vote was regarded by the Cabinet as a vote of censure; but, he added, as the Government "felt conscious that it had done nothing to forfeit the support formerly given to it," they had considered it their duty to advise Her Majesty to exercise her prerogative, and to dissolve Parliament.

The House sat for a few weeks longer, and a general election took place in May. The result was not so decisive as the Liberal leaders had hoped. They won a majority of seats, but it was clear that their advantage was not sufficiently great or stable to make it certain that they would be able to carry their measures through the House. The first trial of strength took place on the Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne. The Marquis of Hartington moved an amendment to the Address, declaring that "the confidence of the House in her Ministers was essential to the discharge of Her Majesty's high functions, and that the present Ministry did not possess that confidence." After a debate of three days, this was agreed to by 323 against 310; and Ministers at once gave in their resignations.

Thus ended Mr. Disraeli's second term of office. Like the first, it had been too brief and precarious to give him much chance of showing his capacities for Government, or of converting into realities the political idea which he had enunciated in his novels in so striking a manner. No doubt he had done his best to be brilliant and original in introducing his "fancy franchises;" but the odds were against him, and his opportunity had not yet come.

CHAPTER XXI.

SEVEN YEARS OF OPPOSITION

FOR seven years Mr. Disraeli was in Opposition, and his Parliamentary career was comparatively uneventful. As late Chancellor of the Exchequer, it fell to his lot, amongst other things, to watch the financial measures of Mr. Gladstone, who succeeded him in office. But Mr. Gladstone had already more than made his mark in finance, and Mr. Disraeli had too just an estimate of his own capabilities to suppose that he could do more than pass a general, not to say a perfunctory criticism on the plans of his great rival in this special domain of work. Mr. Gladstone's Budgets during the last Palmerston and Russell Administrations were so successful, so transparently beneficial to the country, and so popular in the House of Commons, that it would in many instances have been idle to oppose them with anything stronger than mild and desultory comments.

Mr. Disraeli's Budget for 1858 had been, as we have seen, fairly simple and satisfactory. There had been little to do beyond providing for a large deficit, and this had been done as it were with the stroke of a pen. But it had been done in a manner which even at that period in his career Mr.

Gladstone would scarcely have concurred in without a protest, if it had not been for the peculiar circumstances under which the Conservatives took office, and the short time allowed to the Chancellor for the formulation of his proposals. Three-and-a-half millions had been contributed to meet current expenditure by simply adding so much to the sum total of the permanent debt—or, which was practically the same thing, by cancelling an arrangement which had been made for the discharge of that amount of debt.

In 1859 Mr. Gladstone had, on equally short notice, to deal with a yet larger deficiency, arising partly from like causes—the suppression of the Mutiny and the extraordinary expenditure on the Army and Navy. This large deficiency Mr. Gladstone refused to extinguish by laying it as a burden upon the future. He asked the taxpayers to meet the year's liabilities out of the year's revenue, and to submit to an increase of fourpence in the income-tax. The suggestion pre-supposed a certain amount of self-denial and patriotism in the public mind; and Mr. Gladstone did not count on these virtues without good reason. The country on the whole decidedly approved of the plan, admitting it to be sound and courageous; but in the meantime Mr. Disraeli thought it his duty to oppose it. He did not, however, go so far as to maintain that it would be a wise plan to sweep the deficits of successive years into the National Debt. On the contrary, he thought that deficits were generally due to the vast outlays which we were compelled to make on the defensive forces of the country; and he took high ground in maintaining that the Government might now fairly appeal to the Continental Powers, and to France in particular, with a view to inducing a general disarmament. The moment seemed to him to be a propitious one for making this suggestion to France when her quarrel with Austria was brought to an end, and when she had shown a disposition to enter into a close commercial alliance with this country.

However, Mr. Gladstone's resolution for an increase in the income-tax was accepted by the House.

On some occasions Mr. Disraeli had powerful allies in the Upper House. Thus in 1860 Mr. Gladstone's financial scheme involved the abolition of the paper duty, and it was necessary to embody this operation in an Act of Parliament. The Lords threw out the Bill, in spite of strong remonstrances against their interfering with the constitutional prerogative of the Lower House in dealing with Ways and Means. In 1861 the Bill was reintroduced and passed into law; and it was in this year that the Chancellor of the Exchequer took a new departure in commercial legislation by instituting the Post-Office Savings Banks. There was naturally a warm opposition to the scheme, especially on the part of the existing guaranteed Savings Banks. Plans of this kind, looking to future years for their development and justification, of course added somewhat to the temporary burdens of the taxpayers, or stood in the way of fictitious and fallacious reliefs which might otherwise have been given. Mr. Disraeli made himself the mouthpiece of such complaints as these; and he did not omit to press the traditional plea of the Conservative party for a diminution of local taxation, and of the burdens incident on land. Enough has been said to indicate the general character of the financial questions and discussions which arose during the course of this Administration, and the respective attitudes of the present and late Chancellors of the Exchequer.

Meanwhile Lord Palmerston continued to manage the affairs of the country with that calm and equable temperament which had contributed so much to keep him in office through the greater part of half a century, and which made him, on the whole, the most popular Premier of the age. His foreign policy, indeed, was by no means invulnerable to criticism, as he had found to his cost on

more than one occasion ; and in 1864 a vigorous attack was made upon him by Mr. Disraeli in connection with the war between Prussia and Denmark. There were many Englishmen in that day who thought that it was our duty, in concert with other Powers, to withstand the encroachment of Prussia on the Danish kingdom, and maintain the integrity of the latter State, on much the same principles which have always actuated us in maintaining the independence of Belgium. And in fact the neutral Powers did attempt in a peaceful manner to intervene between Denmark and her enemies, and a Conference was held in London for the express purpose of seeking to effect a reconciliation.

But this action on the part of Lord Palmerston's Cabinet did not content the Opposition. On the 4th of July, Mr. Disraeli moved an Address to the Crown, "to thank Her Majesty for having directed the correspondence on Denmark and Germany, and the protocol of the Conference recently assembled in London, to be laid before Parliament ; to assure Her Majesty that we have heard with deep concern that the sittings of the Conference have been brought to a close without accomplishing the important purpose for which it was convened ; and to express to Her Majesty our regret that, while the course pursued by Her Majesty's Government has failed to maintain their avowed policy of upholding the integrity and independence of Denmark, it has thereby lowered the just influence of this country in the capitals of Europe, and diminished the securities for peace." Mr. Kinglake moved as an amendment, "to express satisfaction that the Government had resolved to abstain from armed interference in the war now going on between Denmark and the German Powers," and the Government accepted this modification. The debate which followed was carried on with great vigour, and Mr. Disraeli was followed into the lobby by as many as 295 Conservatives, whilst the Government numbered no more than 313.

This majority of eighteen was not a large one on a question of confidence, though it was five more than the majority which had originally brought the Liberals into power. It sufficed to carry on the Administration to the end of its seventh session; and in the autumn of 1865 Lord Palmerston quietly dissolved, without any special effort in the way of a manifesto or a fresh programme. The mere prestige of his name sufficed to gain for him an increased support in the country; but, before the time came for Parliament to reassemble, the aged Premier had passed away, and it became necessary to look to other leaders, and to prepare for more active work.

It may be well, before we proceed to review the great struggle for Parliamentary Reform which distinguished the sessions of 1866 and 1867, if we turn aside for a moment to glance at the condition of Ireland at this crisis—just fifteen years before it was to tax the utmost skill of the same Parliamentary leaders, under somewhat similar circumstances, but with far greater urgency.

The Fenians had for some time past been causing no little anxiety to the Government and the country, and Ireland seemed to be on the verge of civil war. The Cabinet of Earl Russell (who, with a seat in the Upper House, had succeeded to the vacancy created by Lord Palmerston's death) saw fit, early in the year 1866, to bring forward a Bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and the opinions entertained on the Irish question as a whole, by the various parties and sections of parties in the House, appear to have been identical in character, though not in intensity, with those entertained in 1881.

"Mr. Bright" (says Mr. Barnett Smith, in his life of Mr. Gladstone*), "called upon the 'two great and trusted leaders,' Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli, to suspend for a moment their contests for office, and to combine in an effort to ascertain the causes of Irish discontent, and

* Vol. ii., p. 44.

to apply a remedy. He believed there was a mode of making Ireland loyal, and he threw the responsibility of discovering it upon the Government and on the Imperial Parliament. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in defending the ministerial measure, expressed the regret and pain with which he had listened to Mr. Bright's speech, much of which was open to question, and was ill-timed. He declined to recognise the voice of Ireland, except as conveyed through the mouths of her legally elected representatives, and congratulated the House on the general unanimity with which the Irish members had acquiesced in the Bill. The Government were ready at a fitting time to consider any measures which might be proposed for the benefit of Ireland, but it was the single duty of the House that day to strengthen the hands of the Executive on the preservation of law and order. The Bill subsequently passed through all its stages. After the Earl of Derby's Administration came into power, Lord Naas brought in a renewal bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in lieu of that which was about to expire. Mr. Gladstone said that while the Government were adding to their responsibilities in connection with Ireland by asking for this renewal, yet without considering whether their general policy was such as he could approve, he could not refuse to strengthen their hands in such a way as they deemed necessary. If the late Ministry had still been in office, it would have been their duty to make a similar application. This second Bill passed through both Houses, and the events of the following autumn—which were the results of an anticipated great Fenian rising under 'Head Centre' Stephens—fully justified the course adopted by the Government."

Opinions will differ as to the "full justification" of the policy of coercion before remedy, and many will think that the very excesses of the Fenians afforded a logical proof that the remedy of grievances would have been a far more effectual preventive of disorder, at any rate in the future, than the forcible suppression of chronic lawlessness. Mr. Disraeli, some years before this time, had delivered his mind on the subject in a remarkable speech, from which it is worth while to quote a single significant passage:—

"In Ireland," he said, "during the troubles of 1844, they had a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church; and, in addition, the weakest executive in the world. If," he continued, "honourable gentlemen read of a country in that position they

would say at once that the remedy was revolution. But the Irish could not have a revolution; and why? Because Ireland was connected with another and more powerful country. The connection with England thus became the cause of the present state of Ireland. If the connection with England prevented a revolution, and a revolution was the only remedy, England logically was in the odious position of being the cause of all the misery in Ireland. What, then, was the duty of an English Minister? To effect by his policy all those changes which a revolution would do by force."



CHAPTER XXII.

MR. GLADSTONE'S REFORM BILL.

THE second Derby-Disraeli Administration, it has already been said, had dissolved Parliament after having been defeated by an amendment of Lord John Russell's on Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill. It might have been expected, and it was expected by the more earnest reformers, that the new Government would at once bring in a Bill of their own, and that they would endeavour to settle so important a question without delay. If this was not done, it was probably because Lord Palmerston was not so courageous in the matter as some of his colleagues—and also, perhaps, because the popular demand was less urgent and persistent than it had at one time appeared to be.

In 1861, Lord John Russell did bring in a measure, reducing the borough franchise to £6; this Bill was read a second time. But for some reason or other it was not pressed until the session was too far advanced to admit of its being carried forward through its later stages. This was the last attempt to deal with the question in Lord Palmerston's lifetime.

When Earl Russell became Premier, he took up the subject as a matter of course; and, in the meantime, Mr.

Gladstone also had grown more robust and resolute. In 1864 he had made a speech on the necessity for reform, which showed that he was thenceforth to be reckoned amongst the most vigorous advocates of the enfranchisement of the working classes.

Thus, in 1866, everything seemed to be ripe for legislation. Mr. Gladstone led the Lower House, as Earl Russell led the Upper House. In the Cabinet there were men as notorious for their reforming zeal as Mr. Milner Gibson and Mr. Villiers. But, on the other hand, eight out of the fourteen members of the Cabinet were Whig lords; and the House of Commons, though it boasted of a Liberal majority, had been elected as an instrument fit for the hand of Lord Palmerston, and not for the stronger grasp of Mr. Gladstone.

After a famous six weeks of legislative activity, which sufficed to add as many serviceable measures to the statute-book as had been enacted during some entire sessions under the previous *régimes*, the Franchise Extension Bill was introduced in the House of Commons. The principal provisions of this abortive Bill were so framed as to lower the franchise to £7 in boroughs and £14 in counties, to give the suffrage to lodgers paying at least £10 a-year for the rent of unfurnished rooms, to confer a vote on the depositors of £50 in savings banks, after the deposit had stood in their names for two years, and to disfranchise the employés in Government dockyards. It was estimated that these changes would at once add 400,000 voters to the register.

Mild as this proposal was, it went too far for some of the Ministerialists. Mr. Lowe, Mr. Horsman, Lord Grosvenor, and a few other Liberals saw a danger to the country in this downward extension of the suffrage; and they constituted a clique—or, as Mr. Bright put it, they retired into a “Cave of Adullam”—which was destined to bring about the defeat of the Government. Mr. Lowe has always con-

sistently maintained that the franchise of 1832 was sufficiently extended for the safety and good government of the country, and he would have improved it merely by the admission of the educated classes. He feared the consequences of giving votes to the more ignorant ranks of the democracy, who, as he thought, had a smaller stake in the country than the upper and middle divisions of society, and he therefore strongly protested against such an increase of the constituencies as the Government now proposed. He was one of the first on the Liberal side to show signs of discontent and dissatisfaction. It was of Mr. Horsman that Mr. Bright observed, that "he had retired into what may be called his political Cave of Adullam, to which he invited every one who was in distress, and every one who was discontented." Mr. Horsman, according to the member for Birmingham, had long desired to found a political party of his own; and "at last he had succeeded in hooking the right honourable gentleman, the member for Calne (Mr. Lowe)." The accession of Lord Grosvenor to the Cave made it really formidable, and the Cabinet began to see that their Bill was in danger.

Mr. Disraeli, of course, attacked the measure. It proceeded on the principle which he had condemned in 1859—that of regarding the population of a borough as a legitimate ground for enfranchising it; and even if he had already begun to see that this principle would have to be admitted, he would have felt himself justified in his opposition by the ordinary plea of the statesman—that he could legislate better than his rival, and was therefore in duty bound to seek an opportunity of displacing him.

If Mr. Disraeli, or Mr. Lowe, or any other opponent of the Reform Bill of 1866, could have had any doubt as to the sentiments with which the measure itself was regarded in the country, they were not long allowed to deceive themselves. The Government had behind them the emphatic

support of the constituencies, at all events ample to warrant them in persevering. The agitation of the Reform League rose to its height during this session and the succeeding autumn, and the Liberal party out of the House was almost unanimous in favour of the change proposed. Considering it as a measure of justice to a large class of the community, they did not concern themselves so much with the precise form as with the spirit and intention of the Bill. Some took it as an instalment of what they felt was due to the working-men, whilst others, even if they were somewhat afraid of what was coming, had prepared themselves to accept the decision of the Government as a concession made by a prudent and responsible Cabinet. The disposition to look on the enfranchisement of the artisans as a critical, not to say dangerous, experiment was shared by the great majority of intelligent persons. Mr. Gladstone himself spoke of having "crossed the Rubicon." "We have broken the bridge," he said, "and burned the boats behind us."

On the second reading, Mr. Disraeli made a speech of three hours in length, and declared that the Government wished to Americanise our institutions. He repudiated the charge that the Conservatives wantonly opposed measures beneficial to the country, and was able to point with logical force to the thirty or more professing Liberals who were known to be adverse to the Bill. The House, he maintained, ought to remember that it was not the House of the people at large, not the mouthpiece of the indiscriminate multitude, but a representative Assembly of a great political order in the State. This was the argument which he had employed, more than twenty years before, in his letter to Lord Lyndhurst.

The speeches of Mr. Lowe, Lord Cranborne, and others on the same side, were more bitter than Mr. Disraeli's. Mr. Lowe gravely talked of the Bill as though it were to be the ruin of the English empire. "Uncoerced by any

external force, not borne down by any internal calamity, but in the full plethora of our wealth, and the surfeit of our too exuberant prosperity, with our own rash and inconsiderate hands, we are about to pluck down on our heads the venerable temple of our liberty and our glory. History may tell of other acts as signally disastrous, but of none more wanton, none more disgraceful." It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of this tirade; and yet it is pertinent to remember, as we read of it after this lapse of time, that the speaker was a member of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet two years later, and that he helped to pass a measure which enabled a far wider constituency than he yet dreamed of to give their votes under an absolute guarantee of secrecy. His attitude in 1866 was that of a man who sits upon the safety-valve of a locomotive, and solemnly adjures the driver not to go so perilously fast.

The debate was adjourned from day to day over the best part of a fortnight, and eventually passed by the bare majority of five. The numbers were 318 against 313; and the Conservatives refused to believe that the Government could persist with their Bill after thirty-one of their nominal supporters had gone into the lobby against them.

But Mr. Gladstone did persevere. After the Easter recess he introduced a second Bill for the Redistribution of Seats, as well as two other Bills for Scotland and Ireland. The second reading of the Redistribution Bill was agreed to without a division; but Mr. Disraeli promised an active opposition in Committee. Referring to the uncertainty of the position of parties since the last division, he said that the House and country were in ignorance how to proceed; that they must come forward and help the Government out of their difficulty; and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer "must recross the Rubicon, build up his bridges, and reconstruct his boats."

Another Conservative member, Sir Rainald Knightley,

apparently for the purpose of embarrassing the Government, moved and carried an instruction to the Committee on the Franchise Bill that it should make provision for the prevention of corruption and bribery at elections. Captain Hayter, a Liberal, moved a resolution against the system of grouping small boroughs which had been adopted in the Redistribution Bill; but he withdrew it on the recommendation of Earl Grosvenor—afterwards Duke of Westminster—who was throughout unwilling to cause the overthrow of the Government. The Earl was an admirer of Lord Clarendon as a Foreign Minister, and considered that, in the disturbed condition of Europe—it was the time the Austro-Prussian War was at its height—his removal from office would be a misfortune to the country. Mr. Disraeli would not admit the force of this plea, and took occasion to criticise the policy for which Lord Clarendon had made himself responsible.

When the Franchise Bill was in Committee, Lord Dunkellin moved that the borough franchise ought to be based on rating, and not on rental. No doubt it is the best basis of the two; but Mr. Gladstone urged the great practical difficulties in the way of such an arrangement, which had been duly considered when the Bill was drafted. The motion, however, was carried by a majority of eleven, in a House of 619. Then, at last, the Government gave way. They saw that it was useless to persist with the Bill, and accordingly resigned on the 19th of June.

Thus once more, for the third time, Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli came into office—we can hardly say into power—with an adverse majority in the House of Commons. The Adullamite leaders refused to enter the new Ministry, which was constituted entirely from the Conservative side of the House, and represented a party of not more than 290 members. The Cabinet was composed as follows:—

First Lord of the Treasury, . . .	Earl of Derby.
Lord President of the Council, . . .	Duke of Buckingham.
Lord Chancellor,	Lord Chelmsford.
Lord Privy Seal,	Earl of Malmesbury.
Chancellor of the Exchequer, . . .	Benjamin Disraeli.
Home Secretary,	S. H. Walpole.
Foreign „	Lord Stanley.
Colonial „	Earl of Carnarvon.
War „	General Peel.
India „	Viscount Cranborne.
First Lord of the Admiralty, . . .	Sir John Pakington.
President, Board of Trade, . . .	Sir S. H. Northcote.
„ „ Poor Law Board, . . .	Gathorne Hardy.
Chancellor of the Duchy, . . .	Earl of Devon.
Chief Commissioner of Works, . . .	Lord John Manners.
Chief Secretary for Ireland, . . .	Lord Naas.

We come now to a period in Mr. Disraeli's career which illustrates better than any other the great flexibility of his political opinions, and the remarkable success with which he has been able to educate and manipulate the Conservative party. The circumstances under which he, after he had so vigorously and solemnly denounced Mr. Gladstone's scheme of reform, in less than twelve months, proposed and carried a measure of infinitely wider scope, in the same Parliament and with the assistance of both parties, are amongst the most noteworthy and significant in our political annals. He offended and threw over some of the staunchest of his Tory colleagues and supporters, persuaded the rest that their earnest protestations of the previous session might be forgotten, turned round upon the allies who had helped him to drive Lord Russell from power, and succeeded in passing his measure only by the aid of Mr. Gladstone, whom he had satirically advised to recross the Rubicon. It was a manœuvre altogether unprecedented and unequalled, and we cannot wonder that it drew down upon him the bitterest and most trenchant criticism. He has since been forgiven by most of the friends whom he outraged in 1867; but there were some

of the Tories of that day who never again quite submitted to his leadership.

For conduct such as this there must be, in the nature of things, some assignable excuses and explanations. It is urged on behalf of Mr. Disraeli that he found the situation rather than made it; that he saw reform to be necessary and indispensable, and consequently resolved to do himself the work which his rivals might do in a less satisfactory manner; that he, in fact, submitted to the constraint of the "indiscriminate multitude," in spite of his theory that the House was the mere Assembly of the second Estate; that he tried to pass a moderate Act, somewhat on the lines of his proposal in 1839, and that, once having put himself in the hands of the House, he was really hurried on against his will into passing a measure such as no man could have foreseen when he assumed office. The great offence of Mr. Disraeli, in the eyes of some of his critics, was in consenting to introduce a measure of Parliamentary reform in the first instance. Having done that, all the rest naturally followed.

To the last of these charges it is open to Mr. Disraeli's friends to say that he could not have brought in a Reform Bill without the assent of the Cabinet as a whole. The question was of course duly considered and debated; the draft of the Bill must have been approved before it was submitted to Parliament. No issue of principle could have been raised at this stage, and at any rate there were no withdrawals or protests. Lord Derby, and the other Conservative leaders who had been in the Cabinet of 1859, were equally committed with Mr. Disraeli to the course of pitting a Tory against a Liberal scheme, and thus it is unfair to accuse Lord Beaconsfield of having transgressed the lines and traditions of his party from the beginning. No doubt it would have been impossible for him to do what he did if he had not gradually accustomed the minds of the younger Conservatives to the idea of refusing to the Whigs

a monopoly of popular legislation—if he had not written *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, and studiously “educated” his followers. But this, it is maintained by those who undertake his defence, was a creditable achievement, and one for which he certainly does not deserve blame from anyone who had accepted his leadership in the Commons.

There was doubtless more force in the reproaches levelled against Mr. Disraeli for his conduct of the Bill in its later stages, when he received amendment after amendment at the dictation of Mr. Gladstone, and so eventually passed a measure entirely different from that which he had introduced. It is true that, in Committee of the whole House, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was more independent of his colleagues than he could be in the Cabinet, and his responsibility was proportionately greater. This is the reason which was alleged by the Earl of Carnarvon, General Peel, and Lord Cranborne, when they withdrew from the Ministry. They declined to commit themselves to the strategical movements of their leader, and sent in their resignations as soon as Mr. Disraeli had abandoned the £6 limit, and resolved to give the franchise to every ratepayer. They had agreed to the £6 limit in view of the strong and persistent demand of the country, which had begun to cause the Government not a little trouble and anxiety; but they did not consider that this would warrant them in going a step further than they had originally resolved to go. They had made a certain sacrifice to the exigencies of party and to the force of public opinion; but they were not prepared to follow Mr. Disraeli in a course which seemed to have no worthier objects than the retention of office, and the acquisition of a little temporary popularity.

In fact, it is worthy of remark that this was, for various reasons, the most critical period of Mr. Disraeli's career; that his consistency, and even his political morality were constantly called in question by both parties, and by writers and

speakers of almost every shade of opinion. He had not outlived the reproaches and ridicule which had pursued him from his youth, and it was not until the following decade was well advanced that he was to become thoroughly popular with his own party. The greatness of the change which was to be effected within seven or eight years is well marked by the attitude of Lord Cranborne in 1875 towards the man whom he so bitterly denounced in 1867.



CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. DISRAELI'S REFORM BILL.

THE first proposal of the Government in regard to Parliamentary Reform was that the House should proceed by way of Resolutions, on which, after they had been moved and adopted, a measure might be based. Mr. Disraeli, on introducing the subject, promised four new franchises : one educational ; one for depositors of £30 in a savings bank ; one for the possessors of £50 in the funds ; and one for the payers of twenty shillings in direct taxation. The franchise in boroughs was to be extended to occupiers of houses rated at £6, and in counties to occupiers rated at £20. There was a scheme of redistribution, involving the entire or partial disfranchisement of twenty-seven boroughs, and the creation of fourteen new boroughs, and fifteen new county seats.

This statement, made on the 25th of February, encountered so much criticism by Mr. Lowe and other Liberal members that the Chancellor of the Exchequer withdrew his motion, and promised to bring in a Bill. A week later the resignations of the Secretaries of State for War, the Colonies, and India, were announced. On the 18th of March Mr. Disraeli explained his new scheme, which

adopted the simple ratepayers' franchise. The new franchises were retained, and it was proposed to give to all these classes, if they happened to be ratepaying householders, a dual vote. Ratepayers were not to be placed on the register until after a continuous occupation of two years; and the redistribution of seats was to stand as proposed in the first announcement.

Almost the whole of this second plan was wiped out, clause by clause, as the session proceeded, but the principle of basing the franchise on the simple payment of rates was gratefully clung to by the Liberal majority. And indeed Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues had every reason to be thankful for this opportunity of passing a measure so much wider in its scope than that which they had ventured upon in the preceding year. They could well afford to give Mr. Disraeli as much credit as he might derive from the Bill in return for the solid advantage which was to accrue to themselves and to the country.

The second reading was taken on the 26th of March, after a debate of two nights. The main struggle took place in Committee, though nothing of a practical character was achieved before the 2nd of May, when Mr. Ayrton succeeded in reducing the term of residence for ratepayers from two years to one. After this, the importunities of the Opposition and the concessions of the Ministry followed each other rapidly. The embarrassment of the Government was increased by the resignation of the Home Secretary, Mr. Walpole, who had been charged with a lack of firmness in first forbidding and then permitting a demonstration in Hyde Park, which had been organised by the Reform League. It is needless to follow the course of the protracted discussions of the next few weeks. The definite result arrived at by Parliament will show how thoroughly the measure was transformed during its enactment.

The franchise, as settled in the Act of 1867, and as now

existing, is fairly wide and liberal. Every voter must be of full age on the last day of July previous to his being put on the register. In borough constituencies he must be either the occupier of a house, and a ratepayer (in respect of the poor-rates) of one year's standing, or a lodger during the same period, in rooms valued at £10 a-year (under four shillings a-week), unfurnished. In counties he must be a freeholder, or otherwise a lifeholder, of a tenement worth not less than £5 a-year, or an occupier and ratepayer in regard to lands or tenements rated at £12 a-year. A voter is allowed as many votes as there are candidates to be elected, except that when a borough or county returns three members he is not to vote for more than two—so that the minority, if sufficiently large, shall have a chance of being represented. In the city of London a voter is allowed to vote for three candidates. Electors who, within six months of an election, have been employed for reward as agents, canvassers, clerks, messengers, or the like, are debarred from recording their votes, and in the event of their doing so they are held guilty of a misdemeanour.

In the second part of the Act, dealing with the distribution of seats, it was for the first time expressly enacted that no borough with a less population than 10,000 shall return more than one member to serve in Parliament. A third vote was given to Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Leeds. Fourteen new divisions of counties were created, each returning two members. Two seats were given to the new borough of Hackney; two each, instead of one, to Merthyr Tydvil and Salford; two to Chelsea; one each to London University, Darlington, Hartlepool, Stockton, Burnley, Staleybridge, Wednesbury, Middlesbrough, Dewsbury, and Gravesend.

Other provisions, dealing with "the incidents of franchise," with the registration of voters, and with the management of contested elections, were framed in a

generous spirit, with the manifest intention of protecting the voter against the defeat of his privilege on technical or insufficient grounds, or by the corrupt action of others. At the same time, the payment of a voter's rates by any person, with the object of influencing his vote, is declared to be an act of bribery.

Amongst the more general and miscellaneous clauses is one which provides that, on any future demise of the Crown, the Parliament sitting at the time shall not be determined or dissolved by such demise, but shall run its natural course, unless specially dissolved in the ordinary way. Another provides that the franchises constituted by the Act are to be in addition to, and not in substitution of, the franchises previously existing, save that no person shall be entitled to vote for the same constituency in respect of more than one qualification.

Such are the main lines of the Reform Act of 1867, which added between 150,000 and 200,000 voters to the lists of county electors in England and Wales, and about half-a-million borough voters. It was estimated at the time that the franchise would be possessed in England and Wales, after the Act had come into operation, by about 1,100,000 borough voters, and 700,000 county voters. The number has, of course, been considerably increased down to the present day.

The Bill was read a third time, without division, on the 15th of July; and after a number of amendments had been introduced in the House of Lords—some of which were accepted and others disagreed with by the Commons—it received the royal assent. The Premier himself described the measure in the Upper House as “a leap in the dark;” but more lugubrious language still was employed about it by men who had less inducement to qualify their utterances. “Shooting Niagara—and After?” was the ominous title of a commentary passed upon it by one of our most eminent

writers. Lord Ellenborough entered his formal protest in the House of Lords; Earl Grey resisted the change as one full of peril; Lord Lyttelton entreated that at least the vote should be given to no one who could not sign his name. In the Commons the protestations had been quite as earnest as in the Lords; and they were characterised by a great deal of personal bitterness against Mr. Disraeli. Mr. Lowe spoke of "a shameful victory." Mr. Beresford Hope proclaimed his determination to vote at all hazards against "the Asian mystery," bringing down on himself a quip at his "Batavian graces." Mr. Lowe was none the more indulgent to the Tory Reform Bill because he had helped to defeat the Liberal measure, and he paraphrased the language of Ministers by putting into their mouths such words as these:—"If the House will deign to take us into its counsel, if it will co-operate with us in this matter, we shall receive with cordiality, with deference—nay, even with gratitude—any suggestion it likes to offer. Say what you like to us, only for God's sake leave us our places!" Lord Cranborne (afterwards Marquis of Salisbury) warned his party against committing political suicide by passing the Bill of his late colleagues. He declared that the Bill had been dictated to the Government by Mr. Gladstone, and repudiated the claim which was made for it as a Conservative triumph. It is interesting, in the light of subsequent events, to note the concluding strictures of the future Marquis on the conduct of the leader with whom he was destined to be so intimately associated. "I desire to protest," Lord Cranborne said, "in the most earnest language I am capable of using, against the political morality on which the manœuvres of this year have been based. If you borrow your political ethics from the ethics of the political adventurer, you may depend upon it the whole of your representative institutions will crumble beneath your feet."*

* See *Life of W. E. Gladstone*, p. 166-7.

If Lord Cranborne was unwilling to have the Reform Bill of 1867 described as a Conservative triumph, Mr. Disraeli himself saw no reason why he should forgo the satisfaction of such a boast. It was he who, referring on a subsequent occasion to the work of the session, remarked that he had had "to prepare the mind of the country—'to educate, if it be not arrogant to use such a phrase, to educate our party.'" No doubt he had educated the Conservatives. The day-dreams in which he had indulged at Deepdene had to some extent become realities, and it was impossible that the creator of *Coningsby* should not exult in his triumph.

Early in the following year an event occurred which brought about a notable change in English political life, whilst it at the same time advanced and checked Mr. Disraeli's ambition. The Earl of Derby retired from the Cabinet in February 1868, and the leader of the House of Commons succeeded, without any noteworthy contestation of his claims, to the Premiership.

Thus at length, after a career of perseverance and steady triumph which have rarely been paralleled, the youth who had confided his audacious hopes to Lord Melbourne in the Hon. Mrs. Norton's drawing-room had reached the lofty position to which it then seemed so absurd for him to aspire.



CHAPTER XXIV.

PREMIER WITHOUT A MAJORITY.

VARIOUS important changes had taken place in the Cabinet since it was originally constituted by Lord Derby, and it may be well to show the personal composition of the Ministry over which Mr. Disraeli was called upon to preside:—

First Lord of the Treasury,	Benjamin Disraeli.
Lord President of the Council,	Duke of Marlborough.
Lord Chancellor,	Lord Chelmsford.
Lord Privy Seal,	Earl of Malmesbury.
Chancellor of the Exchequer,	G. Ward Hunt.
Home Secretary,	Gathorne Hardy.
Foreign „	Lord Stanley,
Colonial „	Duke of Buckingham.
War „	Sir John Pakington.
India „	Sir Stafford Northcote.
First Lord of the Admiralty,	H. J. L. Corry:
President, Board of Trade,	Duke of Richmond:
First Commissioner of Works,	Lord John Manners.
Chief Secretary for Ireland,	Col: Wilson Patten.

Although the operation of the Reform Act was not to commence before the end of the year 1868, there was, from the moment of its passing, a pretty general feeling that the country ought to be appealed to without unnecessary delay.

A dissolution in 1868 was more than probable, even before the retirement of Lord Derby, inasmuch as it was anything but desirable that a Ministry which could not command a majority in the House of Commons should long continue in office. Mr. Disraeli's accession to the Premiership rendered an early appeal all but inevitable.

When the session of 1868 began, there were no greater difficulties on the hands of the Government than the despatch of an expedition to Abyssinia and another Irish revolt. The Queen's Speech at the end of the preceding session had congratulated the House on the repression of the Fenian conspiracy, "without the necessity of sacrificing a single life in punishment." Less than a month after this speech had been delivered, a most daring outrage was committed by a number of Fenians at Manchester, who attacked a police-van on its way from the station to the gaol, and rescued two Irishmen under remand on a charge of conspiracy. More than forty men were concerned in this attack. They shot the horses, knocked the driver from his seat, broke open the van, shot the policeman who sat inside, and released their friends, together with fifteen other prisoners. This was done in broad daylight. The men were recognised, and twenty-three of them were committed for trial. Five of these were indicted for murder, and condemned to death. Three were executed. On the 13th of December all London was alarmed by an explosion at the Clerkenwell House of Detention, where two of the Manchester prisoners were confined. Six persons were killed by the explosion, and the man who fired the powder was hung. On the 12th of the following March, the Duke of Edinburgh was shot in the back by an avowed Fenian in Australia, and was hung for the offence. During the same interval a large number of Irishmen were tried and condemned for various crimes of conspiracy, sedition, or violence, and were sentenced to imprisonment or penal servitude. It was

altogether a most remarkable commentary on the too confident expressions of the Queen's Speech in August.

The Habeas Corpus Act had been suspended in 1867; and it remained for Parliament and the country to consider whether this suspension of constitutional liberties had had the effect of diminishing or aggravating crime. At any rate no more stringent measures were possible; but, when Parliament met in 1868, the Act was at once renewed until March 1870.

These were the circumstances, so far as Ireland and the Irish were concerned, under which Mr. Disraeli took the helm of affairs on the 5th of March. On the 10th, Mr. Maguire moved for the appointment of a Committee to take into immediate consideration the condition of Ireland. A long debate ensued, which was adjourned to the 12th, 13th, and 16th. On this day Mr. Gladstone (who, in the debate on the Address, had already urged the necessity of dealing with the Irish Land and Church questions) delivered an important speech, wherein he declared that the state of Ireland must receive immediate attention; and made an eloquent appeal for the redress of Irish grievances.

This speech had all the force and consequence of a sound to arms. The nation was in a mood to try some other plan than coercion for dealing with the great question which the Fenians had brought to the front. Giving rein to his impulse, and encouraged by the reception of his speech in the House and in the country, Mr. Gladstone gave notice of the following Resolutions, which he moved on the 30th of March:—

“(1.) That, in the opinion of this House, it is necessary that the Established Church of Ireland should cease to exist as an establishment, due regard being had to all personal interests and to all individual rights of property. (2.) That, subject to the foregoing considerations, it is expedient to prevent the creation of new personal interests by the exercise of any public patronage, and to confine the operations of the

Ecclesiastical Commissioners of Ireland to objects of immediate necessity, or involving individual rights, pending the final decision of Parliament. (3.) That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, humbly to pray that, with a view to the purposes aforesaid, Her Majesty will be graciously pleased to place at the disposal of Parliament her interest in the temporalities, in archbishoprics, bishoprics, and other ecclesiastical dignities and benefices in Ireland, and the custody thereof."

The Government meanwhile had introduced a Bill to deal with the system of land tenure in Ireland, which, however, was not a very vigorous attempt to solve the difficult problem. Lord Stanley now moved, as an amendment to Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions, that the question of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church ought to be left for the consideration of a new Parliament; and he suggested in the meantime the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry. This proposal to defer the consideration of the matter until the next Parliament was something like an appeal to mercy, or rather to indulgence; and indeed Mr. Disraeli went so far as to lament his misfortune in being confronted by the Irish difficulty in its worst form as soon as he had become Prime Minister. But the appeal was futile, and the movement advanced rapidly to its development.

No one who considers what the past career of Mr. Disraeli had been, or who bears in mind his ideas and plans, his hopes and his ambitions, will doubt that the disappointment was very severe. He had waited so long and patiently for the highest prize of English statesmanship, and had surely thought often and carefully of the use which he would make of that golden opportunity whenever it might fall into his hands. Now he was Prime Minister; and instantly he found before him a subject of overwhelming difficulty, which threatened at once to render every scheme impracticable. The Irish question had existed for seven centuries, and he had not been Premier for seven days before he was called upon to settle it out of hand.

It may be said that this was an opportunity worthy of the very highest ambition, and such as the loftiest statesmanship might rejoice to secure. But Mr. Disraeli's talent, as he very well knew, did not consist in dealing with vast domestic reforms. To have grappled with and overcome the Irish difficulty he would have had to attack the Church and the landowners—the very props and pillars of the Conservative party, and more especially the props and pillars of that grander Toryism which it had been his pride to instil into the newer generation. If to do this, and do it successfully, might, under some circumstances, have been possible for the genius of Mr. Disraeli, it was quite hopeless for him to attempt it after the very hazardous experiment of the previous session, which had demoralised and all but destroyed the party. We may be sure that Mr. Disraeli had his plans—ingenious, bold, and probably adequate—for the reorganisation of the army which it had fallen to his lot to command; and he would soon have developed them, as he eventually did in 1874 and 1875. But for this purpose he would have needed at least one year of comparative quiet before making his appeal to the country. This year might have been granted to him—and even the session of 1868 began with a generous forbearance from Mr. Gladstone and the other Liberal leaders. But Ireland had pressed her claims to attention in a too urgent manner to be neglected.

The forbearance of Mr. Gladstone was due, in the first instance, to the dangerous illness of Mrs. Disraeli, to which he made touching allusion in the debate on the Address; but the debate on the Resolutions came on, as above said, on the 30th of March. The leaders on both sides took part in it; and amongst them the Premier was somewhat severely dealt with. His future close ally, Lord Cranborne, whilst he refused to support either the Resolutions or the amendment, condemned the Government for its vacillation and ambiguity. He could not venture to predict the course which

the Premier might take. "He should as soon undertake to tell the House which way the weather-cock would point to-morrow." "Such a system of management," he added, "was unworthy of the House and degrading to the Executive." Mr. Lowe complained that the Government, "instead of initiating measures, throws out, like the cuttle-fish of which we read in Victor Hugo's novel, all sorts of tentacula, for the purpose of catching up something which it may appropriate and make its own."

The reply of the Prime Minister was noticeable chiefly for his rejoinders to those personal attacks. Though he stoutly resisted the Resolutions, yet it was impossible that he should have much of a case against them; and, moreover, he must have known that he was about to be defeated by a large majority. But he could not resist the temptation to hurl some stinging words at his assailants. Of Lord Cranborne he said: "The noble lord is a man of great talent, and he has vigour in his language. There is great vigour in his language, and no want of vindictiveness. I admit that now, speaking as a critic, and not, perhaps, as an impartial one, I must say I think it wants finish. Considering that the noble lord has studied the subject, and that he has written anonymous articles against me, before and since I was his colleague—I do not know whether he wrote them when I was his colleague—I think it might have been accomplished more *ad unguem*." Of Mr. Lowe he said: "He is a learned man, though he despises history. He can chop logic like Dean Aldrich; but what is more remarkable than his learning and his logic is that power of spontaneous aversion which particularly characterises him. There is nothing that he likes, and almost everything that he hates. He hates the working-classes of England. He hates the Roman Catholics of Ireland; he hates the Protestants of Ireland. He hates Her Majesty's Ministers. And until the right hon. gentleman, the member for South Lancashire, placed

his hand upon the ark, he seemed almost to hate the right hon. gentleman the member for South Lancashire. But now all is changed. Now, we have the hour and the man. But I believe the clock goes wrong, and the man is mistaken."

After four days' debate, Lord Stanley's amendment was rejected by 330 against 270, and the motion for going into Committee on the Resolutions was carried by practically the same vote. This was a larger majority than any one had expected. Eight or ten Liberals were opposed to the policy of disestablishment, but, on the other hand, there were some half-dozen in favour of it. It was nearly a month later when the House, after another discussion, divided on the first Resolution, and now the majority had increased by five. On the 4th of May Mr. Disraeli informed the House that he had tendered to the Queen the resignation of himself and of the Ministry; that the Queen had declined to accept it; that he had then recommended a dissolution of Parliament; and that accordingly Ministers would hold office until the close of the session, and dissolve in the following November. This course was agreed to, and Mr. Gladstone, after carrying his remaining Resolutions, introduced a Bill to suspend certain operations of the Irish Church, pending further legislation. The measure was carried through all its stages in the Lower House, and passed; but the Lords saw fit to reject it by a majority of nearly one hundred.

At length, on the last day of July, Parliament was prorogued, after an active session, in which a large number of serviceable Acts had become law. Reform Bills had been passed for Scotland and Ireland, a Registration Act had been carried, church rates had been abolished, the telegraphs had been acquired for the Postmaster-General; there were important Acts for the regulation of Public Schools, of Railways, of the Sale of Poisons, of Poor Relief, of Capital

Punishment within the prison walls, of the removal and reconstruction of Artizans' Dwellings. So far as domestic legislation is concerned, it was perhaps the most productive session that the country has had under Lord Beaconsfield's premiership.

The general election took place in December, and the issue placed before the constituencies was, in brief, whether or no we should try to redress the grievances of Ireland by disestablishing the church of the minority and increasing the security of the tenant farmers. There were other questions more or less prominent, such as the demand for national education in England; but the Irish difficulty was uppermost in the mind of the nation, and Mr. Gladstone's proposal to deal with it had created an enthusiasm in his favour. Moreover, it was only natural that the newly-enfranchised classes should cast their votes for the party which offered the largest programme of reforms. The Liberal majority was considerably over one hundred; and Mr. Disraeli's critics now repeated their lamentations and reproaches with more bitterness than ever.

There were very few of either political party who did not believe that the Conservatives of the old school had seen the last of power and office for many years to come. But one of those few, in all probability, was Mr. Disraeli himself. He does not seem to have lost heart, under circumstances which had damped the ardour of his most sanguine supporters. He remembered the maxim, that all things come to the man who can wait; and in little more than five years he was to reap the reward of his patience.

CHAPTER XXV.

ACTION AND REACTION.

DURING the five eventful years of Mr. Gladstone's first Administration—from the end of 1868 to the beginning of 1874—Mr. Disraeli was an active leader of the Conservative Opposition; and as such it fell to his lot to oppose many useful and beneficial reforms. This is one of the necessary evils of party government, which are sometimes deplored as though they outweighed the many indisputable advantages of that characteristic institution of Parliamentary countries. Yet an opposition to the Minister who is enacting a salutary measure is not of necessity uncandid and insincere, whilst in many cases it is decidedly profitable to the measure itself. Theoretically speaking, the criticism is undertaken for the purpose of amendment; the objections and obstructions are interposed for the purpose of checking crude and hasty legislation. This is the justification put forward by all politicians who oppose the carrying of measures demanded by the people, and calculated to promote their happiness. No doubt if the pretext is insincere, and if the opposition degenerates into factiousness, or is inspired by the mere selfishness of ambition, a very heavy responsibility rests upon those who resort to it.

Nothing would be more difficult than to decide upon the motives of a particular statesman, in each particular act of opposition to the Ministerial programme. We shall not attempt anything of the kind in regard to Mr. Disraeli's attitude towards Mr. Gladstone's measures. He acted throughout with the bulk of his party, and doubtless also on the dictates of his conscience and judgment. On the question of the Irish Church it is hard to see on what grounds any resistance could be maintained to the disestablishment of that religious corporation, which sacrificed the rights of a large majority to a small minority ; but there was room for discussion in respect of the details of disendowment and compensation. On the Irish Land Bill there was a still wider field for argument and debate ; and it must be remembered that public opinion was not so mature on the subject in 1870 as it had become ten years later, so that there might have been some excuse even for a blank rejection of the very principle of the reform.

The Irish reforms proposed by Mr. Gladstone had been warmly discussed in the country during the general election, and it was manifest that the work would not be accomplished without a bitter struggle. But the immense majority with which the Liberals came into power showed the Conservatives that the force of the constituencies was altogether in favour of their rivals ; and Mr. Disraeli did not wait for the reassembling of Parliament before making way for the coming man. Thus Mr. Gladstone assumed the Premiership on the 9th December 1868, and when Parliament met in the following February the Cabinet was prepared without further delay to announce its intentions and to introduce its Bill.

Mr. Gladstone dealt with the Irish Church question in a masterly manner, which won praise in every quarter except where extreme bigotry or excessive selfishness had obscured the intelligence of his critics. Mr. Disraeli himself paid a

tribute of admiration to the powerful speech in which the Premier unfolded his plans; but his own speech on the second reading was not treated very leniently:—

“On the order for the second reading of the Bill,” writes Mr. Barnett Smith,* “the leader of the Opposition moved its rejection. His speech on that occasion is described by the *Times* as ‘fimsiness relieved with spangles—the definition of a columbine’s skirt.’ He began in the philosophical vein, ‘and while we freely acknowledge,’ observed the journal just quoted, ‘that Mr. Disraeli’s fun is exquisite, his philosophy is simply detestable. Then he became historical and didactic, and his historical paradoxes, which were acceptable enough in his earlier political novels, fell flat when reproduced as serious arguments to arrest the attention and sway the judgment of the House of Commons.’ He objected to disestablishment because he was in favour of the union of Church and State, by which he understood an arrangement which armed the State with the highest influence, and prevented the Church from sinking into a sacerdotal corporation. Mr. Disraeli dwelt with much earnestness on the possible evil consequences of divorcing authority from religion, and warned the House against establishing an independent religious power in the country, which might be stronger than the civil power, and not always in agreement with it. As to disendowment, if a State seized on the property of a church without assigning a reason, he held it to be spoliation, but with a reason, valid or not, it was a confiscation. The title of the Irish Church was stronger than that of any other landlord, and no valid reason had been assigned for depriving her of her property. Amid great amusement, Mr. Disraeli sketched a hypothetical case of the extension of the Government principle to private property—one set of landless Irish gentry demanding the confiscation of the estates of their more fortunate fellow-countrymen, from no motive but jealousy; he also referred to corporate property, as though the unendowed London hospitals were to demand the confiscation of the revenues of Guy’s, St. Bartholomew’s, and St. Thomas’s. The right hon. gentleman then criticised, minutely and sarcastically, the various details of the measure, and, in concluding an address of two hours’ duration, declared that England could not afford another revolution. As Mr. Disraeli, however, had himself effected a greater revolution when he ‘dished the Whigs’ upon the question of Reform, his declaration failed to excite any emotion approaching to terror.”

* *Life of Mr. Gladstone*, ii., 125.

The second reading was carried by the vast majority of 118, in a House of 623; and six Conservative members voted with the Government. The presence of such an eminent and respected Liberal as Sir Roundell Palmer in the Conservative lobby would alone have sufficed to protect the Opposition from a charge of factiousness; though amongst Sir Roundell's scruples on the matter the fear expressed by Mr. Disraeli—that the measure would lead to the ascendancy of the Papal power in Ireland—was not included. One hundred and seventy-nine peers were found to support the Bill in the Upper House, and it accordingly passed.

Mr. Disraeli's opposition to the Land Bill in 1870 was no more successful than his opposition to the Church Bill; and his speech on the second reading was as thin and rhetorical as the one which had been so unmercifully criticised on the former occasion. He declared that "a more complicated, a more clumsy, or a more heterogeneous measure was never yet brought before the attention of Parliament." He appealed to his hearers not to vote on the Bill as though they had received threatening letters, or as though they "expected to meet Rory of the Hills" in the division lobby. But in spite of this smart attack he did not oppose the second reading. Indeed he voted with Mr. Gladstone, reserving his opposition for Committee; and there were only thirteen English and Irish members who insisted, on various points of principle, that the sense of the House should be taken.

In Committee on the Bill, Mr. Disraeli sought to limit various provisions, and amongst others the very important one of compensation for eviction. He suggested that, whatever the reason for eviction of a tenant might have been, the latter should have no claim for the disturbance except "in respect of unexhausted improvements made by him, or any predecessor in title, and of interruption in the completion of any course of husbandry suited to the holding." This amendment was rejected by a majority of twenty-six.

The Land Bill became law ; and the same session witnessed the passing of the Elementary Education Act.

On the whole, Mr. Disraeli's opposition to the measures of the Government, especially in 1870, appears to have been half-hearted, and not inspired by any very deep dislike to them in principle. This was the period in which his leisure moments were devoted to the production of the romance of *Lothair* ; and that congenial occupation may well have withdrawn his mind in some degree from political controversy. Yet he was constant in his attendance in the House so long as Parliament was sitting ; and he displayed much concern, as might have been expected, in the foreign policy of the country during the Franco-German war.

On the repudiation by Russia, in 1871, of the Black Sea clause of the Treaty of Paris, whereby her fleets had for fifteen years been excluded from her southern ports, a strong feeling was evoked in England by the supposed humiliation of the country. No doubt Russia made many enemies by her conduct on this occasion, and Mr. Disraeli made himself the mouthpiece of the animosity and suspicion which were harboured against the northern Empire. In the debate on the Address he expressed a fear that the country was in some peril in respect of the European complications. He hinted at a possible secret alliance between Russia and Germany, and charged the Government with having been remiss in their duty on the outbreak of the war in 1870, and with having attenuated the national armaments in a mistaken zeal for economy. On a subsequent occasion he returned to the charge in respect of the repudiation of the Treaty, and contended that we ought not to have consented to that one-sided abandonment of the settlement of 1856.

There can be little doubt that a large number of Englishmen, Mr. Disraeli amongst them, contracted or increased their rancour against Russia in consequence of this arbitrary

policy of the Imperial Government, and that the Anti-Russian sentiment which was afterwards to acquire so much force had its origin in the occurrences of 1871. The Liberal Government was frequently denounced for having "humiliated" England, and for showing a tame and spiritless front to the world; and this unhappy misconception of the attitude of the Cabinet led to the strong reaction which presently set in.

The abolition of purchase in the army by royal warrant, after a Bill for the same object had been thrown out of the House of Lords, was very sharply criticised by the Opposition. Mr. Disraeli, who had previously assented in principle to the abolition, went so far as to denounce the course pursued by the Cabinet as "part of an avowed and a shameful conspiracy against the undoubted privileges of the other House of Parliament." He was required by the Speaker to withdraw this imputation, which went beyond the limits of Parliamentary usage; but he persisted in attacking the high-handed course of the Premier, whom he accused of defying the opinion of Parliament, and using the prerogative of the Crown to extricate himself from a difficulty of his own creation.

The embarrassments of the Liberal Government increased rapidly towards the end of 1871, and throughout the two following years. Surprise has often been expressed at the manner in which the great majority elected in 1868 to support Mr. Gladstone's policy had practically exhausted its strength in three sessions, and the able and hard-working Cabinet had lost its hold upon the country. Many reasons were given to account for the phenomenon. Some said that it was the fate of strong Liberal Governments to fall to pieces after a few years of office, and pointed to the Parliament of 1832 as affording a similar instance. Others declared that Mr. Gladstone's heroic measures had used up the energy of his followers. Others again saw enough to

account for the change in the excitement caused by the military achievements of Germany, coupled with the alleged tameness of the Government in submitting the Alabama claims to arbitration, and in assenting to the demand of Russia. The Opposition spokesmen naturally made the most of the situation, and prepared to take advantage of the manifest reaction in public opinion. They declared that the Cabinet had attacked all the institutions, all the vested interests of the nation, and that they had by their own incompetence and aggressiveness frittered away the splendid majority which had been given to them by the constituencies.

In the course of 1872 Mr. Disraeli was addressing a large audience at Manchester, and he took occasion to emphasize the growing weakness of the Ministry in terms which attracted much notice at the time. He spoke of the gradual decay of energy which was exhibited by Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues after the first two sessions. As time progressed, he said, it was evident that the energy was being replaced by extravagance. "The unnatural stimulus was subsiding; their paroxysm ended in prostration. Some took refuge in melancholy, and their eminent chief alternated between a menace and a sigh. As I sit opposite the Treasury Bench, the Ministers remind me of one of those marine landscapes not unusual on the Coast of South America: you behold a range of exhausted volcanoes; not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest; but the situation is still dangerous—there are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea." The "exhausted volcanoes" was a grotesque simile which clung to the Government as long as they remained in office.

The full extent of the mischief done to the Liberal cause by dissension and defection was revealed in 1873. The Ballot Bill had been passed in the previous session; and this was the last valuable measure of Mr. Gladstone's Administration. Early in the year above-named the Irish Education

Bill was introduced ; and it failed to gain the general support of the Ministerialists. After considerable debate it was rejected by a vote of 287 against 284—the majority including no fewer than forty-five Liberals. This was on the 11th of March. Mr. Gladstone at once resigned ; but when the Queen sent for Mr. Disraeli, the latter respectfully declined to form an Administration.

There was some conflict of opinion in respect of the negotiations which had taken place at this crisis between the two statesmen and the Queen. Mr. Gladstone held that his rival, having as a matter of fact defeated the Ministry in Parliament, and having, upon their resignation, been constitutionally called upon to take office, had no proper alternative save to accept the responsibility thus thrown upon him. As he had refused to do so, the Cabinet had agreed to resume their posts ; but Mr. Gladstone, in responding to the Queen's summons, had placed before Her Majesty a statement of his views upon the merits of the case.

No doubt Mr. Gladstone's contention was strictly and traditionally accurate. He had made the Education Bill a question of confidence. Mr. Disraeli had persisted in opposing it ; and the regular course for him was that he should take the helm from the hands of his defeated rival. But it is easy to understand why he should have been most unwilling to do so. Three times already he had taken office under like circumstances, with an adverse majority in the House of Commons, and had thus exhausted his chance of doing any good in a few months' time. He wished in future to have a fair start ; and now he had reason to think that a general election would give him the opportunity for which he had been waiting. Hence, in all probability, his refusal of office in 1873. It is true that he might have taken the Premiership and dissolved Parliament in the autumn ; but what might not have happened in the meanwhile ? There are times when it might be an advantage to a political

party to be in Opposition when the country was appealed to ; and this was such a time. Mr. Gladstone would doubtless become more unpopular by remaining in office ; whereas if he were to take Mr. Gladstone's place in the present Parliament, he was pretty certain to repeat his experience of 1867, and to lose something of his prestige.

Mr. Disraeli had given his reasons—not the reasons suggested above, but the reasons which appeared to him to be adequate and appropriate—for declining to form an Administration ; and he also made his statement public property. He informed Her Majesty that the recent defeat of the Government had not been the work of the Opposition so much as of a considerable section of the Liberal party itself. It might be said that he should have advised a dissolution, if he was unwilling to take the course of forming a Cabinet ; but “although a Minister in office could perform this duty with great promptitude, it was not so with a Minister who had to form his Government.” He was not prepared with a policy which he could put before the country. Moreover, he contended that Mr. Gladstone had resigned on insufficient grounds ; and altogether the resumption of office by the Liberals was the best solution of the difficulty. But he concluded this shrewd declaration by affirming that he looked forward to the time when the Conservative party would return to power with a noble career before it.

The session of 1873 came to a natural end, and the recess was spent in active and animated controversy. It remained quite uncertain whether Mr. Gladstone would persevere for some time longer, or whether he would resort to a speedy dissolution. He had reconstituted his Cabinet, without greatly improving its prospects ; but as the year drew to a close without any appeal to the country, most men concluded that the Liberals would remain at the head of affairs for another session.

In the month of October Mr. Disraeli had written a letter

to Lord Grey de Wilton, supporting his candidature for Bath, in which he made a smart attack on the Ministry:—

“ ‘For nearly five years,’ he said, ‘the present Ministers have harassed every trade, worried every profession, and assailed or menaced every class, institution, and species of property in the country. Occasionally they have varied this state of civil warfare by perpetrating some job which outraged public opinion, or by stumbling into mistakes which have been always discreditable, and sometimes ruinous. All this they call a policy, and seem quite proud of it; but the country has, I think, made up its mind to close this career of plundering and blundering.’ ”

This was in the nature of a party manifesto; and the manner in which it was received by many of the organs of public opinion showed that Mr. Disraeli's chances of a favourable verdict from the country were not to be despised. The signs of the times during the next few months were such as to justify Mr. Gladstone in coming to a more sudden resolution than he had contemplated; and there was comparatively little surprise on either side when a dissolution was announced in the following January.

The elections took place during the first half of February 1874; and the result was to give the Conservatives a majority of fifty-six. Mr. Gladstone forthwith resigned; and Mr. Disraeli, for the first time in his career, found himself Prime Minister of England, with an ample force at his command in both Houses of Parliament.

This was the great reward of his protracted patience and self-reliance. His very highest ambition was at length fulfilled; he had not merely nominal but actual power; he was first Minister of the Crown by the free and unequivocal choice of the nation. More than this, he had been chosen by that enlarged constituency which he had created amidst the distrust and reproaches of his party, and he took the reins of government with all the prestige of a prophet and a political magician.

To few men has it been given so completely to realise the


dreams and romance of a lifetime. Let the world affix what moral it pleases to the extraordinary record of Lord Beaconsfield's life: for Lord Beaconsfield himself there is at least the moral of Ixion in Heaven—that "adventures are to the adventurous."

Before we consider what the Premier was to do with his opportunity, we may break the thread of our narrative by glancing at the story which he had published in 1870, whilst fresh from his own defeat in 1868:



CHAPTER XXVI.

"LOTHAIR."

" BOOK may be as great a thing as a battle," Mr. Disraeli wrote in the memoir of his father. Perhaps that can scarcely be said of any of his own works. Certainly his trilogy—*Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*—had done much to gain him friends and admirers amongst young men of his own party, to whom the views there unfolded appeared in an attractive light. No doubt it assisted him in defining the particular political level on which he felt himself most at his ease, and on which he desired to lay the basis of his new confederation. At any rate he was so well satisfied with this riper effort of his romantic talent that for more than twenty years he attempted nothing further in the same vein.

But in *Lothair* he struck out a new path; and there is a sense in which this charming story was as serviceable to its author as any battle which he could, at the same crisis of his career, have fought and won in the Parliamentary arena. The book was successful in a very remarkable degree; it decidedly raised Mr. Disraeli's reputation as an author of fiction; it was, as he boasted in a preface to a new edition, a few months after the appearance of the first,

as much read in England and the United States as any work in the past half-century ; it caused him to be written about and spoken about as much as he had ever been before ; and thus unquestionably did much to strengthen his position in the public favour, or at least to blunt the edge of unfavourable opinion.

Its reception by the English critics was varied in character. In the preface just referred to the author admits that he had nothing to complain of in their remarks, even if there were less of judicial impartiality in the notices than was the case with the American reviews. "Personal influences inevitably mingle in some degree with such productions. There are critics who, abstractedly, do not approve of successful books, particularly if they have failed in the same style ; social acquaintances also of lettered taste, and especially contemporaries whose public life has not exactly realised the vain dreams of their fussy existence, would seize the accustomed opportunity of welcoming with affected discrimination about nothing, and elaborate controversy about trifles, the production of a friend ; and there is always, both in politics and literature, the race of the Dennises, the Oldmixons, and Curls, who flatter themselves that, by systematically libelling some eminent personage of their times, they have a chance of descending to posterity."

Mr. Disraeli was rarely attacked with impunity ; and there is a bitter taste in this sentence which shows that he had felt the sting of one or two of his critics. Some of these, indeed, he had lashed beforehand in the novel itself. He makes one of his characters say : "To-morrow the critics will commence. You know who the critics are ? The men who have failed in literature and art." This was a hit all round ; but here and there he had dealt a distinct blow. Mr. Goldwin Smith, an Oxford Professor who has chosen to make his home in Canada, and who had said some pungent things of Mr. Disraeli comes in for a rough snub in *Lothair*,

which he saw fit to resent soon after the publication of the book. The Oxford Professor, we are told, "was clever, extremely well-informed, so far as books can make a man knowing, but unable to profit even by that limited experience, of restless vanity and overflowing conceit, which prevented him from even observing or thinking of anything but himself. He was gifted with a great command of words, which took the form of endless exposition, varied by sarcasm and passages of ornate jargon."

The Professor was only one of many pictures from the life introduced in *Lothair*; and it is the frequency, the vigour, the general fidelity of these pictures—sometimes verging on a caricature or a lampoon—which constituted one of the special charms of the work for the curious and inquisitive public. Here, for instance, we have Cardinal Manning and Monsignor Capel—some traits of the Marquis of Bute in the hero himself—Garibaldi, and many other more or less easily recognisable characters of the time. It was a device to which he had resorted in his earlier works, but he has employed it more audaciously, and with finer touches of his pencil, in the novels of *Lothair* and *Endymion*.

The hero is introduced to us, like the Duke of St. James and Tancred, as he is attaining his majority; and, like the former, he finds at his disposal the fruits of a long minority. Here also there have been two guardians who have never seen each other—a Scotch lord and a Cardinal; the one a strict Presbyterian, who had had charge of his ward, and sent him to the High School at Edinburgh, and afterwards to the University in the same city; the other a pervert from the English Church, who had been the college friend of Lothair's father, and who was regularly out-manœuvred by the Scotch guardian, until at last he compelled him by a chancery suit to send the youth to Christ Church. The main spring of action throughout the book is the struggle

made by Cardinal Grandison and his co-religionists to win over the young nobleman to the Romish Church. It is in this, and some few other respects, that the resemblance of Lothair to the Marquis of Bute is conspicuous; but, as in the story of *Venetia*, the author has taken care not to draw the copy too closely after the original. Moreover, the conversion does not come about in the story; Lothair is on the verge of it when a more human passion steps in and takes possession of him, and we are left with the conviction that he has passed through that phase of his mental development without more than singeing his wings.

Lothair is brought out in English society in the course of a visit to Brentham, the seat of the Duke of —, the father of a Christ Church friend. It is true that he had been a guest at banquets given by his uncle, but these were "festivals of the Picts and Scots; rude plenty, and coarse splendour, with noise instead of conversation, and a tumult of obstructive dependents, who impeded by their want of skill the very convenience which they were purposed to facilitate." We have plenty of well-appointed, well-served banquets in *Lothair*. The author loves a dinner-scene, and manifestly considers the whole business of proper eating and drinking as a fine art, from the cooking to the dressing of the table, from the serving to the eating, from the conversation to the description. The young lord is green and a little awkward, very much in earnest, with an Oxford air and self-confidence, who had already thought a good deal about everything, and was ready to swear that his feelings would never change again. He has not been long at Brentham before he is head over ears in love with Corisande, the daughter of his hostess, and is calmly asking her grace to hand the young lady over to him. This the Duchess declines to do, at any rate until both the young people have seen a little more of the world. The lady Corisande, indeed, has scarcely spoken to Lothair; she is not yet

"out;" and when her lover goes away disconsolate he leaves her tender heart to all appearance untouched.

Then the plotting begins. Lothair is introduced to the Cardinal by Mr. Putney Giles, a member of the firm of solicitors which manages the young lord's estates, who by a clever stratagem brings the two together at the house of his wife, to the latter's intense satisfaction. Thenceforth his Eminence holds the youth by a silken thread. He introduces him to the family of Lord St. Jerome, an English catholic, where he meets Clare Arundel, a niece, devoted to the Church, and at the same time ravishingly beautiful. Lothair is struck; some one tells him that the lady is to be "the bride of the Church," and he starts, and changes colour; then the same informant, one Father Coleman, hints that "if Miss Arundel could meet with a spirit as exalted and as energetic as her own, her fate might be different." Lothair likes the St. Jeromes, and frequents their house, so that by-and-by there is a paragraph in the *Morning Post* suggesting that a young nobleman, on the eve of attaining his majority, is about to enter the Roman Church. At Brentham the Lady Corisande sees this paragraph, and exchanges her opinions on the subject with her mother. "When I hear of young nobles," she says, "the natural leaders of the land, going over to the Roman Catholic Church, I confess I lose heart and patience. It seems so unpatriotic, so effeminate." From which we may be justified in concluding that if Corisande were ever to bestow her hand on Lothair, the Cardinal and his friends would not have everything their own way. Meanwhile Lothair contemplates building a cathedral (as the Duke of St James built a gothic castle), and becomes "quite domiciliated at Vauxe." A chance word with Corisande apparently checks him when he is on the verge of a declaration to Clara.

Presently there is another attraction and distraction for Lothair. This is Theodora, otherwise Mrs. Campian, the

wife of an American colonel, who was a friend and follower of Garibaldi. Theodora has a classical face, which has been faithfully transferred to the five-franc pieces of the French Republic in 1850; and her character is finer and nobler still. She is an enthusiast for popular liberties, and is wrapped up in the cause of Italian regeneration. She fascinates Lothair, who, without arguing or examining himself very much, hangs about her, and gradually imbibes her enthusiasm. In course of time he finds himself in Italy with the Campians and their friends, and, in brief, becomes a Garibaldian.

It was after the date of Aspromonte, and before the capture of Rome, for which the Italian patriots were constantly sighing and scheming. The French garrison had left the Holy City, but at this very juncture they returned, in order to prevent the revolutionists from breaking the restraint of the Government, and making a dash upon the city. The news fills Theodora with anguish; but the volunteers still determine to carry out their designs. The cry of Italy is "To Rome." The Garibaldini attack the Papal troops near Viterbo, and after a sharp struggle defeat them; but Theodora is wounded by a gunshot. She is assured of the victory of her friends, and the doctor declares that her courage will enable her to live; but the sound of the French cannon at Civita Vecchia renews her despair, and then it is clear that she must die. On her deathbed she makes Lothair promise her that he will never join the Church of Rome.

At Mentana, Lothair himself is wounded; and so it happens that he comes under the charge of Clare Arundel (unknown to himself) in a palace of Rome. In a month he is allowed to rise, and then he finds himself surrounded by friends—Lord St. Jerome, and Monsignor Catesby, and finally Cardinal Grandison. These priests and their instruments practise a cheat on him, in a desperate effort to secure

his conversion. They pretend to believe that he fought at Mentana in the cause of the Pope, and against the "secret societies of atheism;" they entrap him into attending a religious service, with a lighted taper in his hands, which persuades all Rome that his soul has been saved; they feign a miracle, and the direct intervention of the Virgin Mary; and then they suddenly and artfully spring the whole mystery upon him, evidently trusting that he will, for one cause or another—bewilderment, devotion, gratitude, or what not—fall in with the current, and accept accomplished facts.

But Lothair's manliness asserts itself. He remembers his promise to Theodora, and he remembers Corisande's opinion about perverts. Cardinal Grandison attempts in the most skilful manner to pilot the soul of his ward through the sea of falsehood and deceit into which it had been plunged; he admits that a mistake may have been made, but insinuates that a future Apostle and a Champion of Christendom might leave the miraculous story undenied, and so gain himself an everlasting crown. Lothair is ill again, and is allowed to travel with a couple of priests, who take him to a villa on the coast. One day he sets out in a boat for Malta, and falls in with the yacht of Mr. Phoebus, an old English friend, to whom he relates all his marvellous experiences, and who at once sails off with him to "an island which he occasionally inhabited, near the Asian coast of the *Ægean* Sea, and which he rented from the chief of his wife's house, the Prince of Samos."

Now we have an episode in the Holy Land. It was impossible that Mr. Disraeli should take us to the *Ægean* without going onward to Jerusalem; and the Semitic and Aryan ideas duly present themselves to our notice. At Jerusalem the travellers encounter Lothair's old college friend, Bertram, the brother of Corisande. Bertram falls in love with Euphrosyne, the sister-in-law of Mr. Phoebus.

Here, in this delightful clime, the development of Lothair's mind proceeds apace. He lights upon a wonderful Syrian, a Mr. Paraclete, with whom he visits Galilee, and “the Oaks of Bashan,” and from whom he receives a few Oriental ingredients for the philosophic faith which is eventually to satisfy his reason.

At last he is back in London. Mr. Putney Giles has most ingeniously disabused the public of the false impression that Lothair had changed his religion, and he breathes freely. One of his first acts, however, is to prepare an offering of gratitude for Clare Arundel. He sends for Mr. Ruby, a famous artist in precious stones. Mr. Ruby brings with him a bag, from which he produces “a variety of beautiful objects, none of them for sale, all executed commissions, which were destined to adorn the fortunate and the fair.”

“ ‘This is lovely, my lord, quite new, for the Queen of Madagascar; for the Empress this, Her Majesty's own design, at least almost. Lady Melton's bridal necklace, and my lord's George, the last given by King James II.; broken up during the Revolution, but reset by us from an old drawing, with picked stones.’

“ ‘Very pretty,’ said Lothair, ‘but it is not exactly this sort of thing that I want. See’—and he opened the despatch-box, and took from out of it a crucifix. It was made of Eastern wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl; the figure carved in brass, though not without power, and at the end of each of the four terminations of the cross was a small cavity, enclosing something, and covered with glass.

“ ‘See,’ continued Lothair, ‘this is the crucifix, given with a carved shell to each pilgrim who visits the Holy Sepulchre. Within these four cavities is earth from the four holy places: Calvary, Sion, Bethlehem, and Gethsemane. Now, what I want is a crucifix something of this dimension, but made of the most costly materials; the figure must be of pure gold. I should like the cross to be of choice emeralds, which I am told are now more precious even than brilliants; and I wish the earth of the sacred places to be removed from this crucifix, and introduced in a similar manner in the one which you are to make; and each cavity must be covered with a slit diamond. Do you understand?’

“ ‘I follow you, my Lord,’ said Mr. Ruby, with glistening eyes. ‘It will be a rare jewel. Is there to be a limit as to the cost?’

“ ‘None but such as taste and propriety suggest,’ answered Lothair.”

Our hero is received without embarrassment by the St. Jeromes and the Cardinal. The latter tells him, with much exultation, of the Œcumenical Council which is to meet at Rome, and which the Church desires to see attended by a few sympathetic English laity. Lothair is civil, even interested, but he does not commit himself; and indeed the Cardinal must have perceived that his influence over the mind of his ward was waning fast.

Yet more pleasant is his reception by Corisande’s parents, and by Corisande herself. The latter had slipped into an engagement with the Duke of Brecon; but now she perplexes the Duke and Duchess by cancelling it. The worthy couple are further perplexed by Bertram’s desire to marry Euphrosyne Cantacuzene. Gradually, however, they are reconciled in both respects. Lothair is manifestly returning to his first love; and his prospects are by no means gloomy, when Lady Corisande and the Duchess happen to pay a visit to Mr. Ruby, who as usual exhibits his “commissions.” Amongst them is the exquisite crucifix which has been ordered by Lothair for Miss Arundel. A day or two later, Lothair is surprised to hear that the Duchess and her daughter are going to leave town. He goes to call at Crecy House, and is met at the door by an excuse. Her ladyship had a headache, and was obliged to lie down.

However, it all comes right at last. The truth about the crucifix is discovered, and Lothair receives a hint that his old quarters at Brentham are vacant. He goes down and is happy. Mr. Disraeli, as we have seen, is good at the description of a garden, but Corisande’s garden is sketched with so light and loving a hand that it clings to the memory.

"In the pleasure-grounds of Brentham were the remains of an ancient garden of the ancient house, that had long ago been pulled down. When the modern pleasure-grounds were planned and created, notwithstanding the protests of the artists in landscape, the father of the present duke would not allow this ancient garden to be entirely destroyed, and you came upon its quaint appearance in the dissimilar world in which it was placed, as you might, in some festival of romantic costume, upon a person habited in the courtly dress of the last century. It was formed upon a gentle southern slope, with turfen terraces walled in on three sides, the fourth consisting of arches of golden yew. The Duke had given this garden to Lady Corisande, in order that she might practice her theory, that flower gardens should be sweet and luxuriant, and not hard and scentless imitations of works of art. Here, in their season, flourished abundantly all those productions of nature which are now banished from our once delighted senses; huge bushes of honeysuckle, and bowers of sweet-pea, and sweet-briar and jessamine clustering over the walls, and gillyflowers scenting with their sweet breath the ancient bricks from which they seemed to spring. There were banks of violets which the southern breeze always stirred, and mignonette filled every vacant nook. As they entered now, it seemed a blaze of roses and carnations, though one recognised in a moment the presence of the lily, the heliotrope, and the stock. Some white peacocks were basking on the southern wall, and one of them, as their visitors entered, moved and displayed its plumage with scornful pride. The bees were busy in the air, but their homes were near, and you might watch them labouring in their glassy hives."

In this garden the young couples and the older folk "saunter and ramble in the sweet and sunny air, amid a blaze of butterflies and the ceaseless hum of bees." Bertram and Euphrosyne adorn each other with carnations. Lothair and Corisande lose themselves in a corner. The ardent lover says that he should like to have such a garden at Muriel, and suggests that his companion might help him to make one. His words become more and more pointed, and then Corisande looks round for her friends, but finds that they are gone. Lothair declines to move without a rose, and choosing the rose lost more time, so that when they reached the arches of golden yew there were no friends in sight. Then Lothair seizes his opportunity, and pours out his heart.

Of course Corisande melts at once ; for she had made up her mind, in refusing the Duke of Brecon, that at any rate no one except Lothair should lead her captive. After comparing notes for one or two happy hours, they think it time to go in to luncheon ; but luncheon was over, and the Duchess and her party were gathered on the terrace.

“ ‘What has become of you, my good people?’ said her Grace ; ‘bells have been ringing for you in every direction. Where can you have been?’ ”

“ ‘I have been in Corisande’s garden,’ said Lothair ; ‘and she has given me a rose.’ ”

This is the end of a not unsatisfactory story, which was received with great favour on its first appearance, and in regard to which the first judgment of the public has not been reversed. It has most of the features which characterised Mr. Disraeli’s earlier efforts in romance—pages and chapters of exquisite delicacy, some passages of lofty eloquence and inspiration, and at the same time an admixture of fanciful delusions and puerile extravagance. The “secret societies” figure largely in *Lothair*, though with scarcely more substantiality than the mighty toppers in the Palace of the Wines. Mr. Disraeli had not taken so much trouble to inform himself about “Mary Anne” and “Madre Natura” as he had taken to learn the truth about the Chartists when he was writing *Sybil*. The consequence is that much of what he has to say on these topics is unexact and worthless.

A point of contact between the secret societies and the Roman Catholic hierarchy is found in Ireland. Monsignor Catesby receives his Cardinalate as a reward for his successful struggle with the societies in that, his native country ; but we have few or no details on the subject. The author waves his hand at these and many other transactions in the most airy and mysterious manner, leaving his reader to understand that he could tell a great deal more about them if he chose, or if he were not bent on higher things, or

if men of ordinary capacities were able to endure such awful revelations. And there is little doubt that he could have woven and unravelled some startling plots, if he had seen fit to do so. That is sufficiently proved in the chapters which record the great papal conspiracy to fetter the mind and secure the property of Lothair ; which, to be candid, is about as true to life as any desperate secular scheme which might have been detailed by one who knew no more than the name of a secret association. The book is all but a libel on individual Roman Catholics : and perhaps if Cardinal Manning had chosen to bring an action against Mr. Disraeli, he might at least have taken him through the law courts with a show of propriety and substantial grievance.



CHAPTER XXVII.

PREMIER WITH A MAJORITY.



R. DISRAELI was fortunate in securing a strong, harmonious, and hardworking Administration, which, with few changes, stood by him during the whole six years of his Premiership. He had the entire Conservative party to choose from, the breaches of 1867 having by this time been healed, and the prominent men in both Houses putting themselves at his disposal. The Cabinet originally contained no more than twelve members, as follows:—

First Lord of the Treasury, . . .	Benjamin Disraeli.
Lord Chancellor, . . .	Lord Cairns.
Lord President of the Council, . . .	Duke of Richmond.
Lord Privy Seal, . . .	Earl of Malmesbury.
Home Secretary, . . .	R. A. Cross.
Foreign „ . . .	Earl of Derby.
War „ . . .	Gathorne Hardy.
Colonial „ . . .	Earl of Carnarvon.
India „ . . .	Marquis of Salisbury.
Chancellor of the Exchequer, . . .	Sir Stafford Northcote.
First Lord of the Admiralty, . . .	G. W. Hunt.
Postmaster-General, . . .	Lord John Manners.

The weakest names in this list were the third and fourth. Lord Cairns had earned an excellent reputation in the

Lower House as a sound lawyer and a forcible debater, and his presidency in the House of Lords was a decided element of strength to the Cabinet. The Earl of Derby, who had won his spurs in his father's Government in 1867, was highly esteemed in the country for his ability, candour, and impartial common sense. The Marquis of Salisbury had made his mark in politics as Lord Cranborne. Lord John Manners, one of the Premier's oldest adherents, made up in industry and steadiness what he lacked in genius; and the Earl of Carnarvon had already approved himself as a man of good administrative powers, and of calm and balanced judgment. The other members of the Cabinet were more or less experiments in the high posts for which they were selected; but each of them proved to be eminently fitted for the discharge of his functions. Mr. Ward Hunt's death led to the introduction of Mr. W. H. Smith in his place—an appointment of a thoroughly popular kind, which strengthened Mr. Disraeli's position not a little. Lord Sandon and the Duke of Northumberland entered the Cabinet at a later period, and constituted a further addition to its strength. Altogether the Premier manipulated his forces in a thoroughly skilful way, and was admirably served by those in whom he had placed his confidence.

The sessions of 1874 and 1875 were comparatively uneventful. The Government did not attempt much in the way of legislation. They had interpreted the vote of the constituencies as a sign that the country had been surfeited with what they were pleased to call, by way of criticism, "heroic" measures, and they accepted the mission of rest and inaction with a very good conscience. They professed to be administrators rather than legislators; and no doubt they performed this moiety of their duties in an efficient manner. In the Manchester speech delivered by Mr. Disraeli in 1872 he had dwelt in a terse and epigrammatical style on the vast importance of sanitary measures; and

though it was manifest to men of his own way of thinking that he was in this fashion merely suggesting that political reforms might for a time be made secondary to social and domestic reforms, his motto of *sanitas sanitatum—omnia sanitas* drew on him a good deal of ridicule in the Press. In his election speeches he referred again to the urgency of sanitary and hygienic measures; and at the same time he shadowed forth rather than promised the good things which he was prepared to do for the farmers, for local ratepayers, and for sundry classes and interests which were supposed to have been neglected by the former Administration.

When the Conservatives came into office they were able to do some small things by way of redeeming their promises to their supporters. Mr. Gladstone had foreseen a surplus of some five millions sterling, and Sir Stafford Northcote had not been long at his post before he admitted that this estimate would be more than fulfilled. Then the sops were distributed. The income-tax was reduced by a penny; local taxation was diminished by more than a million; various duties were reduced. So careful were Ministers to spread their bounties over as wide a surface as possible that, when it became necessary to pay a part of the expenditure on the Ashantee Expedition, they would not do this out of the immense surplus of the year, but came to Parliament for a special grant. It might almost have seemed as though Sir Stafford Northcote and his colleagues were anxious to vary the intentions and precedents of Mr. Gladstone as widely as it was possible for them to do so.

As for the actual legislation of the Government, one of their first acts was to introduce the Public Worship Regulation Bill, in response to a demand loudly expressed by the Evangelical party in the Church. Mr. Disraeli had committed himself to the declaration that it was necessary "to put down ritualism;" and the Bill in question was a vigorous attempt to do so. It was stoutly opposed by Mr.

Gladstone amongst others ; and, though it was passed into law, its results have not been of such a character as to justify the time and energy spent on its enactment. The Endowed Schools Amendment Act was a partial modification of the principle established in the important measure of 1870, though of course the new Administration did not venture to go far in the way of undoing that great achievement of the Liberal Ministry. When we have mentioned these two Acts we have practically exhausted the record of the legislative ambition of Mr. Disraeli and his colleagues in their first year of office.

The session of 1875 was more fruitful in good measures ; and if it were not for the fact that some of the most pretentious of these were made optional in their operation, the list would reflect high credit upon the Conservative Administration.

One of the most promising of these measures was the Friendly Societies' Act, the object of which was to consolidate and amend the law relating to these and other similar societies.* The principle of the Bill was to limit the authorisation of these bodies to such as could show themselves to be in a certain defined condition of efficiency and soundness. The Friendly, Insurance, and Benefit Societies, with the Working-men's Clubs, were enabled to register themselves, and thus to secure a sort of official sanction, provided they conformed to certain regulations laid down in the Bill, and lodged with the Registrar an annual return of receipts and expenditure. The measure was optional so far as its acceptance by the societies was concerned. It held out a number of presumable advantages, which were expected to encourage registration ; but as matter of fact it has proved to be less efficacious in this respect than its framers anticipated.

* We quote the summaries of these Acts of Parliament from the first volume of the present Series ; since it is necessary that to this extent we should travel over precisely the same ground.

The Employers and Workmen Act, passed in the same session, purported to enlarge the powers of the County Courts in connection with disputes between masters and men. It enabled these courts "to adjust and set off one against the other" the several claims of the two parties to a dispute, in such matters as wages, damages for breach of contract, and the like; to rescind contracts when it seemed advisable, and to accept security from the defendant or defendants in any claim for the performance of a contract of work or employment. Some of the best-known working men were consulted in the elaboration of this plan, and expressed their approval of it; but the Act did not satisfy those who had most strenuously demanded the establishment of courts of compulsory arbitration.

The Public Health Act consolidated and amended the existing law on the subject, and provided for the division of the country into urban and rural sanitary districts, and for the appointment of sanitary inspectors in each. This was one of the best measures of the session, and did in some degree fulfil the promises made during the general election, when Mr. Disraeli in particular insisted on the need for sanitary legislation.

The Artisans' Dwellings Acts aimed at facilitating the improvement of the dwellings of the working classes in large towns, especially by the pulling down of unhealthy houses, courts and alleys, and the reconstruction of those parts of the towns wherein the Act was adopted. In some cases, as in that of Birmingham, this measure has been found serviceable; but in other cases the practical effect of it has been to clear out working men's families from the central streets and occupying the space by houses or warehouses, which make no provision for the disturbed people.

Another valuable measure passed in 1875 was the Merchant Shipping Act, for giving further powers to the Board of Trade for stopping unseaworthy ships. This was a first

result of the agitation set on foot by Mr. Plimsoll, the member for Derby ; and it would not have become law but for the emotional earnestness of the hon. member, who created a scene in the House when it appeared that the Bill would not be allowed to pass, and thus produced a strong demonstration of opinion in its favour, which compelled the Government to find an opportunity for its enactment.

In 1876 the efforts of Parliament already appeared to flag. A more comprehensive Merchant Shipping Act was brought forward in accordance with an engagement entered into by Ministers at the close of the previous session. The object was to guard against the sending to sea of merchant vessels in an unseaworthy condition. Whenever a ship in any British port is found to be defective, and is so reported to the Board of Trade, an order may be given to stay its departure. The matter is then to be referred to a court of survey in the district, and the owners may be compelled to repair the defects before the vessel is allowed to put to sea. To prevent overloading, deck and load-lines are to be conspicuously painted on each side amidships ; and penalties are imposed in order to ensure obedience to these regulations. In the same Act there are provisions with regard to the stowage of the cargo ; but the present rules as to shifting the cargoes of grain and the like were not enacted until the year 1880.


Another Act extended, and in some important particulars modified, the Elementary Education Act of 1870. It provided machinery for compelling the attendance at school of children in agricultural districts, and wherever a School Board had not yet been established ; but it enabled town councils and guardians to appoint a school attendance committee for this purpose as an alternative to the election of a new Board. It would not be sufficiently within the scope of our object to enter on the discussions which preceded the enactment of this measure, and of the other

measures which distinguish the Administration of 1874. On the whole, the first three sessions of this Administration were devoted to legislation which was, at least in its intention, of a servicable and beneficial character. The Agricultural Holdings Act was perhaps the most conspicuous example of the measures which, though ambitious in their scope and laborious in their attainment, were inoperative because they were not made compulsory. The Act in question provided that tenants should receive compensation for unexhausted improvements on giving up the leases of their farms; and, side by side with this satisfactory instalment of relief for the agriculturists, there was a clause which declared that the relief should only be granted when the landlords agreed to it beforehand.

This half-hearted spirit of reform, and this virtual mockery of claims nominally conceded, must be regarded as a part of the price paid by the genuine representatives of the people for their alliance with the territorial and aristocratic classes. It was the weak point of Mr. Disraeli's "new union," which was fatal to its efficiency as a legislative party. No doubt the Premier had realised in 1876, if not on his first accession to office, that he could never count on obtaining great popular reforms from the most influential section of his party, and that, in order to win brilliant triumphs of statesmanship, it would be necessary to strike out a line in a direction where the aristocracy and the democracy could be induced to follow him in company. Let us see, then, how Mr. Disraeli contrived to unite his forces and to fight his campaigns,

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE IMPERIAL POLICY.

E may easily believe that when the new Premier found himself in 1874 the most powerful man in England, with a majority in both Houses of Parliament and a reserve of popularity in the constituencies, he set himself to conceive some vast and dazzling scheme which should exact all the energy, the ingenuity, the patient perseverance whereof he felt himself to be capable; which should be revealed only feature by feature to the less adventurous minds of his followers; which should seize and charm the imaginations of his friends, and should deserve and obtain success by appealing to the vanity, the weakness, the ambition of his countrymen.

We can still more readily believe that, casting about him for such a scheme, the Premier would instinctively look abroad rather than at home, and that he would turn by preference to the East. The bent of his genius and of his earlier speculations would naturally take him to Oriental climes and to Aryan races as the arena for his exploits; and if he could have persuaded himself that the interests of England made it advisable that her diplomacy should centre itself in Syria, or in Arabia, he would have welcomed the

conviction with delight. But England has no interests in Syria or in Arabia; and thus it was necessary for him to stop short of or to pass beyond the most holy places of the world. And then it would flash upon him that we had a mighty Oriental empire for whose future safety and glory it became him to put forth his efforts, and that we had a rival in the East against whom it was all-important that he should contend.

More probably, he had always had this scheme in contemplation—vaguely, of course, and as a contingency—and now he found himself at the head of affairs, the people already irritated against Russia, the Eastern Question manifestly reopening, the traditional enemy of Turkey plotting against her from the north, and everything in train for the development of the policy which he believed to be efficacious. It was an excellent opening for his ambition, and a rare opportunity of proving himself capable of the grand designs and wide-reaching operations which he had hitherto unfolded in novels alone. It was impossible for any one who knew Mr. Disraeli's character and genius (and perhaps few men did really know them at that crisis) to doubt that he would seize the chance—that he would enter on a policy at all events differing from any recent policy of English statesmanship, calculated to dazzle, to impress, to raise the prestige of England abroad, and (if successful) to add to England's possessions in various parts of the world.

There were certain considerations to which, as it afterwards turned out, Mr. Disraeli had attached too little weight. His policy might succeed for a time, but it would surely rouse great opposition; and when the inevitable reaction came, would not his victories be repudiated, and his acquisitions thrown away? Perhaps he foresaw and calculated for this reaction, and yet had confidence that enough would be preserved in the end to make it worth his

while to persevere. It was natural, in the meantime, that he should count on having a majority of Englishmen with him in a forward and even aggressive policy. Any man, especially of Mr. Disraeli's temperament, can persuade himself of an idea so complimentary to his pride; and Mr. Disraeli had not been a profound student of human nature to so little purpose as to doubt the success of his appeal to the "proud instincts of an imperial race." There were other questions which might be, and which were sure to be raised, in regard to the justification for the various steps which it might be decided to take; and of course the Premier knew very well that his policy would be actively and bitterly opposed by numerous and strong sections of the community, and that it would be stigmatised as unwarrantable, gratuitous, expensive, adventurous, and even dishonourable. He must have counted the cost on all these grounds, and have deliberately come to the conclusion that it was not worth while to pause for any reason of this kind. Justification in public affairs is held to be a very elastic thing; one man will think a certain course dishonourable which others will hold to be necessary, right, and even praiseworthy; and most men will in the end accept, hold, and be grateful for possessions and advantages against the acquisition of which they had originally protested.

One of the first indications of the intended development of a new policy in the East was the virtual supersession of Lord Northbrook as Governor-General of India. The Anglo-Indian policy of the Liberal Government had been based on quietude, on the maintenance of the *status quo*, on the cultivation of friendly relations with our neighbours, and particularly on the suspension of what was known as "the forward policy" on our north-western frontier. Lord Northbrook soon had occasion to feel that his resignation would be acceptable to the new Home Government, and he therefore resigned. In his place the Premier sent Lord

Lytton, a poet, a diplomatist of some standing, and a son of one of Mr. Disraeli's earliest personal and political friends. Lord Lytton was not slow in initiating the negotiations with the Amcer of Afghanistan which eventually led to our quarrel with Shere Ali, and our invasion of his dominions.

Early in 1876 Mr. Disraeli began at this end of the line the same well-concerted policy which Lord Lytton was beginning at the other end. He introduced a short measure into Parliament by which power was conferred upon Her Majesty, "with a view to a proper recognition of the transfer of the Government of India to the Crown"—a transfer effected several years previously—to make "such addition to the style and titles at present appertaining to the Imperial Crown of the United Kingdom and its dependencies as to Her Majesty may seem fit." The intention was to change the title of the Queen into "Empress," and to make England from that time forward an Empire. But Englishmen, on the whole, did not appreciate or approve this design. They knew that they had imperial sway, imperial power and authority, but they were irreconcilably opposed to the name, the external pomp and boast of imperial dignities. The nation prefers the realities of empire without its display, and its general tendency is rather to limit than to increase the mere prerogatives of the Crown. Thus the Act was not passed until the Government had given assurances that the newer and grander titles were not to be employed in England, nor anywhere out of India itself.

It had been an ingenious device of Mr. Disraeli, and he had doubtless honestly believed that the power of England would be increased by making her an Empire in name as well as in fact. He even declared in Parliament that the change would give Russia to understand that her advances in Central Asia were to be boldly and resolutely met by all the resources of a mighty imperial dominion, which would not permit the shadow of an encroachment on the bordering

States of India. But the idea was too bold for the people at large, and thus the first lesson in "imperialism" was received with ridicule.

In the meantime the condition of Turkey had begun to occupy the attention of Europe. In 1875 the Bosnian insurrection broke out; in 1876 Servia and Montenegro declared war against the Porte. The Turks might have been too strong for all these enemies combined; but it was clear enough that Russia was not prepared to see the rebels crushed. Many people looked forward to a Russo-Turkish War as inevitable, even before the outbreak in Bulgaria, and the terrible massacres resorted to by the Porte in order to crush it out. The indignation excited throughout Europe by these massacres, and in particular the strong feeling expressed in England against any further alliance with Turkey, might have damped the hopes of any less confident statesman than Mr. Disraeli had often shown himself to be. The plain and unmistakable expression of public opinion in regard to the misgovernment and tyranny of the Porte left no hope that the country would pursue a course in direct hostility to Russia. A repetition of the Crimean War had become impossible. Very many Englishmen would doubtless hail with pleasure an invasion of Turkey by Russia; and, under these circumstances, it seemed to be improbable, in the last degree, that any general policy could be set on foot with no stronger basis than that of animosity against the Government of the Czar.

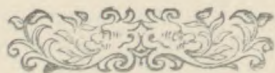
But Mr. Disraeli did not despair. He had received full sanction for his expenditure of four millions sterling in purchasing the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal. This was an act of peaceful policy, which might have been conceived for the very purpose of rendering hostility and aggression unnecessary. Apparently, however, he did not doubt that he would obtain the sanction of his countrymen for measures of the latter kind also.

There were several discussions on the Bulgarian massacres in Parliament ; and Mr. Disraeli gave no slight offence to the Opposition by treating the subject as if it were of comparatively small importance. The facts had been in the first instance denied ; and, as late as the end of June, 1876, Mr. Disraeli expressed a hope that the statements were scarcely warranted. There had without doubt been atrocities in Bulgaria. This was a war, "not carried on by regular troops, not even by irregular troops, but by a sort of *posse comitatûs* of an armed population." "I doubt," he said, "whether torture has been practised on a great scale among an historical people, who seldom have, I believe, resorted to torture, but generally terminated their connection with culprits in a more expeditious manner. Every effort had been made, and would continue to be made, to soften and mitigate as much as possible the terrible scenes that are now inevitably occurring. Atrocities were inevitable when war was carried on in certain countries and between certain races."

The Premier was sharply attacked for his attitude on this occasion, and Mr. Gladstone in particular was severe upon the apparent lightness and indifference with which he treated the matter. In a pamphlet on the "Bulgarian Horrors," the late Premier discussed at some length the statements which had been made on either side before the conclusion of the session, and concluded with the complaint that Mr. Disraeli still, on the 12th of August, "effectually disguised the main issue which lay in the question, whether the Turkish Government, which was receiving from us both moral and virtually material support, had or had not, by its agents, and by its approval and reward of its agents, been deeply guilty of excesses than which none more abominable have disgraced the history of the world. For the Government, it was still merely a question of 'civil war,' 'carried on under conditions of brutality unfortunately not unpre-

cedented in that country,' namely Bulgaria. A repetition of language, which is either that of ignorance, or of brutal calumny upon a people whom Turkish authorities have themselves just described as industrious, primitive, and docile."

It was probably not in connection with these discussions, or from any wish to escape from his antagonists in the House of Commons—that was not Mr. Disraeli's way of conducting a political rivalry—but in continuance of his long-concerted plan, that the Premier resolved to go to the Upper House. In August, 1876, he accepted an earl's coronet; and he must henceforth be spoken of as the Earl of Beaconsfield. It was a title which he had adopted for one of his characters in *Vivian Grey*; and a few years before he took it for himself he had conferred it—in the form of the Baroness of Beaconsfield—upon his wife. Lady Beaconsfield had died in the meantime, before she could witness this particular realisation of her husband's ambition.



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ACME OF AMBITION.

THERE is no need that we should describe with any amount of detail the progress of the Eastern Question through its various developments, or the events of the Russo-Turkish War and the Berlin Congress, which must be sufficiently familiar to the present generation, and which could not be fitly dealt with in a few pages. But it will be interesting to trace the leading features of the time, so far as it was a veritable crisis in the history of our country, and in the life of the statesman whose career we are passing under review.

The act which above all others had committed us to the distinctive "Imperial" policy, and which had constrained England to pursue an isolated course, relying on her own resources, or on the intrigues which we might be able to conduct amongst the European Governments, was the rejection in 1876 of the famous Berlin Memorandum. This document was drawn up by the German Government at the moment when the Servian and Montenegrin wars were about to begin, and its main objects were—

"To insist on a suspension of arms for two months, and, when it was obtained, to make pressure both on the insurgents and on the

Porte, in order to secure a durable pacification, based on the fulfilment of the obligations which the latter Power had contracted towards Europe." Certain points were suggested "to form a basis for the negotiations between the insurgents and the Porte, which would be opened as soon as the armistice had been obtained—the principal one being, that materials to rebuild the destroyed houses and churches should be supplied to the returning refugees, together with sufficient food to support life until they were again in a position to maintain themselves."

The Continental Powers without exception agreed to the proposal of Germany, which was evidently put forward in the hope of preserving peace, and which was at any rate calculated to maintain the common action of Europe. The English Government refused to unite with the rest in urging the adoption of this Memorandum on the Porte; and as a natural consequence the Porte, in the circumstances, declined to adopt it.

It is difficult, in the light of subsequent events, to defend this course of action, entered on at such a critical moment. There was clearly no great or resolute effort on the part of the Cabinet, or of our representative at Constantinople, to convince the Porte that it would never again receive the material aid of England. Sir Henry Elliot, indeed, was instructed to inform the Turkish Government beforehand that England would not agree to the Memorandum, and the only deduction which the Turks could be expected to make from this intimation was that if they persevered long enough, and showed a bold front against Russia, they would not be left alone to fight out their battle to the bitter end.

The rejection of the Memorandum sounded the key-note of England's policy in the Eastern Question. We had declined the method of concert, and had chosen to limit our sphere of action to the conservation of British interests. The European Powers openly regretted our isolation, and even protested strongly against it; but of course they drew

the natural conclusion that we were prepared singly to answer for the conduct of Russia, and to undertake unaided the task of maintaining the integrity and independence of Turkey against all possible attacks. Lord Beaconsfield plainly intimated that this was his intention. He used the very phrase on more than one occasion, and made a point of throwing down the gauntlet of England at the feet of the Czar. This attitude pleased a large section of the public; the anti-Russian sentiment grew by what it fed upon; and when the struggle had actually broken out between Russia and Turkey there was unquestionably a majority of Englishmen, at one time or another, which would have sanctioned measures leading directly to a declaration of war from either side.

Such measures, indeed, were positively taken, and received the sanction of large Parliamentary majorities, and of crowded public meetings. In the autumn of 1876, any hall and any open square could be filled with dense crowds, enthusiastically declaring that England should on no account renew her alliance with the Porte, or sacrifice the life of a single soldier, or expend a single shilling in its cause. In the autumn of 1877, the same halls and the same open places were filled with equally dense crowds, extolling the patriotism of the Premier, and assuring the Government of their steady support. Then there sprang up the so-called Jingo fever, which displayed itself in loud boasts of what we could do and would do in certain circumstances, which made the music halls resound with praises of England's might and England's right, and which based a new gospel upon the assertion of "British interests in the East."

In May, 1877, Lord Derby wrote a despatch to the Russian Government in which he carefully defined the interests of this country which the Cabinet considered to be imperilled by the war, and demanded an assurance from Russia that they should not be put in jeopardy. "Should

the war now in progress unfortunately spread, interests may be imperilled which Her Majesty's Government are equally bound and determined to defend, and it is desirable that they should make it clear, so far as at the outset of the war can be done, what the most prominent of those interests are." The neutrality of the Suez Canal and of Egypt was dwelt upon as being of the utmost concern to England; and then Lord Derby went on to speak of what was undoubtedly a legitimate and serious point for consideration, and one which might conceivably come within the sphere of Russian operations. "The vast importance of Constantinople," he wrote, "whether in a military, a political, or a commercial point of view, is too well understood to require explanation. It is therefore scarcely necessary to point out that Her Majesty's Government are not prepared to witness with indifference the passing into other hands than those of its present possessors of a capital holding so peculiar and so commanding a position." Russia gave a distinct pledge on all these points; but, as it afterwards turned out, the English Cabinet was not satisfied. In the course of the next few months it saw fit to take many significant measures, and to adopt many important conclusions, which, though their object and professed purpose was to keep Russian ambitions in check, and thus to exclude the necessity of war, really brought us to the threshold of a rupture with the Government of the Czar.

The antagonism between Lord Beaconsfield and his opponents in Parliament was not very marked before the session of 1877. There had been a distinct condemnation of the conduct of the Government in rejecting the Berlin Memorandum; but the mission of Lord Salisbury to Constantinople in the following winter, when it was sought by a Conference of the Powers to bring the Porte to a sense of its danger and its duty, had gone far to reconcile the English Liberals. They saw in this act an effort, or at least

a willingness, to re-establish the European Concert; but when Lord Salisbury came home without effecting anything, Mr. Gladstone and his supporters warmly criticised the Government. And their warmth increased from that time forward to the end of Lord Beaconsfield's Administration.

The principal charges which were brought against the Government during the war may be briefly enumerated. It was urged that they might, on several distinct occasions, have arrested the war by making strong representations to the Porte, or by stepping in as mediators, and that Russia repeatedly gave them an opportunity of doing so—notably before her armies crossed the Danube, and after the fall of Plevna. It is further urged that, declining to act the part of peacemaker, they allowed the war-fever to grow in this country by holding back from public knowledge the solemn pledges of the Czar that he had no designs on Constantinople, and the candid offer which he had made, under certain conditions, not to pass beyond the Balkans. Not only did they withhold these facts, but they distinctly violated the Constitution by bringing a handful of Indian troops to Malta, as a menace against Russia, or, as some maintained, for the sole purpose of making a brag of our imperial forces. About the same time they sent the fleet to the Bosphorus, first against the will of Turkey, and afterwards with her consent. Next, they demanded a credit of six millions sterling, to be spent on war preparations when there was no fair and reasonable prospect of having to fight; and much of this money was expended in simply distributing commissions amongst their friends. And, generally, the Government were accused of defying Russia, and virtually encouraging Turkey to ruin herself (as the Turkish diplomats complained) from motives of self-glorification, and for no tangible advantage.

Such was the gist of the charges brought against

Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues. But they were made for a long time without producing any sensible effect on the Government, which more than retained its immense majorities in Parliament. It is true that the Premier received more than one warning of danger in the course which he was pursuing. The retirement of Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon from his Cabinet, in the spring of 1878, after previous resignations had been withdrawn, must have shown Lord Beaconsfield that even his own party could not be definitely held together by a policy which made such large demands on the acquiescence and allegiance of men like the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries. However, it was after Lord Salisbury had taken the place of Lord Derby at the Foreign Office that the greatest Parliamentary successes of the Government were won.

The culmination of Lord Beaconsfield's triumph was attained at the Congress of Berlin, which met on the 13th of June, 1878, in order to decide upon the questions arising out of the war, and to substitute the will of united Europe for the simple dictation of the conquering Power.

"The work of the Congress was successful in so far as it substituted the sanction of Europe for the sole will of Russia, and completed the liberation of a vast number of the Porte's Christian subjects. When the English plenipotentiaries returned to London, and were received with ovations by their admirers, Lord Beaconsfield claimed that they had brought back 'peace with honour' from Berlin. It is true that Russia had assented to the modification of her Treaty, and that no quarrel had resulted from the meeting of the two rival Powers; but the question of honour was an open one, and was very warmly discussed. It was pointed out that the English Government had made a secret agreement with the Russian Government before the Congress had opened, and that Lord Odo Russell had been instructed to oppose certain demands of Russia which his

Government had promised ultimately to concede; that pledges had been given to Greece which were neglected at Berlin; that a secret understanding had been come to with Turkey in the middle of the Congress, by which England took the Island of Cyprus, and promised to guarantee Turkey in Asia; that the cause of Greece was thrown over on the same day when this convention was made; that certain limitations made at England's instance in the San Stefano Treaty had the effect of preventing the emancipation of a large number of Christians; and so forth."*

The controversy raged long and fiercely over the Berlin Treaty and Congress; but we should be travelling beyond the limits assigned to this merely personal record of Lord Beaconsfield's career if we were to dwell more at length upon the public events of this momentous crisis.

The Premier and the Marquis of Salisbury returned from Berlin on the 16th of July, and met with an enthusiastic welcome. Two days later Lord Beaconsfield spoke in the House of Lords, reviewing and defending his action at the Congress. He denied that the plenipotentiaries had assented to a partition of Turkey; they had only consolidated and strengthened her by lopping off the weak extremities. And as for the Anglo-Turkish Convention, which had been freely criticised, he maintained that this agreement had been entered into for the purpose of introducing tranquillity and order in the unsettled provinces of Turkey in Asia Minor. In the course of the same month he was entertained at a Conservative banquet, when he once more took up the cudgels for what Mr. Gladstone had described as an "insane covenant." "I would put this issue," he said, "to an English jury—which do you believe most capable of entering into an insane covenant, a body of English gentlemen, honoured by the favour of their Sovereign and the confi-

* Vol. I. of the present Series, p. 259.

dence of their-fellow subjects, managing their affairs for five years, I hope with prudence, and not altogether without success; or a sophistical rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity, and gifted with an egotistical imagination that can at all times command an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign us and to glorify himself?"

This was Lord Beaconsfield's revenge on Mr. Gladstone. He tried to renew the castigation, but with less success, a few days later in the House of Lords, when, referring to his rival again, he said: "I must say that that speaker on several occasions has taken the opportunity of making personal allusions to myself, allusions which were intended to be extremely offensive, though I am glad to say that they were allusions which did not much trouble me. I may refer, besides other instances, to a speech at Oxford, which I believe was not even an after-dinner speech, but was made in cold blood. He singled me out of the Cabinet; he charged me with all the offences of the Cabinet; he described me as a dangerous and even a devilish character." Being called on by Mr. Gladstone to substantiate these references, Lord Beaconsfield was not able to do so in a very explicit manner; but he did get so far as to cite a speech of one of Mr. Gladstone's friends at Hawarden, in which Lord Beaconsfield was likened to Mephistopheles—for which offensive comparison he held Mr. Gladstone to be responsible.

At the moment, however, Lord Beaconsfield was in a position to say very much what he pleased without being closely criticised by the general public. It was the heyday of his triumph, the proudest epoch of his career, than which he could not hope to attain to anything more brilliant and flattering. At Osborne he was invested by the Queen with the Ribbon of the Garter. The city of London presented him with its freedom. He spent three days on a

visit to Her Majesty in the Isle of Wight, and the Queen herself subsequently visited him at Hughenden. He was *fêted*, banqueted, received deputations and addresses without number. It was the acme of his long and patient ambition ; and beyond this it was impossible even for Benjamin Disraeli to aspire.



CHAPTER XXX.

LORD BEACONSFIELD'S FALL.

THE Afghan War, which broke out a few months after the Berlin Congress had completed its labours, was destined to mark the downward career of the Conservative Government; and this not simply because it was attended by grave disasters to the British arms, but also because a reaction had begun to take place in England after the stirring events of the past two years, and because Englishmen were at last alarmed by the vast extent of their responsibilities and dangers.

It was at the Lord Mayor's banquet, on the 9th of November, 1878, that the Premier made his memorable statement as to the necessity of a "scientific frontier" on the north-west of India. The plans of the Government, as we have seen, had long been ripening in that quarter of the world; and the time had now come when Lord Lytton was to reap the fruit of his diplomacy. The war with Shere Ali, and with the Afghan people after Shere Ali's death, was carried on with varying success; but though the Anglo-Indian troops eventually made themselves masters of the country, Englishmen could not view with satisfaction a struggle which had been begun with more than doubtful

justification, and which had been marked by such calamities as the massacres at Cabul. Nor have they ever been convinced, to the present day, either that the "rectification of frontier" was necessary to the welfare of India, or that the invasion was adequately justified by the intrigues of Russian generals with the Ameer.

There was naturally a considerable amount of discussion over the various questions arising out of the Berlin Treaty, and especially in regard to the duty of England to see that it was faithfully carried out by the Porte, as well as by the other parties concerned in it. Lord Beaconsfield, not even yet abandoning the tone which he had throughout adopted towards Russia, required no prompting in this direction in the first instance. He declared that the Government of England would maintain all the stipulations of the Treaty "to the letter and to the complete spirit;" they would insist on its observance by the strongest as by the weakest, and would certainly on their own part carry out their share in the Anglo-Turkish Convention. No doubt this was their desire and intention; but as time went on the task was found to be more and more difficult. The Convention would not work. Cyprus was more of a burden and expense than an advantage, and though the Premier had affirmed his belief that "with slight expenditure, a harbour could be made at Famagousta capable of containing all the British Mediterranean fleet," it presently turned out that the island was extremely unhealthy, and the shores almost destitute of anchorage. Moreover, the Turks could not be brought to reform their Government in Asia Minor, so that England was saddled with a protectorate which it could not render efficient. In Europe, the Treaty remained unfulfilled during more than two years in some very important particulars. The Turkish Government failed to make the stipulated cession to Montenegro, declined to follow the advice of the Powers in respect of Greece, and showed no

disposition whatever to apply to its remaining provinces the administrative reforms which it had promised.

The English Government were continually pressed to take measures for the better observance of the Treaty, and to employ for this purpose at Constantinople the influence which they were supposed to possess there. But it very soon appeared that Sir Henry Layard had no more authority in the Turkish capital than any of his colleagues, so that in this respect also the imperial policy seemed to have obtained for us a very doubtful advantage.

Discussions of this kind were protracted over the year 1879 with varying fervour, and with uncertain results on the public opinion of England. There was not much to show in what shape the verdict of the masses was likely to be given; and the Government were apparently resolved to defer their appeal for the verdict as long as possible. They had been raised to power at the beginning of the year 1874, and they entered the session of 1880—more than six years later—with every indication that they intended to complete the last session of their constitutional term. There was a programme of measures to be introduced, business was done in the ordinary course, an Irish Relief Bill was passed, and the Home Secretary brought in a Bill of very considerable importance to the Metropolis, involving the purchase of all the Water Companies, the expenditure of a vast sum of money, and the creation of a new public body.

But it was not fated that the session was to proceed. A dissolution was suddenly announced on the 8th of March; and immediately the whole country was thrown into the bustle and heat of a general election. The time had at length arrived when the constituencies were to declare their opinion on the imperial policy of the Conservatives, and were to give their reply to the appeals which had been so urgently made to them by Mr. Gladstone and his supporters.

Lord Beaconsfield had determined to make the condition of Ireland, in connection with the general policy of imperial government, the basis of his appeal to the country ; and he therefore issued his manifesto in a letter to the Duke of Marlborough, the Irish Lord-Lieutenant. This letter was at once a masterpiece of expression and a great blunder in point of tact. It was at the same time a model of its writer's political style and a failure ; it is pregnant in every word, and yet it did as much as anything else to contribute to Lord Beaconsfield's defeat.

Beginning with a reference to the measures relating to Ireland, which the Government had passed through both Houses, and which were then about to be submitted for the Royal Assent, the Premier stated that it was at length in the power of Ministers to advise the Queen "to recur to the sense of her people."

"The arts of agitators," he continued, "which represented that England, instead of being the generous and sympathising friend, was indifferent to the dangers and sufferings of Ireland, have been defeated by the resources, at once liberal and prudent, which Parliament has almost unanimously sanctioned. During the six years of the present Administration, the improvement of Ireland, and the content of our fellow-countrymen in that island have much occupied the care of the Ministry, and they may remember with satisfaction that in this period they have solved one of the most difficult problems connected with the government and people, by establishing a system of public education open to all classes and all creeds. Nevertheless, a danger, in its ultimate results scarcely less disastrous than pestilence and famine, and which now engages your Excellency's anxious attention, distracts that country. A portion of its population is attempting to sever the Constitutional tie which unites it to Great Britain in that bond which has favoured the power and prosperity of both. It is to be hoped that all men of light and leading will resist this destructive doctrine. The strength of this nation depends on the unity of feeling which should pervade the United Kingdom and its wide-spread dependencies. The first duty of an English Minister should be to consolidate that co-operation which renders irresistible a community educated, as our own, in an equal love of liberty and law. And yet there are some who challenge

the expediency of the Imperial character of this realm. Having attempted and failed to enfeeble our Colonies by their policy of decomposition, they may perhaps now recognise in the disintegration of the United Kingdom a mode which will not only accomplish but precipitate their purpose. The immediate dissolution of Parliament will afford an opportunity to the nation to decide upon a course which will materially influence its future fortunes and shape its destiny. Rarely in this country has there been an occasion more critical. The power of England and the peace of Europe will largely depend on the verdict of the country. Her Majesty's present Ministers have hitherto been enabled to secure that peace, so necessary to the welfare of all civilised countries, and so peculiarly the interest of our own. But this ineffable blessing cannot be obtained by the passive principle of non-interference. Peace rests on the presence, not to say the ascendancy, of England in the councils of Europe. Even at this moment, the doubt, supposed to be inseparable from popular election, if it does not diminish, certainly arrests her influence, and is a main reason for not delaying an appeal to the national voice. Whatever may be its consequence to Her Majesty's present advisers, may it return to Westminster a Parliament not unworthy of the power of England, and resolved to maintain it!"

The more significant expressions in this manifesto were, of course, eagerly taken up, on every platform, in every newspaper, and in every election address throughout the country. It was evident that the Conservative candidates did not feel themselves strengthened by it, whereas the Liberals made the most of the fact that the outgoing Premier was adjudged to have committed an error in taste and tactics. The accusations levelled against his political rivals were especially resented, and Mr. Gladstone was justified in saying that most of the measures which had tended to consolidate the Colonies, to secure their local liberties and their dependence upon the mother country, had been the work of the Liberal party—amongst others of the very men whom Lord Beaconsfield denounced. In brief, this letter to the Duke of Marlborough was held to have missed its mark. It was intended to frighten the constituencies, and to persuade them that the empire would be in danger if they returned the Liberals to power again; but, instead of

doing this, it only seemed to nerve the masses of the electors to a supreme effort, which resulted in an overwhelming vote against the Ministry.

Thus it happened that, at the very height of his power, Lord Beaconsfield committed a blunder as serious as any he had committed in his early youth.

It was a mark of supreme infatuation to charge his rival with crimes of the deepest turpitude, and thus to reveal to the simplest understanding that he had lost confidence in himself.

The verdict of the nation was given with decision and emphasis. In the boroughs alone there was a great majority for the Liberals ; but far more significant was the fact that a large number of county seats were lost to the party that had always confidently reckoned upon them. Every seat in Scotland but seven returned a supporter of Mr. Gladstone. Three-fourths of the Irish seats were won by Liberals or Home Rulers. In all, the Liberals counted 351 votes, without including a single member of the Irish third party. The men whom Lord Beaconsfield had accused of aiming at the disruption of the empire polled half-a-million more votes than the champions of "imperialism," and returned to office with a majority as compact and as strong as the Conservatives had secured six years before.



CHAPTER XXXI.

"ENDYMION."

"**N**OTHING happens but the unexpected," said Lord Beaconsfield, at a certain point in his career. The paradox has often been illustrated in the speaker's own life, and it received some sort of illustration in the appearance of a new novel from the author of *Vivian Grey*, at the mature age of seventy-five.

Six months after he had been expelled from office by one of the most crushing defeats which it is possible to imagine, the creator and organiser of modern imperialism published the romance of *Endymion*. Of course the book had a great and immediate success, but it was a success rather sensational than enduring. For a week or two everybody spoke and wrote of the last addition to the circulating libraries, for which the author was reported to have received the sum of ten thousand pounds, and which he was alleged to have written off in the six months aforesaid, as a distraction from his political cares. And yet the critics were not carried away; they recognised that there was far less of romantic vigour and freshness in *Endymion* than in any other of Lord Beaconsfield's stories; they rightly described it as little more than a series of personal reminiscences, disguised sufficiently

to justify their admission into a novel, and surrounded by the glamour with which the author so well knew how to cast over the ordinary incidents of political life.

The gist of Lord Beaconsfield's last romance is that it comprises, in as straightforward and consecutive a manner as he could bring himself to adopt, the memoirs of his own public life. It is at any rate more a retrospect of his past career than *Vivian Grey* was an anticipation and a prophecy. In *Vivian Grey* we had the first rough sketch of the "new union," the working together of a new political party, the shrewd and subtle tact of the hero in gaining converts and manipulating tools. In *Endymion* we have partial realisations and fulfilments of the earlier dreams, a sort of idealised autobiography, a thread of history and personal experience on which to suspend pearls, and trinkets, and caricatures, which are entirely and undisguisedly the offspring of Lord Beaconsfield's mind.

Who can doubt that he has the mind of the author in its direct and characteristic expression when he lights upon such sentences as the following:—"I have brought myself, by long meditation, to the conviction that a human being with a settled purpose must accomplish it, and that nothing can resist a will that will stake even existence for its fulfilment."

Here speaks the true Lord Beaconsfield; and in *Endymion* he lightly sketches for us the manner in which he himself had formed his resolutions, clung to them tenaciously, and secured their fulfilment after many years. He gives us, in some measure, what we should have got from his commonplace book and his memoirs, if he had ever written the one or the other. The autobiographical instinct must have been upon him as he shaped his romance, perhaps more strongly than in any other of his works, for he passes rapidly through the scenes of his long career, speaking of nothing in which he had not taken a personal interest, and introducing at his

caprice the characters with which he had been brought into more or less intimate connection.

There is comparatively little of the romantic in *Endymion*, and the story itself is of the slightest kind. The hero and his sister Myra are the children of Mr. Ferrars, a Tory who had held office under Lord Liverpool, and had deserted Canning in company with the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel. It is on the eve of Canning's death that the book opens, and Ferrars is discussing the political situation with his friend and former colleague, Sidney Wilton—who is apparently intended to represent to us the character of Sidney Herbert. Wilton was a Canningite, and was afterwards to be a Peelite; and he had a prevision of the changes which were fast approaching in 1827. Ferrars did not share his views, but placed all his confidence in the Duke; and his opinion was so far confirmed in the following year that a Wellington Ministry did actually come into power. He himself received office, and that blue ribbon of rising politicians, a Privy Councillorship. At a dinner which he gives about this time, Endymion and his sister are introduced to us. Endymion, then eight years old, is precocious and ambitious; it is impossible to patronise or abash him.

“The boy, in a black velvet jacket with large Spanish buttons of silver filagree, a shirt of lace, and a waistcoat of white satin, replied with reserve, but some condescension, to the goodnatured but half-humorous inquiries of the husband of Zenobia.

“‘And when do you go to school?’ asked his lordship in a kind voice, and with a laughing eye.

“‘I shall go to Eton in two years,’ replied the child without the slightest emotion, and not withdrawing his attention from the grapes he was tasting, or even looking at his inquirer, ‘and then I shall go to Christ Church, and then I shall go into Parliament.’”

The triumph of Mr. Ferrars was not a long one, but he made the most of it while it lasted. He spent more than he had and more than he earned, lived in a large house and kept much company, never dreaming that the Tory Cabinet

could be displaced before it chose to go to the country again. But the death of George the Fourth caused a general election, and the general election of 1830 was a general rout of the Tories. "The counties in those days were the great expounders of popular principles, and whenever England was excited, which was rare, she spoke through her freeholders. In this instance almost every Tory knight of the shire lost his seat except Lord Chandos, the member for Buckinghamshire, who owed his success entirely to his personal popularity."

The Whigs came in; Mr. Ferrars lost his place when he most needed it, and in consequence was all but ruined. He had to retire into the country and live in the most frugal manner; and from his retreat he saw with horror the "revolution" of 1832, and the triumph of the Whigs. His time is spent in training his children, in reading his books, and occasionally talking politics with his neighbours. One of these neighbours is a young farmer, a man of character, named Job Thornberry, who has some features in common with Mr. Cobden, but may possibly have been a composite creation of the author's, figuring forth the alliance between the Manchester school and the Liberal-minded farmers. The following conversation between the two men is piquant enough to quote, and it illustrates the effort of Lord Beaconsfield, throughout the book, to give a faithful representation of successive moods of English opinion.

Mr. Ferrars contends that a farmer's life is a very pleasant one. Job admits it; but, he says, life should be something more than pleasant. "An ox in a pasture has a pleasant life."

" 'Well, and why should it not be a profitable one, too?' said Mr. Ferrars.

" 'I do not see my way to that,' said Job, moodily; 'there is not much to be got out of the land at any time, and still less on the terms we hold it.'

" 'But you are not high-rented.'

" 'Oh, rent is nothing, if everything else were right, but nothing is right,' said Job. 'In the first place, a farmer is the only trader who has no security for his capital.'

" 'Ah ! you want a lease ?'

" 'I should be very sorry to have a lease like any that I have seen,' replied Job. 'We had one once in our family, and we keep it as a curiosity. It is ten skins long, and more tyrannical nonsense was never engrossed by man.'

" 'But your family, I believe, has been on this estate for generations now,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'and they have done well.'

" 'They have done about as well as their stock. They have existed,' said Job ; 'nothing more.'

" 'Your father always gives me quite the idea of a prosperous man,' said Mr. Ferrars.

" 'Whether he be or not I am sure I cannot say,' said Job ; 'for as neither he nor any of his predecessors ever kept any accounts, it is rather difficult to ascertain their exact condition. So long as he has money enough in his pocket to pay his labourers and buy a little stock, my father, like every British farmer, is content. The fact is, he is as self as much as his men, and until we get rid of feudalism he will remain so.'

" 'These are strong opinions,' said Mr. Ferrars, drawing himself up, and looking a little cold.

" 'Yes, but they will make their way,' said Job. 'So far as I myself am concerned, I do not much care what happens to the land, for I do not mean to remain on it ; but I care for the country. For the sake of the country I should like to see the whole thing upset.'

" 'What thing ?' asked Mr. Ferrars.

" 'Feudalism,' said Job. 'I should like to see this estate managed on the same principles as they do their great establishments in the North of England. Instead of feudalism I would substitute the commercial principle. I would have long leases without covenants : no useless timber, and no game.'

" 'Why, you would destroy the country,' said Mr. Ferrars."

The temporary fall of the Whigs in 1834 takes Mr. Ferrars up to London again ; but he is disappointed, in common with many of his Tory friends. The Duke of Wellington fails to form a Cabinet ; and Sir Robert Peel, who has the courage to attempt it, does not offer the ambitious father of our hero such a post as he cares to accept. But Endymion has a clerkship in Somerset House placed at his

disposal—and as, by a comparison of dates, he would appear to have been no more than fourteen years old at this time, he must have considered himself tolerably fortunate. Poor Mr. Ferrars dies of his chagrin, and his orphans are thrown upon the tender mercies of the world. Myra, however, has the luck to go as companion to the only child of Mr. Neufchatel, a millionaire, who seems to shadow forth the late Baron Rothschild; and Endymion lives upon his clerkship. Some Radical acquaintances take him to a debating society, where he hears an elegant speech from one Hortensius, which fires him with ambition to excel in the same line. After a while he makes his first effort, and is successful enough to attract the notice of several of his hearers. Amongst these is George Waldershare, the nephew of Sidney Wilton, though himself a Tory.

Waldershare, who seems to have received from the hands of his creator some touches in the style of George Smythe—one of Lord Beaconsfield's earliest political associates—becomes the friend and mentor of Endymion, guiding his opinions, directing his studies, and forming his tastes. It is one of the best-drawn characters in the book; and his notions as to the prospects of his party in 1837 remind us very strongly of the opinions expressed by *Coningsby* about the same time. He is conversing with his uncle, then a Cabinet Minister under Lord Melbourne, and gives it as his opinion that the Whigs are in office "for life." "It is quite clear," says the confident young man, "that Peel has nothing to offer the country; and the country will not rally round a negation."

"'When he failed in '34 they said there had not been sufficient time for the reaction to work. Well, now, since then it has had nearly three years, during which you fellows have done everything to outrage every prejudice of the constituency, and yet they have given you a majority.'

"'Yes, that is all very well,' replied Mr. Wilton, 'but we are the Liberal shop, and we have no Liberal goods on hand; we are the party

of movement, and must perforce stand still. The fact is, all the great questions are settled. No one will burn his fingers with the Irish Church again, in this generation certainly not, probably in no other; you could not get ten men together in any part of the country to consider the Corn Laws; I must confess I regret it. I still retain my opinion that a moderate fixed duty would be a wise arrangement, but I quite despair in my time of any such advance of opinion; as for the ballot, it is hardly tolerated in debating societies. The present Government, my dear George, will expire from inanition. I always told the Cabinet they were going on too fast. They should have kept back municipal reform. It would have carried us on for five years. It was our only *pièce de résistance*.’

“‘I look upon the House of Commons as a mere vestry,’ said Waldershare. ‘I believe it to be completely used up. Reform has dished it. There are no men, and naturally, because the constituencies elect themselves, and the constituencies are the most mediocre of the nation. The House of Commons now is like a spendthrift living on his capital. The business is done and the speeches are made by men found in the old school. The influence of the House of Commons is mainly kept up by old social traditions. I believe if the eldest sons of peers now members would all accept the Chiltern Hundreds, and the House thus cease to be fashionable, before a year was past it would be as odious and as contemptible as the Rump Parliament.’

“‘Well, you are now the eldest son of a peer,’ said Sidney Wilton, smiling. ‘Why do you not set an example, instead of spending your father’s substance and your own in fighting a corrupt borough?’

“‘I am *vox clamantis*,’ said Waldershare. ‘I do not despair of its being done. But what I want is some big guns to do it. Let the eldest son of a Tory duke and the eldest son of a Whig duke do the thing on the same day, and give the reason why. If Saxmundham, for example, and Harlaxton would do it, the game would be up.’”

Endymion has no better friend in the world than his sister Myra, who is very ambitious for her brother, as well as for herself. She marries Lord Roehampton (probably meant for Lord Palmerston, though Palmerston is elsewhere mentioned by name), and about the same time our hero becomes private secretary to Sidney Wilton. He goes down well in society, and is a great favourite with Berengaria, Countess of Montfort—the young wife of an old *roué* who has some points of similarity with the late Earl of Hertford. His prospects

brighten, though his love had not prospered. In 1841 he obtains a seat in Parliament, but his party is in a great minority. He takes his seat behind his brother-in-law, Lord Rochampton, and schools himself to years of patient waiting. He is better able to wait than the men who take their seats below the gangway, or on "the Mountain," professedly in order to force themselves before the notice of the country ; for he is young, he has excellent connections and friends, and he has a lien upon the heart of Lady Montfort, who has privately put twenty thousand pounds to his credit in the Three per Cents. Lady Montfort is very intimate with his sister Myra, and does not conceal the interest which she takes in his advancement. She wishes him to adopt the diplomatic career, and he has a decided taste for foreign affairs ; but he determines to cling to Parliament, and in the end he has his reward.

Lord Beaconsfield revels in the maxims and morals, the theories and traditions, the precepts and precedents of Parliamentary life. He is never tired of discoursing on this congenial theme. Thus one day, not long after Endymion had entered the House of Commons, old Sir Fraunceys Scrope, the Father of the House, came and sat by his side, and asked him how he liked his new life.

" 'It is very different from what it was when I was your age. Up to Easter we rarely had a regular debate, never a party division ; very few people came up, indeed. But there was a good deal of speaking on all subjects before dinner. We had the privilege then of speaking on the presentation of petitions at any length, and we seldom spoke on any other occasion. After Easter there was always at least one great party fight. This was a mighty affair, talked of for weeks before it came off, and then rarely an adjourned debate. We were gentlemen, used to sit up late, and should have been sitting up somewhere else had we not been in the House of Commons. After this party fight, the House for the rest of the session was a mere club.'

" 'There was not much business doing then,' said Endymion.

" 'There was not much business in the country then. The House of Commons was very much like what the House of Lords is now.

You went home to dine, and now and then came back for an important division.'

"'But you must always have had the Estimates here,' said Endymion.

"'Yes, but they ran through very easily. Hume was the first man who attacked the Estimates. What are you going to do with yourself to-day? Will you take your mutton with me? You must come in boots, for it is now dinner time, and you must return, I fancy. Twenty years ago, no man would think of coming down to the House except in evening dress. I remember so late as Mr. Canning, the Minister always came down in silk stockings and pantaloons, or knee breeches. All things change; and quoting Virgil, as that young gentleman has just done, will be the next thing to disappear. In the last Parliament we often had Latin quotations, but never from a member with a new constituency. I have heard Greek quoted here, but that was long ago, and a great mistake. The House was quite alarmed. Charles Fox used to say as to quotation, "No Greek; as much Latin as you like; and never French under any circumstances. No English poet unless he had completed his century." These were like some other good rules, the unwritten orders of the House of Commons.'"

We pass rapidly over the period of the Peel Administration, during the whole of which Endymion is in Opposition. Job Thornberry is in this Parliament, and takes an active part in the Free Trade debates from below the gangway. Lord Beaconsfield enters somewhat fully into the domestic and commercial state of the country at this time, dealing at length with the subjects of popular distress, the partial revival due to railway and other enterprises, the Corn Law agitation, the tariffs, and so forth. On the railway question he waxes almost eloquent. Englishmen, he reminds us, grew enthusiastic over the new form of investment, and never ceased subscribing until the capital of the various lines had nearly equalled the National Debt. "The immediate effect on the condition of the country was absolutely prodigious. The value of land rose, all the blast furnaces were relit, a stimulant was given to every branch of the home trade, the amount suddenly paid in wages exceeded that

ever known in this country, and wages, too, at a high rate. Large portions of the labouring classes not only enjoyed comfort, but commanded luxury. All this, of course, soon acted on the revenue, and both Customs and, especially, Excise soon furnished an ample surplus."

At last the Peel Administration is at an end. In the new Cabinet Lord Roehampton is made Foreign Secretary, and Endymion is his Under-Secretary. It was a time of revolution in Europe, and every Government was either tottering to its fall or overwhelmed with anxiety. The author's phantasmagoria shows us two men—Prince Florestan in France, and the Count of Ferroll in Prussia, easily recognised as Louis Napoleon and Bismarck—who are affected in a somewhat similar manner by the popular outbreaks in their several countries. Florestan is busily engaged in the intrigue which is to raise him to the throne; but the other has time on his hands.

"The Count of Ferroll about this time made a visit to England. He was always a welcome guest there, and had received the greatest distinction which England could bestow upon a foreigner; he had been elected an honorary member of White's. 'You may have troubles here,' he said to Lady Montfort, 'but they will pass; you will have mealy potatoes again and plenty of bank notes, but we shall not get off so cheaply. Everything is quite rotten throughout the Continent. This year is tranquillity to what the next will be. There is not a throne in Europe worth a year's purchase. My worthy master wants me to return home and be Minister; I am to fashion for him a new Constitution. I will never have anything to do with new Constitutions; their inventors are always the first victims. Instead of making a Constitution, he should make a country, and convert his heterogeneous domains into a patriotic dominion.'

"'But how is that to be done?'

"'There is only one way; by blood and iron.'

"'My dear Count, you shock me!'

"'I shall have to shock you a great deal more before the inevitable is brought about.'

"'Well, I am glad there is something,' said Lady Montfort, 'which is inevitable. I hope it will come soon: I am sure this country is

ruined. What with cheap bread at famine prices and these railroads we seem quite finished. I thought one operation was to counteract the other ; but they appear both to turn out equally fatal.’”

Meanwhile Endymion is hardworked at his office, for Lord Roehampton is old and ill, and cannot do much. One autumn day he is found dead in his armchair ; and Lady Montfort hurries to the Premier (for it will be perceived that the parallel is not drawn very closely to the facts of Lord Palmerston’s later career) in order to make interest for her *protégé*. She suggests that Endymion would make a capital Foreign Secretary ; but the Premier has some one else in his eye. “ We must put Rawchester there,” he says. “ Rawchester ! ” exclaimed Lady Montfort ; “ what, ‘ Niminy-Piminy ! ’ ” Lord Rawchester is intended for Earl Granville ; and the discussion of his merits is not very complimentary to the Earl.

Lord Montfort relieves the world of his presence soon after Lord Roehampton, and the two young widows are open to fresh siege. They both improve their position after a fashion ; Myra in point of brilliancy and title, Berengaria by exchanging a dissolute old husband for an ambitious young one. Prince Florestan himself, who has established his throne in his native country, tempts Endymion’s sister by the offer of a crown ; and, as Myra is at least as ambitious as the young Under-Secretary, she eventually consents to this very remarkable proposal. As for our hero, he is rewarded for his long patience by receiving the hand and heart of Lady Montfort, his early benefactress, who brings him the handsome dower of thirty thousand a-year. Thenceforth he is in luck’s way. Sidney Wilton is made Premier, and he entrusts the important post of Foreign Minister to his former private secretary—the quondam clerk at Somerset House.

Nothing, as the reader will perceive, could be more wildly improbable than some of the incidents in this political

fiction—which at the same time is a political memoir. Fact and fancy are inextricably blended together; it requires the closest acquaintance with the Parliamentary history of the past half century to enable the reader to pick his way through the maze. All the portraits which abound in the pages of *Endymion* are unfinished sketches; and most of them are mere composite caricatures which forbid us to accept them as faithful delineations for more than five minutes at a time.

The following list of identifications may be accepted, under all reserve, as being at least partially and approximately correct. The hero is in some important respects, and in many casual particulars, endowed with the qualities of Lord Beaconsfield himself. Zenobia, “Queen of London, of fashion, and of the Tory party,” is a reflection of Lady Jersey. Berengaria, Lady Montfort, has some likeness to the Hon. Mrs. Norton, whom the author had known in his youth. Agrippina, the mother of Prince Florestan, will of course stand for Queen Hortense. Adriana Neufchatel may be identified with Miss Angela Burdett Coutts, whilst the family of the Neufchatels in general will find a parallel in the Rothschilds. Prince Florestan, as we have said, does duty for Napoleon the Third; Lord Roehampton for Lord Palmerston; Lord Montfort for the late Lord Hertford; Lord Rawchester for Earl Granville; Earl of Beaumaris for the late Earl of Derby; Mr. Bertie Tremaine for Lord Houghton; Count of Ferroll for Prince Bismarck; Nigel Penruddock for Cardinal Manning; Mr. Ferrars (the grandfather) for the Rt. Hon. George Rose; George Waldershare for George Smythe; Job Thornberry for Richard Cobden; Mr. Vigo for Mr. Poole; Mr. Jorrocks for Mr. Milner Gibson; Hortensius for Sir W. Vernon Harcourt; Sidney Wilton for Sidney Herbert; Mr. Sainte Barbe for Thackeray; and Mr. Gushy for Dickens.*

* See *Notes and Queries*. 25th Dec. 1880.

The “portraits” in *Endymion* are not often ill-natured, though they are frequently satirical—even when the satire is directed against the cream of Tory society. Here, for instance, is Zenobia exulting in the short-lived triumph of the Wellington Administration:—

“‘I have some good news for you,’ said one of her young favourites, as he attended her reception. ‘We have prevented this morning the lighting of Grosvenor-square by gas by a large majority.’

“‘I felt confident that disgrace would never occur,’ said Zenobia, triumphant. ‘And by a large majority! I wonder how Lord Pomeroy voted.’

“‘Against us.’

“‘How can one save this country?’ exclaimed Zenobia. ‘I believe now the story that he has ordered Lady Pomeroy not to go to the Drawing Room in a sedan chair.’”

There are, however, ill-natured sketches in the book, dealing harshly enough with some of the author’s political opponents. Lord Beaconsfield nowhere reproduces Mr. Gladstone in person; but the following lampoon on Mr. Milner Gibson is cruel in its suggestions—and all the more cruel in proportion to its truth. Mr. Jorrocks is described as—

“A Radical member to whom considerable office had been given at the reconstruction of 1835, when it was necessary that the Whigs should conciliate the Mountain. He was a pretentious, under-bred, half-educated man, fluent with all the commonplaces of middle-class ambition, which are humorously called Democratic opinions, but at heart a sycophant of the aristocracy. He represented, however, a large and important constituency, and his promotion was at first looked upon as a masterpiece of management. The Mountain, who knew Jorrocks by heart, and felt that they had in their ranks men in every sense his superior, and that he could be no representative of their intelligence and opinions, and so by degrees prepare for their gradual admission to the sacred land, at first sulked over the promotion of their late companion, and only did not publicly deride it from the feeling that by so doing they might be playing the game of the Ministry. At the time of which we are writing, having become extremely discontented, and wishing to annoy the Government, they even affected dissatisfaction at the subordinate position which Jorrocks occupied in the Administration, and it was generally said—had become indeed the slang of the party—

that the test of the sincerity of the Ministry to Liberal principles was to put Jorrocks in the Cabinet: The countenance of the Premier when this choice programme was first communicated to him was what might have been expected had he learnt of the sudden descent upon this isle of an invading force."

Though Lord Beaconsfield's last novel is inferior in point of general interest and romantic conception to the majority of his earlier ones, and though, as a consequence, it has had less success with the public than might have been anticipated from the extraordinary character of its first reception, it is marked here and there by much of the brilliance that we had learned to look for in his literary productions. Though the extracts already given must have conveyed an adequate idea of the constant sparkle and glitter of Lord Beaconsfield's latest work, it is worth while to show how lightly the septuagenarian novelist could deal with a subject which had always possessed a peculiar charm for him. He is writing of a dinner party at which no ladies were present, and where the guests were compelled to fall back for their small talk on the topics of the turf and the smoking rooms:—

"Male dinners are in general not amusing. When they are formed, as the usually are, of men who are supposed to possess a strong and common sympathy—political, sporting, literary, military, social—there is necessarily a monotony of thought and feeling, and of the materials which induce thought and feeling. In a male dinner of party politician, conversation soon degenerates into what is termed 'shop;' anecdotes about divisions, criticism of speeches, conjectures about office, speculations on impending elections, and above all, that heinous subject on which enormous fibs are ever told, the registration. There are, however, occasional glimpses in their talk which would seem to intimate that they have another life outside the Houses of Parliament. But that extenuating circumstance does not apply to the sporting dinner. There they begin with odds and handicaps, and end with handicaps and odds, and it is doubtful whether it ever occurs to any one present that there is any other existing combination of atoms than odds and handicaps. A dinner of wits is proverbially a palace of silence; and the envy and hatred which all literary men really feel for each

other, especially when they are exchanging dedications of mutual affection, always ensure, in such assemblies, the agreeable presence of a general feeling of painful constraint. If a good thing occurs to a guest, he will not express it, lest his neighbour, who is publishing a novel in numbers, shall appropriate it next month, or he himself, who has the same responsibility of production, be deprived of its legitimate appearance. Those who desire to learn something at the manœuvres of the Russian and Prussian reviews, or the last rumour at Aldershot or the military clubs, will know where to find this feast of reason. The flow of soul in these male festivals is perhaps, on the whole, more genial when found in a society of young gentlemen, graduates of the Turf and the Marlborough, and guided in their benignant studies by the gentle experience and the mild wisdom of White's. The startling scandal, the rattling anecdote, the astounding leaps, and the amazing shots, afford for the moment a somewhat pleasing distraction, but when it is discovered that all these habitual flim-flams are, in general, the airy creatures of inaccuracy and exaggeration—that the scandal is not true, the anecdote has no foundation, and that the feats of skill and strength are invested with the organic weakness of tradition, the vagaries lose something of the charm of novelty, and are almost as insipid as claret from which the bouquet has evaporated.”

Will Lord Beaconsfield write another novel before he dies? It would not be very remarkable if he were to do so; but at any rate it is more than questionable whether we shall ever have from his pen as light, as bright, and as spirited work as he gave us before he had reached the summit of his career. We may have more in the shape of memoirs, more sketches and essays and short disquisitions, such as abound in the pages of *Endymion*; but scarcely the hilarious extravagance of *Vivian Grey*, the tender romance of *Henrietta Temple*, the adorned political argument of the *Trilogy*, or even the graceful and subtle polemics of *Lothair*.

To all intents and purposes our review of Lord Beaconsfield's literary achievements is complete. We have observed the many-sided character of the man, and the manifold features of his writing. As an author he cannot be said to take the highest rank, and our estimate of his works

would be lower than it is if it were not for the frequent flashes of originality by which they are distinguished. If Mr. Disraeli had remained Mr. Disraeli to the end of his life, he might not have secured so wide an audience for his novels, but he would surely have been favourably known as the writer of clever and entertaining romances.



CHAPTER XXXII.

COURAGE IN ADVERSITY

SINCE the remarkable election of 1880, when the Conservative majority which had held undisputed sway for more than six years had disappeared in a couple of days, Lord Beaconsfield has passed a quiet and uneventful existence. Setting his literary activity on one side, he has done little to bring himself before the attention of the public. His absence from the political arena has been less remarked than it would have been in the House of Commons; and perhaps it has been due rather to the unexciting and scanty character of the work which has fallen upon the Upper House than to any unreadiness on his part to engage in the business which has come before it. He had resigned office as soon as he saw how the verdict of the country had gone; and there was little or nothing to demand the presence of the late Premier in Parliament until the chief Government measures began to come up from the House of Commons.

But before the session was far advanced a meeting of the Conservative party was held at Bridgwater House, when Lord Beaconsfield confidentially addressed his supporters, encouraging them to renewed efforts, and recommending a

further exercise of the magic of patience, which was certain, at no very distant date, to bring them another opportunity of victory. Full and elaborate reports of this meeting appeared in some of the newspapers, the accuracy of which was at once contested; but it was understood that the leader had given astute counsels to his followers, and a much-needed example of courage in adversity. So far as Lord Beaconsfield's exhortations were concerned, there was no default of leadership in the Conservative party; but signs were not wanting on the front Opposition bench in the House of Commons, and amongst the small group which came to be known as the Fourth Party, of a demoralisation which might have proved fatal.

The first work of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet was to pass measures of Irish relief, in mitigation of the distress which undoubtedly existed in the sister kingdom. These measures were in harmony with and in continuation of the measures passed in the preceding February; they were based on much the same principles, and carried out the same scheme of providing relief through the landlords and the guardians. It was impossible for the late Ministers to criticise an operation of which they had themselves furnished the model. But towards the Compensation for Disturbance Bill they assumed a very different attitude, and thought themselves justified in offering a desperate opposition to this first step in Irish remedial legislation.

The Irish members having forced the hands of Ministers who had desired to postpone their proposals until they had further particulars to work upon, Mr. Forster suddenly resolved to bring in the Compensation Bill, which would have extended one clause of the Act of 1870. By this Act, tenants evicted for non-payment of rent were debarred from receiving any compensation under the favourable clauses, even though the compensation which they might otherwise receive would have been more than sufficient to liquidate all

arrears of rent. This clear injustice Mr. Forster now proposed to remove ; but so great was the prejudice against the smallest concession, and so vehement the refusal of the landlords to abate a jot of their legal status, that the change could only be suggested as an exceptional measure due to exceptional distress, and it was to be applicable only in districts scheduled for the purpose. Even in this shape the measure was met with almost frantic opposition. The Conservative leaders made up their minds to resist it in every possible manner ; and when after great efforts it had passed the House of Commons, and came up for consideration in the Lords, Lord Beaconsfield advised his friends to combine and reject it. This was done, after a vigorous speech from the late Premier, by an overwhelming majority, though Lord Derby had the courage to support the second reading.

A great part of the session had been occupied by the proceedings above mentioned, and it was late in August before the other principal Government measure reached the Upper House. Lord Redesdale, Lord Grey, and other peers protested against what they described as the discourtesy of the Commons in delaying the Bills so long, and, when the Ground Game Bill was proposed for second reading on the 30th of August, the first-named lord moved its rejection on the score of its late appearance. Lord Beaconsfield then made an elaborate speech, in which he expressed sympathy with the protests of his colleagues, and paid some doubtful compliments to Lord Redesdale on his great skill and judgment in matters of this kind. The position of the House, he went on to say, in having to discuss such a question as this on the eve of the last day of August was most deplorable ; and in fact he had made up his mind that it could no longer be tolerated. He therefore proceeded to give his advice to his colleagues as to the course which they ought to pursue, not merely in regard to the Bill before the House, but also in view of the state of public business in general.

As for the Ground Game Bill itself, he considered that it was "full of animus against the landlords," without conciliation and without tact in its form or phrasing. This was a hit at Sir William Harcourt, who was the introducer of the measure in the Commons. The rhetorical style of Lord Beaconsfield in describing the Bill would not have been exaggerated if he had anticipated a revolution in the country; and indeed he plainly stated that the clause giving tenants a right to kill game was one which called upon the farmers to "arm" themselves, their sons, their households, and their labourers. It summoned the "expert"—by which we are to understand the poacher—to the assistance of the tenant; so that, in place of being regarded with suspicion, this expert became a member of an honourable profession. "Instead of following his pastime on moonlight nights, he would stand in the sunlight and flourish his weapon in the very eyes of the lord of the manor."

Lord Beaconsfield then went on to speak of the relations between the two Houses. The politics of the next few years, he declared, would mainly depend on the action of the landed interest. "As things were at present going on, the Upper and Lower Houses would frequently arrive at different conclusions on important subjects; but if their lordships were clear and right and firm in their conclusions, a collision might be looked upon without undue apprehension. Ireland and land were the great subjects on which questions were raised. Their lordships had rejected a Bill which dealt injuriously with the landlords of Ireland, though it had been introduced in a spirit of menace and arrogance. Their lordships' conduct had met with the approval of the country. He might say that it had gained them the respect of Europe. But their position with regard to the Game Laws was rather different, and if they rejected the second reading they would be liable to much misapprehension on the part of the just, and much misrepresentation on that of

the wicked." In brief, their lordships must use discretion, and not altogether reject the measures of the Government, but modify and amend them.

The consequence of Lord Beaconsfield's advice was that several of the principal Bills were altered by the House of Lords, and a short conflict between the two Houses followed, until a compromise was arrived at. The conduct of the Conservative peers, and of the Whig peers who went with them, in thus mutilating measures known to be in harmony with the popular desires, increased the feeling which had been aroused against them after their rejection of the Compensation Bill. As usual in such cases, a cry was raised in the country for the abolition of the hereditary Chamber ; but it soon died out, or at any rate lost its force amidst other and more pressing demands for reform.

Lord Beaconsfield did not again come prominently before the public until the appearance of *Endymion*, late in the year, made him the talk of society and the theme of gossip. This brief excitement passed away, leaving but slight traces behind it ; and indeed the political anxieties of the moment were too absorbing to admit of a deep or enduring interest even for a romance by the author of the Trilogy. The recess of 1880, shortened as it had been by the duration of the previous session, had little of the ordinary character of a recess. The condition of Ireland occupied everybody's mind, and assumed more and more gravity from day to day. Mr. Gladstone might well have complained, as his predecessor in office had complained thirteen years before, that he should be confronted by so vast a responsibility on his accession to power ; but in point of fact there was greater peril and urgency in the present situation than there had been in the Irish question of 1867. Fenianism had been sufficiently aggressive, and had amply justified the coercive measures of Mr. Disraeli's Government. There was now less of open hostility, but for that

very reason there was more imperious necessity for a statesmanlike treatment of the difficulty. Men of all parties looked on with intense interest to see what the Liberal Cabinet would do in the critical circumstances of the case.

No doubt the late Premier felt as much concern as any one in the development of this crisis. He had, as we have seen, often professed a warm sympathy with the Irish people, and had even shown some disposition, at an early period in his career, to attempt a remedy. Latterly, indeed, his utterances and attitude on the Irish question had stood in unfavourable contrast with the more generous sentiments of his youth; and his unfortunate Manifesto, to say nothing of his vote on the Compensation Bill, showed that he was one of the many English politicians who had outlived their hopes of reconciling the sister kingdom, and had come to the conclusion that Ireland could only be governed by a policy of chronic coercion. If this correctly represents the state of Lord Beaconsfield's mind on the greatest domestic or imperial problem of the age, it must be admitted to be an unsatisfactory and disappointing close to a public life of such pre-eminent distinction.



APPENDIX.

THE death of Lord Beaconsfield took place on the 19th of April, 1881, at his residence in Curzon Street, Mayfair, after an illness of three or four weeks. Towards the end of March he had been attacked by an asthmatic disorder, which was complicated by acute bronchitis, and subsequently by gout. From the first he seems to have recognised the gravity of his illness; and he faced the approach of death with cheerfulness and fortitude. His friends insisted on calling in the best medical aid which could be obtained, in addition to his regular attendant; and when Her Majesty was made aware of the dangerous character of Lord Beaconsfield's condition, she sent one of her own physicians to consult with the others. Everything possible was done to relieve the patient. Lord Barrington and Lord Rowton—the latter had been his private secretary for many years—were constantly at his bedside; and at times it seemed that he would survive the attack, and take a new lease of existence. But at length the enfeebled

frame of the veteran was worn out by the constantly recurring spasms ; a sudden change from genial warmth to bitter north-east winds brought on a hopeless relapse ; and on the early morning of Tuesday, in Easter week, the life of the eminent statesman and man of letters ebbed quietly away.

Whilst Lord Beaconsfield lay on his deathbed a remarkable degree of interest and sympathy was displayed by the general public. Hundreds of the most distinguished members of English society called daily at the house in Curzon Street, in order to make inquiries into the sick man's condition. Messengers from the Queen, several members of the Royal Family in person, Mr. Gladstone, the leaders of both political parties, paid repeated visits for this purpose ; and the nation as a whole felt as nations only do feel when the life of one who has played so prominent a part, during so many eventful years, is known to be hanging in the balance.

Eight months previously Mr. Gladstone had been dangerously ill, and England had been stirred to sympathy in a similar manner. All differences and distinctions are obliterated by the shadow of death. When a great man dies, we do not hasten to dissect his character and to pass judgment on his motives. Of such a man as Lord Beaconsfield it is remembered only, on the morrow of his departure, that he spent his life in the service of the State, of his Sovereign, and of his party ; that he did many things which filled the world with wonder ; that he was unique in his generation and in his century ; a man without a parallel, and, in the path which he had marked out for himself, without a rival.

The time, of course, will come when the last chapter of

this memorable history may be written without reference to the sentiments inevitably called forth by recent death. It may then be possible—and in the meantime it would certainly not be becoming—to review the work of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, as a finished record, to estimate its effects upon his country and generation, to draw the morals which it appears to convey, and to anticipate the judgment of calm posterity. For the present there is but one thing which may fitly and fairly be said, and it amounts to little more than has already been written in the pages of this volume, completed and printed before their subject had passed away. One aspect, perhaps the most noteworthy and striking aspect of Lord Beaconsfield's career, is that of his colossal ambition, determination, and success. Benjamin Disraeli made up his mind, in spite of every difficulty and obstacle, to be "a leader in Israel"—to be the first subject in England, to be Prime Minister of the country wherein his forefathers were aliens. This was his aim—the aim, as it might well have seemed, of an overweening man; and eventually, by sheer force of will, by a perseverance never excelled, by remarkable tact and discernment, the very summit of his ambition was reached. Wherever his story is told, whatever historian may hereafter deal with him as a central figure on his canvas, this must be prominently set forth in the narrative of his memorable career—that he dared greatly, that he persevered indomitably, and that he achieved one of the most splendid triumphs which have ever been placed on record.

This is what Englishmen have seen and acknowledged in Lord Beaconsfield—a great man by strength of will even more than of talent, a leader by virtue of his own deter-

mination to lead, even more than of his special capacity for leading. The vast popularity which he secured in his lifetime, the tribute of admiration paid to him on his deathbed, were due to the fact of his brilliant success. They who have admired the career and been impressed by the actions of Lord Beaconsfield, may speak of him as the author of *In Memoriam* spoke of his early friend—though not, perhaps, in the same spirit—as of one “whose life in low estate began”—

“Who breaks his birth’s invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star ;

“Who makes by force his merit known,
And lives to clutch the golden keys,
To mould a mighty state’s decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne.”



LITERARY CHRONOLOGY.

THE following is a List of Lord Beaconsfield's published Works, with the dates of their first publication, and some other particulars :—

"Vivian Grey" (Motto : "Why, then, the world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open")	-	-	-	-	1826
"The Voyage of Captain Popanilla"	-	-	-	-	1827
"The Young Duke : 'A Moral Tale, though Gay'"	-	-	-	-	1831
"Contarini Fleming : a Psychological Romance"	-	-	-	-	1832
"The Wondrous Tale of Alroy"	-	-	-	-	1833
"The Rise of Iskander"	-	-	-	-	1833
"Ixion in Heaven"	-	-	-	-	1833
"The Infernal Marriage"	-	-	-	-	1833
"The Crisis Examined." (A Speech delivered at High Wycombe)	-	-	-	-	1833
"The Revolutionary Epick." (Published in a revised form in 1864)	-	-	-	-	1834
"What is He?" (A political and partly autobiographical pamphlet)	-	-	-	-	1835
"A Vindication of the English Constitution, in a Letter to a Noble and Learned Lord." (Lord Lyndhurst)	-	-	-	-	1835
"Letters of Runnymede." (? These letters have been ascribed to Mr. Disraeli, but never acknowledged by him)	-	-	-	-	1835
"Henrietta Temple : a Love Story." (Dedicated to Count Alfred d'Orsay)	-	-	-	-	1837
"Venetia." (Dedicated to Lord Lyndhurst)	-	-	-	-	1837

"Count Alarcos ; a Tragedy." (Dedicated to Lord Francis Egerton. Acted in London, 1868)	-	-	-	1839
"On the Life and Writings of Mr. (Isaac) Disraeli, by his Son." (Prefixed to an edition of Mr. Isaac Disraeli's works)				1839
"Coningsby ; or, The New Generation." (With a dedicatory address to Henry Hope)	-	-	-	1844
"Sybil ; or, The Two Nations." (Dedicated to the Author's Wife)				1845
"Tancred ; or, The New Crusade "	-	-	-	1847
"Lord George Bentinck ; a Political Biography "	-	-	-	1851
"Church and Queen : Speeches "	-	-	-	1865
"Constitutional Reform : Speeches "	-	-	-	1866
"Parliamentary Reform : Speeches "	-	-	-	1867
"Speeches on Conservative Policy "	-	-	-	1870
"Lothair." (Dedicated to 'the Duke of Aumale.' Motto : "Nôsse omnia hæc salus est adolescentulis." A second edition, in the same year, was accompanied by "A General Preface" to the Author's novels)	-	-	-	1870
Rectorial "Address at Glasgow University "	-	-	-	1873
"Endymion " (Motto : 'Quicquid agunt homines')	-	-	-	1880



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