Contents

1878

REMINISCENCES

OF

THE PAST HALF CENTURY:

A LECTURE

DELIVERED UNDER THE AUSPICES

OF

The Aberdeen Speculative Literary Association.

BY

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ABERDEEN:
LEWIS & JAMES SMITH.

1859.

ABERDEEN:
PRINTED AT THE HERALD OFFICE,
BY JAMES BROWN.

REMINISCENCES, &c.

To take an occasional glance over the times in which we have lived, and to note the progress of events and the changes which have taken place since we became conscious observers of what was passing around us, may be both a pleasant and a profitable recreation. For this purpose, it is not necessary to have borne a high part in the events of a bygone period; it is sufficient to have known only of their occurrence. When we say "around us," we consequently shut out all morbid introspection of what we may ourselves have gone through during the interval, or any allusion to ourselves as actors in the same; though indeed these may be rendered interesting, either through the importance of the events in which the individual may have figured, or the manner he may be able to describe them. We have, however, no such curious, or lofty, or egotistical matters to bring before you; but merely intend to note a few of the more striking occurrences for which the Past Half Century is so memorable. At the risk of being considered somewhat older than we really are, we shall merely premise that we have lived through the entire portion of time we intend to treat of; that we have not been unobservant of much that many will recognise when once more brought before them, and of which others will only know of for the first time; and that whatever we bring is the result of individual reflection, without any other aid than that of an ordinary retentive memory. Our only fear is, that we may not be able to depict those matters with that eye to effect which the really popular lecturer is expected to have, and ought indeed to possess.

Exactly fifty years ago, our country was startled by the intelligence that a gallant and well-appointed army, led by

an able and favourite general, after a terrible retreat, in the depth of winter and in the face of overwhelming numbers, had at length fought a battle under the walls of Corunna: though a victory indeed was won, it had been at the expense of the life of the leader; that the army had barely got on board the transports, which were fortunately waiting for its reception; and that, leaving behind it all its treasure, its equipage, its beasts of burden, and the horses of its cavalry, was on its way to the shores of Britain, from whence it had gone forth only the year before, in the hope to stay the course of the Great Conqueror—the heir of the French Revolution.

Here were we, then, in these islands, entirely cut off from the Continent, in every sense of the expression. Our great antagonist, Bonaparte, lorded it over Europe, from the utmost west to the borders of Russia, and every year seemed to add to his power and influence. It was then the seventeenth year of the war, and the question was often put—"How long was this state of things to last?" for to many it was seemingly interminable. Four short years ago the present generation obtained a slight glimpse of war, after a long rest of forty years; but those who remember the great French war know well that between the two there was small room for comparison. Fifty years ago our country seemed to be almost wholly military. Scarcely a family could be found that had not some relative engaged in the struggle, and all were anxiously longing for its conclusion. But it did come to a close—only after another seven years of hard toil. In the course of a few months another army went forth, and it did not leave the scene till success had crowned its efforts. Ever and anon we were hearing, on our side, of marches and counter-marches, of advances and retreats, and now and again of such victories as Talavera, and Barrossa, and Salamanca, and Vittoria, and of the Pyrenees—and of the entry into France itself, and then of an abdication, and peace at last, and a glorious return of our brave and undaunted countrymen.

On the side of our enemy, we heard of great victories

in Germany, of the French being victorious everywhere but in the Peninsula, of capital cities being taken, of an invasion of Russia with an army of half a million of men, of Moscow being entered, of the burning of that great capital, and of a horrible retreat in the terrible winter of 1812, which paled all other disasters of a similar kind. We then heard of oppressed nations rising up as one man—of new hosts, raised as if by magic—of other great battles, where kings and emperors were in the field, and the combatants mustered by hundreds of thousands—of Leipsic and Dresden—and the Rhine being crossed, and the mighty hero being brought to bay—and the downfall of Paris, and the restoration of the Bourbons—and a dropping down of Napoleon from the highest pinnacle of earthly power to the sovereignty of the petty island of Elba.

The world had now a breathing time. Peace—which a whole generation had known little of—had come; but soon was another sad interruption. A twelvemonth does not elapse—even while the Congress engaged on the arrangements of the finished contest was sitting—and we hear that Napoleon had broken loose, and was again landed in France—that he had been welcomed with open arms—that he had reached Paris—and once more had become Emperor. It was then that the final struggle took place. Sixty millions of money, subscribed in London in three hours—armies directed from all points towards France—and Napoleon's second reign, of one hundred days, comes to a close on the field of Waterloo—

"That first and last of fields, king-making victory."

What person in the civilized world is there who has not heard of that great battle, or of Wellington, its hero? Millions on millions know little or nothing of the other great combats of the war, but all have heard of the name of Waterloo. Are there not streets, or squares, or terraces, or quays, or bridges, in almost every town of the empire named in its honour? Even the New World has its Waterloos in abundance—some of them peaceful villages, and

others large thriving towns: and all to keep the name in remembrance.

Let us turn for a moment to notice some of the eminent men of the time, or who were then just coming into view. On the 25th October of that same year (1809), good old George the Third was enjoying his jubilee on completing the fiftieth year of his reign—amongst the last of his earthly enjoyments. Soon after—and now for the second time—the rest of his life was a blank. For ten years more he survived in mental and bodily darkness, insensible to everything passing around him. The progress of the great contest had affected him keenly, but he never knew of its close. There was a Prince of Wales then, too—but rather an elderly person, and known amongst his admirers as the "First Gentleman in Europe." Within two years he was better known as Prince Regent, and afterwards as George the Fourth, of not the most enviable reputation. Of politicians and statesmen were Castlereagh, and Sidmouth, and Canning, and Sheridan, and Whitbread, and Wilberforce, and Burdett, and Grey—all long since gathered to their fathers. Peel had just entered public life; and there was another Peel—the first Sir Robert, and the honester man of the two. Brougham was known only as the eminent critic and barrister, and was then about coming into Parliament. The chief of the old school of Reformers was Major Cartwright, and Cobbett was the great firebrand of the day. Joseph Hume was not yet known to fame. Of our present band of statesmen, Lords Derby, and Macaulay, and John Russell, were boys at school. Richard Cobden would be then beginning his A B C. D'Israeli and Bulwer Lytton were then in their nurses' arms. Neither John Bright nor Lords Elgin and Canning were yet born. Of political notabilities, there still survive Lords Lyndhurst, and Brougham, and Palmerston—the last known only as a mere "Red-Tapist," who had entered Parliament the year before, and who did not open his mouth there for twenty years to come.

Of literary men, there were Jeffrey, and Sidney Smith of the *Edinburgh Review*. Southey, and Coleridge, and Words-

worth, were chiefly known as the triad of the Lake school of poetry, and were then fiercely denounced as apostates by the more liberal party. Walter Scott had then just finished "Marmion," and was busy at the "Lady of the Lake"—in the heyday of his poetical fame. Lord Byron had not yet caught the public ear. Rogers, and Campbell, and Moore were great public favourites. Hogg was not yet known beyond the Border; and Tannahill, the only rival of Burns, was sending forth his sweet strains, which proved a harvest to the ballad-singers, and enlivened the public streets with the richest melody. Chalmers at that time was rusticating at Kilmeny, and Hall and Foster were but little known out of their own connection. Of our present favourites, Dickens and Thackeray were not yet born. In lieu of *Punch* were the caricatures of Rowlandson, but only appearing fitfully—tremendous daubs of colour, and highly abusive of "Boney, the vile Corsican usurper." And there were, too, *Cobbett's Weekly Register*, with the gridiron on its title, and his *Twopenny Trash*, published in contemptuous answer to a depreciatory occupant of the bench. In these notorious sheets he waged war like a genuine Ishmaelite. With him Whigs and Tories were all rogues alike. There was he—flinging nicknames on all around—denouncing the Bank of England as the "Great Rag Manufactory"—abusing stock-jobbers and boroughmongers—predicting the national bankruptcy—running down potatoes and Scotch "Feelosofers"—and making mincemeat of Parliamentary orators and of the Royal speeches. The *Times* had not yet reached its pinnacle of power, but was struggling with the *Morning Chronicle* for supremacy; and the *Edinburgh Review* was the great oracle of the day in matters literary, social, and political.

At the close of this first period, Lord Byron had dethroned Walter Scott, who immediately changed his cue, and reappeared as the Great Unknown, the "Author of Waverley." Our earliest recollection of the former of these great chiefs was the appearance every now and then of his poetry in the humble guise of pamphlets, and often without covers. Strange stories were wont to be retailed in the public prints

of the great moody lord and poet—a misanthrope, and a man of terrible power. Of his rival, the Great Unknown, the public never doubted he was Walter Scott. The appearance of a new work by the Author of Waverley caused a rush to the libraries for months. To have been ignorant of the last new novel was tantamount to being a nobody. Sixpence a night was the usual charge for the perusal of a volume, and each series of the "Tales of my Landlord," being in four, consequently cost the reader the sum of two shillings. The only works of a later time to compete with these have been "Macaulay's England" and "Uncle Tom," but the last had specialities in its favour besides the fact of not being a copyright.

In 1815 we had peace for a second time; and on this occasion a reality. But along with peace there had come a reaction. From the excessive expenditure of former years there was now a return to an ordinary peace establishment. Great Britain had come out of the contest triumphant, but with a debt of more than eight hundred millions, or forty pounds for every man, woman, and child in the kingdom. In the last year of the war the national expenditure had risen to one hundred and twenty millions, or nearly double the present amount, while the population was eight millions less than it is now. The disappointment of many was extreme. Peace, though one of our greatest blessings, was a novelty; and a whole generation had been brought up in the din of war. Other nations began to manufacture for themselves. The exportation of cotton twist to the foreigner was denounced as suicidal. Discharged soldiers and seamen were coming home to compete in ordinary industrial occupations. Prices began to fall. Wages came down likewise. Ships were lying idle. Just now we have a similar instance in the outcry of portions of our shipping interest, which will convey an idea of what took place forty-three years ago. The high freights of the Crimean War, partially maintained by the exigencies of the Indian Mutiny, have now subsided, and the supply is greater than the demand.

The landed interest was the first to take the alarm, and

having almost a monopoly in the Legislature, in 1815 imposed the notorious Corn Law. An amount of bitterness was sown which endured for thirty years, till a more enlightened policy swept the preposterous legislation from the Statute Book. When the Bill was passed the entrances to Parliament were guarded by the military; and this was the last time that ever such a precaution was resorted to. The following year began the first of those periodical panics recurring nearly every ten years, prostrating trade, and ruining thousands, partly through erring legislation, and partly through the haste to be rich by speedier methods than ordinary prudence will warrant.

We now come to one of the most mournful incidents of the time—the death of the Princess Charlotte. George the Third's fine scheme of the Royal Marriage Act had succeeded in producing from a family of ten sons and six daughters only one grandchild, the daughter of the heir apparent. Father and mother had been living separate since the first year of their marriage, mutually hating each other. On the daughter all the hopes of a Royal Succession were centred. The Princess had been married during the previous year, and in November, 1817, expectation was at its height for tidings of an heir. Never were the hopes of a people so blighted—mother and babe, grandchild and great-grandchild, were buried together. Poets, and orators, and moralists uttered the same strain—the vanity of human life and grandeur. Hundreds rushed into print who neither before or since were guilty of the same. Of all the utterances called forth only three were of surpassing excellence, those of Byron at the close of his "Childe Harold," which appeared the following year; of Hall, the great preacher of Leicester; and of Chalmers, now of Glasgow. Of the two divines we are inclined to prefer the latter. Never in pulpit eloquence was the like known in our land. Greater crowds, indeed, have attended a Whitfield and a Spurgeon, but who that knows what literature really is knows anything that ever came from their pens? Chalmers was then in his full vigour and fame. For the three previous

years he had been a remarkable man, and was to continue such to the end. To have seen him on the public street, with his broad colourless countenance slightly marked with small-pox; his eyes heavy, and apparently fixed on vacancy; his pace rapid; his dress of not the most fashionable cut; nothing particularly striking about him; no one could have thought that there was the greatest preacher of the day. Nay, to have seen him rise and commence the service, to have heard his untunable voice and harsh provincial tone, one would at first have been quite disconcerted; but to have seen and heard him in the full torrent of his eloquence, the magnificent sentences rolling along and rising into a climax which held the audience for a time in a state of almost breathlessness, the effect was quite overpowering. The printed discourses are second only to what the living voice was, but one must have witnessed it to appreciate even these to their full extent.

But to return. That these realms might not be without an heir our unmarried Royal Dukes patriotically gave way, and in the course of the following year entered into the state of matrimony. By and by there came certain little Princes and Princesses, and amongst these was our present gracious Sovereign. No one at the time could foresee the brilliant future that was opening before the little stranger, for her father was only the fourth son of the old King; there were uncles, and there might have come a brother. But Providence willed otherwise, and all has been for the best. The father died ere she was eight months old, and the week following saw the venerable old King called away, and an end to all his troubles. Forty years have not elapsed, and already is this same early fatherless one not only a mother of nine prosperous children, but is become also a grandmother. What a lesson to us all of the speed of time. But this also reminds us we have much yet to say.

Old George gone! no more Fourth of June celebrations for his birth, and he had had sixty of these while Sovereign, the greatest number in our history. A new George, but not a young one, succeeds; and a troublous time it was.

Trade had been bad, discontent had increased, and emigration to another land had set in. Dangerous spirits were abroad; and Sidmouth and Castlereagh had strange ways of quieting grievances. The infamous spy system had been employed, and Olivers, Castleses, and Richmonds were in the field to tempt the unwary, and create the crimes they were rewarded to discover. Heads had fallen under the axe, five at once in London; and Scotland was now, in 1820, to witness similar scenes. The following incidents have always given us a faint idea of a state of siege, or something approaching towards a military Government.

One Sabbath morning about the beginning of April, the lieges in Glasgow, while proceeding to church, were startled by observing at the various banks and public buildings pieces of artillery planted with the necessary military in attendance. They likewise learned that treasonable proclamations calling to arms had been early posted up, and as quickly torn down by the authorities. At nightfall patrols of cavalry occupied the principal thoroughfares till the latest. On the morrow by early day bodies of military began to arrive, and the numerous public works and factories in all quarters of the city were forcibly closed by bands of men proceeding from one to the other, and dismissing the workers to the streets. The thousands thus turned out added to the general consternation. Wild and contradictory reports were hourly pouring in. Towards evening, in order to disperse the crowds of idlers, bodies of cavalry abreast the whole breadth of the street and pavement swept past like a hurricane, wheeled round and returned in the same manner. This continued till perfect stillness was obtained. Tuesday passsed in the same manner, and Wednesday, the threatened day of rising, arrived. By this time there were five thousand troops in the city. It was the market day, aud crowds of strangers were there from the country. At three in the afternoon a troop of horse swept round the cross at full speed, and proceeded towards the north quarter. In an instant every place of business was shut up, and all was as still as a Sabbath morning. An

orderly proceeding to Stirling had fallen in with a body of men with arms about eleven miles from the city, and had returned giving the alarm. The troops sent out rode the distance in less than thirty minutes, broke through the fence of a field, and captured the whole with arms in their hands. The next day was the public fast, and strong posses were hourly arriving with suspected persons as prisoners. An Act of Parliament appointed a Special Commission to try these in their several counties. One person was condemned at Glasgow, and six and twenty at Stirling. Government contented itself with sacrificing only two of the latter. An ignorant, greyheaded man of sixty suffered for High Treason at Glasgow, and two much younger men at Stirling. It was the last time that heads fell publicly on the block, and blood was seen on the scaffold in our land. May the like never be again. In September last the newspapers announced the death of a Mr. Robert Baird, at Glasgow, brother of one who had suffered at Stirling. So long are such things held in remembrance.

Then followed one of the most disgraceful incidents in modern British Royalty—the public trial of Caroline, the neglected wife and lawful Queen of the new Monarch. On a tradesman's token of the year 1795, the date of the marriage, and which is in our possession, there is a head of "Caroline, Princess of Wales," and the motto "May the union be crowned with happiness." But never was a hope so miserably disappointed. The marriage was wretched in the extreme. The "first gentleman in Europe" had never been a paragon of virtue, and he endeavoured to cause the partner of his life to be considered as bad as himself. After insultingly neglecting her for five and twenty years, and when now enjoying the highest place in the state himself, he meanly sought to brand her with public infamy. A well-known commentator of the time, in noticing that passage in Job, "My transgression is sealed up in a bag," makes the following remark as illustrative of the text:—"Just at this time (July, 1820) charges of State transgressions, sealed up in a green bag,

and presented to the two Houses of Parliament, for the examination of a Secret Committee, are making a considerable noise in our land." This is the notorious trial of Queen Caroline, the mother of the lately deceased Princess, the lamented Charlotte, and, as Mr. Carlyle would say, "that will date it for an English reader." The whole country was soon in a ferment. The Government brought over bands of wretches from Italy who were ready to swear to anything. It turned out that her steps had been dogged for years, and every movement construed in the vilest manner. Her guilt or innocence became a mere party question. Almost all the supporters of the Ministry maintained she was guilty. Their opponents believed her to be innocent, and the great majority of the nation were of the same mind. When the prosecution was abandoned every town in the kingdom testified the public joy by spontaneous illuminations as soon as the news arrived—not waiting for the sanction of the magistracy. In some places these were repeated for successive evenings, till the most obdurate yielded to the general joy.

The following year witnessed a coronation—the first which had been for sixty years, and the unhappy Queen endeavouring to gain admittance to the ceremony was rudely repulsed, and died within three weeks after. The virtuous monarch did not venture on another marriage, but consoled himself by visiting Ireland and Hanover, and in August 1822 his ancient kingdom of Scotland. A Royal visit has of late become a matter of no uncommon occurrence, but at that time the like had not been since Charles the Second had taken the covenant about one hundred and seventy years before. By this visit George the Fourth became as popular as if all the virtues under heaven had adorned his character. The eagerness to behold a real live king was something excessive. Flunkeyism was evidently in the ascendant. Tens of thousands hurried to Edinburgh in such modes as they could; and in those days of slow coaching, Provosts and Baillies from Berwick to the far North travelled in state, but at what cost let our Burgh

accounts declare, for truly we can not. Whilst the king's visit was drawing to a close, news arrived that the Foreign Secretary, long and too well-known as my Lord Castlereagh, and who had been the moving spring of affairs for many years, had terminated his existence by his own hand, and from that event we may date the gradual amelioration in matters of government which the present generation has seen.

In the meanwhile ups and downs in trade and general welfare had been yearly taking place. Handloom weavers vainly struggled against the might of the Powerloom. Labour was everywhere yielding to machinery. The wildest speculations were now entered upon. As Sir Walter Scott, in 1825, writing in the character of Jonathan Oldbuck, says—"In the previous year an act might have been obtained, incorporating a Company for riddling ashes, but now one could not be procured for gathering pearls." In 1826 another panic had taken place. English Banks were failing by the hundred. Booksellers were bankrupt for their hundred thousands, and the great "Author of Waverley," no longer the "Unknown," was down for a hundred and twenty thousand pounds. Pedantic statesmen kept tinkering at corn and currency; inventing wonderful sliding scales; settling the laws of trade in defiance of Adam Smith; inquiring into causes of distress, and peddling with the consequenoes; denouncing over-production and at the same time limiting exchanges; maintaining we were still an agricultural people and preventing the exportation of machinery and the emigration of skilled labour; in a word, attempting the impossible as if trying to force rivers up hills, instead of clearing away obstacles to their onward progress. One great cure was the attempted suppression of the one pound note, which though successful in getting accomplished for England, was met by a storm in Scotland, and from quarters which were little suspected. Men of all shades of politics joined in the opposition, but the chief actor in the drama was Sir Walter Scott, who in his letters of Malachi Malagrowther, successfully ridiculed the attempt to legislate on

the stupid principle of uniformity. Though himself smarting from the late commercial disasters, he did not shrink from defending the Bank-note, and deserted his own party when he conceived their legislation to be erroneous. The crisis of last year forms a sufficient commentary on the nostrums of currency doctors, and shows but too plainly that excess of credit and not the one pound note is the real defaulter.

1827 exhibited the rather curious phenomenon of four different Ministries having been in being during the compass of that one year, of which the latest was that of the Duke of Wellington. The great hero had never been suspected even by his greatest admirers to have been possessed of the necessary qualifications for that high post, although when at the head of an army he must have exhibited some of the attributes of a statesman. At the time of his accession to power, he exercised the office of Commander-in-Chief of the army, and for some short period he gave no hint of his intention to resign it. This junction of the highest civil and military offices in the same individual was considered by nearly all thinking men as approaching the verge of the unconstitutional. One caricature of the day represented our present sovereign as a child in the cradle (she was then nine years old, however), with the widowed mother hanging over and singing the lullaby—

> "Sleep thee my baby, the time may soon come,
> When thy rest shall be broken by trumpet and drum."

In the background was seen the figure of the Duke sternly contemplating the pair, and on the title the artist puts the significant question, "When does the reign of King Arthur begin?" The Duke shortly resigned his military office, but he brought those principles of obedience acquired in the camp to bear on his subordinates, and from that time forward he earned the well-known appellation of the Iron Duke. Thus, when Mr. Huskisson on one occasion voted contrary to his colleagues, and dreading the consequences, forthwith tendered his resignation, but on the following day

desired to retract it by pleading a mistake, the Duke promptly accepted the unwilling offer, politely insisting "There's no mistake," which has since become one of our current phrases.

1828 and 1829 witnessed the passing of two important measures—the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts enforced on Dissenters, and the removal of the Civil Disabilities affecting the Roman Catholics. These were the earliest in the long list of undoings for which these later times have been distinguished. The third great stigma on the religious principles of the subject, and the one remaining to be undone, was removed by the measure of last year, which gives to the members of the Jewish persuasion full participation in all the rights of the citizen. It is a matter worthy of speculation to note, that these three measures, so deeply affecting the ordinary working of the constitution, were carried into effect by that same party in the state who plume themselves most on their respect for antiquity, and who on all former occasions both in and out of office almost uniformly resisted every attempt at their alteration. We shall shortly bring to your notice another great measure brought in and passed by the same school, and who likewise were those who mainly contributed to impose the restriction. At the present moment (February, 1859) the same political party are again in power, and rumours are rife of another change from their hands as far removed from their usual principles as in the instances we have just now quoted. Too much reason is thus given for the saying, that "Ministries are formed of squeezable materials," but while such has a tendency to bring political consistency and statesmanship into contempt, at the same time it serves to indicate the orderly and peaceful nature of our constitutional changes, when compared with those in the neighbouring land of France.

The mention of that unhappy country reminds us of the second great explosion which happened there, in the following year, 1830, and known since as the Revolution of the Barricades. In the early part of the year one of the letters

of the celebrated "O.P.Q.," contributed to the *Morning Chronicle*, made the startling announcement that matters were fast tending in France towards another convulsion, and in the opinion of the writer likely to equal in atrocity the great outbreak of 1789. In this instance the sagacity of the correspondent was fully warranted by the event.

Before long the celebrated "Three days of July" occurred, and with such scenes as only Paris can furnish. It was now the fifteenth year of peace, and while with us there had been much distress arising from commercial disaster, on the other hand in France society appeared to be gradually recovering from the former long strain of war and barren conquest, and quietly settling down to a more healthy and prosperous state of matters. One effect here of the overturn in France was that of increasing the desire for Reform, which all thinking men saw to be more necessary now than ever, but which party spirit had hitherto successfully resisted. Only fourteen years before this, the first public meeting held in Scotland for Parliamentary Reform took place in the neighbourhood of Glasgow on the grounds of a public-spirited proprietor and ardent reformer, but who in consequence of his liberality was henceforward marked by the authorities as a rather dangerous man. The public spirit of Scotland in 1816 was then in a despicable state. With the exceptions of the *Glasgow Chronicle*, first published in 1811, and the *Aberdeen Chronicle*, of nearly the same age, not a newspaper dared to whisper the slightest hint in disparagement of the ruling powers. The *Scotsman* was the next that started, and ably assisted in the cause of Reform. The Whigs of Edinburgh had not been altogether idle, but both by wit and argument had furthered the work, chiefly in the pages of the *Review*. The Tories in 1817 set up an organ of their own in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and by calumny and abuse endeavoured to run down their opponents. Even the great mind of Walter Scott yielded to the necessities of party, and his countenance was given to the scurrilities of the *Beacon* and the *Sentinel*. Ribaldry which would not be tolerated now was the chosen weapon; and in

one instance led to a duel, resulting in the death of the slanderer. Nevertheless, the cause of Reform gained.

England, indeed, had some semblance of a representation, but in Scotland the whole thing was a farce. Here, all power was in the hands of the Town Councils, and of a few hundreds of paper voters in the counties, who were often without an acre of land. In England, the single county of Cornwall returned forty members, only five less than the whole kingdom of Scotland. Great cities as Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, and Bradford, had not a single representative. Glasgow had only the quarter of a representative, and Aberdeen merely the fifth part of one. Dundee had no member at all; Old Sarum had two, and not a single inhabitant. In Scotland, the burghs were ruled by self-elected juntos who nominated each other, and filled recurring vacancies with their own friends. In Aberdeen, the rule for nearly a generation was, for one term of Provostship, Mr. James Hadden; for the next, Mr. Gavin Hadden, his brother; then James; then Gavin again; and so on as every succeeding term of two years came round.

About the time of this earliest Reform meeting, the term Radical was first heard in political circles. The term Reformer had, indeed, long been in use, but there was still wanted a name to designate such as determined to go to the *root* of the matter. As an instance of the odium which became attached to this very innocent expression, it was related at the time that "Gentleman George," on being told of a *Radical* cure for the gout, replied, "he wanted none of it," but, on hearing it explained as being a *sovereign* remedy, at once gave in, and "thought he would try it." The expression descended still lower, and with many became the equivalent of a reprobate. The Government of the time ruled with a strong hand. On one occasion they suspended the Habeas Corpus Act. On another, they got passed the notorious "Six Acts," known as Lord Castlereagh's, one of which was forbidding all out-door meetings unless sanctioned by the Lieutenants and Sheriffs of counties. On two several occasions, the person who granted his field for the

meeting of 1816, was, along with his brother-in-law, arrested on a Secretary of State's warrant, and imprisoned. Their books and papers were carried off by the myrmidons of the law. "Take this Bible along with the rest," said one of the arrested, "it is the most democratic book of them all." Their petitions to Parliament were unceremoniously passed by, and no redress was ever obtained. In 1819, a public meeting, held in Manchester for Reform, was dispersed by an armed yeomanry, and many persons cruelly cut down. From the name of St. Peter's Field, where the meeting took place, the outrage was known for long after as the massacre of Peterloo.

On the progress of Reform in 1830, and the two following years, we need not enlarge. Suffice it to say, when the Iron Duke was questioned on the subject, he bluntly announced, "There should be none." On the passing of the Catholic Bill, Lord Eldon had said "that the sun of Britain's glory was set." The Duke, more magnanimous, declared the "Representation to be the perfection of human wisdom." When twitted with the number of county meetings for a change, his answer was, "County meetings are a farce." The death of George and the accession of William gave the Whigs an opportunity such as they had not enjoyed for forty years, and accordingly a Reform Bill was brought in. Many will recall to mind the well-known phrase of "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." Upon meeting an acquaintance, the salutation was always, "What about the Bill?" Its contents, indeed, astonished both friends and foes. The most sanguine never expected the like. Little John Russell came out like a giant. The Duke, for once, was outgeneralled. Had he consented to give members to a few large towns, the majority at the time would have been satisfied. But his military habits had blinded him, and a long possession of power had rendered the party secure. Such a sweeping measure, too, was more than they ever imagined. Old Sir Charles Wetheral denounced the bill as "spoliation and corporation robbery," and great was the joy of the Tories when the Whigs were outvoted on the proposition to deprive

England of thirteen members in favour of Scotland and Ireland. The party now thought to get back, but in this they were disappointed. For once the cautious Peel lost temper. The house was summoned in the midst of the tumult, and Parliament dissolved ere it was six months old.

Then came the tug of war. Reformer and Anti-reformer became the terms of the one party, Destructive and Conservative those in use by the other. But how the whole kingdom was kept in a ferment; how the new House of Commons triumphantly passed the Bill; how the Lords, true to their traditions, threw it out; how Parliament was again prorogued; how the Bill was again introduced and passed through all its formalities; how the Lords again stayed its progress; how the Ministry resigned, and the Duke came back for ten days and endeavoured to seize the reins; what monster meetings were everywhere; what crowds were even on the Sabbath to hear the news read in the open street; what stirring speeches were uttered in hall and field, even on our own Broad Hill; how the hustings came down as the orator declared his "no-confidence in Duke, or Lords, or Tories;" and how the never-to-be-forgotten appellation, "Our northern city cold," was then bestowed upon our pleasant Aberdeen—are matters too well known to enter on farther.

According to Alison, the British Constitution was at this time destroyed; in the opinion of wiser men it was merely renovated, and the succeeding generation has reaped the benefit. Let us not, however, despise our old unreformed system as utterly worthless, and overlook its many claims to respect. It was a barrier against arbitrary power. It had been too much the exponent of one interest, but it had daily been getting more in accordance with public opinion. It looked too much after what it blindly conceived to be the public good, but the people themselves were not altogether free from blame. In the worst of times it was in some measure under the influence of the pressure from without. Its patriotic tendencies contrast favourably with those of some more loud-tongued politicians. Between the close of the war and the Reform Bill it had done some good

service. It abolished the nefarious State Lottery. Thirty-three years have not passed since such existed. A new generation will hardly credit that a respectable Government could resort to gambling as a source of revenue. The lucky offices of Bish, and Carrol, and Sievwright, were swept away for ever. It moderated the excessive cruelty of our criminal code, and we no longer hear of batches by the dozen and the half dozen condemned at a time for theft and forgery. In Glasgow, there had been several instances of four being left for execution. In 1820 there were six at one circuit, and an interval of a fortnight was allowed in the case of two for want of space in the machine. In Aberdeen, a boy had been hanged for sheepstealing; in Glasgow there had been another with a child's frill round his neck. In 1824, we passed by the place of execution within five minutes of the hour, and not thirty persons were present.

There have been no orators, indeed, under the new regime equal to those in the old. We do not pretend to explain this, but the fact is undeniable. Perhaps there may be no loss after all, provided we get good measures. Still there is an excessive amount of talk, but it is not of a kind that will bear the trouble of reading. Occasionally a flash of the old fire may light up, or a respectable common sense speech from an unpretending practical man may be heard, but where are the successors of our Cannings and Broughams? These are some of the changes since the famous era of 1832; still there are many good things which have flowed from that source. The Reform of Municipal Corporations was the next to follow. Then came the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British dominions, and twenty millions were ungrudgingly voted for the purpose. Within a few years the taxes taken off since the peace came to thirty millions a year, and yet the revenue kept up to its usual amount. But the hopes of the sanguine were not fully realised, and, as a consequence, disappointment ensued. The Tories, getting ashamed of their name, adopted that of Conservatives. An excessive veneration for the Church became the policy of the party. Earl Grey's hint to the bishops to set

their house in order kept ever ringing in their ears, and was duly interpreted in the strongest sense of the expression. O'Connell came out more strongly than ever for Repeal, and the opponents of Catholic Emancipation declared their forebodings were all verified. The Voluntaries were afoot in Scotland. The Ministry resolved to abolish some of the Irish bishoprics. Anon, the Derby Dilly broke loose from the Cabinet, and the erratic vehicle has ever since defied all attempts to predicate its course. At the present moment its chief occupies the highest place in the State, and seems ready to drive everywhere or nowhere as the exigencies of the hour shall urge. Spite and trick have always held a high hand in its management.

Chalmers now entered the field and asked for more churches. Government replied by appointing a Commission of enquiry. "We do not want a Commission," was the rejoinder, "it is more church accommodation." "I shall never vote again for the Whig candidate," said a zealous churchman once in our hearing, "we shall get far more from Peel and the Tories." So much for Reform, when the imagined interests of sect intervened! The cunning Statesman never said what he would do, but he led some to imagine he would grant great things. "Register, register, register," was the watchword given at Merchant Taylor's Hall; "attend," said he, "to the register." "The Church is in danger," cried one party; "the *true* Church is never in danger," said another; "who would remain in a Church that is ever in danger"? By and by Non-intrusion started into life. House became divided against House, family against family, friend against friend, till matters were brought to a close by the Disruption of 1843. Since then there has been peace. Rivals acknowledge there is work for all, and the land has at length had rest.

In the midst of this agitation our present sovereign assumed the reins. There are some who look askance at the idea of a woman holding the chief power in a State, and our courteous and polite neighbours of France have always had a stringent law on the matter, but not so we. Two female

sovereigns at the interval of a century had already filled the throne with credit; and again, after the lapse of another century, comes the present ruler, who has noways deteriorated from these examples. In fact, Royalty stands higher than it did some thirty years ago. William the Fourth, the "Sailor King," as he was styled, was a far more accessible monarch than his brother George; and his frequent appearance in the streets of London caused Cobbett to say, "we had now got a *man* for a King, and not an Eastern Sultan," like his predecessor.

But there were other agitations also in store for our youthful Queen. In 1838, the year following her accession, the Chartist movement began, and, in ten years after, came to an undignified end. Its material means were at one time great, and the influence of the leader over his followers was truly enormous, but these were all miserably wasted, leaving no result. A dog-in-the-manger interference with the views of others, intolerance towards all who differed even in the smallest, and threats of physical force, disgusted many who agreed in the general principles of the Chartists, and, above all things, there was wanting the simple art of conciliation.

Whilst these were in full career the Anti-Corn-Law League began its work. The moving spirit in this agitation was Richard Cobden, already known by his writings under the signature of "A Manchester Manufacturer." Never in our history was a movement so effectively begun, or so successfully ended; and in no other State could the like have been possible or even tolerated. The Irish agitation also gathered head, and for a time O'Connell seemed to be the virtual ruler of the island. But the ultimate fate of these three agitations affords much scope for reflection. The great agitator, together with his countryman O'Connor, died miserably disappointed, whilst Cobden still lives, and his work has been eminently successful. The skill, tact, and political wisdom of the "League" seemed equal to the government of an empire. From the first the leaders acted as men who had right and justice on their side. The *Times*,

which at one time ridiculed, came at length to acknowledge the "League" as a "great fact," and from that moment its success was sure. All these agitations do at the same time tell much in favour of the freedom we enjoy; and in the success of the "League" we have undoubted proof of the perseverance and energy of the great body of the middle classes.

Sir Robert Peel, the professed champion of Protection, had by this time got back to power. The register had been worked so well as to return him with a greater following than almost any minister ever had. This was in 1841, but, seven years before, when he hurried from Florence to occupy the seat which the Duke kept warm for a fortnight as sole minister, he found that the pear was not yet ripe. A dissolution did not mend matters much. Again, in 1839, the bedchamber question stood in the way. Now the fates were propitious. The pompous physician, however, who refused to prescribe "till regularly called in," ended by adopting the measures of his opponents. He led his deluded followers, step by step, to what in fact turned out to be their utter confusion. The badgering he endured in consequence was fearful. His own party, in a great measure, denounced him. Naturally a close-minded, cautious, and sensitive man, he had soon ample opportunities for the exercise of these qualities. The deceived squirearchy found a new leader in a man of a truly "stable mind," and one hitherto known only on the turf was characteristically preferred to the experienced but weathercock minister. By adopting the principles of Free Trade, Peel yielded to the necessities of his position, and gave in his adhesion to the side he ought never to have neglected. But consciousness of natural powers had caused him in early life to listen to the fascinations of rule, and the son of the successful cotton spinner had sold the best part of his days in the service of those who inwardly despised his origin.

But that which seemed to annoy the minister most was the vindictive feeling of D'Israeli, the veriest political adventurer whom the present age has cast up, and one abso-

lutely without guiding principle higher than the mere love of notoriety. His own tergiversations were notorious. In early life he endeavoured to enter Parliament as an ultra-Liberal, and, being foiled, next offered his services to another constituency as a Conservative of the stricter sort. The same consistent politician now denounced the new convert to Free Trade, asserting that he had stolen the clothes of the Whigs while they were bathing, and now appeared in their garments. Twice since those days has he himself appeared in the garments of others, but whether stolen or merely borrowed we shall not pretend to say.

Another tinkering of the currency, which has been often referred to of late, was Peel's Bank Act of 1842. This extraordinary specimen of legislation, by some held to be the perfection of wisdom, and by others the depth of folly, has twice, within the last few years, been temporarily set aside, and in both cases with advantage. When one hears of the infringement of a law occasioning good results, but little respect can be felt either for the legislator or his handiwork. In such cases one is but too ready to give credit to the old Swedish Chancellor's remark, "See, my son, with how little wisdom the affairs of the world are managed." By the Act of 1842 the paper of the Bank of England was fixed at the magical number of fourteen millions over the amount representing the gold in its coffers; the Scotch Banks were for ever limited in number, and their issue of notes likewise. It is told of two of our native banks, when called on for a return of their circulation, but yet knowing nothing of the object, that the manager of the one, dreading some fiscal regulation, took care to return a conscientiously small amount; the manager of the other of a somewhat more speculative cast, ventured a return as much enormously large. The Act held them both to their own statement, and can never more better their case. The one bank boasts of a guaranteed circulation of £70,000, the other, though much the younger, can point to a figure of more than double that sum.

The third grand explosion in Paris took place in February, 1848, and within eighteen years of the one before.

Only so long lasted the rule of the Citizen-Kingship, and now our fickle neighbours endeavoured to set up a "Republic of all the virtues." But what more need we say on this? You all know of the attempt, and of its end likewise. Moreover, the affair happened in France, and surely that is enough; besides, who can foretell what may be there before long? Our half century began with a French Empire, and, after so many changes, it again closes with another, and under a Bonaparte too. Apparently our neighbours have at length got their desire, though in a way not originally contemplated, and the new Empire is said to be one of peace. It is our wisdom, however, to be always ready for either alternative.

The other events of the period, though few, are equally important, but too well known to dilate upon at any considerable length. A forty years' peace is rudely disturbed by a Russian War, and a strange sight is exhibited of French and British soldiers engaged in a common cause. Scarcely is this brought to a close when we hear of a cry from the East carrying consternation into all quarters of our country, and inducing exertions to restore order such as the world never witnessed before. At the present moment our countrymen, at the distance of fifteen thousand miles from the parent State, are engaged in trampling out the embers of the greatest military mutiny recorded in history. One great change resulting from the Indian Mutiny has been the abolition of the India Company as a ruling power in the East. At the beginning of our period this great corporation possessed full power and authority as a political body, besides enjoying a complete monopoly of trade. This incongrous junction of the sovereign and the merchant naturally excited in the minds of many no goodwill to the Company. Previous to the year 1813, every ounce of tea used in these kingdoms passed through its hands, and may be said to have paid toll to the Company before it reached the consumer. But in that year, when the Charter was renewed, the petty privilege was granted to the community of three private ships being permitted to trade annually to China and the

East. Twenty years later, in 1833, the trade was thrown open to all subjects of the Crown, and the Company ceased henceforth to act as merchants, but were still allowed to continue in the rank of sovereigns. Again, in 1853, the Charter was renewed for the last time, and, but for the mutinies, the Company might have continued for many years to come. This is a change that might well have astonished our fathers, and which those living at the end of the next half century will be better able to decide on than we.

In the late Russian War, and again in the suppression of the Indian Mutinies, three new agencies were employed, the product of the past half century, but which will be more extensively used in the wars of succeeding times. These are Navigation by Steam, the Railway System of Locomotion, and the Electric Telegraph. We commenced by a reference to the Battle of Corunna, fought on the 16th January, 1809; and we may now state that, while a similar event in the present year would be known over Europe in the space of four-and-twenty hours, half a century ago as many days elapsed before the like was as widely spread. Three weeks then was no uncommon time before the news from our army in the Peninsula could reach these shores, and nearly another week again before the extremities of the kingdom were aware of what had transpired in the metropolis. But now, even here, we are apprised by the afternoon of the death of a monarch who expired not six hours before at the whole distance of St. Petersburg. Again, fifty years ago, and even less, transports were often knocking about for weeks on a service that could now be done in three or four days at the most.

Much worthless discussion has taken place in reference to whom the honour of originating Steam Navigation belongs. As to the idea of invention or discovery in the matter, properly speaking, there is no such thing. The modern steam-engine is the undoubted invention of Watt, but the different purposes to which it has yet been put are only so many applications of his one great principle. "Were you acquainted with James Watt?" we inquired of a very aged

relative some thirty years ago, and who was then in their eightieth year; "I kenn'd James Watt weel," was the answer, "and mind when he was but a poor man, and often couldna pay for his *castings*." James Watt, as we all know, became a great and a very wealthy man; but the originator of Steam Navigation in Europe, Henry Bell, of Helensburgh, though he became famous from the success of his project, on the other hand, became a much poorer man in consequence, and died a pensioner on the bounty of the Corporation of Glasgow. Though only a boy at school in 1812, we have still a distinct recollection, not of Bell himself, but of his tiny vessel the "Comet," the earliest steam-boat in Europe. A few years ago, on seeing the magnificent steamer "Persia" of the Cunard line, lying at the same harbour preparatory to her first voyage, we could hardly avoid recalling to mind its early prototype, and being astonished at the contrast. Before our mind's eye again appeared the early specimen (of only thirty tons, and its engine of three-horse power), named after the strange visitor in the heavens of 1811; and before us lay this other of a hundred times its burden, and with machinery of more than a hundred times its power. Henry Bell embarked his little all in what was then considered a somewhat rash speculation; but what shall we say of the "Great Eastern," whose cost as well as capacity is equal to a thousand such as his. In little more than a generation there has been a stride which no one at the beginning of the period could ever have imagined. In the language of Macaulay, when writing of the first regiment in the British service, we may, in referring to the little craft of Henry Bell, say, with all truth and soberness, "This was the first germ of those mighty and renowned automata, which in our own lifetime have borne the name of the Clyde to the most distant shores; have penetrated every stream and inlet; and, having wrought wonders in the mercantile, already point to worthy deeds in the military marine; and are destined, at no distant date, to revolutionize all naval tactics, and change the whole aspect of future maritime warfare."

The second of these great agencies has been the Railway, and this also was tried for the first time in war during the late contest in the Crimea. The introduction of that arm was said to have been equivalent to the addition of many thousands of fresh troops to the Allies. But again, wanting the aid of the Steam Ship, such could never have been realised. These two have indeed mutually assisted each other. Where the task of the one ends, that of the other begins. It is more, however, as agencies in everyday life and its many concerns that we here wish to noticc them. The Steam Ship acts indcpendent of winds and tides; the Railway furnishes facilities for transporting thousands at a time, and that with an ease and speed that a few short years ago could not have been accomplished by any appliance, even for tho convenience of the wealthiest individual traveller. The rise of this great power within the term of a single generation exhibits an example of wealth, skill, and energy which could scarcely be credited. It was in 1826—four years before the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway—that the first attempt to carry passengers by the new mode was made, and that on a short line opened the year before, and known as the Stockton and Darlington Railway. In the account given at the time, it was noticed as a wonderful feat that four hundred persons had been safely conveyed by the hitherto untried agency. During part of the journey, where the rail lay parallel with the ordinary road, the stage coach, with its load of sixteen passengers, was met, but the race was soon won—the poor old coach had no chance with the locomotive. Since then, results have been obtained that far outstrip those early and primitive efforts. Upwards of ten thousand miles have now been opened in this kingdom, and the capital employed already reaches to the sum of four hundred millions, or fully one half of the national debt. The gross income is close upon four and twenty millions a year, or nearly half a million a week; and the clear revenue is between ten and twelve millions—a sum greater than that of many sovereign States of no mean standing.

The third of these agencies is the Electric Telegraph ; and this, too, has been pressed into the service of war equally with that of commerce. Truly may we say that we live in eventful times. Shakspere introduces us to one who boasts that he can " put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes," and this great feat has been nearly realised in our own day. Already, what takes place at the eastern extremity of Europe is known in a few hours ; and a Royal Speech is in our own hands as early as they have it in London. We read of the telegraph wire keeping pace in India with the onward movement of the troops. The General has thus been able to correspond directly, and in the space of a few seconds, with his farthest outposts ; and already they talk of ruling India from Downing Street direct, and so likewise of our other possessions. It is said, however, that this rapid conveyance of intelligence is not without its disadvantages. Since this year set in, a loss of sixty millions has been incurred in the value of public securities in Europe from the too early dread of a war ; whilst under the old mode a like unfavourable impression could not have gone far ere it had met contradiction. Had the Atlantic cable been working, say the same authorities, there would have been already another panic in America. The moral here seems to be, that bad news travel fast ; and, while it is well to know the worst, it is easier to arouse suspicion than to allay it.

There are one or two matters more we shall notice before we conclude. Fifty years ago we had no gas; and but for the introduction of this light into general use, none here present, in all probability, would ever have heard the voice of the speaker. Whether you might have sustained any loss in the latter case may be no great matter; there is no doubt, however, in the case of the other. When we recollect the flickering, unsavoury light in our shops and streets during the reign of oil and candle, we confess that a return to these primitive modes would be almost intolerable. The wonder really is, why they endured so long. Every one who had seen a fire of ordinary coal must, at the very

time, have witnessed the phenomenon of gas. But how often, indeed, do we not all see wonderful things, and yet not know how to take advantage of them? An extract from an old magazine of 1753 has lately appeared, in which it is mentioned that a working man in Paisley had been able to light his house with *coal reek*, and to write upon the wall with electricity. Here we have the germs of gas lighting and of the electric telegraph. But the idea, in both cases, was long in coming to maturity. At the end of the last century, Lord Dundonald, father of the present Earl, took out a patent for the distillation of tar from coal; but he let the most valuable product escape. Now the subtle vapour is secured, and the tar has scarcely a marketable value. In 1814—two years after the introduction of the steamboat—a portion of London was partially lighted with gas. In 1816 we saw the first specimen of the new light in a jeweller's shop in Glasgow, and the patriotic proprietors had fitted up two of the public street lamps nearest in addition. Every one admired the new brilliancy; but many shook their heads at the unheard-of extravagance. These spirited tradesmen had likewise been guilty of another innovation, which was often mentioned to their disparagement. Four neighbouring panes of glass had been taken out of their window, and in lieu of these, one single pane of plate had been inserted. This had cost the enormous sum of ten guineas—and all for the mere display of their watches. Such extravagance was never known before. The obscurest village can now boast of greater things—though perhaps at a smaller cost.

A year or two ago we chanced to see an old London daily paper, the once celebrated *Morning Chronicle*, and of date July, 1815, about three weeks after the Battle of Waterloo. To our eyes, accustomed to the truly "broad sheet" of the present day, the old relic had all the air of an antiquity. The fabric a dirty grey, the edges uncut and ragged, the contents meagre, of four pages only, and the size of the whole sheet about two pages of our ordinary journals. The price, too, was sevenpence halfpenny; at the same rate

of surface our Aberdeen newspapers would be selling at half-a-crown. Truly the power of the press is great, and our opportunities for acquiring knowledge have increased. And to what do we attribute this great change? Chiefly to three things, and one of these of a fiscal nature. There is no longer a stamp of fourpence halfpenny on every paper, as there was at the date of the old journal referred to. The other two have been the introduction of the steam press, and the invention of the paper machine, both of the same year, 1814. The annoyance caused by frequent strikes among the pressmen of the *Times* induced the proprietor of that journal to resort to the power of steam. Much anxiety and expense were necessary before the machine was brought to a working state, but the whole was done so quietly that the astonished workmen were first made aware of the fact by the proprietor bringing in a copy with his own hand, and announcing that the paper was already printed. Improvement after improvement has gone on since then, that the labour of one hour at the hand press is now reduced in the machine to the work of three minutes. The paper machine, too, supplies the commodity in an abundance, limited only by the difficulty of procuring the proper materials, and of a size and cheapness that hand labour could never approach. The two improvements appear as the counterparts of each other; the enlarged supply of the material inducing a greater power in the press, and that increase of power necessitating an enlarged supply of the material. The first specimen of the new fabric we had the pleasure of seeing was also about the same year, and was shown as a novelty from Aberdeen. Twenty years after we saw the identical machine at Culter, being the eighth the inventor had made, and the first which was set up in Scotland. The introduction of this was likewise occasioned through a strike.

But time would fail to enumerate the many important matters the past half-century has produced. There have been many changes in dress, manners, and modes of thought everyway as interesting as anything we have mentioned. At the beginning of the period a few pigtails still lingered

on the heads of some too old-fashioned to come into the modern style, and breeches and knee-buckles were not entirely discarded. The comfortable spencer was still an article of dress with elderly gentlemen, but when this was of one hue and the coat-tails of another, a fastidious taste was too apt to notice the incongruity. The race of dandies did not appear till a few years latter, but there were then plenty of bucks; and the favourite garb was either pantaloons and Hessians, or else top boots and breeches. The cocked hat had completely disappeared except in the portraits of Napoleon, but it was officially worn by the Baillies of Glasgow till the Reformed Town Council of 1833 at their first meeting thought proper to discard it. In 1813, when the French were expelled from Holland, the ladies adopted orange ribbons in compliment to the restored family, and the gentlemen, not to be outdone, had them of the same hue at their watches. In 1815 fabrics of a skyblue tint became the rage, and for many years that particular colour was known by the name of Waterloo Blue. About the same time the world-renowned Wellington boot was introduced, and has not yet been superseded. Peg-top trousers appear to have struck Mr. Roebuck's fancy at the Cherbourg *fetès* of last year, but at the beginning of the eighteen hundred and twenties such things were common enough everywhere among our fashionables. Either the French are more Conservative than we give them credit for, or old fashions are reviving, like the beard and moustache movement of the present day.

Drinking habits were more general some forty years ago than now, and the brutal sport of pugilism was at that time patronized by the highest personages in the kingdom. We know not if many can tell who now holds the high office of Champion of all England, but there was a time when every child could have answered the question by naming at once Tom Crib. There was one gentleman from the neighbourhood of Aberdeen whom every one likewise had heard of. It was the well-known Captain Barclay. In those days it was thought nothing of to travel twenty or thirty miles to a

boxing match, and there were many working-men who would not have missed such an opportunity for a good round sum. "What kirk were you in yesterday" we have more than once heard asked of such. "In the Waterloo Kirk" was the answer, meaning the tap-room of the same name. The literature of the people, too, was of the lowest possible kind, and those who never read an ordinary newspaper could yet find time to enjoy the degrading excitement of a *Bells' Life* in London.

But in many respects such things are no longer the case. There are some who attribute all improvement as having sprung from the ranks of the people, but were fashion once more to set in towards these now exploded customs, many would still be found to join in their revival.

Of the various manias of the period we have no time to speak. We have touched on the Joint-Stock mania of 1824-5, but there has been the Railway mania of 1845, an equally disastrous *possession*. There have been movements, too, of many kinds, and associations without number. There is the Temperance Movement in its various phases; United Kingdom and Evangelical Alliances; Anti-State Church and British Associations; Phrenological, Photographic, and Phonotypic Societies; there have been Hydropathy, and Homoeopathy, and Mesmerism; but we must stop. If Tom and Jerry flourished some forty years ago, we had Jack Sheppard within the last twenty, and we must not say too much in our own favour.

Some may think that we should designate the past period by some name befitting its character. Solomon has warned us against saying "that the former times were better than now," and the general scope of this lecture does not depart from the precept. Lord Byron, in a somewhat petulent mood, styles it the "Age of Bronze," or that of mere pretension. Mr. Carlyle, in one of his earlier essays, designates this "The Mechanical Age," and thinks we trust too much to the application of outward means. Dr. Channing, partly endorsing this view, but restricting the expression to the *practical*, thinks that England is working too much for

herself. But surely the rest of the world has shared in all our inventions? The cause of the Negro must have been an example to others, and our Reform and Free Trade movements no less. Milton has well characterized our country when he calls upon England "not to neglect her high prerogative of teaching nations how to live." One thing is evident, the past has been an age of change. Some have called it an Age of Revolutions—another species of change. But there may be silent and beneficent Revolutions, as well as noisy and destructive ones. The past, we believe, has partaken more of the better character, but, granting the worst, as Tennyson has well sung—

"Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay."

There is evidently more vigour in the body-politic now than at the beginning of the period. May our country continue in the course she has entered, and may the end of the century witness still farther advances in everything tending towards her well-being, in whatever point of view.

Truly excellent.

Printed at the Aberdeen Herald Office, by JAMES BROWN.