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BLACKIE & SON, LIMITED, LONDON, DUBLIN, AND GLASGOW
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By

HAROLD E. GORST
Author of "China"

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BLACKIE & SON, LIMITED, 50, OLD BAILEY, E.C.
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1900
It would be impossible, within the limits of a single volume, to record every event in Disraeli's career. The chief aim, therefore, in writing the following pages has been to trace the political development of the Conservative statesman in broad outline; and to arrange the important incidents of his life in proper perspective, in order that the reader, instead of being confused by a multitude of facts, may derive some kind of impression —however inadequately the idea may have been carried out—of the great part which Disraeli has played in the history of the British empire.

Since the appearance of the existing biographies of Lord Beaconsfield, fresh light has been thrown upon an incident in his career by the recent publication, amongst the private papers of Sir Robert Peel, of a letter addressed by Disraeli to Peel in 1841. It will be remembered that Disraeli, in 1846, denied having asked Peel for office five years before; and on that account the letter in question has been generally regarded as affording proof of a mean and dishonourable action on his part. I have submitted this letter to a high legal authority, and he at once pointed out to me the fact that Disraeli made no direct application for a post in the government. It is rather remarkable that other legal minds, who

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have discussed the subject, should not have alighted upon this simple explanation of Disraeli's naturally indignant denial when he was accused of doing what he had carefully and purposely avoided. Both the letter and its explanation find a place in this volume, and no doubt the unprejudiced reader will readily adopt the latter, in preference to tarnishing the otherwise spotless reputation of a statesman to whom the present generation owes a deep debt of gratitude.

The Conservative victory of 1874 has often been alluded to as the result of a great Conservative reaction, or of a wave of imperialism passing through the country. These inspiriting phrases are unfortunately far removed from the truth; and it is equally misleading to attribute the defeat of 1880 to a revulsion of feeling against Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy. The fact is, that the masses of the electorate enfranchised by the bill of 1867 (or at any rate a large proportion of them) know and care nothing about questions of foreign policy, and are equally indifferent to general matters touching domestic legislation. Political feeling is only evoked when the private interests of the individual are directly interfered with. The passions of the thirsty mechanic are aroused to the highest pitch when an extra duty is imposed upon his favourite beverage; but he does not care twopence about Russia's advance in Central Asia, and takes no interest in educational problems which agitate only a handful of genuine reformers. The causes of the victory which placed Disraeli in power with a majority for the first time, and of the defeat which hurled him from the great position that he had attained during
his term of office, are dealt with plainly and, perhaps, prosaically; but the conclusion in each case is based upon the authority of those who were in the best position to form an accurate judgment.

My father enjoyed considerable political intimacy with Disraeli from the year 1870. I am indebted to him for information that could not have been obtained elsewhere; but it would be most undutiful of me to neglect to exonerate him from all responsibility regarding any political opinions which may be expressed in the following pages. An acknowledgment is due to the great services rendered by Mr. Ewald in collecting, for the purposes of his work on the life and times of Lord Beaconsfield, the speeches delivered by the Conservative statesman both in and out of Parliament; and I have also to tender acknowledgments to the proprietors of the Times, and to Messrs. P. S. King & Son, the proprietors of Hansard's Debates, for special permission to reprint extracts from their reports of Lord Beaconsfield's speeches.

HAROLD E. GORST.

LONDON, 1899.
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Chapter I.

Early Influences.

It was Disraeli's frequent boast that he possessed a pedigree beside which the oldest peerage appeared to be the creation of yesterday. According to his own account of the Disraeli family, contained in a preface to an edition of his father's works, he was descended from a Hebrew family who had emigrated to the Venetian republic at the end of the fifteenth century, having been driven out of Spain by the persecutions of the Inquisition. Here they adopted the surname of D'Israeli, and for more than two centuries they flourished in their adopted country as prosperous merchants. About the middle of the eighteenth century, however, Benjamin D'Israeli, the grandfather of the late Lord Beaconsfield, came over and settled in this country, where he married a lady of his own race and religion.

Their son Isaac was a man of purely literary

1 This spelling of the family name was first adopted by the Conservative statesman. It was originally written D'Israeli.
tastes, who, as Disraeli tells us, not only never entered into the politics of the day, but could never understand them. He spent the whole of his life shut up in his library, a habit of isolation which Disraeli attributes to three causes: "his birth, which brought him no relations or family acquaintance, the bent of his disposition, and the circumstance of his inheriting an independent fortune, which rendered unnecessary those exertions that would have broken up his self-reliance". It was doubtless from his father that Disraeli inherited the dispassionate and judicial mind which guided his career to its ultimate success.

Isaac D'Israeli married a Jewish lady, Maria Basevi, sister of the well-known architect who built the Fitzwilliam museum at Cambridge; and from the fact that their famous son has been singularly reticent on the subject of his mother, one may suppose that she was not a woman of much force of character and that she scarcely influenced his future career. There were five children born of this marriage—four sons and a daughter, all of whom are now dead. The late Lord Beaconsfield was born on the 21st of December, 1804, and twelve years later he was baptized at St. Andrew's, Holborn, and thereby admitted into the Christian Church. He was sent to a school kept by a retired Unitarian minister at Blackheath, but does not appear to have distinguished himself academically. It is related, in fact, that his classical attainments were
so modest that he was unable to grasp the rule that "ut" should be followed by the subjunctive mood. Sir William Fraser quotes the following account of Disraeli's school-days given by one of his school-fellows:

"I cannot say that Benjamin Disraeli at this period of his life exhibited any unusual zeal for classical studies; and I doubt whether his attainments in this direction, when he left the school for Mr. Cogan's at Walthamstow, reached higher than the usual grind in Livy and Caesar. But I well remember that he was the compiler and editor of a school newspaper, which made its appearance on Saturdays, when the gingerbread-seller was also to be seen; and that the right of perusal was estimated at the cost of a sheet of gingerbread, the money value of which was in those days the third of a penny."

In 1821, at the age of seventeen, Disraeli was articled to a firm of solicitors in the Old Jewry. His father intended to send him to the Bar, and one of the partners in the firm of solicitors described him as being most assiduous in his attention to business, as well as showing great ability in its transaction. Afterwards, when keeping terms at Lincoln's Inn, he read in the chambers of his uncle, Mr. Basevi, who was a member of the Bar and an eminent conveyancer. But Disraeli made no disguise of the fact that the law was not to his taste, and he was constantly reiterating his preference
for politics and declaring that he intended to make a name as a statesman.

The next years were mainly devoted to literature. By the publication of his first novel, *Vivian Grey*, in 1826, Disraeli sprang into notoriety, achieving an instant reputation as a political writer of the most daring and candid impudence. During the few years that intervened between this literary success and his first attempt to get into Parliament, he made several tours on the Continent and in the East. A visit to Troy resulted in the composition of a pompous and inflated poem, which was intended by the author to provide posterity with a second "Iliad". "Standing upon Asia and gazing upon Europe," he writes in a preface to this work, "with the broad Hellespont between us, and the shadow of night descending on the mountains, these mighty continents appeared to me, as it were, the rival principles of government that at present contested for the mastery of the world. 'What!' I exclaimed, 'is the revolution of France a less important event than the siege of Troy? Is Napoleon a less interesting character than Achilles? For me remains the Revolutionary Epic.'" The epic, which has unhappily failed to fulfil the great destiny purposed by its creator, appeared in 1834, and ran the gauntlet of considerable ridicule.

The author of *Vivian Grey* was much lionized, and became a well-known personality in London society. He frequented Lady Blessington's at Ken-
sington Gore, "which", observes Lord Malmesbury, "was an agreeable house for men, although not visited by Englishwomen". Disraeli's chief aim at this period of his career appears to have been to make himself as conspicuous as possible. The methods by which he chose to gain this end were, it must be acknowledged, in very bad taste. He covered himself with gold chains; he went to the theatre in a velvet suit; he carried a white stick ornamented with a black cord and tassel; he cultivated a great bunch of jet-black ringlets which hung down over his left cheek, and wore rings outside his gloves. Although possessed of splendid conversational powers, he was rather silent and reserved in society, unless animated by the discussion of a subject which was unusually interesting to him. When once he chose to exert himself, however, he showed unrivalled powers of ready wit and sarcasm.

Shortly before the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 a vacancy occurred in the representation of High Wycombe. Disraeli, whose home at Bradenham was close to this borough, had already anticipated the event, and had informed his sister a few months earlier that he had been promised timely notice should Mr. Thomas Baring, one of the members, be created a peer. Upon this hope being realized, he came forward to contest the seat, and issued his address as an independent candidate. There has been much speculation and considerable difference of opinion as to Disraeli's early profes-
sions of political faith. His most ardent admirers have discovered in his first addresses and utterances the seeds which grew ultimately into the Tory democracy of his later years; and others, who knew him well, think that he wished to get into Parliament at any price, and was chiefly concerned in catching the votes of both Tories and Radicals. The truth generally lies between two extremes; and although it is humanly probable that Disraeli's first consideration was how to enter the House of Commons, it is not difficult to discern in those early political declarations the inception of his dominant idea of a great national party formed out of Tory elements, but based upon principles of democracy and progress.

In any case, to clear Disraeli of charges of inconsistency or hypocrisy it would be unnecessary to reconcile his early opinions with the political actions of his subsequent career. He said himself, in 1834, "a statesman is the creature of his age, the child of circumstances, the creation of his times. A statesman is essentially a practical character; and when he is called upon to take office, he is not to inquire what his opinions might or might not have been upon this or that subject; he is only to ascertain the needful and the beneficial, and the most feasible measures are to be carried on. The fact is, the conduct and the opinions of public men at different periods of their career must not be too curiously contrasted in a free and aspiring country."
Early Influences.

I laugh, therefore, at the objection against a man, that at a former period of his career he advocated a policy different to his present one. All I seek to ascertain is whether his present policy be just, necessary, expedient; whether at the present moment he is prepared to serve the country according to its present necessities."

The result of the youthful Disraeli's fusion of political ideas was that he found a Radical to propose, and a Tory to second, his nomination. The one principle expressed by him which was probably intelligible to the electors of High Wycombe was his determination to destroy the Whig party. His opponent on this occasion was Colonel Grey, a son of the Whig prime minister, who beat him at the poll by a majority of eleven votes.

At the general election which took place in the autumn of the same year, Disraeli again came forward to seek the suffrages of High Wycombe. In his address to the electors he described himself as wearing the badge of no party and the livery of no faction. He advocated the ballot and triennial parliaments. With regard to the Corn-laws, he would support any change the basis of which was to relieve the consumer without injuring the farmer. The address was concluded in the following terms: "Rouse yourselves in this hour of doubt and danger, rid yourselves of all that political jargon and factious slang of Whig and Tory—two names with one meaning, used only to delude you,—and
unite in forming a great national party which can alone save the country from impending destruction!" The people of High Wycombe were not, however, ripe for these novel heresies, and Disraeli found himself a second time at the bottom of the poll.

In 1833 he was invited to stand for Marylebone; but as no vacancy occurred the proposal fell through. A political crisis in the following year brought about the dismissal of the Reform ministry, and Sir Robert Peel was intrusted with the task of forming a new administration. Disraeli for the third time addressed himself to the electors of High Wycombe. It was on this occasion that he produced a lampoon on the late ministry which affords an excellent illustration of the use to which he could put his powers of ridicule. "The Reform ministry, indeed! Why, scarcely an original member of that celebrated cabinet remained. You remember, gentlemen, the story of Sir John Cutler's silk hose. Those famous stockings remind me of this famous ministry; for really, between Hobhouse darns and Ellice botching, I hardly can decide whether the hose are silk or worsted. The Reform ministry! I daresay now some of you have heard of Mr. Ducrow, that celebrated gentleman who rides upon six horses. What a prodigious achievement! It seems impossible, but you have confidence in Ducrow. You fly to witness it. Unfortunately, one of the horses is ill, and a donkey is substituted
Early Influences.

in his place. But Ducrow is still admirable; there he is, bounding along in a spangled jacket and cork slippers. The whole town is mad to see Ducrow riding at the same time upon six horses; but now two more of the steeds are seized with the staggers, and lo! three jackasses in their stead. Still Ducrow persists, and still announces to the public that he will ride round his circus every night on his six steeds. At last all the horses are knocked up, and now there are half a dozen donkeys. What a change! Behold the hero in the amphitheatre, the spangled jacket thrown on one side, the cork slippers on the other. Puffing, panting, and perspiring, he pokes one sullen brute, thwacks another, cuffs a third, and curses a fourth, while one brays to the audience, and another rolls in the sawdust. Behold the late prime minister and the Reform ministry!"

The result of the election was as disappointing to Disraeli’s hopes as the two previous occasions. Failing to secure the support of the Radicals, he found himself again at the bottom of the poll. But he did not appear the least disheartened at this third rebuff, and declared that he did not feel in any way like a beaten man.

His chance came again in 1835, when Peel gave up office and a new administration was formed by Lord Melbourne. He was invited to oppose the re-election of Mr. Labouchere, who had accepted office in the Whig ministry, at Taunton. On this
occasion Disraeli came forward as a partisan of the Tory party, which had, to use his own words, "in this interval roused itself from its lethargy", and had "regained not a little of its original character and primary spirit". It was in the course of this contest that the memorable quarrel with Daniel O’Connell was originated. There being no authentic report of the speech which stung the Irish agitator into the most violent vituperation in the history of polemics, it is extremely difficult to judge at this distance of time how much of the fracas may have been founded on misunderstanding. A report of one of Disraeli’s hustings harangues, in which O’Connell was alluded to as an incendiary and a traitor, was forwarded to the latter. It is supposed that Disraeli, in using these epithets, intended merely to quote the terms in which the Whigs, who were seeking an alliance with O’Connell, had been accustomed to speak of the agitator, but that his phrases were incorrectly reported. O’Connell, who had helped Disraeli at his first contest to the extent of writing him a complimentary letter, which was printed and distributed among the electors, was furious at a service being repaid by what he called "atrocity of the foulest description", and he retaliated by suggesting that Disraeli was descended from the impenitent thief who died upon the cross.

Disraeli promptly sent a challenge over to Dublin; but O’Connell, having once killed a man
in a duel, had made a vow never to fight another, and consequently refused to meet his opponent. The son of the Irishman was then challenged; but, having previously been made a scapegoat on account of his father, he wisely declined a second encounter. Disraeli then took to his pen, which never failed him in the matter of healthy invective. The letter he wrote to O'Connell was published in the *Times*. It commenced—"Although you have placed yourself out of the pale of civilization, still I am one who will not be insulted, even by a Yahoo, without chastising it". He declared that O'Connell's foul and insolent comments were made upon "a hasty and garbled report of a speech which scarcely contains a sentence or an expression as they emanated from my mouth". And he wound up by saying: "We shall meet at Philippi; and rest assured that, confident in a cause, and in some energies which have not been altogether unproved, I will seize the first opportunity of inflicting upon you a castigation which will make you at the same time remember and repent the insults that you have lavished upon Benjamin D'Israeli".

At this time Disraeli's political conduct was attacked by a Whig newspaper, and he vindicated himself by the publication of some able and strongly-worded letters to the *Times*. Describing the state of the country in 1832, he says, in a letter of the 31st of December, 1835: "I found the nation in terror of a rampant democracy. I saw only an
impending oligarchy. . . . Therefore I determined, to the utmost of my power, to oppose the Whigs. Why then, it may be asked, did I not join the Tories? Because I found the Tories in a state of ignorant stupefaction. . . . The Tories in 1832 were avowedly no longer a practical party; they had no system and no object; they were passive and forlorn.” He explained his advocacy of short parliaments on the ground that the power of the Whigs could only be shaken by frequent elections, and he defended his former support of the ballot by declaring that a small knot of hard-hearted sectarian rulers controlled the votes of the petty tradesmen who were their slaves and victims in the paltry little towns enfranchised by the Act. But he ceased to advocate these measures at Taunton, not because the Tory party which he had joined was opposed to them, but because they had ceased to be necessary. “The purposes for which they had been proposed were obtained. The power of the Whigs was reduced to a wholesome measure; the balance of parties in the State was restored; the independence of the House of Lords preserved.”

In the following year Disraeli published his “Vindication of the British Constitution”, which he wrote in the form of a letter addressed to Lord Lyndhurst, who first advised him to join the Tory party, which, he said, was sadly in need of brains. A few months later William IV. died, an event which was followed by the dissolution of Parlia-
ment in July, 1837. Disraeli was invited to stand for Maidstone, which returned two members, and his untiring efforts were at last rewarded by success. Mr. Wyndham Lewis, the husband of the future Mrs. Disraeli, headed the poll; and Disraeli came in a good second, with a large majority over his Whig antagonist.

Chapter II.

Parliamentary Début.

Parliament met in November, 1837, under the auspices of a Whig government; the Liberals having contrived to retain office in spite of the reaction which was setting in against them. Three weeks later Disraeli delivered his maiden speech in the House of Commons. In those days, it must be recollected, new members rarely opened their mouths during their first session, and generally refrained from speaking on important topics for several years. It was somewhat presumptuous, therefore, for Disraeli to rise in his seat at the very threshold of his parliamentary career; and the crime against convention was aggravated by the absurd manner in which he had dressed himself. But in spite of these drawbacks he was received fairly well by the House in general. The occasion was a motion regarding a subscription fund in connection with recent Irish elections, and after
O'Connell had spoken at great length Disraeli managed to catch the Speaker's eye.

The circumstances under which the speech was made might have appalled even greater audacity than Disraeli's. Upon the benches opposite him were ranged the supporters of O'Connell, ready to pounce upon the luckless speaker the moment he gave them the slightest loophole, and determined at all costs to howl him down. As he proceeded, the murmurs of the Irish grew louder and louder. The cheers of Sir Robert Peel, and of other interested and indulgent men on both sides of the House, were drowned in the uproar which grew in volume as the speech proceeded. Disraeli struggled bravely on, but the din reached a point at last which rendered further effort futile. "I should have been glad to hear a cheer even from an opponent", he remarked at this point. The uproar increased, and he then uttered the memorable and prophetic words: "I have tried several things in my life, and in the end I have usually succeeded. You will not listen to me now; the time will come when you will hear me." And he added, as he sat down: "When I rise in this Assembly hereafter a dropped pin shall be heard!" Five years previously Disraeli had been to the House to hear Macaulay, Shiel, and other celebrated orators; and he afterwards expressed his conviction that he "could floor them all". "I was never more certain of anything," he wrote to
his sister, "than that I could carry everything before me in that House." The conviction happily carried him through years of disappointed hope and frustrated ambition, until the crowning success of his long struggle came at length—too late, perhaps, to be appreciated.

Not in the least daunted by his first baptism of parliamentary fire, Disraeli applied himself judiciously to gain the ear of the House. Ten days later he made a brief and pointed speech on the harmless topic of copyright. Speaking on an Irish bill in March, 1839, he succeeded in extracting a cheer from his enemy O'Connell. He opposed Hume's motion for household suffrage, declaring that the House of Commons was the representative not of the people, but of the commons of England. In June we find him giving the House his views on education, and strongly objecting to any shape or form of State interference with regard to educational matters. "It is always the State and never society," he declared; "always machinery and never sympathy. By our system of State education all would be thrown into the same mint, and all would come out with the same impress and superscription."

When Mr. Attwood, the member for Birmingham, presented the Chartists' petition to the House of Commons, Disraeli made an excellent and sympathetic speech, which greatly enhanced his reputation as a speaker. Six weeks later his marriage
took place with Mrs. Lewis, the widow of his former colleague. Mrs. Disraeli was fifteen years older than her husband; she brought him a house in Park Lane and an income of five thousand a year. An acquaintance who was once walking in the Row with Disraeli pointed in the direction of Mrs. Disraeli, who was some yards distant, and had the coarseness to ask: "What feeling can you possibly have for that old woman?" Disraeli answered quietly: "One that is foreign to your nature and which you could not understand—gratitude".

When the government resigned on the Jamaica question, Peel was sent for and intrusted with the task of forming an administration. He refused to take office because the young queen would not part with the Whig ladies who held appointments in the household. It was supposed that Lord Melbourne advised the queen to adopt these tactics in order to ensure his coming in again, and on that account the affair was called the Bedchamber Plot. Disraeli severely criticized Peel's behaviour, and expressed the opinion that he made a mistake in not accepting office. "It was unfortunate", he writes, "that one who, if any, should have occupied the proud and national position of the leader of the Tory party, the chief of the people and the champion of the throne, should have commenced his career as minister under Victoria by an unseemly contrariety to the personal wishes of the queen."
Parliamentary Début.

Parliament was dissolved in June, 1841, the Conservatives carrying a vote of want of confidence against the government by a majority of one. Disraeli did not seek re-election at Maidstone, probably out of delicacy to his wife, who wished to take an active share in canvassing for him, but accepted an offer to stand for Shrewsbury. "Sir William Fraser's account of this election\(^1\) gives a vivid picture of what Disraeli had to endure in those early days of political ambition. His speeches were interrupted by incessant shouts of "Jew" and "Judas". "Portions of a pig were held up on sticks," says Sir William, "and advanced as closely as possible to his nose." The pièce de résistance, however, was when a yokel drove up to the hustings in a donkey-cart, and pulled up in front of the orator. "Disraeli, pausing to take breath, said: 'What is the meaning of your equipage, my friend?' 'Well, I be come here to take you back to Jerusalem.' This joke, which was not badly conceived, merely evoked a good-humoured smile; Disraeli's perfect calmness and equanimity produced the usual effect, if not of checking the attacks, of forcing the respect of those who made them." The result of the poll was that Disraeli and his Tory colleague were returned by substantial majorities.\(^2\)

The same success attended the Conservative cause elsewhere; Peel found himself with a clear

\(^1\) Disraeli and his Day, p. 473.
majority of seventy, and on the defeat of the Whigs on an amendment to the address he became prime minister. A Tory cabinet was constructed, in which the Duke of Wellington had a seat without office; Lord Aberdeen became foreign secretary, and Lord Stanley accepted the colonial secretaryship. Gladstone, it is interesting to note, was made vice-president of the board of trade.

Disraeli, as is well known, was not on that occasion offered a place in the government; and, since the recent publication of *Peel's Letters*, the story of what actually took place has been given to the world. The following letter was sent by Disraeli to Sir Robert Peel after the election:

Grosvenor Gate, Sept. 5, 1841.

Dear Sir Robert,—I have shrunk from obtruding myself upon you at this moment, and should have continued to do so if there were any one on whom I could rely to express my feelings.

I am not going to trouble you with claims similar to those with which you must be wearied. I will not say that I have fought since 1834 four contests for your party, that I have expended great sums, have exerted my intelligence to the utmost for the propagation of your policy, and have that position in life which can command a costly seat.

But there is one peculiarity in my case on which I cannot be silent. I have had to struggle against a storm of political hate and malice which few men ever experienced, from the moment, at the instigation of a
member of your cabinet, I enrolled myself under your banner, and I have only been sustained under these trials by the conviction that the day would come when the foremost man of this country would publicly testify that he had some respect for my ability and my character.

I confess, to be unrecognized at this moment by you appears to me to be overwhelming, and I appeal to your own heart—to that justice and that magnanimity which I feel are your characteristics—to save me from an intolerable humiliation.

Believe me, dear Sir Robert,

Your faithful servant,

B. Disraeli.

In 1846, when he was accused in the course of a debate on the Corn Importation Bill of having been an applicant for office in 1841, Disraeli jumped up and indignantly denied that he had asked for a place in the government. It has often been asserted that he relied upon the fact that Peel was too much of a gentleman to produce the incriminating letter he was supposed to possess, and thus give Disraeli the lie direct. But a careful scrutiny of this letter, the existence of which has now been proved, must convince every reader that it does not actually contain an application for office. The writer recalls himself to Sir Robert Peel’s memory, and sets forth the services which he thinks are entitled to recognition, and he acknowledges that if they are left
The Earl of Beaconsfield.

unrecognized he will feel himself humiliated in the eyes of the party; but he does not ask for a place, nor does he use any words which can be positively construed into such an application. He does not go further than to say that he had been sustained by the conviction "that the day would come when the foremost man of this country would publicly testify that he had some respect for my ability and my character". He does not suggest what shape that acknowledgment should assume, although of course the inference is plain enough to anybody reading between the lines. The point which needs emphasis, and which justifies Disraeli's subsequent denial, is the substantial truth of his assertion that no application for office was made on that occasion.

The reader must judge for himself. Disraeli hears himself suddenly accused of having petitioned Peel for a place in the government. He remembers writing a letter to Peel to recall his services to the party, but he knows that he never actually asked him for office, and he indignantly denies that such was the case. Any man would probably have done the same thing in his position.

In his reply, Peel disclaimed any responsibility regarding the advice tendered to Disraeli by a member of the cabinet.¹ He referred to the object of Disraeli's letter in the following words:—"I should have been very happy had it been in my power to avail myself of your offer of service".

¹This member was obviously Lord Lyndhurst.
There was, as has been stated before, no distinct request of any kind in Disraeli's letter; and Sir Robert Peel's phraseology must be simply regarded as a delicate way of intimating that he did not consider that Disraeli's political claims were sufficient to justify his doing anything for him.

This reply was answered by Disraeli as follows:—

Grosvenor Gate, Sept. 8, 1841.

Dear Sir Robert,—Justice requires that I should state that you have entirely misconceived my meaning, in supposing that I intended even to intimate that a promise of official promotion had ever been made to me, at any time, by any member of your cabinet.

I have ever been aware that it was not in the power of any member of your cabinet to fulfil such engagements, had he made them; permit me to add that it is utterly alien from my nature to bargain and stipulate on such subjects. Parliamentary office should be the recognition of party service and parliamentary ability, and as such only was it to me an object of ambition.

It appears to me that you have mistaken an allusion to my confidence in your sympathy for a reference to a pledge received from a third person. If such a pledge had been given me by yourself, and not redeemed, I should have taken refuge in silence. Not to be appreciated may be a mortification: to be baulked of a promised reward is only a vulgar accident of life, to be borne without a murmur.

Your faithful servant,

B. Disraeli.
The Earl of Beaconsfield.

Although this second letter makes no attempt to deny the inference which Peel drew from the former correspondence, and in fact speaks of parliamentary office as the recognition of party services, every unprejudiced person must see that it leaves the arguments regarding the first letter untouched.

Chapter III.

Young England.

The Young England movement, of which Disraeli was the guiding genius, grew into importance during the first years of the Peel government. Prominent among the notable young men of the day who were disciples of the new creed were the present Duke of Rutland and George Smythe, besides many others who afterwards became famous. The Young England party was an association of men who believed in the power of youth, and who recognized the important rôle which the youth of a nation play in the progress and development of the country. The best exposition of the ideas and aims of Young England is to be found in the pages of Disraeli's two most popular novels, Coningsby and Sybil, which were written between 1843 and 1845.

To us the movement is of great interest, because out of it grew the Tory democracy of later years. One may also hazard the conjecture that these early
and progressive ideas of Disraeli have had an enormous effect upon the present generation. Young Englandism has become one of the most potent of social forces. The present is the age of youth, and there are evidences on all sides of the belief in young energies and young ideas. In politics, in business, in art, or in journalism, we always find nowadays young men coming to the front and pushing the veterans of an older generation out of their place. And we may find the springs of this new factor in modern life in the beliefs and aspirations of Young England in the forties.

In 1844 Disraeli was invited to deliver an address at the Manchester Athenæum, and the remarks that he made for the benefit of the more youthful portion of his audience admirably illustrate the teaching of the new school. "The youth of a nation", he said, "are the trustees of posterity; but the youth I address have duties peculiar to the position which they occupy. They are the rising generation of a society unprecedented in the history of the world, that is at once powerful and new. In other parts of the kingdom the remains of an ancient civilization are prepared to guide, to cultivate, to influence the rising mind; but they are born in a miraculous creation of novel powers, and it is rather a providential instinct that has developed the necessary means of maintaining the order of your new civilization, than the matured foresight of man. This is their inheritance. They will be called on to perform
duties—great duties. I, for one, wish for their sakes, and for the sake of our country, that they may be performed greatly. I give to them that counsel which I have ever given to youth, and which I believe to be the wisest and best—I tell them to aspire. I believe that the man who does not look up will look down; and that the spirit that does not dare to soar is destined perhaps to grovel. . . .

"Then, to the youth of Manchester, representing the civic youth of this great county and this great district, I now appeal. Let it never be said again that the fortunes of this institution were in danger.¹ Let them take advantage of this hour of prosperity calmly to examine and deeply to comprehend the character of that institution in which their best interests are involved, and which for them may afford a relaxation which brings no pang, and yields information which may bear them to fortune. It is to them I appeal with confidence, because I feel I am pleading their cause with confidence, because in them I repose my hopes. When nations fall, it is because a degenerate race intervenes between the class that created and the class that is doomed. Let them, then, remember what has been done for them. The leaders of their community have not been remiss in regard to their interests. Let them remember that, when the in-

¹ The Manchester Athenæum had encountered financial difficulties before it was successfully established.
heritance devolves upon them, they are not only to enjoy, but to improve. They will some day succeed to the high places of this great community; let them recollect those who lighted the way for them; and when they have wealth, when they have authority, when they have power, let it not be said that they were deficient in public virtue and public spirit. When the torch is delivered to them, let them also light the path of human progress to educated man."

It was Disraeli's belief that the two great factors in national development were the traditions and lessons of the past, and the influence of the rising generation. These views, which form the creed of Young England, are concisely stated in the closing pages of *Sybil*.

"And thus", writes Disraeli, "I conclude the last page of a work which, though its form be light and unpretending, would yet aspire to suggest to its readers some considerations of a very opposite character. A year ago, I presumed to offer to the public some volumes that aimed at calling their attention to the state of our political parties; their origin, their history, their present position. In an age of political infidelity, of mean passions, and petty thoughts, I would have impressed upon the rising race not to despair, but to seek in a right understanding of the history of their country and in the energies of heroic youth—the elements of national welfare. The present work advances an-
other step in the same emprise. From the state of Parties it now would draw public thought to the state of the People whom those Parties for two centuries have governed. The comprehension and the cure of this greater theme depend upon the same agencies as the first: it is the past alone that can explain the present, and it is youth that alone can mould the remedial future. The written history of our country for the last ten reigns has been a mere phantasma; giving to the origin and consequence of public transactions a character and colour in every respect dissimilar to their natural form and hue. In this mighty mystery all thoughts and things have assumed an aspect and title contrary to their real quality and style: Oligarchy has been called Liberty; an exclusive Priesthood has been christened a National Church; Sovereignty has been the title of something that has had no dominion, while absolute power has been wielded by those who profess themselves the servants of the People. In the selfish strife of factions, two great existences have been blotted out of the history of England—the Monarch and the Multitude; as the power of the Crown has diminished, the privileges of the People have disappeared; till at length the sceptre has become a pageant, and its subject has degenerated again into a serf.

"It is nearly fourteen years ago, in the popular frenzy of a mean and selfish revolution which emancipated neither the Crown nor the People, that
I first took occasion to intimate, and then to develop, to the first assembly of my countrymen that I ever had the honour to address, these convictions. They have been misunderstood, as is ever for a season the fate of Truth, and they have obtained for their promulgator much misrepresentation, as must ever be the lot of those who will not follow the beaten track of a fallacious custom. But Time, that brings all things, has brought also to the mind of England some suspicion that the idols they have so long worshipped, and the oracles that have so long deluded them, are not the true ones. There is a whisper rising in this country that Loyalty is not a phrase, Faith not a delusion, and Popular Liberty something more diffusive and substantial than the profane exercise of the sacred rights of sovereignty by political classes.

"That we may live to see England once more possess a free Monarchy and a privileged and prosperous People, is my prayer; that these great consequences can only be brought about by the energy and devotion of our Youth is my persuasion. We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can 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."
Sir Robert Peel came into office pledged to protect the agricultural interest. He was a political economist who was convinced of the sound principles of free-trade; but he believed, or was supposed to believe, in common with others, that home-grown corn should be exempted from the operation of the economical principles he professed. It was felt that more harm than good would be achieved if the landed interest of this country were injured by the removal of the duties on imported corn.

The first intimation which Peel gave of his approaching conversion to wholly opposite ideas on this subject was in 1842, six months after his acceptance of office. He then introduced a bill which relieved foreign corn of more than half the duty imposed upon its importation. There was naturally considerable consternation amongst the country gentlemen in the Conservative party, and those who, like Disraeli, were gifted with prescience, foresaw that this was the beginning of the end. It is noteworthy, however, that Disraeli voted with the government on this occasion. He was, it must be remembered, in favour of relieving the working-classes without injury to the farmer; and he supported Peel’s measure because it did
not go far enough, in his opinion, to be mischievous.

At this transition stage of Peel's apostasy Disraeli's eagle eye perceived the opportunity which the coming situation laid open to him, and he was quick to profit by it. He began carefully and gradually to dissemble himself from Peel, and to constitute himself the spokesman of the country gentlemen. It was not until the session of 1844 that he commenced to attack Peel openly; and in 1845, many months before the proposal to abolish the Corn-laws was first made to the cabinet, he kept the House of Commons in an uproar by the brilliant onslaughts he made on Peel and the scathing personalities he hurled at the prime minister's head.

Speaking on a motion for the relief of the agricultural depression, Disraeli pronounced the following admirable piece of satire:—"There is no doubt a difference in the right honourable gentleman's demeanour as leader of the Opposition and minister of the Crown. But that is the old story; you must not contrast too strongly the hours of courtship with the years of possession. It is very true that the right honourable gentleman's conduct is different. I remember him making his Protection speeches. They were the best speeches I ever heard. It was a great thing to hear the right honourable gentleman say, 'I would sooner be the leader of the gentlemen of England than possess the con-
fidence of sovereigns'. That was a grand thing. We do not hear much of the 'gentlemen of England' now. But what of that? They have the pleasure of memory, the charm of reminiscence. They were his first love, and though he may not kneel to them now as in the hour of passion, still they can recall the past; and nothing is more useless or unwise than these scenes of recrimination and reproach, for we know that in all these cases, when the beloved object has ceased to charm, it is in vain to appeal to the feelings.

"Dissolve, if you please," he concluded, "the Parliament you have betrayed, and appeal to the people, who, I believe, mistrust you. For me there remains this, at least—the opportunity of expressing thus publicly my belief that a Conservative government is an organized hypocrisy."

It was not until the end of 1845 that Peel took the cabinet into his confidence. Four years before, he had come into power as the friend of the agricultural interest, and the unpleasing conviction had been gradually forced upon him that the repeal of the Corn-laws was becoming a national question, and that the Protectionists were an isolated group opposed to the wishes of the community. The situation had resolved itself, in his mind, into the question whether it should be himself or Lord John Russell who conferred the cheap loaf upon the working-classes who were clamouring for it. Just as, twenty-two years later, Disraeli found him-
self weighing the alternative of the Conservative or Liberal party enfranchising the masses of the labouring population. As a practical statesman, Peel saw the abolition of the duty on imported corn to be inevitable and imminent. Ten years previously Disraeli had said: "A statesman is essentially a practical character; and when he is called upon to take office, he is not to enquire what his opinions might or might not have been upon this or that subject; he is only to ascertain the needful and the beneficial, and the most feasible measures are to be carried on".

This was the position of Sir Robert Peel, and he was "prepared to serve the country according to its present necessities"—words which were used by Disraeli himself to denote his idea of practical statesmanship. When Peel had definitely made up his mind on this point, he communicated these new opinions to his colleagues and proposed the total abolition of the Corn-laws. With the majority of the cabinet against him, there was nothing left for Peel to do but to resign. It was the honourable course, and he took it. Lord John Russell was sent for by the queen; but he was unable to form an administration, and Peel was accordingly reinstated in office pledged to the repeal of the Corn-laws. Lord Stanley resigned his post; but, with this single exception, the ministry remained exactly as it was before.

The genius of Disraeli was now unfettered. The
Protectionists were nominally under the leadership of Lord George Bentinck, a conscientious and hard-working country gentleman who had given up his racing stud to devote himself to the interests of his party. But Lord George, whatever his abilities may have been, was a mere figure-head. The real leader of the rebellious Tories could only be Disraeli, and, despite the absolute dissimilarity in character between the bluff squire and the masterly politician, there is no question that the former was a puppet in the hands of his able adviser. Fate was, in fact, doubly kind to Disraeli at this turning-point in his uphill struggle. A twofold opportunity presented itself to him in the apostasy of Sir Robert Peel and in the happy circumstance that the chosen leader of the Protectionist party was a man of relatively inferior ability.

Immediately after Peel's resumption of office, Disraeli delivered one of his happiest attacks upon the prime minister. He compared his political apostasy to an incident which had taken place during the late war in the Levant. "I remember," he said, "when that great struggle was taking place, when the existence of the Turkish empire was at stake, the late sultan, a man of great energy and fertile in resources, was determined to fit out an immense fleet to maintain his empire. Accordingly a vast armament was collected. It consisted of many of the finest ships that were ever built. The crews were picked men, the officers were the
ablest that could be found, and both officers and men were rewarded before they fought. There never was an armament which left the Dardanelles similarly appointed since the day of Solyman the Great. The sultan personally witnessed the departure of the fleet; all the muftis prayed for the success of the expedition, as all the muftis here prayed for the success of the last general election. Away went the fleet; but what was the sultan’s consternation when the lord high admiral steered at once into the enemy’s port! Now, sir, the lord high admiral on that occasion was very much misrepresented. He, too, was called a traitor; and he, too, vindicated himself. ‘True it is,’ said he, ‘I did place myself at the head of this valiant armada; true it is, that my sovereign embraced me; true it is, that all the muftis in the empire offered up prayers for my success. But I have an objection to war. I see no use in prolonging the struggle, and the only reason I had for accepting the command was that I might terminate the contest by betraying my master.’ And, sir, these reasons offered by a man of great plausibility, of vast adroitness, have had their effect. For you may be surprised at it, but I assure you it is a fact that he is at this moment the first lord of the admiralty at Constantinople, under the new reign.”

Soon after the meeting of Parliament Peel brought in his bill for the repeal of the Corn-laws.
The Earl of Beaconsfield.

As the measure passed through its various stages the bitterness of party feeling increased, until, as Lord Malmesbury remarks, the Peelites and Protectionists seemed to have lost all power of commanding their language. Disraeli reserved his most eloquent effort until the third reading of the bill, when he delivered an attack upon Peel which is unparalleled for its biting humour and sarcasm. This speech was made on the 15th of May, 1846. Bright declared it to be the finest he had heard; and O'Connell, Disraeli's old enemy, said that it was the greatest speech he ever listened to within the walls of Parliament. It is impossible, within these narrow limits, to give more than a few of the concluding sentences; but the quotation will serve to illustrate, even in cold print, the happy inspiration of Disraeli's wit and the heights to which his oratory was capable of rising.

"And now, sir," said Disraeli, after drawing a vivid picture of the manner in which, he declared, Peel had betrayed his friends and sold his party, "I must say in vindication of the right honourable gentleman, that I think great injustice has been done to him throughout these debates. A perhaps justifiable misconception has universally prevailed. Sir, the right honourable gentleman has been accused of foregone treachery—of long-meditated deception—of a desire unworthy of a great statesman, even if an unprincipled one, of always having intended to abandon the opinions by pro-
fessing which he rose to power. Sir, I entirely acquit the right honourable gentleman of any such intention. I do it for this reason, that when I examine the career of this minister, which has now filled a great space in the parliamentary history of this country, I find that for between thirty and forty years, from the days of Mr. Horner to the days of the honourable member for Stockport, the right honourable gentleman has traded on the ideas and intelligence of others. His life has been one great appropriation clause. He is a burglar of others' intellect. Search the index of Beatson, from the days of the Conqueror to the termination of the last reign, there is no statesman who has committed political petty larceny on so great a scale. I believe, therefore, when the right honourable gentleman undertook our cause on either side of the House, that he was perfectly sincere in his advocacy. But as, in the course of discussion, the conventionalisms which he received from us crumbled away in his grasp, feeling no creative power to sustain him with new arguments, feeling no spontaneous sentiments to force upon him conviction, reduced at last to defending the noblest cause, one based on the most high and solemn principles, upon the 'burdens peculiar to agriculture'—the right honourable gentleman, faithful to the law of his nature, imbibed the new doctrines, the more vigorous, bustling, popular, and progressive doctrines, as he had imbibed the doctrines
of Mr. Horner, as he had imbibed the doctrines of every leading man in this country for thirty or forty years, with the exception of the doctrine of parliamentary reform, which the Whigs very wisely led the country upon, and did not allow to grow sufficiently mature to fall into the mouth of the right honourable gentleman. . . .

"And, sir, even now, in this last scene of the drama, when the party whom he unintentionally betrayed is to be unintentionally annihilated—even now, in this the last scene, the right honourable gentleman, faithful to the law of his being, is going to pass a project which, I believe, it is matter of notoriety is not of his own invention. It is one which may have been modified, but which, I believe, has been offered to another government, and by that government has been wisely rejected. Why, sir, these are matters of general notoriety. After the day that the right honourable gentleman made his first exposition of his scheme, a gentleman well known in this House, and learned in all the political secrets behind the scenes, met me, and said: 'Well, what do you think of your chief's plan?' Not knowing exactly what to say, but taking up a phrase which has been much used in the House, I observed: 'Well, I suppose it's a "great and comprehensive" plan'. 'Oh,' he replied, 'we know all about it. It was offered to us! It is not his plan; it's Popkins' plan.' And is England to be governed by Popkins' plan? Will he go to
the country with it? Will he go with it to that ancient and famous England that once was governed by statesmen—by Burleighs and Walsingham, by Bolingbrokes and by Walpoles, by a Chatham and a Canning—will he go to it with this fantastic scheming of some presumptuous pedant? I will not believe it. I have that confidence in the common-sense, I will say the common spirit of our countrymen, that I believe they will not long endure this huckstering tyranny of the Treasury bench—these political pedlars that bought their party in the cheapest market, and sold us in the dearest.

"I know, sir, that there are many who believe that the time is gone by when one can appeal to those high and honest impulses that were once the mainstay and the main element of the English character. I know, sir, that we appeal to a people debauched by public gambling—stimulated and encouraged by an inefficient and short-sighted minister. I know that the public mind is polluted with economic fancies: a depraved desire that the rich may become richer without the interference of industry and toil. I know, sir, that all confidence in public men is lost. But, sir, I have faith in the primitive and enduring elements of the English character. It may be vain now, in the midnight of their intoxication, to tell them that there will be an awakening of bitterness. It may be idle now, in the spring-tide of their economic frenzy, to warn
them that there may be an ebb of trouble. But the dark and inevitable hour will arrive. Then, when their spirit is softened by misfortune, they will recur to those principles that made England great, and which, in our belief, can alone keep England great. Then, too, perchance they may remember, not with unkindness, those who, betrayed and deserted, were neither ashamed nor afraid to struggle for the 'good old cause'—the cause with which are associated principles the most popular, sentiments the most entirely national; the cause of labour; the cause of the people—the cause of England."

It is matter of history that Peel carried his bill through its various stages by large majorities; but to him it was no hour of triumph. The moment was at hand when the man, whose services, a few years previously, he had unhesitatingly rejected, would hurl him down from the proud position he occupied. On the second reading of the Irish Coercion Bill, a section of the Protectionist party, marshalled by Disraeli and Lord George Bentinck, joined forces with the Whigs and turned out the government. Of that division Disraeli has given a graphic description in his Life of Lord George Bentinck. "But it was not merely their numbers", he writes, "that attracted the anxious observation of the Treasury bench as the Protectionists passed in defile before the minister to the hostile lobby. It was impossible that he could have marked them
without emotion, the flower of that great party which had been so proud to follow one who had been so proud to lead them. They were men to gain whose hearts, and the hearts of their fathers, had been the aim and exultation of his life. They had extended to him an unlimited confidence, and an admiration without stint. They had stood by him in the darkest hour, and had borne him from the depths of political despair to the proudest of living positions. Right or wrong, they were men of honour, breeding, and refinement, high and generous character, great weight and station in the country, which they had ever placed at his disposal. They had been not only his followers but his friends, had joined in the same pastimes, drunk from the same cup, and in the pleasantness of private life had often forgotten together the cares and strife of politics."

Disraeli stood, at that hour of political victory, in a strange and anomalous position. After less than ten years of parliamentary life he had won his way to the virtual leadership of the proudest and most exclusive section of the Tory party; he was political master of men who despised and hated him, and who called him "Jew" and "adventurer" behind his back; and he had succeeded in permanently extinguishing the career of a minister whom he himself has designated "the greatest member of Parliament that ever lived".
Chapter V.

Office.

Disraeli had purchased, about this period of his life, a small estate in Buckinghamshire called Hughenden Manor. At the general election in 1847 he was invited to stand for the county, which returned him unopposed. To this constituency he always remained faithful, until his elevation to the peerage removed him from the House of Commons. Peel had in the meantime been succeeded by Lord John Russell. The Conservative party remained split up into two sections, the Peelites and the Protectionists; and Peel, anxious to prevent the latter from forming a government, and seeing the hopelessness of any attempt to re-form a party of his own for some time to come, gave his support to the Russell ministry.

At the close of the year a fortuitous event occurred which considerably affected Disraeli's fortunes. Lord George Bentinck gave offence to his party by speaking and voting in favour of Russell's bill to remove the disabilities of Jews. A Protectionist member wrote a letter to him, stating that the party were dissatisfied at the course he had taken; and Lord George, being a proud man, at once resigned the leadership. This act placed Disraeli in an awkward predicament. In spite of his great and proved abilities, he was not a persona grata to the
party in general. Lord Malmesbury writes at that critical period: "There can be no doubt that there is a very strong feeling among Conservatives in the House of Commons against him. They are puzzled and alarmed by his mysterious manner, which has much of the foreigner about it, and are incapable of understanding and appreciating the great abilities which certainly underlie, and, as it were, are concealed by this mask." The leadership was offered to Lord Granby; but the party remained practically without a chief during the whole of the session in 1848.

The matter was brought to a crisis by the sudden death of Lord George Bentinck in September. Disraeli was then Lord Londonderry's guest at his place in Durham. The news was suddenly communicated to him on his return from an afternoon stroll, and he was so overwhelmed as to be incapable of speech. He turned ghastly pale, and sank on to a chair. The death of Lord George at that moment meant either the destruction, at least for the time being, of Disraeli's chances, or the doubtful contingency that his services would be recognized by the Protectionists, who seemed to dislike and distrust him. The necessity of choosing a new leader, however, forced upon the party a selection which was certainly inevitable. There could be but one leader, so long as Disraeli had a seat in Parliament; and in 1849 he made his first appearance in the House of Commons as the recognized chief of the Protectionists.
During the next two or three years Parliament was constantly occupied with the pressing question of agricultural depression. It is important to note that Disraeli, when addressing a farmers' association in his county, distinctly stated it to be his opinion that it would not be practicable to revert to the protective system, unless such a step became, in its turn, a national question. But he was constantly and consistently urging the relief of the landed interest, which he considered to be unjustly and disproportionately taxed. He warned the House of the danger of extinguishing the agricultural classes and the territorial aristocracy. "Although you may for a moment flourish after their destruction," he said; "although your ports may be filled with shipping, your factories smoke on every plain, and your forges flame in every city—I see no reason why you should form an exception to that which the page of history has mournfully recorded: that you, too, should not fade like the Tyrian dye, and moulder like the Venetian palaces. But, united with the land, you will obtain the best and surest foundation upon which to build your enduring welfare. You will find in that interest a counsellor in all your troubles, in danger your undaunted champion, and in adversity your steady customer."

Early in 1851 Lord John Russell, having been defeated on Locke King's county franchise motion, resigned office. Lord Stanley was sent for, but
failed to form a cabinet. Disraeli was very angry at the opportunity being allowed to go by, and the irritation was not allayed by Lord Stanley’s public declaration that the members of his party were not sufficiently experienced in public business to undertake the responsibility of office. The days of the government were numbered, however; and the Palmerston affair at the close of the year brought about its subsequent downfall. Lord Palmerston, who was foreign secretary, was continually sending important despatches without consulting the queen or the cabinet. In spite of repeated warnings and injunctions, he privately expressed to the French ambassador his approval of the coup d'état in France, although the cabinet had decided not to interfere in any way with the internal affairs of that country. Thereupon Lord John Russell insisted on his retiring from the ministry. Palmerston determined to have his “tit-for-tat with John Russell”, and early in the following session, by carrying an amendment on the premier’s militia bill, he brought about his resignation.

Lord Derby[^1] was sent for, and commenced immediately to form an administration. There was no question on this occasion of anybody but Disraeli leading the House of Commons; but Lord Derby made an unsuccessful attempt at persuading Palmerston to join the government. ^4 Disraeli took Lord Stanley had succeeded to the peerage on his father's death in July, 1851.
office as chancellor of the exchequer; a selection which was generally condemned by the press, the newspapers being for the most part agreed that finance was not a fit subject for experiment. His delight at the prospect of office was so unaffected, that he told Lord Malmesbury "he felt just like a young girl going to her first ball", and constantly repeated: "Now we have got a status". The Conservative government was not remarkable for its strength; and of several of its members the prime minister had never heard before Disraeli mentioned their names.

Ministers had scarcely taken their seats upon the Treasury bench, when they were challenged as to whether they intended to leave the economic condition of the country undisturbed, or to revert to a policy of protection. In reply, Disraeli gave the House to understand that the government intended to consider some form of compensation for the agricultural classes, but that no measure involving the principle of protection would be introduced without first taking the verdict of the constituencies. A few months later, however, Disraeli found himself the "child of circumstances", and protection was finally—and very sensibly—thrown overboard altogether.

After bringing in a militia bill, which was ultimately passed by large majorities, Disraeli introduced a provisional budget. The greatest interest was manifested in this first financial statement.
What attitude would the chancellor of the exchequer take up on the subject of free-trade? was the anxious question asked by the manufacturing and industrial classes; and the farmers were equally anxious to know if the government had any scheme of compensation to propose. The genius and ability exhibited by Disraeli in explaining his budget was recognized on both sides of the House; but he made an unfortunate omission which created a great amount of vexation to his party and of alarm amongst the agricultural classes. There was no mention made of any prospective measure of relief for the agricultural depression, the subject was not even alluded to in his speech; the budget was the Liberal budget bequeathed by his predecessor in office, and no concealment was attempted of the fact that free-trade had created a prosperous state of affairs. The omission was felt to be so disastrous that Lord Derby took the first public opportunity to reassure the farmers. Speaking at the Mansion House a few days after the introduction of the provisional budget, the prime minister referred to the necessity of reconciling apparently conflicting interests "by mutual concessions and by mutual compromises"—ambiguous phrases which created a considerable amount of alarm amongst the free-traders.

The Derby government had received the support of the Liberal party on the understanding that Parliament should be dissolved in the summer.
Accordingly, writs were issued in July, and the electoral struggle was commenced. There appear to have been a confusing variety of issues before the country. Some Conservatives advocated free-trade; others, protection and a reversion to the Corn-laws. Disraeli and his immediate adherents, holding out somewhat vague principles of reciprocity, may be said to have appealed to the country on the understanding that they advocated leaving free-trade in statu quo, coupled with some measure of compensation to the agricultural interest, but that they were prepared to carry out the wishes of the nation as to whether protection should be reverted to or not.

The country pronounced in favour of free-trade, and the government found themselves in a small minority. The bad organization of the Conservative party was, however, principally to blame for their defeat. Shortly after the meeting of Parliament in November, Disraeli, as leader of the House of Commons, delivered a magnificent oration on the Duke of Wellington, who had died a few weeks previously. It was in the course of this speech that he uttered a fine passage which was discovered to coincide with one in an essay published anonymously in a French review in 1829. Some people thought that the plagiarism was intentional; but it is absurd to suppose that a man of Disraeli's oratorical and literary abilities would have stooped to anything so contemptible. The plausible ex-
planation is probably that given by the *Times* at that date, that "it is one of the evils of a well-stored memory that a man cannot help quoting".

The queen's speech recognized the verdict of the country, and stated that the commercial policy of the government was to be one of "unrestricted competition". The phraseology was considered by some critics to be evasive and ambiguous. Disraeli was asked why he condescended to be tied together with a bundle of incompetent marquises, and why he did not frankly acknowledge: "I am a free-trader. I hunted Sir Robert Peel to his grave, I maligned Sir Robert Peel; but I see that I committed a grievous error, and I am now a free-trader." A great debate ensued when Mr. Villiers moved his free-trade resolutions. Disraeli moved an amendment—which he afterwards withdrew in favour of a similar one proposed by Palmerston—by which the principle of protection was decently and permanently interred. That he was still animated by the spirit of Young England may be gathered from the following eloquent appeal, made in the course of his speech, to the new members lately returned to Parliament. "It is to those new members," he exclaimed, "on whichever side of the House they may sit, that I appeal with confidence. They have just entered, many of them after much longing, upon that scene to which they have looked forward with so much anxiety, suspense, and interest. I have no doubt they are animated
with a noble ambition, and that many of them will hereafter realize their loftiest aspirations. I can only say, from the bottom of my heart, that I wish that, whatever may be their aim in an honourable career, their most sanguine hopes may not be disappointed. Whatever adds to the intelligence, eloquence, and knowledge of the House, adds also to its influence; and the interests of all are bound up in cherishing and maintaining the moral and intellectual predominance of the House of Commons. To the new members, therefore, I now appeal. I appeal to the generous and the young; and I ask them to pause, now that they are at last arrived on the threshold of the sanctuary of the constitution, and not become the tools and victims of exhausted factions and obsolete politics."

The hope of the Opposition was to trip up the government on the budget. The agitation about the commercial policy of the Disraeli-Derby ministry had served its purpose of stirring the whole country into a fever of suspense regarding the financial intentions of the government. It would have better suited Disraeli to make his statement at the usual time in the following year; but the budget of April had been only a provisional one, and it was expedient, besides, to pacify the agitators by meeting them boldly without delay. A few days after the debate on Mr. Villiers' resolutions, Disraeli accordingly rose to introduce his budget. He declared that it was framed on
the general principle of enabling the people to engage in that competition to which they were now forever destined, by cheapening as much as possible that which sustained their lives. The government proposed, therefore, to diminish the duty on malt by one-half, and to gradually remit one-half of the duty on tea. Something was also to be done to relieve the farmer, in addition to the reduction of the malt duty, by assessing the amount of his income-tax on one-third, instead of on one-half, of his rent. On the other hand, the loss of revenue was to be made up by extending the income-tax and the house-tax.

The Opposition and the Peelites were determined to make Disraeli's budget an opportunity for turning out the government. Disraeli always believed that this coalition was brought about by personal hostility to himself, and he concluded his final speech on the 16th of December by these words: "If I were, which is not impossible by intense labour, to bring forward a scheme which might save £1,000,000 annually to the country, administrative reform would become a party question tomorrow. Yes! I know what I have to face. I have to face a coalition. The combination may be successful. A coalition has before this been successful. But coalitions, although successful, have always found this, that their triumph has been brief. This, too, I know, that England does not love coalitions. I appeal from the coalition to that
public opinion which governs this country—to that public opinion whose mild and irresistible influence can control even the decrees of parliaments, and without whose support the most august and ancient institutions are but 'the baseless fabric of a vision'."

Sir Charles Wood, a former chancellor of the exchequer, had advised Disraeli in the course of the debate to take back his budget, as Pitt had once been compelled to do, and reconsider it. The offensive tone in which the advice was tendered provoked Disraeli to retort: "The right honourable gentleman tells me in not very polished, and scarcely in parliamentary, language, that I do not know my business. The House of Commons is the best judge of that; I care not to be his critic. Yet, if he has learnt his business, he has still to learn some other things: he has to learn that petulance is not sarcasm, and that insolence is not invective."

It was a dramatic scene. When Disraeli had finished his great speech—during part of which a loud thunder-storm raged—with his impassioned appeal to public opinion, Gladstone rose up angrily to defend his friends from the personal attack made on them. This was the signal for so great an uproar that for some minutes Gladstone was inaudible. "One old gentleman", relates Sir William Fraser, "shouted in a voice loud enough to deafen one. He actually screamed at Mr. Gladstone."
Office.

The coalition defeated the government, on the division which followed, by 305 votes against 286. Lord Derby at once announced his intention to resign, making a very handsome promise of support to his successor, who was expected to be Lord Aberdeen. At the same time Disraeli rose in the Commons to make a similar declaration. He had assumed an air of gaiety, and wore a flower in his button-hole; but his language betrayed the real state of his feelings, and in expressing his gratitude to the House for the support given him in the conduct of business, he made use of the expression "grateful thanks"—a solecism which, as Sir William Fraser observes, "coming from such a great master of language, added to the sadness of the situation".

Disraeli concluded by uttering these generous words of reconciliation: "If in maintaining a too unequal struggle any word has escaped my lips—which I hope has never been the case except in the way of retort—which has hurt the feelings of any gentleman in this House, I deeply regret it; and I hope that the impression on their part will be as transient as the sense of provocation was on my own. The kind opinion of the members of this House, whatever may be their political opinions, and wherever I may sit, will always be to me a most precious possession: one which I shall always covet and most highly appreciate."
Chapter VI.

Lord Derby's Blunder.

The Coalition government under Lord Aberdeen, which succeeded the Derby ministry in December, 1852, was too overweighted with administrative ability to produce a digestible policy. Disraeli laughed at them as "All the Talents", and when they blundered into the Crimean war before this country was prepared for a campaign on so large a scale, he attributed the crisis to the fact that each member of the cabinet had a policy of his own. "It is a coalition war", he declared. "Rival opinions, contrary politics, and discordant systems have produced such vacillation and perplexity, that at last you are going to war with an opponent who does not want to fight, and whom you are unwilling to encounter. What a mess for a great country! and all brought about by such distinguished administrative ability!" And he spoke of "this terrible prospect of war, brought about by the combination of geniuses opposite me; and brought about absolutely by the amount of their talents and the discordancy of their opinions".

War was declared against Russia in March, 1854. The session was mainly occupied with its discussion, and in December of that year Parliament reassembled for the purpose of voting further supplies. The scandalous conduct of the cam-
campaign, which, in the absence of all foresight and preparation, had inflicted untold horrors and suffer-
ing on the British forces, was immediately brought before the House. But the final blow was dealt the
government early in the following session, when one of their own supporters moved for a select committee to inquire into the condition of the army before Sebastopol, and into the conduct of the responsible departments of the government. Lord
John Russell chose this moment to desert his col-
leagues. Without any warning he went down to
the House of Commons on the very day of the
motion, which ministers had agreed to regard as a
motion implying want of confidence, and not only announced the fact of his secession, but proceeded
to deliver a strong attack on the Duke of Newcastle,
who was minister of war. He laid the blame and
the responsibility of the scandalous conduct of the
Crimean War upon the duke, and declared that he
had always disapproved of his appointment. In
consequence of this attack the duke resigned his
office, but in the course of a personal explanation
to the House of Lords he made it clearly under-
stood that no step had been taken by him, in re-
gard to the campaign, without Lord John Russell's
advice or approval.

Disraeli, who alluded to Lord John's desertion of
the ministry as a "profligate intrigue", wound up
his speech on the motion before the House with
the following summary of the political situation:
"Two years ago England was the leading Power in Europe; but is there any man in this House who can pretend that she holds that position now? If this be the case—if we are called upon to decide whether the House of Commons has confidence in the ministry, when the debate is commenced by the secession of the most eminent member of the government, when affairs are in a calamitous state, and when we are told by the late lord president that the conduct of the war is intrusted to a minister who he thinks is unequal to the task—I ask the country, I ask this House, I ask the ministers themselves, whether they can complain that a member of the Opposition should give his vote according to the belief which he entertains, that the affairs of the country are intrusted to a deplorable administration."

The division was taken on the 29th of January, 1855, and the government were beaten by a large majority. Ministers at once resigned, and Lord Derby was sent for by the queen. This was, in the opinion of the most far-sighted politicians, the great opportunity of Lord Derby's career. The gross mismanagement of the war, resulting in unparalleled suffering and in unnecessary loss of life, had created throughout the country the bitterest animosity against the Coalition government. Ministers were universally blamed for blundering into hostilities for which no preparation had been made, and the public were by
no means satisfied that certain members of the cabinet had not allowed themselves to be made tools of by the French emperor. There were two contingencies which made the stability of Lord Derby's position, should he elect to take office, almost a foregone conclusion. In the first place, the country desired a change of government. They distrusted, and withheld their confidence from, the Coalition ministry; and a solid phalanx of all shades of opinion was ready to rally round and support Lord Derby, had he chosen to take the helm of the State at that crisis. Secondly, the Crimean war had reached its turning-point. The minister who accepted office at that moment would reap the credit of putting an end to a disastrous war; and the gratitude of the people would ensure his administration a long lease of power.

To the rage and mortification of the whole Conservative party, Lord Derby deliberately threw away this great chance. He repeated the excuse which he had made in 1851, that he could not govern with his own party without extraneous aid. The disgust and indignation of Disraeli over-mastered him to such an extent, that he went to Lord Derby on the morning of the latter's public statement, and told him, as Lord Malmesbury relates, some very disagreeable truths. At the same time he begged him to say nothing against the party; a warning which had no effect, as Lord Derby made a long speech praising the Peelites
and disparaging his own friends. It appeared from Lord Derby's explanation in the House of Lords that, on receiving the commands of the queen, he had called upon Lord Palmerston and told him, upon the latter expressing his readiness to take office in the new government, that he would have difficulty in forming an administration without his aid. It was agreed between them that Lord Palmerston should invite two of his late colleagues, Gladstone and Sidney Herbert, to join the new cabinet; but instead of this arrangement being carried out, Lord Derby received an intimation that Lord Palmerston had changed his mind upon reflection, followed by letters from the other two declining to take office. The implication was that Lord Palmerston had told his friends of Lord Derby's inability to form a government without them, and that he had proposed himself as prime minister instead.

This explanation created considerable sensation, but it did not exculpate Lord Derby in the eyes of his party. On the contrary, the incautious admission which he confessed having made to Lord Palmerston seriously damaged his political reputation. Even Lord Malmesbury, a most amiable man and a great admirer of Lord Derby, writes at this period: "There is no doubt in my mind that his bad health during the last two years, and his physical sufferings from gout, which have been excessive, have shaken his nerve and robbed him of
much of his former courage and energy". This statement is a little discounted by the following entry in Lord Malmesbury’s diary, which occurs four days later than that from which the above quotation is taken: “Lord Derby, Mr. Bentinck, and I went out shooting wild-fowl. No boy of sixteen could have enjoyed it more than Lord Derby. Eager as everybody is for this peculiar sport, I never saw anyone so keen. We killed six or seven varieties, among which were three white-fronted geese.”

Whilst Lord Derby was killing white-fronted geese with boyish enthusiasm, Disraeli was not unnaturally gnashing his teeth. His hopes had been dashed to the ground at the moment when the legitimate recompense for past labours, undertaken in the face of overwhelming odds, and for past disappointments, was literally within his grasp. He had endured for twenty years an unceasing struggle against a hatred, malice, and uncharitableness unprecedented in the history of public life. If he had not conquered the affections of his party, he had won their respect and their support. By his genius he had raised a broken, disorganized, and abandoned remnant to the position of a great, popular, national party. In their darkest hour he had cheered them on; his eloquence had fired them to enthusiasm; and his statesmanship had found for them a policy. He had led them at last to victory; and in the hour of his triumph the cup
was dashed from his lips, the results of his generalship were scattered to the winds, and he and his supporters were discredited by their chief. It was certainly a moment of bitter anger and mortification; and the strong sentiments expressed by Disraeli were not probably rendered milder by the fact that Lord Derby was enjoying himself like a school-boy, shooting at geese, far from the busy turmoil of political life.

Lord Palmerston succeeded where Lord Derby had failed. Foreign affairs continued to occupy the attention of ministers during the years that followed, and Disraeli was indefatigable in his criticisms of the policy pursued by the government. In 1857 an opportunity occurred of turning the tables on Lord Palmerston, when Mr. Cobden brought forward a motion condemning the China policy of the government. The address which Disraeli delivered on this occasion in support of the motion is both interesting and instructive. Apart from all question of political expediency, it shows a broad-minded and statesmanlike view of the subject, which forms a striking contrast to the narrow and selfish type of imperialism exhibited in the China debates of recent years. The crisis in our relations with China had been brought about by the seizure of a vessel called the Arrow, which was flying the British flag, by Chinese officials. It was proved that the Arrow was owned by Chinese; that she was engaged in illicit trade; and
that the period of her registry at Hong Kong having expired by ten days, she was placed outside
the jurisdiction of the British authorities. These
facts were ignored by Sir John Bowring, the British
plenipotentiary, who promptly ordered the destruc-
tion of the river forts and the bombardment of
Canton, ostensibly by way of reprisal for the action
of the Chinese.

In addressing the House on the subject, Disraeli
declared that it appeared to him that a few obser-
vations would dispose of the legal part of the case.
"In the first place," he said, "if the Arrow had
been a British ship, built at Blackwall, owned by
an Englishman, and manned by British seamen, I
do not think the government would have been
authorized in taking the course which they adopted;
and in the second place, the representatives of
England in China were unable to take their stand
upon the case which they originally stated, and
were driven to placing the whole matter on a very
different issue. On both grounds our position is
equally untenable, and therefore I think that the
legal part of the question as regards the Arrow is
not material. It has all along been a question not
of law, but of policy, and it is to this question of
policy I shall briefly address myself." It was not
a question, he continued, of reviewing the conduct
of Sir John Bowring, whose proceedings had been
sanctioned by the government; the subject for
criticism was the policy of the government in
attempting by force to gain entrance into Canton, and thus to increase our commercial relations with the East.

Great Powers had been brought into contact with us in the East, said Disraeli, and a system of political compromise had developed itself like the balance of power in Europe. If, therefore, the government were not cautious in their conduct then in dealing with China, they would find that they were likely not to extend commerce, but to excite the jealousies of powerful States. "If that is the true state of affairs," he continued, "this country must dismiss from its mind the idea of dealing, as barbarous and uncivilized, with States with which Powers like ourselves have sympathies; and we must habituate ourselves to the idea of extending to countries like China the same diplomatic intercourse that we adopt with other nations. You cannot do that in a moment: it must be a work of time. . . . You are dealing with a country of immense antiquity. You have been reminded in the debate that China enjoys a civilization of twenty-five centuries. In point of antiquity the civilization of Europe is nothing to that. But the result of those ancient habits and customs is an existence of profound ceremony and formal etiquette; and yet you expect that such a country will not be startled by the frank and occasionally, I am sorry to say, the brutal freedom of European manners. With a policy of combination with other powerful European States
in attempting to influence the conduct of the Chinese by negotiations and treaties, it is my belief that ultimately, slowly but surely, we may attain our end. But it is because the actual policy of the government—the policy approved and vindicated by the noble lord—seems to me inconsistent with the policy of combination with other European States, that I think the time has arrived for the House of Commons to express an opinion upon events so startling, and upon behaviour so inconsistent with such a profession."

Disraeli then made a personal attack upon Lord Palmerston, who had declared that Mr. Cobden's resolution was the result of a factious combination. "The noble lord cannot bear coalitions!" he exclaimed. "The noble lord has acted only with those amongst whom he was born and bred in politics! That infant Hercules was taken out of a Whig cradle! And how consistent has been his political life! Looking back upon the past half-century, during which he has professed almost every principle and connected himself with almost every party, the noble lord has raised a warning voice to-night against coalitions, because he fears that a majority of the House of Commons, ranking in its numbers some of the most eminent members of this House—men who have been colleagues of the noble lord—may not approve a policy with respect to China which has begun in outrage, and which, if pursued, will end in ruin. That, sir, is the position of the noble lord."
On a division Mr. Cobden carried his motion by a majority of sixteen. Lord Palmerston decided to appeal to the country, and the dissolution was arranged to take place at the earliest date possible. The elections were held before Easter, and the result amply corroborated the conviction of the Conservative party that Lord Derby's acceptance of office in 1855 would have ensured him a measure of unusual popularity. Lord Palmerston won the day with a largely increased majority, and became for the moment almost the idol of the nation. The election did not in any sense turn upon the intricacies of the China policy of the government. The general public were then, as they mostly are now, completely ignorant with regard to complicated questions of foreign policy. The course best calculated to catch votes was to go to the country with some popular jingo cry that would stir up an ignorant kind of patriotism; and this dodge, coupled with the immense prestige attaching to the minister who had brought the Crimean war to a happy conclusion, gave to the Palmerston administration the new lease of power which might—but for the blunder of 1855—have been accorded to a Derby government.

The triumph of Lord Palmerston at this moment, in the contingency of an appeal to the country, was undoubtedly foreseen by Disraeli. We learn from Lord Malmesbury that he had always discouraged a debate on the China question, and that he spoke
himself on the subject with great reluctance. It was impossible for so vigorous a critic of the government's foreign policy to remain silent during the discussion of Mr. Cobden's motion; but no one can doubt for a moment that Disraeli was dismayed at the defeat of the ministry at that juncture. It meant, or appeared to indicate, the further and prolonged postponement of the realization of hopes which had already been needlessly deferred.

Chapter VII.

The Second Derby Government.

The year 1858 gave Disraeli a more satisfactory opportunity of aiming a blow at the Palmerston government. In January an attempt to assassinate the Emperor Napoleon was made by an Italian named Orsini, and public indignation was roused in France by the discovery that the plot had been hatched and the bombs manufactured in England. An important despatch on the subject was addressed by the French government to the British cabinet; but Lord Palmerston, instead of replying to it at once, laid the despatch unanswered on the table of the House of Commons, and brought in a bill to amend the law respecting refugees. This bill was supported by Disraeli; but when an amendment was moved to the effect "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, yet it cannot but regret that Her Majesty's government, previously to inviting the House to amend the law of conspiracy, at the present time has not felt it to be their duty to make some reply to the important despatch received from the French government, dated Paris, Jan. 20", Disraeli—with the majority of the party—voted for it, and put the government in a minority of nineteen.

"Disraeli's face", relates Lord Malmesbury, "was worth anything—a mixture of triumph and sarcasm that he could not repress"; and Lord Palmerston was so furious that he actually shook his fist at his opponents.

On the ministry resigning, Lord Derby formed his second administration with Disraeli in his old place. The new government got into a scrape at the outset by an imprudent act of Lord Ellenborough, who was appointed president of the Indian Board of Control. Lord Canning, the governor-general of India, had issued a proclamation of impolitic severity after the fall of Lucknow. Lord Ellenborough, without consulting his colleagues, wrote a private despatch to the governor-general strongly condemning the terms of his proclamation. By some blunder the despatch in full was laid upon the table of the House of Commons. A motion of censure was brought forward by Mr. Cardwell, and
gave rise to a debate which lasted four nights. The situation was saved by the resignation of Lord Ellenborough, and from first to last the battle went in favour of the government. Disraeli afterwards described the scene in Parliament at a meeting of his constituents in Slough.

"We came down to the House," he said, "expecting to divide at four o'clock in the morning, I myself expecting probably to deliver an address two hours after midnight; and I believe that even with the consciousness of a good cause that is no mean effort. Well, gentlemen, we were all assembled, our benches with their serried ranks seemed to rival those of our proud opponents, when suddenly there arose a wail of distress—but not from us. I can only liken the scene to the mutiny of the Bengal army. Regiment after regiment, corps after corps, general after general, all acknowledged that they could not march through Coventry. It was like a convulsion of nature, rather than any ordinary transaction of human life. I can only liken it to one of those earthquakes which take place in Calabria or Peru; there was a rumbling murmur, a groan, a shriek, a sound of distant thunder. No one knew whether it came from the top or the bottom of the House. There was a rent, a fissure in the ground, and then a village disappeared; then a tall tower toppled down; and the whole of the Opposition benches became one great dissolving view of anarchy."
Disraeli was determined to take this golden opportunity of making a bid for popularity by dealing with the subject of parliamentary reform. It was generally acknowledged that the bill of 1832 could not be considered as a final settlement; and as of late years the question of reform had on several occasions been unsuccessfully reopened by the Liberal party, it was quite fit and proper for a Conservative government to come forward and express their readiness to deal with it. The crux of the position was brought into relief by Disraeli in moving the first reading of his Reform Bill. "Is this question to be left as a means of reorganizing an Opposition?" he asked. "Is that the opinion of either side of this House? Is it the judgment of this House that that is a wholesome position for political questions of the highest quality to occupy?" Instead, therefore, of leaving the question to assist in reorganizing the Opposition, the Derby cabinet very wisely decided to call in its aid to contribute towards the reorganization of the Conservative party.

An excellent illustration of the adroit manner in which logicians are able to turn their arguments to suit individual cases, is afforded by a comparison between the opening sentences used by Disraeli on introducing the subject of reform in 1859, and a passage which occurs in a speech delivered by him on the 8th of June, 1855. "Those which are often esteemed the greatest political questions," he said
in 1859—"those questions, for example, of peace or war which now occupy and agitate the public mind—are in fact inferior. In either of those cases an erroneous policy may be retraced; and there are no disasters which cannot be successfully encountered by the energies of a free people; but the principles upon which the distribution of power depends in a community, when once adopted, can rarely be changed, and an error in that direction may permanently affect the fortunes of a State or the character of a people.”

The following were Disraeli’s words in 1855:—
“A minister may, by the aid of a parliamentary majority, support unjust laws, and may support a political system which a quarter of a century afterwards may, by the aid of another parliamentary majority, be condemned; the passions, the prejudices, and the party spirit that flourish in a free country may support and uphold him in the course he is taking. But when you come to foreign politics things are very different. Every step that you take is an irretrievable one, and the consequences of your conduct are immediate and palpable. A false step in such a case cannot be retraced; you cannot, as you do on domestic questions, rescind your policy, calculate the loss you have sustained by the unwise system you have pursued, and console yourselves by thinking that for the future you will shun a policy proved to be injurious.”
These contradictory passages have not been quoted for the purpose of discrediting their author. They merely serve to exhibit in a whimsical degree the evanescent quality, even when emanating from the mind of a statesman, of much that passes for sound logic.

Disraeli's Reform Bill of 1859 was based upon the principle of representing interests, and not merely population and property. "This House," he declared, "in my opinion, ought to represent all the interests of the country. Now, those interests are sometimes antagonistic, often competing, always independent and jealous; yet they all demand a distinctive representation in this House, and how can that be effected, under such circumstances, by the simple representation of the voice of the majority, or even by the mere preponderance of property?"

After showing that mere population or property tests were fallacious and erroneous, he proceeded to picture a House of Commons under varying aspects. "Let us now see, sir," he said, "what will be the consequence if the population principle is adopted. You would have a House, generally speaking, formed partly of great land-owners and partly of great manufacturers. I have no doubt that, whether we look to their property or to their character, there would be no country in the world which could rival in respectability such an assembly. But would it be a House of Commons; would it represent the country—would it represent the vari-
ous interests of England? Why, sir, after all, the suffrage and the seat, respecting which there is so much controversy and contest, are only means to an end. They are means by which you may create a representative assembly that is a mirror of the mind, as well as of the material interests, of England. You want in this House every element that obtains the respect and engages the interest of the country. You must have lineage and great territorial property; you must have manufacturing enterprise of the highest character; you must have commercial weight; you must have professional ability in all its forms. But you want something more. You want a body of men not too intimately connected either with agriculture, or with manufactures, or with commerce, not too much wedded to professional thought and professional habits. You want a body of men representing the vast variety of the English character—men who would arbitrate between the claims of those great predominant interests, who would temper the acerbity of their controversies. You want a body of men to represent that considerable portion of the community who cannot be ranked under any of those striking and powerful classes to which I have referred, but who are in their aggregate equally important and valuable, and perhaps as numerous."

To carry out his theory of representation, Disraeli proposed various so-called fancy franchises, which would confer votes upon fund-holders, depositors
in savings-banks, recipients of official pensions, university graduates, ministers of religion, and so forth. But the main point of the bill was the equalization of the county and borough franchise, both being fixed at a £10 qualification; and the disqualification of the forty-shilling freeholders in boroughs from possessing a franchise in the county. In view of the fact that Disraeli conferred household suffrage in 1867, it is particularly interesting to note what he said on this occasion in reference to the lowering of the franchise in towns; but it should be borne in mind that in 1867 he blamed those who had rejected his former bill for having forced upon him the final surrender to democracy.

"Now," he observed, "I beg the House to consider for a moment what must be the effect of lowering the franchise in towns. Suppose that, instead of a £10 borough qualification, you had a £5 borough qualification. Well, the moment that you had a £5 borough qualification you would realize all those inconvenient results which are erroneously ascribed to the £10 qualification. You would then have a monotonous constituency. You would then have a constituency whose predominant opinions would be identical. You would then have a constituency who would return to Parliament members holding the same ideas, the same opinions, the same sentiments; and all the variety which represents the English character would be entirely lost. You would then have in your borough constituency
a predominant class; and certainly the spirit and genius of our constitution are adverse to the predominance of any class in this House. It certainly would be most injudicious, not to say intolerable, when we are guarding ourselves against the predominance of a territorial aristocracy and the predominance of a manufacturing and commercial oligarchy, that we should reform Parliament by securing the predominance of a household democracy. I am convinced that that is not the mode in which you must improve and vary the elements of the present borough constituency.

"We have sought", said Disraeli, "to offer to the country, in the hope that it will meet with its calm and serious approval, what we believe to be a just and, I will not say a final, but conclusive settlement. Finality, sir, is not the language of politics. But it is our duty to propose an arrangement which, so far as the circumstances of the age in which we live can influence our opinion, will be a conclusive settlement. And we have laid it down as our task to consider, without any respect to persons, what we honestly think are the interests of the country that are not represented, but which we should at this moment counsel the House to add to their numbers."

Before the second reading of the bill, the position of the ministry was weakened by the defection of two members of the cabinet. Mr. Henley and Mr. Walpole objected to the abolition of the forty-
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shilling freehold franchise—an opinion which was shared by the bulk of the Conservative party—and resigned their offices. The clause containing this provision proved to be the heel of Achilles. On the second reading of the bill Lord John Russell moved an amendment condemning interference with the freehold franchise, and advocating the greater extension of the suffrage in cities and boroughs.

Disraeli wound up the debate on this amendment by a speech which, coming from the author of the bill of 1867, contained remarkable sentiments. "If you establish a democracy," he declared, "you must in due season reap the fruits of a democracy. You will in due season have great impatience of the public burdens, combined in due season with great increase of the public expenditure. You will in due season have wars entered into from passion and not from reason; and you will in due season submit to peace ignominiously sought and ignominiously obtained, which will diminish your authority and perhaps endanger your independence. You will in due season, with a democracy, find that your property is less valuable, and that your freedom is less complete. . . . That being my opinion, I cannot look upon what is called reduction of the franchise in boroughs but with alarm; and I have never yet met any argument which fairly encounters the objections that are urged to it. You cannot encounter it by sentimental assertions of the good qualities of the working-classes. The greater their
good qualities, the greater the danger. "If you lay down as a principle that they are to enter the constituent body, not as individuals, but as a multitude, they must be the predominant class from their number; and if you dwell on their intelligence, you only increase the power they will exercise."

When the House divided, the government found themselves beaten by a majority of thirty-nine. Thereupon Lord Derby, preferring an appeal to the country to the alternative of resignation, dissolved Parliament. The result of the elections was a gain to the Conservative party of twenty-nine seats, which still left them, however, in a minority. On the assembling of the new Parliament, a vote of want of confidence was moved by Lord Hartington, and carried by a majority of thirteen. This hostile resolution would not have been carried against the government if the Italian blue-book had been previously laid on the table of the House of Commons by Disraeli. The blue-book contained a complete vindication of the policy pursued by the government in regard to the Italian war of independence; and many members afterwards acknowledged that, had they had an opportunity of seeing it, they would not have voted against the government. It has always remained a mystery why the book was not laid upon the table. The party were very angry with their leader for this omission, the consequence of which was the immediate fall of the Derby administration; but no explanation was ever
vouchsafed by Disraeli of this extraordinary blunder, which must have been due to a singular and certainly inexplicable oversight.

Chapter VIII.

Gladstone's Franchise Bill.

The defeat of the Derby ministry in 1859 was followed by several years of wearisome opposition, during which Disraeli's criticisms were mainly directed at the foreign policy of the Palmerston government. The enlistment of British officers to support the Chinese emperor against the Taiping rebels, the Polish insurrection, and the great struggle between Germany and Denmark regarding the Schleswig-Holstein question, were matters which successively occupied the attention of the House of Commons, and Disraeli made many brilliant and effective speeches on all these engrossing topics. He was a perpetual thorn in the side of the chancellor of the exchequer, whose financial footsteps he dogged with unflagging energy; and he made several important speeches on the quarrels between churchmen, which reached the same acute crisis at that period as that attained by the dispute between Ritualists and anti-Ritualists at the close of the nineteenth century.

The general election of 1865 gave a fresh lease of
life to the Palmerston administration, the Liberals being returned to power with a majority of seventy. In the autumn of the same year Palmerston died. Lord Russell succeeded to the premiership, and the task of leading the House of Commons devolved upon Disraeli's brilliant rival, Gladstone.

The queen's speech at the commencement of the session in 1866 contained a promise that the question of Parliamentary reform should be dealt with. In March, Gladstone accordingly introduced a bill to reduce the franchise in the towns from a £10 to a £7 qualification on a basis of rental value. The Conservative party decided to oppose the measure on the ground that it was inexpedient to discuss a bill for the reduction of the franchise, before the whole scheme contemplated by the government had been placed before them. An amendment to this effect was moved, on the second reading of the bill, by Lord Grosvenor, who withdrew his support from the Liberal party, and formed, with several other seceders, a rebel faction which was dubbed by John Bright the "Cave of Adullam".

On the eighth night of the debate which followed, Disraeli got up and supported the amendment. His speech is principally of interest to-day on account of the amazingly accurate forecast which he made of the change in the character of Parliament that would be brought about by the lowering of the franchise.
"I have not the slightest doubt", he said, "to what all these fine measures would lead. I have never believed that they would end in the destruction of the country. I have too much confidence in the country for that. I think there are sense and creative spirit enough in this country to form a government. But what I think is, that they will end in the destruction of Parliament. You may get rid of the House of Commons—I hope you will not destroy England. Now, suppose the present government make up their minds—as for aught I know they have made up their minds to do—to meet the question on a great scale, and astonish the House with a great scheme founded on their own statistics. Suppose they say, 'We are prepared to disfranchise eighty-seven boroughs which have not five hundred electors. We cannot give them entirely to the land; it is not practicable. But we will endeavour to approach a fair balance in the Constitution, and will as far as possible represent population and property blended, and at the same time we will every now and then allot for representation some distinctive interest.' Suppose they do that, what would be the consequence? If the House will permit me, I will tell them. This will probably occur first. I do not suppose you would have, as some think, a Parliament which would not have the confidence of the country. If you had electoral districts to-morrow you would have a very great Parliament, for the character of individuals
and the representation of great interests command public respect in England. You would have every great land-owner in this House, every great manufacturer, and some merchants. But in a short time you would find that you did not have that hold over the executive which you had under the old system. The want of diversity of elements in this House would cause that. In proportion as your command over the executive fades, your great proprietors and your great manufacturers will cease to belong to the House, of which the influence and importance proportionately diminish.

"Then the story will be that the House of Commons is not what it was. So you extend the franchise again, and you may go to manhood or universal suffrage, but you will not advance your case. You will have a Parliament then that will entirely lose its command over the executive, and it will meet with less consideration and possess less influence; because the moment you have universal suffrage it always happens that the man who elects despises the elected. He says, 'I am as good as he is, and although I sent him to Parliament, I have not a better opinion of him than I have of myself'. Then, when the House of Commons is entirely without command over the executive, it will fall into the case of those continental popular assemblies which we have seen rise up and disappear in our own days. There will be no charm of tradition; no prescriptive spell; no families of
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historic lineage; none of those great estates round which men rally when liberty is assailed; no statesmanship, no eloquence, no learning, no genius. Instead of these, you will have a horde of selfish and obscure mediocrities, incapable of anything but mischief, and that mischief devised and regulated by the raging demagogue of the hour."

One has only to glance at the present House of Commons to realize in how great a degree Disraeli's prediction has been fulfilled. The government of this country is now in the hands of an oligarchy represented by the cabinet. Ministers are neither influenced by, nor do they pay the slightest regard to, the opinions expressed by private members of Parliament. The House of Commons has lost its hold over the executive because it is mainly composed of men who have had no political training, and who know and care nothing about politics. To the government of the day the House of Commons simply represents so much mechanical voting power, useful only for the necessary formalities of business; and members are returned to Parliament by the constituencies, not on account of their individual abilities, but simply to support one or other of the great parties in the State.

In Disraeli's day, before the introduction of household suffrage had had time to produce its natural effects, the popular assembly at Westminster was composed of the best elements in the
country. Men of ability and genius had less difficulty in obtaining a seat in Parliament, and consequently the House of Commons was not only representative of the catholic interests of the British empire, but contained leading specialists in most branches of political and economic science. Few would venture to assert that this continues to be the case at the present time; and it is the inevitable outcome of the existing system of representation that all the government need care about is the votes of their supporters. Those votes are influenced by the knowledge that an account of them will have to be rendered to an ignorant constituency, who are conscious of the one fact that the member in question has been elected for the purpose of supporting the Conservative or Liberal party, and who regard this as their representative's sole political mission beyond the pushing of local interests. The voice of the people is of course a real power, insomuch as it decides which party shall predominate. But the verdict of the country has become the verdict of an uneducated majority, and it is they who, as Disraeli warned Parliament, exercise over the executive the influence which the House of Commons has unhappily lost.

In the course of his speech Disraeli explained, in an instructive manner, his theory of the British Constitution—a topic to which he constantly referred during the course of his political career. "I hold our constitution to be a monarchy," he said,
"limited by the co-ordinate authority of bodies of the subjects which are invested with privileges and with duties, for their own defence and for the common good: the so-called Estates of the Realm. One of these Estates of the Realm is the Estate of the Commons, of which we are the representatives. Now, of course, the elements of the Commons vary, and must be modified according to the vicissitudes and circumstances of a country like England. Nevertheless, the original scheme of the Plantagenets may always guide us. The Commons consisted of the proprietors of the land after the barons, the citizens and burgesses, and the skilled artisans. Well, these are the elements I wish to see in them, which I wish to preserve, and if necessary to increase; but I wish also to retain the original character of the constitution. I wish to legislate in the spirit of our constitution, not departing from the genius of the original scheme. The elements of the Estate of the Commons must be numerous, and they must be ample, in an age like this, but they must be choice. Our constituent body should be numerous enough to be independent, and select enough to be responsible. We, who are the representatives of the Commons, do not represent an indiscriminate multitude, but a body of men endowed with privileges which they enjoy, but also intrusted with duties which they must perform."

The debate resulted in a moral victory for the opponents of the government. Lord Grosvenor's
amendment was defeated by a bare majority of five, and there was a general expectation that ministers would resign. The rumours which were everywhere circulated to this effect proved, however, to be unfounded, and Gladstone announced his intention of immediately bringing in his bill for the redistribution of seats.

The principal effect of this measure was to abolish the small borough system and to group together several constituencies into one. This, in Disraeli’s opinion, would put the final touches to the degeneration of the House of Commons. In opposing the second reading of the bill, he drew attention to the fact that many eminent members of Parliament owed their presence in the House to the existence of small representative boroughs. There was a great authority on questions connected with Central Asia and the northern frontier of India, and there were ex-governors of the Bank of England whose opinions on financial subjects were of the greatest value. These, amongst others, represented small boroughs which the government proposed to disfanchise, and the result of this step would be to deprive the House of the valuable services of its most useful members. Disraeli went on to declare that he was far from being an opponent of the system of grouping. He thought it, on the contrary, a powerful and an efficient instrument, if used with vigour and discretion; but the principle should be applied to the unrepresented, and not to the
old, boroughs. Mr. Lowe, speaking on the bill in committee, declared that by adopting the system of grouping, the government would enforce an aggravated form of political polygamy, as it would be like asking a man to marry three or four widows.

Neither bill passed the committee stage. On estimating the basis of value of the franchise, Lord Dunkellin moved an amendment to the effect that rating should be substituted for rental. This decided the fate of the government. On a division, ministers were defeated by a majority of eleven, and they thereupon resigned office. Lord Derby was sent for, and intrusted with the task of forming an administration.

The Conservatives being in a minority, Lord Derby attempted to form a coalition with some of the disaffected Liberals. The Whigs refused to join him, and efforts to enlist the Adullamites met with no better success. Lord Derby was obliged to content himself with promises of independent support, and the members of the new ministry were chosen exclusively from the ranks of the Conservative party. Disraeli became once more chancellor of the exchequer, and Lord Stanley was given the Foreign Office. Lord Carnarvon, Lord Cranborne (the present Marquis of Salisbury), and General Peel also found seats in the cabinet.

When Disraeli was re-elected, after vacating his seat on accepting office, and addressed his sup-
porters on the position of affairs, he declined to give any pledge that the government would deal in the coming session with the question of parliamentary reform. He made some remarks, however, which serve to show that the idea of "dishing the Whigs" was already simmering in his mind. "I hear very often," he said, "or perhaps I should say I read very often, that the subject of parliamentary reform is the great difficulty of the present ministry, and will be their stumbling-block. I am quite of a different opinion. I see no difficulty in the subject at all; and if we stumble, rest assured we shall not stumble over the subject of parliamentary reform. If parliamentary reform is to be dealt with, I consider that the present government have as good a right to deal with it as any body of statesmen in existence. . . .

"I have remarked during the recent campaign in the House of Commons that every division that took place, and every strong manifestation of opinion which was expressed, ratified the principle upon which the bill of 1859 was founded. And, night after night, sitting in that House opposite to me, distinguished Liberals of all hues rose, and in a tone of courteous penitence publicly avowed how much they regretted they had voted against the bill of 1859. Gentlemen, I want to know under such circumstances what is to prevent us, if the question is to be dealt with, dealing with it in as efficient a manner as any other body of public men?"
We understand it, or at least we ought to understand it, better than several who have dealt with it. I cannot, therefore, at all agree that the subject of parliamentary reform will be a source of trouble to the present ministry, or that it will be one of the causes of their downfall, if it ever occur.”

Chapter IX.

Dishing the Whigs.

A great deal of abuse has been heaped upon Disraeli for the part he played in what is termed the Conservative surrender of 1867. There are, however, degrees of reprehensibleness; and before condemning the man who created and organized the Conservative party, it is well to weigh two facts. In the first place, we must remember the comfortable and prosperous tactics adopted by the Liberals in those days. Their idea was to stamp the Tories as the party implacably opposed to parliamentary reform, and to ingratiate themselves with the electorate by lowering the franchise in instalments. By pursuing this simple plan, they could reasonably expect to remain perpetually in office, while the Conservative party were relegated to the unprofitable rôle of a permanent constitutional opposition. Secondly, it was perfectly clear that no power could avert the ultimate introduction of
household suffrage. The latter was simply a question of time.

The problem resolved itself in Disraeli's mind into the alternative proposition, which of the two great parties in the State were to be credited with, and profit by, the final settlement of the franchise question. Should the Liberals be permitted to continue their paying game of gradual surrender, or should he spike their guns once and for all? Nobody could read a single speech of Disraeli on the subject of parliamentary reform, without perceiving his uncompromising objection to letting in the uneducated classes to the exercise of the franchise. He always declared that the House of Commons was not the House of the People; that it represented a great political order in the State, and not an indiscriminate multitude. But here he was face to face with the inevitable. The indiscriminate multitude was bound to be admitted at no far-distant date, and there were other considerations which possessed at least an equal claim. The whole future of the Conservative party seemed to Disraeli to depend upon the immediate settlement of the question of parliamentary reform. If this final settlement were procured through them, the gratitude of the enfranchised classes would be showered upon them instead of upon their opponents.

We know now that Disraeli entirely miscalculated the effects of his scheme. The classes he let in by
the bill he subsequently passed were composed of men with whom the defective system of Conservative organization was not in touch, and who were in those days Radical to a man. When, therefore, the general election of 1868 ended in a series of Liberal triumphs, several of the Conservative leaders, who thought that Disraeli's reform act had completely and permanently ruined the party, practically threw up politics in disgust. This pessimistic view of the situation might have proved correct, had not Disraeli's genius conceived the idea of a thorough party reorganization to meet the needs of the new conditions that he had created.

It would in any case be unjust to cast the whole responsibility of passing the Reform Bill of 1867 upon Disraeli. If it was his brain that planned, one must not lose sight of the fact that Lord Derby gave full countenance to his able lieutenant, and that without this sanction and approval on the part of the prime minister no Tory vote would have been recorded in support of such a measure. It has even been stated that, if the idea were Disraeli's, the bill itself was the work of his chief. But the assertion rests solely upon the evidence of Ralph Earle, an exceedingly able man, who for many years was confidential secretary to Disraeli. The incident is related by Sir William Fraser in his interesting collection of anecdotes published under the title *Disraeli and his Day*. It appears that at the time of the passing of the Reform Bill in
1867 the chancellor of the exchequer and his clever secretary quarrelled. No explanation has ever been given of the circumstances which led to this rupture, and as both parties to it have long been dead the mystery will probably never be cleared up. Earle, who had a seat in Parliament, went down to the House and delivered a feeble, though virulent, attack on his late master, to which the latter paid no attention. Shortly after this unhappy exhibition, he met Sir William Fraser at a garden-party and volunteered the following confidences:—

"Disraeli and I have quarrelled, as you know. The quarrel is absolutely hopeless; it can never be made up under any circumstances. I know what your feelings have always been about Disraeli; and I know, of course, what they must be about this reform bill. I think it right to tell you that I was behind the scenes the whole time; I know everything that occurred. It was not Disraeli's bill: it was Lord Derby's."

The extreme improbability of the correctness of this statement is emphasized by the characteristic difference between the two Conservative leaders. The democratic measure which was introduced in 1867 bore the impress of a radical mind, and could only have been conceived by Disraeli. The most that Lord Derby did was to give his lieutenant the support without which it would have been impossible for him to have enlisted the sympathies of the
Tory squire. The Conservative party in 1867 gave the fullest recognition to Disraeli's abilities as a leader; but he would not have secured a large following independently of Lord Derby's influence. The responsibility for the passing of the Reform Act may therefore be divided evenly between them: Disraeli taking the credit or blame of conceiving and proposing the measure, while Lord Derby must be held responsible for using his great position and party influence to assist him in carrying it out.

The queen's speech at the opening of Parliament in February, 1867, stated the intention of the government to deal with the question of parliamentary reform. A week later Disraeli laid before the House of Commons a series of resolutions, embodying certain principles which the government proposed to introduce into their reform bill. He declared in doing so that they were not angling for a policy. They had distinct principles to guide them, and which they wished the House to sanction. But there were subjects of great importance upon which it would be desirable that the opinion of the House should be given; and on those subjects they would defer to the decision of the House. The course adopted by the government was not one flattering to themselves (a statement which was cheered ironically by John Bright), but it was more flattering to assist, however humbly, in effecting that which they thought for the public good than
to bring forward mock measures which they knew
the spirit of party would not pass. "I earnestly
hope", he said, "that the House of Commons will
rise to this occasion. I earnestly hope that the
House of Commons, in unison with that gracious
speech which Her Majesty delivered to her Parlia-
ment, authorized by antecedent circumstances and
urged by the necessity of the case, will divest itself
of party feeling, and give ministers on this, if on
no other occasion, the advantage of its co-operation
and cordial support."

This procedure on the part of the government
naturally encountered the hostility of the Opposition.
The Whigs had no inclination to assist Disraeli in
dishing them, and it was rather in the nature of
adding insult to injury to expect them to do so.
Meanwhile, however, the further discussion of the
resolutions was postponed until the 25th. When
that date arrived, circumstances had occurred
which necessitated a complete alteration in the
plans of the government. Three members of the
cabinet, Lord Carnarvon, Lord Cranborne, and
General Peel, at the very last moment shied at
household suffrage. An urgent cabinet council
was called together on Monday, two or three hours
before Disraeli was to lay his scheme before the
House. It was hastily decided that the large
measure of reform should be thrown overboard,
and that an alternative bill, which had been pre-
pared for the event of Parliament rejecting the
more democratic measure, should be introduced instead. By this means the dissentients were persuaded to withdraw their resignation, and Disraeli went down to the House of Commons, in a very bad temper, to expound the measure which has been handed down to posterity as the Ten Minutes Bill, a nickname which was applied to it on account of the haste with which the cabinet had decided on its adoption.

Disraeli always commenced his speeches with an historical preamble, and on this occasion he referred to the Reform Act of 1832, alluding to it as a political experiment which had been completely successful. But although the country had never been better governed than during the past thirty years, there was a deficiency in that Act. "I will not say an intended deficiency," observed Disraeli, "but one which certainly arose from want of useful information on an important part of a great question; and perhaps, without any offence to the honourable gentlemen opposite, I might say that omission was perhaps more naturally made by a party which, generally speaking, had built up their policy rather upon Liberal opinions than upon popular rights. The political rights of the working-classes which existed before the Act of 1832, and which not only existed but were acknowledged, were on that occasion disregarded and even abolished;"¹ and during

¹ The reader may be reminded that the effect of the Reform Act of 1832 was to enfranchise the middle classes.
the whole period that has since elapsed, in consequence of the great vigour that has been given to the government of this country, and of the multiplicity of subjects of commanding interest that have engaged and engrossed attention, no great inconvenience has been experienced from that cause. Still, during all that time there has been a feeling, sometimes a very painful feeling, that questions have arisen which have been treated in this House without that entire national sympathy which is desirable. Well, it is our business on this occasion, in the first and most important place, to endeavour to offer some proposition to the House which will restore those rights that were lost in 1832 to the labouring class of the country, and which will bring back again that fair partition of political power which the old constitution of the country recognized, and which, if practicable, it seems to me that all of us are desirous should be accomplished.

"There is a very great difference between the period of 1832 and the period of 1867. In the period of 1832 parliamentary reform was a subject to fire the imaginations and excite the passions of all men. It was one which banded parties together with a heat and with a power such as very rarely occur. But on the present occasion there is great unanimity on the subject. We who have succeeded to the place which we occupy in the spirit of the constitution, finding that question unsettled, and
by universal consent requiring settlement, can appeal with confidence, as I now understand, to the candid interpretation of the House of Commons upon our plans and motives, and can count even on the support, of course the discriminating, but still the not less generous support, of our political rivals."

This unanimity on the subject of parliamentary reform consisted chiefly in the anxiety of both parties to lower the franchise for their own benefit. The measure which Disraeli was then proposing did not, however, go further than a £6 franchise in the boroughs, while reducing the occupation franchise in the counties from £50 to £20. He did not threaten, therefore, on this occasion to dash the cup of reform completely from the lips of the Liberals. But the proposed bill did not on that account suffer less opposition. Disraeli's method of proceeding by resolutions, instead of at once bringing forward a bill, was strenuously resisted by the Liberal leaders. Mr. Lowe characterized them as mere hungry and empty abstractions, and called upon the government to bid adieu to shams and pretences by bringing the matter to an issue fairly and plainly in the old English fashion. "Touch the nettle with timid hand," he exclaimed, "it stings you and you drop it; grasp it firmly, you are unhurt and tear it up by the roots". Gladstone and John Bright were equally of the opinion that the resolutions should be withdrawn.
In nothing did the genius of Disraeli show itself more conspicuously than in his marvellous readiness in gauging the temper of the House of Commons. He knew exactly how far to go, and when undue strain was put upon the tether; accordingly he announced on the following day that the government had decided to withdraw the resolutions and to introduce a bill on the earliest practicable opportunity, a decision which was received with marks of general approval from all parts of the House.

It had been Disraeli's intention to bring forward his reform bill in the first week of March, but an event took place in the interim which completely altered the tactics of the government. A meeting of a section of the Conservative party was held at the Carlton Club which was largely attended by county members. The original reform bill would have rendered the Tory seats in the counties safe for an indefinite period, it was therefore determined by the members present that the party would support nothing short of Disraeli's scheme of household suffrage, and a message to this effect was conveyed to Lord Derby.

Thereupon Lord Derby and Disraeli, recognizing that the half-hearted measure proposed by them was equally unacceptable to both sides of the House, and perceiving the impolicy of their tactics, determined to retrace their steps. They decided to let the dissentient colleagues go, and to bring in the
bill which they had originally intended to introduce. The result of this decision was the immediate resignation of Lord Carnarvon, General Peel, and Lord Cranborne. The usual explanations followed in Parliament, and were characterized by a remarkable frankness on the part of everybody concerned.

It fell to Disraeli to make the best of the situation, and to offer some defence of the tactics which had been adopted by the government. In the first place, he denied that the measure proposed by him on February 25th had been conceived in haste. It had received, he declared, the mature attention of the prime minister. The government had felt that if they failed to bring forward their pet scheme, that measure was the one to be substituted for it, because it could be defended on principle—the principle upon which it was founded being the restoration of the labouring classes to that place in the parliamentary system which they forfeited by the Act of 1832. This alternative proposition was brought forward, he said, by a united cabinet, but it did not give satisfaction to the Conservative party throughout the country. There was a general feeling, in fact, that the question of extending the franchise should not be dealt with in a contracted spirit.

"Under these circumstances," Disraeli continued, "Lord Derby called his colleagues together, and wished them to reconsider the course which he had formerly and originally wished to pursue. And he
expressed his strong opinion that the course which he originally wished to pursue was the only one that would lead to a solution which would be satisfactory to the country and enable Parliament to agree to a measure, and would, on the whole, be most conducive to the interests of the country, present and future. I regret to say that under these circumstances, although a majority of the cabinet supported Lord Derby, we had the great misfortune of losing three of our colleagues.”

Later on, Disraeli declared that if his own resignation could have prevented that unfortunate result, that resignation was at Lord Derby’s command. It was at his command then, as it had always been. He would not have hesitated to sacrifice himself in order to maintain a united party or a united cabinet.

Finally, Disraeli announced that the government would bring forward, as soon as possible, their measure of parliamentary reform. There should be no evasion or equivocation; the government would stand or fall by the bill about to be introduced.

Chapter X.

Household Suffrage.

It is a remarkable fact that the county members, who represented the most Tory element in the Conservative party, should have egged on the
The Earl of Beaconsfield.

government to adhere to the democratic measure of reform which they had originally intended to introduce. But the bribe by means of which Disraeli had obtained their support for his scheme was simple and tempting. The £15 occupation franchise would, in the first place, only admit those classes from whom the Conservative party were certain of receiving support. The agricultural labourer would not be enfranchised by that provision. Secondly, and principally, the boundaries of the boroughs were to be extended so as to embrace the suburban districts, which contained a numerous population that possessed no interests in the county. The admittance of the masses in these urban districts to the county franchise would have resulted, in the opinion of the Tory squires, in the Liberals sweeping the counties at the first election. They were convinced that the small householders in the outskirts of the towns would prove Radical without exception, and the promised exclusion of this class from the county poll won over their eager adherence. Time has, of course, shown that their fears were groundless, and the winning of Conservative seats in London and in many other towns has been entirely due in several instances to the suburban voters. But in 1867 many mistakes were made by all concerned in the passing of a measure which for a time seemed as if it had permanently swamped the prospects of the Conservative party.

The first reading of the Reform Bill was moved
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by Disraeli on the 18th of March, 1867. The cardinal principle of the bill was the enfranchisement of every householder who paid his rates and had occupied a house for two years. Even the compound householder, whose rates were by arrangement paid by his landlord, was to be permitted to qualify for the franchise by having his name entered upon the rate-book and fulfilling the other prescribed conditions. By these provisions an addition would be made to the electorate of 723,000 householders in the boroughs who were then not qualified to vote. Fancy franchises were also proposed. Everybody who paid twenty shillings in direct taxation was to have a vote, and those who were qualified both in respect of their being rate-payers and tax-payers would be allowed to exercise the dual franchise. An educational franchise was also to be included. The occupation qualification in the counties he proposed to reduce to a £15 rating. After explaining the new franchises, Disraeli passed on to explain the way in which the government proposed to deal with the redistribution of seats.

"I will not advert unnecessarily", he said in conclusion, "to the circumstances attending the framing of this measure, which has now been brought before the House of Commons under very great difficulties and at very great sacrifices. I do not wish to disguise that I have felt great chagrin and great mortification in connection with what has
taken place; but I believe I have done my duty, and under the circumstances I do not think I could have done other than I have. In attempting to bring the question to this point we have lost those whose absence from our councils we more than regret; we have had to appeal to a high-spirited party to make what, no doubt, to some was to a certain extent a sacrifice of principle, much sacrifice of sentiment, and much sacrifice of interest. But we have not appealed in vain, because the members of that party were animated by the same feeling which influenced us—a sense of duty and conviction; they felt that the time had arrived when this question must be dealt with and settled extensively and completely. I hope, therefore, the House of Commons will give this measure a fair and candid consideration. We believe it is one which, if adopted in spirit, will settle its long differences; and that it is qualified to meet the requirements of the country. I am told for certain there are objections against it; but I beg to remind the House of the distinctions which we draw between popular privileges and democratic rights. I am told that in this measure there are checks and counterpoises, and that it assumes in this country the existence of classes. If there are checks and counterpoises in our scheme, we live under a constitution of which we boast that it is a constitution of checks and counterpoises. If the measure bears some reference to existing classes in this country, why should
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we conceal from ourselves, or omit from our discussions, the fact that this country is a country of classes, and a country of classes it will ever remain? What we desire to do is to give every one who is worthy of it a fair share in the government of the country by means of the elective franchise. But, at the same time, we have been equally anxious to maintain the character of the House, to make propositions in harmony with the circumstances of the country, to prevent a preponderance of any class, and to give a representation to the nation."

It soon became evident that the bill would have to undergo a considerable amount of alteration in committee before it would be permitted to pass. Gladstone made a strong speech upon the second reading, in the course of which he insisted upon the abolition of dual voting and of the fancy franchises, and urged the substitution of a lodger franchise; while Bright declared the scheme to be safeguarded so as to exclude the working-classes from the franchise. Disraeli expressed his readiness to give up dual voting, and declared that the government were only anxious to co-operate with the House in bringing the question of parliamentary reform to a settlement. He exhorted the House of Commons to assist in passing the measure. "Act with us, I say, cordially and candidly," he exclaimed. "You will find on our side complete reciprocity of feeling. Pass the bill—and then change the ministry if you like!"
During the committee stages of the bill most of the safeguards which it contained had to be sacrificed to the demands of the Liberals. The fancy franchises were abandoned; the county franchise was reduced; the two years' occupation qualification was given up; and the lodger franchise was accepted. When a friend suggested to Disraeli that he should rid the bill of some more safeguards, he replied, "I dare not. I have pared them to the quick!" A brilliant cartoon published at the time represented the two Conservative leaders in a sledge followed by a pack of hungry Liberal wolves. To save themselves, and to appease the wolves, the two travellers were throwing out all kinds of articles, bearing labels such as "compound householder", "educational franchise", and so forth.

In addition to the three members of the cabinet who had seceded from the ministry, there were several members of the Conservative party who openly opposed the Reform Bill of 1867. Of these the most indefatigable and plain-spoken was Mr. Beresford Hope, who remarked, during one of the discussions in committee, that he had always refused to "fall down and worship the golden image set up in Arabia", and announced his intention on this occasion of voting against "the Asian mystery". To which Disraeli retorted: "I listened with the greatest pleasure to the invective which he delivered against me. His style is very ornamental to discussion, but it requires practice. And so far as my
honourable friend displayed his talents to-night, I listened with the greatest satisfaction. All his exhibitions in this House are distinguished by a prudery which charms me; and when he talks of Asian mysteries, I may perhaps by way of reply remark that there is a Batavian grace about his exhibition which takes the sting out of what he has said."

The sentiments of the dissentient Conservatives were forcibly expressed by the present Lord Salisbury. "Our theory of government", he said, "is that on each side of the House there should be men supporting definite opinions, and that what they have supported in opposition they should adhere to in office; and that every one should know, from the fact of their being in office, that those particular opinions will be supported. If you reverse that, and declare that, no matter what a man has supported in opposition, the moment he gets into office it shall be open to him to reverse and repudiate it all, you practically destroy the whole basis on which our form of government rests, and you make the House of Commons a mere scrambling place for office. You practically banish all honourable men from the political arena; and you will find, in the long run, that the time will come when your statesmen will become nothing but political adventurers, and that professions of opinion will be looked upon as so many political manœuvres for the purpose of attaining office.
"I should deeply regret to find that the House of Commons has applauded a policy of legerdemain. And I should, above all things, regret that this great gift to the people—if gift you think it—should have been purchased at the cost of a political betrayal which has no parallel in our parliamentary annals, which strikes at the root of all that mutual confidence which is the very soul of our party government, and on which only the strength and freedom of our representative institutions can be sustained."

Referring to the accusations which had been made against him, Disraeli came out with the following humorous piece of ambiguity:—"Honourable members complain that the principles of this measure are contrary to my principles. Good heavens!" looking at the surrounding benches—"what principles?" An excellent little bit of comedy that was thoroughly appreciated by the House.

The third reading of the Reform Bill was moved on the 15th of July, 1867. Disraeli had to defend the measure in its altered state, and he steered his course through the difficulties of the situation with his usual adroitness and good temper. It has been admitted by all competent critics that the greatest achievement of Disraeli's political career was the passing of this reform bill. He exhibited under the most trying circumstances the most unfailing good temper. As he piloted the measure through the rocks and shoals of its committee stage he kept
a skilled hand constantly upon the pulse of the House of Commons. He understood to a nicety the exact feeling of those who were with him, and he could gauge with perfect precision the utmost limit of surrender of which his opponents were capable.

The most extraordinary characteristic of Disraeli was his self-command. In this respect he was the literal antithesis of Gladstone, who betrayed every mood and every emotion by the expression of his mobile features. On one well-known occasion, when Gladstone was delivering an impassioned speech, he banged down his hat on the table with a force that sent a vibrating echo through the House. Immediately afterwards Disraeli observed quietly in his pompous manner: "Really, Mr. Speaker, I sometimes congratulate myself on the solid piece of furniture which is between myself and the right honourable gentleman". It was impossible to tell from Disraeli's face the disposition of his mind. He sat upon the front bench with an impassive, emotionless face that seemed to possess the rigidity of wood. Sir William Fraser only once saw him smile in public, and describes it as having been a mirthless performance.

The greatest sensation ever produced in the House of Commons within the recollection of the present generation was occasioned by two words from this strange, immobile mask. It happened during one of the debates on the Reform Bill of 1867. Glad-
stone was speaking. "The right honourable gentleman and his satellites", he was exclaiming, with a contemptuous gesture towards the opposite side of the House, when suddenly Mr. Cardwell leant forward from the seat behind and pulled the orator's coat-tails to attract his attention. Gladstone stopped, and turning round commenced a whispered altercation with his interrupter. On attempting to resume his speech a few minutes later, it became evident that he could not take up the thread of what he had been saying. "Mr. Speaker," he began hesitatingly, "as I was — saying — to the House—" There was a momentary pause of embarrassment. It was broken by a deep and indescribably calm utterance from the Treasury bench; an utterance that had almost the effect of ventriloquism, so little did it appear to emanate from the still, calm, wooden face that neither moved nor so much as contracted a muscle. "The satellites", prompted the voice. The tone in which the words were uttered was inimitable: a blending of deliberation, pomposity, and utter indifference; and the House was absolutely convulsed for five minutes.

The Reform Bill, which Lord Derby himself stated to be "a leap in the dark", received the royal assent on the 15th of August, 1867. Lord Derby thought that he had, as he himself expressed it, "dished the Whigs"; and it is certain that the Conservative party looked forward with confidence
to the result of an appeal to the new constituencies. Disraeli had, as he remarked at Edinburgh during the autumn recess, "educated" his party on the subject of parliamentary reform. "Seven memorable years elapsed," he said, "from 1859 to 1866, when Lord Derby was again called to power, and during these seven years the question of parliamentary reform was before the public mind and under the examination of parliament. During that period of seven years, with the advice—I may say under the instructions—of my colleagues, I expressed the principles upon which any measure of parliamentary reform ought to be established. Now mark this, because there are things which you may not have heard in any speech which has been made in the city of Edinburgh, we had to prepare the mind of the country, and to educate—if it be not arrogant to use such a phrase—to educate our party."

It was left to Gladstone to complete the education of Parliament, by extending household suffrage to the counties and thereby conferring the franchise upon a class which embraces perhaps the most hopelessly and permanently ignorant population in the United Kingdom.
Chapter XI.

Prime Minister.

When Parliament met in February, 1868, Lord Derby was unable through ill-health to come up to town. His condition was so serious that fears were entertained at one time for his recovery. On the 24th of the month he resigned, and Disraeli was at once appointed prime minister in his place. The latter had, to use his own description of the achievement, "climbed to the top of the greasy pole". The changes in the ministry were few; the most noteworthy being the elevation of Lord Cairns, the most able lord chancellor of recent times, to the woolsack.

It was stated at the time that Gladstone was furiously angry at his rival's promotion. However that may be, the Liberal leader lost no time in attacking the government, and he found a ready-forged and fatal weapon in Irish disestablishment. The Irish Church question was one that had frequently been discussed by men of all parties, but it had never before been taken up seriously. It was extraordinarily acute of Gladstone to bring the matter to the front at this particular moment, and it was a remarkable feat to succeed in popularizing in a Protestant country the idea of disestablishing a Protestant Church.

In 1844 Disraeli had summed up the Irish ques-
tion in the famous phrase—"a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church".

This definition was thrown up against him in the course of a debate on the state of Ireland, and he defended it on the ground of its historical accuracy at the time it was made. It was during this debate that Gladstone gave the first intimation of his intention to raise the cry of disestablishment; and a fortnight later he rose in his place to move the three resolutions embodying this purpose. To these resolutions Lord Stanley moved an amendment, expressing the opinion that Gladstone's proposition ought to be reserved for the decision of the new Parliament. At the close of the debate Disraeli addressed the House. The position he took up was that, in the first place, the House should wait until the report of the recently-appointed royal commission had been laid upon the table; and secondly, that he denied the right of the present House of Commons to decide a question, involving the upsetting of a fundamental law of the country, which had not been put before the electorate. He declared that the condition of Ireland, far from having arrived at a crisis, was much better than before the Union; and, criticizing Gladstone's motives in bringing forward his resolutions, he said: "A statesman who, in this position of affairs, makes the enormous sacrifice of all the convictions of his life, tells us that the state of Ireland is so critical that he must do that which only three years
ago, when mentioned, struck him with such inexpressible horror that he said the question was without the pale of political debate. I want to know on what ground he does this.”

General disestablishment would be, in Disraeli’s opinion, the logical consequence of adopting Gladstone’s proposition. “The Church of Scotland”, he said, “has in its communion only a minority of people, and I want to know upon what principle you can maintain the Kirk in Scotland if you do not maintain the Church in Ireland. Well, then, it is admitted that the majority not being within the pale of the Scottish Kirk, Scotland may also follow the policy of the right honourable member for Lancashire. Why stop at Scotland? Are you prepared for the ulterior consequences of this policy? That is what I want to have thoroughly understood by the people of this country. Let there be, as the honourable member for Oxford says, ‘a clear and intelligible issue’. Well, the Church falls in Ireland, it falls in Scotland; but it is never to fall in England, because the right honourable gentleman says there are millions upon millions of churchmen in England. That is rhetoric, it is not reason.”

Lord Stanley’s amendment was defeated, and Gladstone carried his motion by a majority of fifty-six. The cabinet, however, decided not to resign, but to dissolve Parliament at a future date in order to appeal to the new constituencies. This was the
proper constitutional course for ministers to take as an alternative to immediate resignation. Parliament having condemned the existing elective machinery, it was only possible to accept the verdict of the new electorate. There was a great deal to be done in the way of altering the registers, settling the boundaries of boroughs, and carrying out the various other changes necessitated by the operation of the Reform Act; and the government were advised that this could not possibly be accomplished before the autumn. It was absurd therefore to charge Disraeli, as he was charged, with trying to prolong his term of office; but John Bright, who made the accusation, consistently regarded Disraeli as a political charlatan, and never credited him with being actuated by any other motive than that of playing for his own hand. There was considerable mystification as to what actually took place at the interviews which Disraeli had with the queen after the defeat of the government on Lord Stanley's amendment. Disraeli's account was that he had in fact tendered his resignation to the queen, at the same time expressing the opinion that the best course would be to dissolve Parliament and take the verdict of the country. The queen at a second audience had refused to accept the resignation of the ministry, and had agreed to a dissolution of Parliament. A somewhat different version was given to the House of Lords by the Duke of Richmond; but, as Disraeli pointed out to those who
challenged him to clear up the mystery, he was the individual who had the audience, and if any one of his colleagues had elsewhere made a statement which conveyed a different impression, the logical procedure would be that that colleague should be the person called upon to explain the discrepancy.

The incident brought about a little scene between Bright and Disraeli, when the former declared that the prime minister, "with a mixture of pompousness and sometimes of servility, talked at large of the interviews which he had with his sovereign". To this Disraeli made the following retort. "I shall not condescend", he said, "to notice at length the observations of the honourable member for Birmingham. He says that when it was my duty to make a communication to the House of the greatest importance, and which I certainly wished to make—as I hope I did make it—in a manner not unbecoming the occasion, I was at once 'pompous and servile'. Well, sir, if it suits the heat of party acrimony to impute such qualities to me, any gentleman may do so. But I am in the memory and in the feeling of gentlemen on both sides of the House—and fortunately there are gentlemen on both sides of this House—and they will judge of the accuracy of this representation of my conduct." Members, without distinction of party, cheered this speech.

Having obtained the leave of Parliament, Gladstone lost no time in introducing his Irish Church
Suspensory Bill, the object of which was to prevent new appointments in the Church of Ireland pending the decision of the country on the question of its disestablishment. Speaking on the second reading of the bill, Disraeli characterized Gladstone's crusade as "one of the wildest enterprises that ever the disordered imagination of man conceived". The Irish Church Bill passed through its stages in the House of Commons by large majorities, but was thrown out by the Lords and accordingly dropped for the session.

The organization of the Conservative party was at that period intrusted to a firm of solicitors. Disraeli was assured by them that he would get a working majority at the coming elections, and he fully expected that such would be the case. The elections were fought entirely upon the question of Irish disestablishment, but it would scarcely be correct to ascribe the Liberal victory solely to the interest of the electorate in disestablishing a Church of which large numbers of them had never heard. The Conservative defeats in the boroughs must be largely attributed to the fact that the party possessed no organization which was in touch with the new voters; while, on the other hand, it was an easy matter for agents of the class employed by the Radicals to influence men with whom they were constantly in contact. All this was discovered later; at the time it was felt that the operation of the Reform Act had annihilated the prospects of
the Conservative party, and, as was stated in a former chapter, some of the most prominent men amongst the Conservatives threw up politics in disgust, convinced that it was they, and not the Whigs, who had been "dished" by Disraeli and Lord Derby.

On receiving the hostile verdict of the constituencies, Disraeli resolved to resign at once in preference to meeting the new Parliament. It is impossible, therefore, to uphold for a moment the absurd accusation that he clung to office. Disraeli did not wish at that time to leave the House of Commons; but although he declined honours for himself, he accepted them for his wife, and Mrs. Disraeli was raised to the peerage as Viscountess Beaconsfield. The affection and gratitude displayed by Disraeli towards his wife was one of the most prominent traits in his character. He never forgot throughout his career how much he owed to her; and although she was his senior by many years, there can be no question of the fact of his constant devotion and unfeigned affection. He refused all invitations in which Mrs. Disraeli was not included, and there is no doubt that the proudest and happiest moment of his life was that when his services to the State were rewarded by honours conferred upon the woman he most delighted to honour, and to whom he was never tired of attributing his political triumphs.
Chapter XII.

Opposition.

Having been called upon to form an administration, Gladstone lost no time in introducing his bill to disestablish the Irish Church. The first reading was not opposed by Disraeli, but upon the second reading he made a speech which was, in many respects, prophetic of the future condition of Ireland. Picturing the consequences of disestablishment, he said: "It is not a wild assumption on my part if I were to suppose that with the cause of the next great Irish discontent the land may be in some degree connected; and what will be the necessary and natural feelings of the three Churches on the land question? I do not—as some do—I do not myself contemplate the immediate cessation of all dogmatic differences between the three Churches. I am in hopes that year after year any asperity of this kind arising from such a source may be softened. But I think I may venture to say this, that there will be one dogma in which the three Churches will entirely agree, which will be as unanimously adopted as any that may be sanctioned by any impending ecumenical council; and that dogma will be this, that the clergy of the three Churches, whether they were disendowed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth or in the reign of Queen Victoria, have all been equally ill-treated. And where there
is this general discontent upon the land question, they will naturally say: 'We entirely agree with the feeling of the nation; the land question is a question that must be settled'. They will say: 'The people have lost the great estate which belonged to the Church as their trustees, and where it is, neither the clergy who were disendowed in the reign of Elizabeth nor the clergy disendowed in the reign of Queen Victoria will be able to tell you'. . . . Such, in my mind, are the probable—I will not say immediate—consequences, but consequences that will occur in the early experience of many men who sit in this House, of the policy of disestablishment in Ireland as it is advised by the right honourable gentleman, the first minister. And such are the prospects which disestablishment affords us of rendering a people contented and a government strong.'

Disraeli proposed several amendments in committee with the object of obtaining an increase of the compensation paid to the clergy, but all were rejected, and the bill was passed by large majorities. In the Upper House amendments were carried by the Conservative peers which were afterwards rejected by the Commons, Gladstone showing an amount of hostility and vindictiveness towards the Lords that clearly foreshadowed his ultimate programme of abolition.

The death of Lord Derby occurred in the autumn of 1869. He had been slowly sinking since his
resignation, and little hope had been entertained of his recovery. The death of Lord Derby brought no change, therefore, in the prospects of Disraeli. After the passing of the Irish Church Bill, the latter took no practical part in public affairs, but retired for a time to his estate in Buckinghamshire, where he enjoyed a period of well-earned repose. The queen’s speech at the commencement of the following session contained a reference to the disturbed state of Ireland, and Disraeli attributed the cause to the Irish having misinterpreted the policy of the government. They would argue, he said, in this fashion: “The Irish Church is abolished; the bishops and rectors are deprived of their property. The next grievance is the land. Is it not a natural consequence that if you settle the question of the Irish Church by depriving the bishops and rectors of their property, you will settle the question of the land by depriving the landlords of their property?”

Disraeli was of course anticipating the intention of the government to introduce an Irish Land Bill. A week after the opening of Parliament Gladstone brought in the bill. This was the first step in his Irish land policy, which has entirely revolutionized the social and economic condition of Ireland. As, however, the connecting links of this policy were forged after Disraeli’s death, it is sufficient for present purposes to repeat those observations of the Conservative statesman which forecast the immediate effects of the first Irish Land Act.
"There will be a new grievance," he said, "the payment of rent; and the non-payment of rent will become a principle asserted by the same rural logic, the startling consequences of which have filled the mind of the country with apprehension and horror almost every day. The argument of the Irish tenant (belonging to the very class that you think you are now setting up by this violation of the fundamental law of the country) will be to this effect: 'I have lost my holding because I did not pay my rent; can anything be more flagrantly unjust than that a man should be deprived of his contingent right to a third of the freehold because he does not pay his rent?' That is a natural view which may lead to a much more successful agitation than any we have yet heard of. The question is unanswerable. We may think it is abstractedly unreasonable, but it is the necessary result of our legislation. And what will be the consequence? Why, that payment of rent will become a grievance; and you will find yourselves in exactly the same position in which you are now placed. There will be great complaints of vexatious and tyrannical evictions; and on the other side, the most violent means by which the supposed rights of the occupiers to property in the soil may be vindicated will be resorted to. And so far from the improvement of the country terminating all these misunderstandings and heart-burnings, which we seem now so anxious upon both sides of the House to bring to a close,
you will have the same controversies still raging, only with increased acerbity, and under circumstances and conditions which inevitably must lead to increased bitterness and increased perils to society."

One of the most important measures passed by the Gladstone government was the Education Act of 1870. In his Edinburgh speech, made in the autumn of 1867, Disraeli had said, with regard to the question of education: "It is an absolute necessity that we should study to make every man the most effective being that education can possibly constitute him. In the old wars there used to be a story that one Englishman could beat three members of some other nation; but I think, if we want to maintain our power, we ought to make one Englishman equal really in the business of life to three other men that any other nation can furnish." Educationalists of to-day would be very thankful to obtain a third of the result proposed by Disraeli; but it must be remembered that the immense progress made by Germany and France in educational matters is of recent date, and that in 1870 we were not so far behind our continental rivals as has since proved to be the case. When Mr. Forster's education bill was considered in committee, Disraeli spoke on Mr. Cowper-Temple's amendment (which received the support of Gladstone) to exclude the teaching of doctrine from the newly-created Board schools.
"As far as I can ascertain," he observed, "the new scheme would be this, that although no creed nor catechism of any denomination is to be introduced, yet the schoolmaster would have the power and opportunity of teaching, enforcing, and explaining the Holy Scripture when he reads. Now, he cannot do that without drawing some inferences and some conclusions, and what will those inferences and conclusions be but dogmas? They may not be the opinions of the rector, nor of the Presbyterian minister, nor of the Nonconformist minister; but they are the opinions of the schoolmaster. You are contemplating the establishment of a class who must be endowed with great abilities, and who certainly will have to perform most important functions and to exercise great powers; and I want to know in the present state of affairs where these schoolmasters are to be found? You will not intrust the priest or the presbyter with the privilege of expounding the Holy Scriptures to the scholars; but for that purpose you are inventing and establishing a new sacerdotal class."

The war between France and Germany in 1870 furnished the occasion for Disraeli to utter his well-known advice that the policy of England should be "an armed neutrality", and not merely one of neutrality uncoupled with the strength and power which would make her counsels respected. In the debate on the address at the opening of Parliament in 1871, Disraeli again spoke on foreign politics.
The words he used in respect to the designs of Russia are of special interest, both as regards his own attitude when Russia declared war against Turkey in 1876, and on account of the more recent developments of Muscovite policy in the East.

"Russia", said Disraeli, "has a policy, as every Great Power has a policy; and she has as much right to have a policy as Germany or England. I believe the policy of Russia, taking a general view of it, to have been a legitimate policy, although it may have been inevitably a disturbing policy. When you have a great country in the centre of Europe, with an immense territory, with a numerous and yet, as compared with its colossal area, a sparse population, producing human food to any extent, in addition to certain most valuable raw materials—it is quite clear that a people so situated, practically without any sea-board, would never rest until it found its way to the coast, and could have a mode of communicating easily with other nations and exchanging its products with them. Well, for two hundred years Russia has pursued that policy; it has been a legitimate though a disturbing policy. . . . But at the end of the last century she advanced a new view. It was not a national policy; it was invented by the then ruler of Russia—a woman, a stranger, and an usurper,—and that policy was that she must have the capital of the Turkish empire. That was not a legitimate, that was a disturbing policy. It was a policy like the
French desire to have the Rhine—false in principle. She had no moral claim to Constantinople; she did not represent the races to which it once belonged; she had no political necessity to go there, because she had already two capitals. Therefore it was not a legitimate, but a disturbing policy. As the illegitimate desire of France to have the Rhine has led to the prostration of France, so the illegitimate desire of Russia to have Constantinople led to the prostration of Russia.”

One of the most remarkable mistakes recorded in political history was made in reference to the Ballot Act, which was passed by Gladstone’s government in the session of 1871. The Liberal party brought in a bill for the establishment of voting by ballot, under the impression that they would gain largely if open voting were abolished. The Conservatives, on the other hand, strenuously opposed the bill, in the firm belief that they would lose heavily by its operation. Both parties proved utterly wrong. It was quickly discovered that intimidation at elections was mainly practised by the Radicals, and that it was consequently the Conservative party who profited by the institution of secret voting. The blunder was repeated when the Conservatives carried an amendment which provided that any man who proclaimed himself to be illiterate should have his voting paper filled up by the presiding officer in the presence of the agents belonging to both parties. This clause operated, in its turn, against
its authors. The chief use to which this provision was put was in Ireland, where the priests made hundreds of people pretend to be illiterate, in order to make sure that they voted according to instructions.

Disraeli strongly opposed the ballot. The only persons, in his opinion, who wanted it were the small shopkeepers; and as the men of this class formed the most active section of the Radical party in the country, there was a natural anxiety on the part of the Conservatives to prevent any measure likely to give them increased power.

"There is a class", said Disraeli, in opposing the bill, "who always want the ballot, and that is the small tradesmen in the towns. It is a respectable class—a class of many virtues, but I do not think it is a class that ought to give a tone to the political life of the country. I say this the more because it has always appeared to me that the desire of the ballot by the class of small tradesmen is founded upon a perverse and even morbid sentiment. When the small tradesman makes up his accounts, and he finds that he has lost a customer here and a customer there, the way in which he accounts for it is not by considering the caprice of human nature, or the skilful competition of his rival, but by remembering some promise which he made, and which he did not fulfil, at the last general election. It is a mania, a weakness which pervades the class; they really believe that Mr. Blank and Lady Dash
have withdrawn their custom, because a year ago they gave an ambiguous answer to an appeal; while the persons themselves no doubt have entirely forgotten the incident, have withdrawn their custom for an entirely different reason, and are probably dealing with a tradesman of entirely different opinions to themselves. So much for intimidation."

The bill would be passed, Disraeli declared, by a "mechanical majority", who were "so full of the Irish Church at the last election, that they gave pledges in favour of the ballot without duly considering the question". "The prime minister", he said, "has been suddenly converted to an expiring faith, and has passionately embraced a corpse."

The mechanical majority passed the bill through the House of Commons, but it was thrown out by the Lords. It was re-introduced, however, in the following session, and was—fortunately for the Conservative party, and in spite of Disraeli's constant opposition—duly enrolled upon the statute book.

Chapter XIII.

Reorganization.

While Gladstone was deluging the country with reforms, a movement was taking place outside the House of Commons of far more importance to the
Conservative party than the manœuvres of parlia-
mentary opposition. The elections of 1868 had
brought home to the statesmanship of Disraeli the
necessity of creating some kind of organization to
meet the new conditions created by the reform act
which he had passed for the purpose of dishing the
Whigs. There existed at that time, it must be
remembered, nothing which could be called, by
the widest stretch of courtesy, a party organiza-
tion. The Conservative party was managed by a
firm of solicitors, whose business it was to supply
candidates to the various constituencies, and to
spend a large sum of money subscribed by the
party in subsidizing the poorer candidates and
running the elections.

There was no permanent local organization of any
sort or kind. The political associations which are
now flourishing throughout the country were then
unheard of, except in the enlightened manufacturing
centres of Lancashire, where intelligent operatives
had organized themselves into working-men’s
political associations, much resembling those which
are now in existence all over England. When an
election took place, a paid secretary had to be
specially engaged in each ward or division, and
paid canvassers had to be found to assist in the
work of canvassing for votes. But the moment the
election was over, this crude machinery melted
away. No interest whatever was manifested locally
in politics during the time that elapsed between
elections. There were no stirring speeches delivered by members of Parliament at enthusiastic meetings of their supporters; and if a local hall or building had been hired for that purpose, few people would have troubled themselves to go and listen to an oration about imperial interests or domestic legislation.

The method of selecting candidates was as bad and inefficient as could possibly be conceived. A man who wished to enter Parliament in the Conservative interest placed himself in communication with the firm of solicitors who managed the party. The first question would be: "What are you prepared to spend?" and the next interrogation was generally: "Can you make a good speech?"

At a general election the party solicitors sent candidates down to the constituencies that required them, after submitting their names to the chief Whip and receiving his approbation; and on arrival the candidates were placed under the care of a local solicitor who represented the London firm of party managers.

The principle upon which a general election was fought was simple in the extreme. With few exceptions the counties voted solidly for the Tory party, and occasioned no trouble. The boroughs, on the other hand, were nearly all Radical; and in the election of 1868 the whole of London returned only one Conservative. The municipal corporations were almost invariably Radical, and the political
influence exercised by them was of course enormous. The expedient adopted by the Conservative party was simply this: the counties were left to take care of themselves, and the boroughs were fought by bribery. Enormous sums were spent in corrupting the electorate, and a candidate who was not prepared to "make a good splash" had no chance whatever.

While, as before stated, several influential members of the Tory party thought that the Conservative cause was absolutely ruined, Disraeli's brains perceived that the remedy for the present state of affairs lay in the invention of an entirely new system of conducting elections. Disraeli believed that personal zeal and ambition would prove more successful than paid services; accordingly, after the Liberal triumph in 1868 he began to look about for a young and ambitious member of the party, who would be willing to give his services to the Conservative cause, and who would devote his best years to working out a complete scheme of party organization. His choice fell upon Mr. Gorst, who had entered the House of Commons in 1866 as member for Cambridge, but had lost his seat in the election of 1868. What was most wanted, said Disraeli to his new party manager, was that every constituency should have a candidate ready beforehand. That ought to be the first consideration in organizing a permanent system of electoral machinery.
Offices and an adequate staff were provided in Parliament Street; and at these head-quarters the party manager and his able assistants duly installed themselves as "The Central Conservative Office". The first step to be taken was the organization of local committees in the towns and county divisions. In order to carry out this object it was necessary to pay a personal visit to every constituency throughout the country. Arrangements were made to meet the most influential local Conservatives at each place, and to persuade them to form a committee for the purpose of propagating Conservative principles and arranging about a local candidate. These committees, when once they had been established, rapidly grew into Conservative associations. Intelligent working-men were easily persuaded to join them, and they are now known everywhere by the common appellation "Conservative Working-men's Associations". In the counties these associations always remained aristocratic in character, and chiefly consisted of country gentlemen and the superior class of farmers; but in the manufacturing districts of counties like Yorkshire and Lancashire, and in large towns such as Birmingham and Sheffield, they spread at the most astonishing speed among the masses of the electorate.

An attempt was made to affiliate these local associations to a central organization by the establishment of the "National Union", an idea which
emanated principally from Mr. Cecil Raikes. But the local Conservative committees were jealous of outside control, and would not surrender their independence; the National Union has consequently become more than anything else a centre for distributing pamphlets, cartoons, and other electioneering literature.

In large towns and in the county divisions the Conservative associations established branch committees in the different wards, which were of course in touch with, and subordinate to, the central representative body. Every association had at its head a chairman or secretary with whom the Central Conservative Office could communicate; and a list of all the Conservative associations and their chairmen was filed at head-quarters.

A register of approved candidates was of course kept at the Central Office; but the principle upon which they were supplied to the constituencies differed fundamentally from that which had been in vogue during the days when the party management was in the hands of a firm of solicitors. Formerly, the plan had been to supply candidates to constituencies. The object now was to make the constituencies choose their own candidates. The method employed was as follows. In registering candidates care was taken to note down their peculiar qualifications. One man might be the chairman of a great shipping company, and consequently a man of high commer-
cial standing; another, perhaps, was an able lawyer who had made a special study of economic and labour questions. A constituency, in applying for a candidate, was asked to state the kind of man wanted. The party manager declined to make the selection himself, but requested some of the leading men in the constituency to come up and make their own choice. Meanwhile a list of likely men was compiled from the register; and, if desirable, personal interviews were arranged. By this means each place was provided with a candidate suited to its particular needs.

Although a perfectly free hand was given to the new party manager in carrying out his plan of organization, it must not be supposed that any important steps were taken without the knowledge and advice of the Conservative leader. Disraeli took the greatest possible interest in the details of the scheme, and his sagacity and experience were of the highest value at every stage of the undertaking. There were members of the party, of course, who threw ridicule on the whole project. But Disraeli never allowed himself to change his convictions or to be discouraged by people who differed from him; and although he was sceptical about winning the election of 1874—partly because Parliament was taken by surprise and partly on account of political questions—he never doubted that the new organization would prove a great weapon during future campaigns.
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One item in particular in the programme of reorganization convinced the sceptical members of the party that the whole scheme was predoomed to failure. It was determined, namely, that the Conservative Central Office should steer perfectly clear of the old system of bribery. The party fund placed at its disposal by the Whips was to be used solely for the legitimate expenses of running an election. Disraeli and his advisers were more clearheaded than the recalcitrant critics alluded to above, and they perceived compensating advantages which would far outbalance the antiquated plan of corruption pure and simple. The direct consequence of the system of bribery was that respectable people held aloof from elections, and would not take any active part in them; and owing to this circumstance candidates were deprived of the substantial support of the most influential persons in the constituencies. The new plan, as foreseen, succeeded admirably. When private gentlemen, respectable merchants, and other leading men discovered that assisting their party at an election did not necessarily involve getting themselves mixed up with bribery, they readily came forward with all the power at their command to help the local candidate. It would be absurd to assert that bribery was put an end to altogether; but the fact was accomplished, that the Conservative leaders officially dissociated themselves from corrupt practices, and by taking this step an enormous amount of dormant influence,
which had hitherto been lost to the party, was brought into play in times of political necessity.

The satisfactory results achieved by this new system of organization were manifested at the bye-elections which occurred from time to time. Disraeli took a great interest in the working of the new machinery. When a bye-election was won he was satisfied that everything had been in order, and the successful result furnished him with sufficient proof that such was the case. But he gave instructions that whenever a bye-election was lost, he was to be fully informed of the cause of defeat; and this was invariably done. By this means he was enabled to point out what he thought to be defective in the system, and to discuss any improvement that suggested itself to his astuteness and experience.

When Parliament was suddenly and unexpectedly dissolved in 1874 there was no confusion or embarrassment among the ranks of the Conservative party throughout the country. Telegrams were sent immediately to all the constituencies, telling them to get ready for the election, and asking them who was going to contest the seat in the Conservative interest. In the majority of cases, where there was any chance of winning the election, candidates had already been selected by the local committee. But to those places which remained unprovided the advice was sent: "Get some one of influence in your own neighbourhood. If not, as a last resort come to us and we will help you." The plan of
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Campaign was to throw the whole energies and resources of the central organization into those contests which received inefficient local help, but which gave a reasonable expectation of a successful issue. And in this way the election of 1874, which might otherwise have proved disastrous to the Conservative party, was turned into a brilliant victory.

Chapter XIV.

The Manchester Demonstration.

An interesting and important event occurred in the year 1872, when a gigantic gathering of the Lancashire Conservative associations was organized at Manchester, which Disraeli, as leader of the party, was invited to address. This demonstration grew out of the scheme of Conservative reorganization, and bore overwhelming testimony to the significance of the movement; but to those who were behind the scenes in the political life of that period the occasion also signified one of the most momentous and critical incidents in Disraeli's public career.

It is a frequent occurrence nowadays for ministers to address meetings in all parts of the country, and it generally happens that the leader of one of the great parties has to make a speech at one place or another at least once a week. But twenty-five or
thirty years ago it was an unusual thing for a statesman to deliver an address on public affairs in a locality with which he was not politically connected. The Edinburgh speech and the Manchester speech were exceptional incidents in Disraeli's parliamentary life, and most of the important orations which he made outside the walls of St. Stephen's, prior to 1872, were delivered to his constituents.

The great demonstration at Manchester originated in the desire of one of the Lancashire Conservative associations that Disraeli should go down and address it. The Conservative Central Office thought, however, that it would create a great amount of local jealousy if one particular association were to be singled out by the leader of the party. It was recognized at the same time that Lancashire had done more for the propagation of Conservative principles than any other county in England, and the proposal was accordingly made that a great meeting of all the Conservative associations in Lancashire should be organized and an invitation sent to Disraeli in their joint names. This idea was carried out. Early in April Disraeli went down to Manchester, and received a tremendous and unprecedented ovation from the Lancashire operatives.

One feature of the demonstration was the presentation to Disraeli of addresses from the numerous Conservative associations, which filed past the platform on which he was seated, bearing immense
banners with the inscription of their names. The representatives of each association paused in front of the platform to shake hands with the Conservative leader and present an address to him. One brightly-coloured banner bore the cheerful title, "The Bolton Conservative Burial Club", and as Disraeli shook hands with its representatives, he remarked pleasantly: "Well, gentlemen, I hope it will be a long time before you're buried!"

At the time when Disraeli paid his visit to Manchester there was a great agitation amongst the Lancashire operatives to shorten the hours of factory labour. The demand had taken the preliminary form of an attempt to get the hours of women and children shortened, which appealed more readily to public sympathy, and which would have entailed the ultimate reduction of the hours of labour for all classes of operatives. This grievance was becoming an important public question, and Disraeli consented to receive a deputation of workmen to discuss the subject during his visit to Manchester. After listening to their arguments, Disraeli delivered an extremely sympathetic reply. He pointed out to them the difficulties which would have to be overcome in complying with their demands, but he showed by the tone of his answer how thoroughly he understood the working-classes of this country, and how well he was able to enter into their feelings. He promised that the matter should be inquired into whenever he possessed the power to do so; and
during his term of office, a few years later, a factory bill was passed by Sir Richard Cross, the home secretary, which carried out the objects advanced by the Lancashire deputation. The incident serves to show that Disraeli's sympathy with the working-classes was practical and unaffected, and that he possessed the rare gift—becoming rarer every day—of performing political promises as well as making them.

The great event of Disraeli's Manchester visit was the speech which he delivered before a huge audience in the Free Trade Hall on the 3rd of April. It was in connection with this monster meeting that the significant incident took place which was referred to at the beginning of the chapter. In spite of the great services which he had rendered to the Conservative cause—services, one would imagine, which could scarcely have been repaid even by the most loyal and constant support of the party—Disraeli was still looked upon by a section of the Tories as a Jew and a political adventurer. It is necessary, and in better taste, to observe a certain reticence with regard to political incidents which have taken place within the present generation. Without going into further details, therefore, the fact may be simply stated that an intrigue had been set on foot by certain disaffected Conservatives, which had for its object the substitution of Lord Derby for Disraeli as leader of the party. There can be no question that Lord Derby never once wavered in his loyalty
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to Disraeli, and it is probable that he was ignorant of the intrigue in the beginning. In order, however, to put an end to the conspiracy, efforts were successfully made to induce Lord Derby to be present at the Manchester meeting; and whether he went there cognizant of the purpose or not, it is a fact that he made a speech in which he distinctly, and maybe designedly, referred to Disraeli as his "chief".

The visit to Manchester produced, therefore, two results of paramount importance. It signified, in the first place, the fruits of the scheme of Conservative reorganization; and secondly, it crushed once and for all the attempts of a hostile section of the Tory party to upset Disraeli and to rob the founder and benefactor of modern Conservatism of the legitimate reward of his genius and industry.

The great speech which Disraeli delivered in the Free Trade Hall contained a full and comprehensive exposition of the political faith of the Conservative party. "Our opponents assure us", he began, "that the Conservative party have no political programme; and, therefore, they must look with much satisfaction to one whom you honour to-night by considering him the leader and representative of your opinions, when he comes forward at your invitation to express to you what that programme is. The Conservative party are accused of having no programme of policy. If by a programme is meant a plan to despoil churches and plunder land-
lords, I admit we have no programme. If by a programme is meant a policy which assails or menaces every institution and every interest, every class and every calling in the country, I admit we have no programme. But if to have a policy with distinct ends, and these such as most deeply interest the great body of the nation, be a becoming programme for a political party—then, I contend, we have an adequate programme, and one which, here or elsewhere, I shall always be prepared to assert and to vindicate. Gentlemen, the programme of the Conservative party is to maintain the constitution of the country."

Disraeli went on to sketch an outline of the British constitution. Speaking of party government, he said: "I look upon parliamentary government as the noblest government in the world, and certainly the one most suited to England. But without the discipline of political connection, animated by the principle of private honour, I feel certain that a popular assembly would sink before the power or the corruption of a minister. Yet I am not blind to the faults of party government. It has one great defect. Party has a tendency to warp the intelligence; and there is no minister, however resolved he may be in treating a great public question, who does not find some difficulty in emancipating himself from the traditionary prejudice on which he has long acted. It is, therefore, a great merit in our constitution that, before a minister introduces a
measure to parliament, he must submit it to an intelligence superior to all party, and entirely free from influences of that character.

"I know it will be said", he continued, "that, however beautiful in theory, the personal influence of the sovereign is now absorbed in the responsibility of the minister. I think you will find there is great fallacy in this view. The principles of the English constitution do not contemplate the absence of personal influence on the part of the sovereign; and if they did, the principles of human nature would prevent the fulfilment of such a theory. Gentlemen, I need not tell you that I am now making on this subject abstract observations of general application to our institutions and our history. But take the case of a sovereign of England who accedes to his throne at the earliest stage the law permits, and who enjoys a long reign. Take an instance like that of George III. From the earliest moment of his accession that sovereign is placed in constant communication with the most able statesmen of the period, and of all parties. Even with average ability it is impossible not to perceive that such a sovereign must soon attain a great mass of political information and political experience. Information and experience, gentlemen, whether they are possessed by a sovereign or by the humblest of his subjects, are irresistible in life. No man, with the vast responsibility that devolves upon an English minister, can afford to treat with indifference a suggestion
that has not occurred to him, or information with which he had not been previously supplied.

"But pursue this view of the subject. The longer the reign, the influence of that sovereign must proportionately increase. All the illustrious statesmen who served his youth disappear. A new generation of public servants rises up. There is a critical conjuncture in affairs—a moment of perplexity and peril. Then it is that the sovereign can appeal to a similar state of affairs that occurred perhaps thirty years before. When all are in doubt among his servants, he can quote the advice that was given by the illustrious men of his early years; and though he may maintain himself within the strictest limits of the constitution, who can suppose when such information and such suggestions are made by the most exalted person in the country that they can be without effect? No, gentlemen; a minister who could venture to treat such influence with indifference would not be a constitutional minister, but an arrogant idiot."

After reviewing the relative degrees of influence exercised by the Lords and the Commons, Disraeli referred to the Reform Bill which he had passed in 1867. "And now, gentlemen," he said, "I will tell you what was done by the last Reform Act. Lord Grey, in his measure of 1832, which was no doubt a statesmanlike measure, committed a great, and for a time it appeared an irretrievable, error. By that measure he fortified the legitimate influence
of the aristocracy, and accorded to the middle classes great and salutary franchises. But he not only made no provision for the representation of the working-classes in the constitution, but he absolutely abolished those ancient franchises which the working-classes had peculiarly enjoyed and exercised from time immemorial. Gentlemen, that was the origin of Chartism, and of that electoral uneasiness which existed in this country more or less for thirty years. The Liberal party, I feel it my duty to say, had not acted fairly by this question. In their adversity they held out hopes to the working-classes, but when they had a strong government they laughed their vows to scorn.

"In 1848 there was a French revolution, and a republic was established. No one can have forgotten what the effect was in this country. I remember the day when not a woman could leave her house in London, and when cannon were planted on Westminster Bridge. When Lord Derby became prime minister, affairs had arrived at such a point that it was of the first moment that the question should be sincerely dealt with. He had to encounter great difficulties, but he accomplished his purpose with the support of a united party. And what has been the result? A year ago there was another revolution in France, and a republic was again established of the most menacing character. What happened in this country? You could not get half a dozen men to assemble in
a street and grumble. Why? Because the people had got what they wanted. They were content, and they were grateful."

From the subject of parliamentary reform Disraeli passed on to speak of the union between Church and State. He was never tired of urging that authority should be connected with religion, and on this occasion he took the opportunity of commenting on the recent controversy about the religious teaching in the schools created by Mr. Forster's Act of 1870. "It was in this city," he said, "I don't know whether it was not in this hall, that that remarkable meeting was held of the Nonconformists to effect important alterations in the Education Act, and you are acquainted with the discussion in Parliament which arose in consequence of that meeting. Gentlemen, I have due and great respect for the Nonconformist body. I acknowledge their services to their country; and though I believe that the political reasons which mainly called them into existence have entirely ceased, it is impossible not to treat with consideration a body which has been eminent for its conscience, its learning, and its patriotism. But I must express my mortification that, from a feeling of envy or of pique, the Nonconformist body, rather than assist the Church in their great enterprise, should absolutely have become the partisans of a merely secular education. I believe myself that without the recognition of a superintending Provi-
dence in the affairs of this world all national education will be disastrous, and I feel confident that it is impossible to stop at that mere recognition.

"Religious education is demanded by the nation generally and by the instincts of human nature. I should like to see the Church and the Nonconformists work together; but I trust, whatever may be the result, the country will stand by the Church in its efforts to maintain the religious education of the people. Gentlemen, I foresee yet trials for the Church of England; but I am confident in its future. I am confident in its future, because I believe there is now a very general feeling that to be national it must be comprehensive. I will not use the word 'broad', because it is an epithet applied to a system with which I have no sympathy. But I would wish churchmen, and especially the clergy, always to remember that 'in our Father's House are many mansions'; and I believe that comprehensive spirit is perfectly consistent with the maintenance of formularies and the belief in dogmas, without which I hold no practical religion can exist."

Discussing the state of the agricultural interest, Disraeli urged objections to any revolution in farming, principally because he believed it would injure the agricultural labourer. Under existing conditions he considered that the lot of the agricultural labourers was steadily improving. Disraeli's concluding words on this topic furnish an illus-
tration of his complete conversion to the general application of the principles of free-trade. "I cannot resist the conviction", he exclaimed, "that the condition of the agricultural labourers, instead of being stationary, as we are constantly told by those not acquainted with them, has been one of progressive improvement; and that in those counties—and they are many—where the stimulating influence of a manufacturing neighbourhood acts upon the land, the general conclusion at which I arrive is that the agricultural labourer has had his share in the advance of national prosperity."

Before concluding his speech, Disraeli made one of his happy attacks upon the government. "Their specific", he said, alluding to Gladstone's Irish bills, "was to despoil churches and plunder landlords. And what has been the result? Sedition rampant; treason thinly veiled; and whenever a vacancy occurs in the representation, a candidate is returned pledged to the disruption of the realm. Her Majesty's new ministers proceeded in their career like a body of men under the influence of some delirious drug. Not satiated with the spoliation and anarchy of Ireland, they began to attack every institution and every interest, every class and calling in the country." Then, having accused ministers of reckless and profitless expenditure in connection with national defence, he continued: "As time advanced, it was not difficult to perceive that extravagance was being substituted for energy
by the government. The unnatural stimulus was subsiding. Their paroxysms ended in prostration. Some took refuge in melancholy, and their eminent chief alternated between a menace and a sigh. As I sat opposite the Treasury bench, the ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coasts 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."

Disraeli has often been accused of having been a jingo; but there are certainly no traces of any sentiment of the kind to be found in his speeches on foreign politics, whether delivered in Parliament or before audiences more amenable to stirring rhetoric than to cold reason. At Manchester he took particular pains to dissociate himself from what he termed "aggressive diplomacy". "Gentlemen," he said, "don't suppose, because I counsel firmness and decision at the right moment, that I am of that school of statesmen who are favourable to a turbulent and aggressive diplomacy. I have resisted it during a great part of my life. I am not unaware that the relations of England to Europe have undergone a vast change during the century that has just elapsed. The relations of England to Europe are not the same as they were in the days of Lord Chatham or Frederick the Great. The Queen of
England has become the sovereign of the most powerful of Oriental states. On the other side of the globe there are now establishments belonging to her, teeming with wealth and population, which will in due time exercise their influence over the distribution of power. The old establishments of this country, now the United States of America, throw their lengthening shades over the Atlantic, which mix with European waters. These are vast and novel elements in the distribution of power. I acknowledge that the policy of England with respect to Europe should be a policy of reserve—but proud reserve. And in answer to those statesmen—those mistaken statesmen—who have intimated the decay of the power of England and the decline of its resources, I express here my confident conviction that there never was a moment in our history when the power of England was so great and her resources so vast and inexhaustible.

"And yet, gentlemen," he concluded, "it is not merely our fleets and armies, our powerful artillery, our accumulated capital, and our unlimited credit on which I so much depend, as upon that unbroken spirit of her people, which I believe was never prouder of the imperial country to which they belong. Gentlemen, it is to that spirit that I above all things trust. I look upon the people of Lancashire as a fair representative of the people of England. I think the manner in which they have invited me here, locally a stranger, to receive the
expression of their cordial sympathy, and only because they recognize some effort on my part to maintain the greatness of their country, is evidence of the spirit of the land. I must express to you again my deep sense of the generous manner in which you have welcomed me, and in which you have permitted me to express to you my views upon public affairs. Proud of your confidence and encouraged by your sympathy, I now deliver to you, as my last words, the cause of the Tory party, of the English constitution, and of the British empire."

Chapter XV.

The Victory of 1874.

In 1868 Gladstone had announced the necessity of three Irish reforms: the disestablishment of the Church, the alteration of the relations between landlord and tenant, and the settlement of the university education question. Having dealt with the first two, he proceeded, in the session of 1873, to introduce an Irish University bill. This measure was intended as a compromise. The Roman Catholics demanded a university of their own; but whatever Gladstone's views may have been on that subject, the concession could not have been granted in the face of the opposition which such a step would have encountered from a section of the
Liberal party. The bill brought in by Gladstone aimed at giving the Roman Catholics a share in the government of the new university, which was to be deprived of the faculties of modern history, moral philosophy, and theology, as being controversial subjects upon which the Roman Catholics and Protestants were not agreed.

Disraeli opposed the second reading of the bill, and based his objection on the ground that it proposed to institute a university which would not be universal. "A university", he said, "should be a place of light, of liberty, and of learning. It is a place for the cultivation of the intellect, for invention, for research. It is not a place where you should expect to find interdiction of studies, some of them the most interesting that can occupy the mind of man." He accused the prime minister of having substituted the policy of confiscation for the policy of concurrent endowment. "You have had four years of it", he exclaimed. "You have despoiled churches. You have threatened every corporation and endowment in the country. You have examined into everybody's affairs. You have criticised every profession and vexed every trade. No one is certain of his property, and nobody knows what duties he may have to perform tomorrow. This is the policy of confiscation as compared with that of concurrent endowment. The Irish Roman Catholic clergy were perfectly satisfied while you were despoiling the Irish Church. They
looked not unwillingly upon the plunder of the Irish landlords; and they thought that the time had arrived when the great drama would be fulfilled, and the spirit of confiscation would descend upon the celebrated walls of Trinity College, would level them to the ground, and endow the university of Stephen’s Green. I ventured to remark at the time when the policy of the right honourable gentleman was introduced that confiscation was contagious. I believe that the people of this country have had enough of the policy of confiscation. From what I can see, the House of Commons elected to carry out that policy are beginning to experience some of the inconvenience of satiety; and if I am not mistaken, they will give some intimation to the government to-night that that is their opinion also.”

On the division taking place the government were defeated, and Gladstone, who had declared at the very outset of the debate that he would stand or fall by the bill, tendered his resignation. Disraeli perceived at once the disadvantages of taking office at that moment. Parliament could not have been dissolved in the existing state of public business; it would therefore have been necessary for the new government to remain in office on sufferance until the requisite financial provision had been made for the year. Disraeli well knew that under such circumstances the Liberal party would be daily gaining ground, while the ministerialists would become correspondingly unpopular. When
an appeal was ultimately made to the country, the electorate would consider that Gladstone had been sufficiently punished for his misdeeds, and would return him again to office. Whereas, if the Liberals were compelled to continue the administration of affairs, the opposite would happen, and the Conservative party would stand a better chance in the constituencies at a future date. On these considerations Disraeli declined to form a government, and Gladstone was obliged to re-form his administration.

The session of 1873 was brought to an uneventful conclusion; but an occurrence took place in the autumn recess which was destined to bring about the collapse of the Liberal government in the most extraordinary and unexpected manner. Some changes taking place in the ministry after the adjournment of the House, Gladstone undertook the chancellorship of the exchequer in addition to retaining his office of first lord of the treasury. He effected this change under the supposition that it would not involve the vacation of his seat, which was not considered a safe one; but there appears to have been a considerable amount of private discussion among the Liberal lawyers as to whether Gladstone would be able to take his seat for Greenwich on the reassembling of Parliament in 1874.

When a minister accepted a new office "in lieu of", or "in succession to", the other, it was the constitutional practice for two members of Parlia-
ment to send a written notification of the fact to the Speaker, in addition to which the minister in question was legally bound to forward to the Speaker a copy of the Gazette containing his appointment. The Conservatives were not slow to take advantage of this anomalous situation. Two members of the party sent the customary notification of Gladstone’s appointment to the Speaker, to enable the latter to issue a writ for re-election at Greenwich, and added the words: “We presume that Mr. Gladstone will have complied with the law and sent a copy of the Gazette containing his appointment”. It was currently rumoured, on the approach of the new session, that Mr. James Lowther would rise up in his place, as soon as Gladstone had taken his seat on the Treasury bench, and inform Mr. Speaker that he “spied strangers”. This delightful scene would have led inevitably to the appointment of a committee to inquire if the prime minister had vacated his seat. Eminent lawyers belonging to both parties were agreed that such was in fact the case, and the report of the committee would undoubtedly have ended in a suspension of public business while the prime minister spent two or three weeks in Greenwich fighting a contested seat.

To save himself from this ridiculous position Gladstone had no alternative but dissolution. It was suspected at the time that this was the true reason of his sudden appeal to the country, and any doubts which may have existed on the subject have
been cleared up by Lord Selborne, who narrates the circumstances of this episode in his recently-published *Memorials*, giving it as his opinion that Gladstone dissolved Parliament as the only way out of the difficulty.

On the 24th of January, 1874, to the astonishment of the country, the newspapers contained an address to the Greenwich electors from the prime minister, announcing the dissolution. In this address Gladstone made a bid for office that took even the members of his own cabinet by surprise. He offered a bribe to an important section of the electorate by promising the total repeal of the unpopular income-tax. When Disraeli received the news of this manoeuvre, he exclaimed, "Gladstone's done us!" and he was firmly convinced, in spite of his faith in the new party organization, that the country would pronounce in favour of the revolutionary financial policy put forward by the chancellor of the exchequer. It is interesting to note that this proposition remained a glaring electioneering manoeuvre, and was never reverted to by Gladstone during his subsequent leases of power.

The new organization of the Conservative party was now to be put to a severe test. Dissolution had come upon them like a thunder-clap, fully a year before it was expected. Before the writs were issued, however, it was reported to Disraeli that every constituency throughout the country, in
which there was a chance of victory, was provided with a Conservative candidate; and he was furnished with an estimate of the majority which the Central Office expected to gain at the elections. The estimate, which gave all doubtful seats to the Radicals, promised a majority of twenty-five; but the management expressed the private opinion that the Conservatives would come into power with a majority of fifty. The more sanguine calculation proved, in fact, correct; and Disraeli found himself, at the conclusion of the election, for the first time in his political life, supported by a substantial working majority.

The Conservative victory of 1874 was obtained by less majestic means than has been generally suggested. Disraeli had made great efforts to awaken a spirit of imperialism throughout the country, and to arouse in the breast of the newly-enfranchised working-man heroic and patriotic feelings calculated to lift him beyond sordid considerations of private interest. It is very fine and elevating to think of the working-classes being exalted to this pitch of imperial enthusiasm; but if we descend to prosaic facts it must be acknowledged that the British workman never has cared, and probably never will care, twopence about anything so far removed from cheap beer and improved conditions of labour as imperialism. This fact—an unhappy one, but nevertheless a fact—was fully recognized by the wire-pullers of the Conservative
party in 1874. There was, in truth, no Conservative reaction at all; and the elections were won, not by the actual strength of the Tories, but by Radical abstention and by the skilful organization of the Conservative forces.

In order to understand the cause of this abstention it is necessary to take into consideration the philosophy of human nature. Reforms cannot be effected by a government without offending certain groups or classes in the country, and the individuals belonging to these groups will naturally show their resentment by withdrawing their support at the next election. The case of the bye-elections between 1872 and 1874 furnishes an excellent example of this fact. The classes whom Gladstone had offended either gave a hostile vote or abstained from voting altogether at these bye-elections, which consequently presented a series of Conservative triumphs. But it is instructive to observe that, at the general election in 1874, all the results of the bye-elections were reversed. And this remarkable circumstance finds its explanation in the hypothesis set forth above. The discontented Radicals had already punished the government for the various causes of offence, and by the time of the general election they had recovered their temper and forgiven Gladstone; hence the vote in his favour in the constituencies referred to. Had the Radicals possessed an organization like that of the Conservatives in 1874, they might have succeeded
in bringing a sufficient number of the malcontents to the poll; but, being wholly without any effective electoral machinery, they failed to cope with the disciplined order of their opponents.

Unhappily, these points were not grasped by the leaders of the Conservative party in 1874. They failed to comprehend the negative nature of their victory, and consequently they failed to profit by the lessons it should have inculcated. From the moment when he was returned to power with a majority, Disraeli put his faith in imperialism; and he unfortunately neglected the recommendations of the experienced managers of the party, who assured him that it would require greatly increased and unremitting efforts on the part of the Conservative organization to win the next election. It was not until 1880 that the accuracy of the warning was brought home to those who had disregarded it in the hour of prosperity.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Ritualist Controversy.

The unexpected Conservative victory in 1874 brought back to the fold those members of the party who had retired from active politics in disgust. Disraeli had therefore no difficulty in finding willing material out of which to form his second ad-
The new Parliament assembled on the 5th of March, and the otherwise uneventful commencement of the session was marked by Gladstone's resignation of the leadership of the Liberal party. The temperament of the defeated prime minister was not suited to hopeless and inevitable opposition. He was essentially a man who must either throw himself heart and soul into some particular question, or else stand aloof from politics altogether; and there was no promise at the moment of Disraeli's taking office of any controversy arising calculated to absorb his interest. Disheartened and dissatisfied, he appears to have formed the resolution to retire absolutely and permanently from public life. "I think he is so thoroughly determined not to lead," writes Lord Selborne, in September, 1874, "or to return to office (on any terms which the party either can or will make practicable), as to offer extremely little chance of his giving up his wish for retirement, which is certainly genuine."

1 The following formed the cabinet:—
Mr. Disraeli, First Lord of the Treasury.
Lord Cairns, Lord Chancellor.
The Duke of Richmond, Lord President of the Council.
Lord Malmesbury, Privy Seal.
Sir Stafford Northcote, Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Mr. Cross, Home Secretary.
Lord Derby, Foreign Secretary.
Lord Carnarvon, Colonial Secretary.
Mr. Gathorne Hardy, Secretary for War.
Lord Salisbury, Secretary for India.
Mr. Ward Hunt, First Lord of the Admiralty.
Lord John Manners, Postmaster-General.
But the very characteristics which had induced Gladstone to throw up politics in disgust brought the fiery-minded enthusiast out of his seclusion at the first blast of the trumpet. He did not reappear in the House of Commons to resume the leadership of the opposition, which, after an interregnum, was conferred upon Lord Hartington; but periodically, by fits and starts, he emerged from his retirement and ran amok—to the discomfiture of his locum tenens—upon some absorbing and irresistibly controversial topic.

The Public Worship Regulation Bill drew Gladstone into the arena in the session of 1874. The bill was introduced to the House of Lords by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and its object was to suppress the irregular practices of the Ritualists. In these days of religious controversy, when the dispute between Ritualism and anti-Ritualism is rapidly reaching a crisis similar to that which gave rise to legislation in 1874, the history of the Public Worship Regulation Bill—as it was somewhat absurdly termed—is of particular interest, besides being highly instructive. It merits double attention because the passing of that bill was a momentous act in the political career of Disraeli, who was unwise enough to take it up in the House of Commons, and to give it the importance of a government measure.

The object of the bill was to give power to the bishops to enforce the Acts of Uniformity; and
when Disraeli heard that the measure was supported by the episcopate, he immediately, and it will be admitted under the circumstances very unwisely, accorded it the full benefit of his support. It was impossible for the prime minister to touch so delicate a subject without burning his fingers, and the language used by him in the course of his speech on the second reading was provocative of great anger and resentment on the part of the Ritualists, who never forgave Disraeli for the energetic manner in which he took up the cudgels against them.

The second reading of the bill in the House of Commons brought Gladstone up to town for the purpose of opposing the measure. He produced six resolutions, which he proposed to move at a later stage of the proceedings, but which were ultimately withdrawn. The last of them was merely formal; the five principal resolutions being as follows: ¹—

**1.** That the House "could not do otherwise than take into view the lapse of more than two centuries since the Book of Common Prayer was enacted; the multitude of particulars embraced in the conduct of Divine service under its provisions; the doubts occasionally attaching to their interpretation, and the number of points they were thought to leave undecided; the diversities of local custom

¹ The resolutions are quoted from Lord Selborne's *Memorials*, 1865-1895, vol. i. p. 352.
which, under these circumstances, had long prevailed, and the unreasonableness of proscribing all varieties of opinion and usage among the many thousands of congregations of the Church disseminated through the land”.

2. That the House “would be reluctant to place in the hands of every single bishop, on the motion of one or three persons, greatly increased facilities towards procuring an absolute ruling of many points hitherto left open and reasonably allowing of diversity, and so towards the establishment of an inflexible rule of uniformity throughout the land, to the prejudice, in matters indifferent, of the liberty now practically existing”.

3. That the House, “willingly acknowledging the great and exemplary devotion of the clergy in general to their sacred calling, would not be on that account the less disposed to guard against the indiscretion, or thirst for power, or other fault, of individuals”.

4. That it would, “therefore, be willing to lend its best assistance to any measure recommended by adequate authority, with a view to provide more effectual securities against any neglect of or departure from strict law, which might give evidence of a design to alter, without the consent of the nation, the spirit or substance of the established religion”.

5. That it was “also desirable that the members of the Church having a legitimate interest in her services should receive ample protection (which
did not appear to be provided by the bill) against precipitate and arbitrary changes of established custom by the sole will of the clergyman, and against the wishes locally prevalent among them”.

Gladstone urged that “honest and general obedience” to rubrics was desirable, but that a literal and absolute obedience ought never to be enforced. This view was vigorously opposed by Sir William Harcourt, who resolutely affirmed that if the rubrics were obsolete they ought to be reformed and then enforced. Disraeli’s defence of the bill, which was in substance a strong attack upon the Ritualists, was delivered on the 15th of July.

“What”, he said, “is the object of the bill which we are now considering? I will at first say what I consider is not the object of it. It is not the object of the bill to attack any of the legitimate parties in the Church. Were it so, I certainly should not have facilitated the discussion of its merits in this House. I look upon the existence of parties in the Church as a necessary and beneficial consequence. They have always existed, even from apostolic times; they are a natural development of the religious sentiment in man; and they represent fairly the different conclusions at which, upon subjects that are the most precious to him, the mind of man arrives. Ceremony, enthusiasm, and free speculation are the characteristics of the three great parties in the Church, some of which have
now modern names, and which the world is too apt to imagine are in their character original. The truth is that they have always existed in different, or under different, titles. Whether they are called High Church, or Low Church, or Broad Church, they bear witness in their legitimate bounds to the activity of the religious mind of the nation, and in the course of our history this country is deeply indebted to the exertions and the energy of all those parties. The High Church party, totally irrespective of its religious sentiments, fills a noble page in the history of England, for it has vindicated the liberties of this country in a memorable manner. No language of mine can describe the benefits which this country has experienced from the exertions of the evangelical school at the commencement of this century; and in the case of the Broad Church, it is as well that a learned and highly-disciplined section of the clergy should show at the present day that they are not afraid of speculative thought, or are appalled by the discoveries of science. I hold that all these schools of religious feeling can pursue their instincts consistently with a faithful adherence to the principles and practices of the Reformation, as exhibited and represented in its fairest and most complete form—the Church of England.

"I must ask myself, What then is the real object of the bill? and I will not attempt to conceal my impressions upon it, for I do not think that our
ability to arrive at a wise decision to-day will be at all assisted by a mystical dissertation on the subject-matter of it. I take the primary object of this bill, whose powers, if it be enacted, will be applied and extended impartially to all subjects of Her Majesty, to be this—to put down Ritualism."

After denying that he had spoken on the subject outside Parliament for the purpose of creating political excitement, Disraeli proceeded: "I wish, I may add most sincerely and in the strongest manner, that all should understand that if I make the slightest allusion to the dogmas and ceremonies which are promulgated by the English Ritualists, I am anxious not to make a single observation which could offend the convictions of any honourable gentleman in this House. . . . So long as those doctrines are held by Roman Catholics, I am prepared to treat them with reverence. But what I object to is, that they should be held by ministers of our Church who, when they enter the Church, enter it at the same time with a solemn contract with the nation that they will oppose those doctrines and utterly resist them. What I do object to is Mass in masquerade. To the solemn ceremonies of our Roman Catholic friends I am prepared to extend that reverence which my mind and conscience always give to religious ceremonies sincerely believed in. But the false position in which we have been placed by, I believe, a small but a powerful and well-organized body of those who call
themselves English clergymen, in copying those ceremonies, is one which the country thinks intolerable, and of which we ought to rid ourselves."

As may be supposed, the Ritualist party was exasperated by such uncompromising expressions as "putting down Ritualism" and "Mass in masquerade", and by the accusation brought by Disraeli against the Ritualist clergy that they were guilty of a breach of faith. On the bill coming up for the third reading, however, the prime minister did not withdraw or modify any of these statements. He repeated his description of the measure as a bill to put down Ritualism, and he further offended the Ritualists by alluding to them as a "small but pernicious sect".

The passing of the Public Worship Regulation Bill was mainly due to the exertions of Disraeli. He was warned by the more level-headed of his friends that he would burn his fingers if he took up a measure of this kind, and there is little doubt that the vigour of his language went a long way in the direction of nullifying the effects of the new Act. Those who were better acquainted than Disraeli with the peculiar workings of the religious mind in this country were aware that only by excessive delicacy and great moderation could a disciplinary measure of such a nature be made to work harmoniously. To Disraeli the occasion appeared to present an excellent opportunity to raise a cry of Protestantism throughout the country, and in this
belief he threw his whole weight into the one scale. But the result was satisfactory neither to himself nor to the harmony of the Church; and to the latter fact the columns of the *Times* have borne striking and irrefutable evidence for an almost indefinite period.

Chapter XVII.

Imperialism.

The first two years of the Disraeli government did little towards increasing the prestige of the prime minister, or fulfilling the expectations of his friends. For the first time in his political career Disraeli was placed in command of a large majority. During his brief spell of power in 1868 he had merely existed as a minister on sufferance; and on the former occasions upon which he had held office, he had been, if not literally a subordinate, at least in a position which prevented the assumption of independent control. But the Conservative victory of 1874 placed him under conditions which permitted the unfettered development of his genius; and when he appeared to make no use of this great opportunity, people began to believe that his powers were waning and that the term of his political activity was drawing to a close.

With his accession to real power Disraeli's personal interest in labour problems and social ques-
tions appeared to evaporate. But the sum of domestic legislation passed during his administration was substantial, though the measures did not bear the imprint of his master hand. His pledges were redeemed, and he carried out the programme of reforms which he had put forward in opposition; but the details were left to his colleagues, and the bills that were framed, although many of them were very good bills, lacked the completeness which he alone could have imparted to them. Disraeli's heart was elsewhere. He was ambitious of making his term of office memorable; and while a portion of the public mistook his inactivity for impotence, he was in reality cherishing schemes by which England was to be placed upon a higher pinnacle of power than she had yet attained in the history of past achievement.

It is only possible to gauge how much was accomplished by Disraeli for posterity, when one remembers the general trend of Liberal policy in the past. The present generation is, in fact, only beginning now to realize the stupendous revolution which the Conservative statesman has brought about in the history of this country's development—so great a revolution that the narrow creed of Bright and Cobden has practically been wiped out of existence, while imperialism has become the national policy of both great parties in the State. The effects of past Liberal policy were painted by Disraeli in the great speech which he delivered in
1872 at the Crystal Palace, not long after the triumphant demonstration at Manchester.

"If you look to the history of this country since the advent of Liberalism forty years ago," he said, "you will find there has been no effort so continuous, so subtle, supported by so much energy, and carried on with so much ability and acumen as the attempts of Liberalism to effect the disintegration of the empire of England. And, gentlemen, of all its efforts this is the one which has been the nearest to success. Statesmen of the highest character, writers of the most distinguished ability, the most organized and efficient means, have been employed in this endeavour.

"It has been proved to all of us that we have lost money by our colonies. It has been shown with precise, with mathematical demonstration, that there never was a jewel in the crown of England that was so truly costly as the possession of India. How often has it been suggested that we should at once emancipate ourselves from this incubus? Well, that result was nearly accomplished. When those subtle views were adopted by the country under the plausible plea of granting self-government to the colonies, I confess that I myself thought that the tie was broken. Not that I, for one, object to self-government. I cannot conceive how our distant colonies can have their affairs administered except by self-government. But self-government, in my opinion, when it was conceded ought to have
been conceded as part of a great policy of imperial consolidation. It ought to have been accompanied with an imperial tariff, by securities for the people of England for the enjoyment of the unappropriated lands which belonged to the sovereign as their trustee, and by a military code which should have precisely defined the means and the responsibilities by which the colonies should be defended, and by which, if necessary, this country should call for aid from the colonies themselves. It ought, further, to have been accompanied by some representative council in the metropolis which would have brought the colonies into constant and continuous relations with the home government. All this, however, was omitted because those who advised that policy—and I believe their convictions were sincere—looked upon the colonies of England, looked even upon our connection with India, as a burden on this country, viewing everything in a financial aspect, and totally passing by those moral and political considerations which make nations great, and by the influence of which alone men are distinguished from animals.

"Well, what has been the result of this attempt during the reign of Liberalism for the disintegration of the empire? It has entirely failed. But how has it failed? Through the sympathy of the colonies with the mother-country. They have decided that the empire shall not be destroyed; and in my opinion no minister in this country will do his duty who neglects any opportunity of
reconstructing as much as possible our colonial empire, and of responding to those distant sympathies which may become the source of incalculable strength and happiness to this land."

The Liberalism of the period alluded to by Disraeli formulated, in effect, a policy of complete disintegration and isolation. It was urged and believed that the colonies and dependencies of the British Crown were a source of expense and embarrassment to the mother-country. Men like Bright and Cobden wished to get permanently rid of all imperial ties and responsibilities, and they suggested that we should shut ourselves up in our island, confine our attention exclusively to our own concerns, and pay no regard whatever to what went on outside the United Kingdom. Liberal statesmen who harboured these narrow views did not confine themselves to theory, but attempted to put their scheme into practice. Troops were actually withdrawn from our colonies, and endeavours were made—by granting independent constitutions to the colonial dependencies of the Crown—to induce them to voluntarily break off their imperial relations with this country. Happily for England, the plan, as Disraeli observed in his Crystal Palace speech, was frustrated by the action of the colonies themselves; but the consequence of this policy of the past has been the creation of an ambiguous situation, as regards imperial ties, which has had no proper and final solution to the present day.
Imperialism.

Disraeli consistently and continually advocated larger ideas, and combated this mean and contracted dream of contemptible seclusion. It may be considered fortunate for England that the Conservative prime minister turned his back upon domestic legislation and social reform during that pregnant period of our history from 1874 to 1880, and cast the whole weight of his genius and statesmanship into the balance of our imperial greatness. The immediate results of his imperial and foreign policy may not have invariably pointed to its wisdom; but what were the blunders in South Africa, which culminated in Majuba Hill, and the trouble on the frontiers of India, compared with the power and respect which have been attained by England in the councils of Europe through the lofty ambition and statesmanship of Lord Beaconsfield?

In November, 1875, Disraeli revealed to the world the dawn of a new era in British policy by purchasing for the British government Suez Canal shares to the amount of £4,000,000 sterling. European Turkey was in a critical state, and by this first move the prime minister ensured the security of our Indian communications. This purchase-scheme not only drew the attention of the Powers to the attitude of the new British government, but it concentrated popular attention on the personality of the prime minister, and in one moment changed the growing sentiment of indifference and disappointment into
universal approbation and enthusiasm. With one bound Disraeli had achieved popularity; and a couple of months later, at the commencement of the session in 1876, he accomplished a second stroke by introducing a bill to confer upon the queen the title of "Empress of India".

"I trust", he said, on moving the first reading of the bill, "that the House will support Her Majesty's government in the course they are adopting, because we have reason to feel that it is a step which will give real satisfaction, not merely to the princes, but to the nations of India. They look forward to some act of this kind with intense interest, and by various modes they have conveyed to us their desire that such a policy should be pursued. I cannot myself doubt that it is one also that will be agreeable to the people of the United Kingdom; because they must feel that such a step gives a seal, as it were, to that sentiment which has long existed, and the strength of which has been increased by time, and that is, the unanimous determination of the people of this country to retain our connection with the Indian empire. And it will be an answer to those mere economists and those diplomatists who announce that India is to us only a burden or a danger. By passing this bill, then, and enabling Her Majesty to take this step, the House will show, in a manner that is unmistakable, that they look upon India as one of the most precious possessions of the Crown, and their pride
that it is a part of her empire and governed by her imperial throne."

This proposal to add the title of "Emperor" to the Crown of England met with a considerable amount of opposition. The newspapers condemned it; and many people expressed the opinion that the assumption of this new dignity, instead of adding lustre to the Crown, would simply have the effect of electro-plating it. On the third reading of the Royal Titles Bill, a new light was shed upon its object by the prime minister.

"There is a country", he said, "of vast extent which has been known hitherto only by its having sent forth hordes to conquer the world. That country has at last been vanquished; and the frontiers of Russia—I will not say a rival Power, but the frontiers of Russia—are only a few days' march from those of Her Majesty's dominions in India. I venture to speak on this subject with some frankness, because I am not of that school who view the advances of Russia in Asia with those deep misgivings that some do. I think that Asia is large enough for the destinies of both Russia and England. But whatever may be my confidence in the destiny of England, I know that empires are only maintained by vigilance, by firmness, by courage, by understanding the temper of the times in which we live, and by watching those significant indications that may easily be observed. . . .

"The nations and populations", he concluded,
"that can pronounce the word Emperor, and that habitually use it, will not be slow to accept the title of Empress. That is the word which will be adopted by the nations and populations of India; and in announcing, as Her Majesty will do by her proclamation, that she adopts that title, confidence will be given to her empire in that part of the world, and it will be spoken in language which cannot be mistaken, that the Parliament of England have resolved to uphold the empire of India."

It is by the statesmanship of men like Lord Chatham and Disraeli that England has become great. While using temperate and conciliatory language about the advances of Russia in Asia, and expressing the conviction that the rival Power had no ulterior object hostile to the interests of this country, Disraeli omitted no precaution to thwart Russia's slow and significant moves in the East, and to protect and safeguard British interests against every eventuality which it was in the power of statesmanship to foresee. The first practical step in this direction was the purchase of a controlling interest in the Suez Canal, the highway to India; and this move was followed up by a direct and yet delicately-conveyed warning to Russia that the English people were resolved to uphold their Indian empire.

The third reading of the Royal Titles Bill was carried by a majority of seventy-five. Out of the passing of this measure there arose, however, an
incident which is well worth recording, if only to show the groundlessness of many of the virulent attacks to which Disraeli was subjected during his political career. In a speech delivered outside Parliament during the Easter recess, Mr. Lowe declared that he strongly suspected that the question of changing the royal title was not then brought forward for the first time. "I am under a conviction", he said, "that at least two previous ministers have entirely refused to have anything to do with such a change. More pliant persons have now been found, and I have no doubt the thing will be done."

As may be supposed, this attack upon the queen, for nobody could pretend to construe the words quoted above in any other light, was at once brought before the House of Commons upon the reassembling of Parliament. Mr. Lowe refused to make any defence, on the ground that the House had no right to call him to account for words spoken outside Parliament.

It was of course unavoidable for Disraeli to be drawn into the discussion. It was no secret in the House that Disraeli and Lowe cordially detested one another throughout their parliamentary life, and members thronged to hear the debate on the privy councillor's indiscretion in anticipation of a lively scene. They were not disappointed. For the first and only time during his ministerial career Disraeli spoke with absolute passion.

"The right honourable gentleman", he said,
'must have felt, during the whole time while he was attempting to vindicate that freedom of speech necessary at the meetings of Englishmen, that it was not the boisterous festivity of the East Retford assembly that led to these painful inquiries, but that it was the circumstance that a politician—and a politician of a distinguished character who had held high and responsible office—while the country was interested in the discussion of a great public question, should have taken the opportunity of making statements which were monstrous if they were true, but which, if they were not true, must be described by an epithet I cannot find in my vocabulary.

"Sir, did the right honourable gentleman, or did he not, not merely intimate, not insinuate, but I say broadly state to the people of this country, that the Royal Titles measure was introduced to the notice of Parliament by the unconstitutional and personal influence of the sovereign? Did he or did he not take that occasion to hold up to public prejudice, and I will say, public infamy, the chief minister; asserting, under circumstances detailed by the right honourable gentleman with minuteness, that after that gracious sovereign had been balked and baffled in her appeals to previous ministers, she had found a pliant and a servile instrument who was now ready to do her will?"

Then, leaning heavily upon the table, Disraeli repeated, in a voice almost inarticulate with passion:
"A pliant minister! A pliant minister! If it were true, to utter such things here were infamous! False!—false!—false! as those words are, nothing, sir, that I dare utter in your presence can characterize what I think of them!" The words "pliant minister", says Sir William Fraser,¹ seemed literally to choke him.

The effect of Disraeli's speech upon the House of Commons was heightened when he announced that he had the queen's permission to make a statement on her part, and requested the permission of the House to introduce the sovereign personally into the debate. On receiving the Speaker's assent, Disraeli pronounced these words: "It is merely this statement on the part of Her Majesty, that there is not the slightest foundation for the statement that was made, that proposals, such as were described in the Retford speech, were ever made to any minister at any time. Sir, the whole thing is utterly unfounded—merely that sort of calumnious gossip which unfortunately, I suppose, must always prevail, but which one certainly did not suppose would come from the mouth of a privy councillor, and one of Her Majesty's late cabinet ministers."

It is needless to add that Mr. Lowe apologized.

¹ The scene is graphically described by Sir William Fraser in Disraeli and His Day, p. 31.
During the summer of 1875 a revolt in European Turkey brought about disturbances in the East. Disraeli perceived the gravity of the situation; and in his Guildhall speech, delivered at the Lord Mayor's dinner on the 9th of November, he gave a first indication of the firm and unwavering attitude which was maintained by the British cabinet throughout the three years of imminent danger that followed. Alluding to the interests of Great Britain involved in the Eastern question, he declared that those to whom the conduct of affairs was intrusted were deeply conscious of the nature and magnitude of those British interests, and those British interests they were resolved to guard and maintain. That these were not empty words was demonstrated by the purchase, within a few days of this speech, of the Suez Canal shares, a transaction which was discussed in the foregoing chapter.

Then came the famous Andrassy Note. It was communicated to the British government early in January, 1876, and proposed a series of reforms, which had been agreed upon by Russia, Austria, and Germany, to be carried out by the Porte in the revolted provinces. This Note Disraeli characterized as inopportune. That was, he said, its fatal fault. The government gave it their sanction because it
embodied the measures which, if carried into effect, would have ameliorated the condition of the Christian subjects of the Porte. As Disraeli had anticipated, the Note proved abortive, and the disturbances in the Turkish provinces were continued.

In May a more decisive step was taken by the issue of the Berlin Memorandum, which had been drawn up by the three interested continental Powers. This document called upon Turkey to perform what in her present state were impossibilities, and threatened, in the event of her failing to comply with these demands, measures which were clearly intended to signify armed intervention. By the treaty of Paris, which had been revised in 1871, the independence and territorial integrity of the Turkish empire were guaranteed. Disraeli considered the proposition of the Berlin Memorandum to be a violation of this undertaking, and on that account it was unhesitatingly rejected.

Meanwhile the revolt of the Christians against their Turkish rulers grew to formidable dimensions, and it was currently reported that the most horrible cruelties were being perpetrated by the Turkish troops in putting down the rebellion. The accounts which reached this country, accurate in some respects, were monstrously exaggerated; and the Liberal party did not miss the opportunity of getting up a great popular agitation against the unspeakable Turk, which was fanned into flame by the voice and pen of Gladstone. The Bulgarian atro-
cities were in the mouth of every street arab, and a popular wax-work show made a fortune by exhibiting, in a weird, blue light, pictures of the revolting horrors which were supposed to have been perpetrated by the Turks. Disraeli was continuously cross-examined in Parliament about these enormities, and denounced by the Radicals for the moral support alleged by them to have been accorded to Turkey; and it is interesting to note that his last speech in the House of Commons was delivered in reply to one of these attacks.

The strain of incessant hard work had, in fact, begun to tell seriously upon Disraeli's health. As the session of 1876 was drawing to a close, he was warned by his doctor that if the physical and mental tension were continued a complete breakdown would be the inevitable result. It was an alternative between relinquishing his post in the popular chamber and contracting fatal injury to health. Disraeli was loth to give up the House of Commons; it was the arena in which all his triumphs had been won, the centre of the bustle and excitement of political life. The House of Lords offered no attractions to him. He regarded it as an august, but paralysingly dull, assembly—the cemetery of wit and intellectual ambition. He knew that no genius could conquer an atmosphere surcharged with somnolence. He had seen the brightest wits, men of great intellect and energy who had kept up the grandest traditions of the
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House of Commons, go up to the second chamber full of youthful enthusiasm and confident in their ability to rouse the Upper House from the habitual torpor in which it was allowed to stagnate; and he had seen those proud spirits ground to powder, crushed beneath the weight of the somniferous pall whose thick folds wrapped the surrounding benches in mental darkness. From this fate Disraeli preserved himself as long as he had health and strength; but at last, in his old age, when the symptoms of decline could no longer be ignored, he succumbed to the inevitable. The very method of his exit from the House of Commons was proof—considering his passion for dramatic effect—of the sad spirit of resignation in which he fulfilled the destiny that to a man of his active temperament must have been a source of dread and disappointment. No one was told of the impending change in Disraeli’s life. On the 11th of August, 1876, he went down to the House of Commons as usual, and delivered a speech in reply to an attack made upon the government on account of the delay in obtaining information about the incidents of the Bulgarian insurrection. But it did not leak out until the following day that Disraeli had uttered his last words amid the old surroundings, and had chosen to quit the scene of his life’s work without ostentatious leave-taking.

After refuting the grossly exaggerated statements about the Bulgarian atrocities which had been
circulated in the press, Disraeli, in answer to Sir William Harcourt's criticisms on the Eastern policy of the government, continued: "The honourable and learned gentleman told the government, 'There is a question now which you must face, and that question is, why do you stand out as an obstacle to the settlement of a great question from pure jealousy of Russia?' I should like to know, in the first place, what is this great question to the settlement of which we stand out as an obstacle? The honourable and learned member, although he has seldom had greater command of eloquence, and although he appears to have given the subject great consideration, never told us what the real question was; and when he taunted us so indignantly with being an obstacle to the settlement of this great question, he never ventured to define it, except, indeed, that he did intimate that it was the duty of England, in combination with Russia and the other Powers, to expel the whole Turkish nation from Eastern Europe. That an honourable and learned gentleman, once a member of a government and an ornament of that government, and one who would in future be one of our eminent statesmen—that after having experienced a sense of political responsibility, he should get up on the last day of the session, and with the conviction that from his glowing and animated words the country might be disturbed for the next six months at least, should counsel, as the solution of all these difficulties, that Her Majesty's
government should enter into an immediate combination to expel the Turkish nation from Eastern Europe, does indeed surprise me. And because we are not prepared to enter into a scheme so Quixotic as that would be, we are held up by the honourable and learned gentleman and the right honourable gentleman the member for Bradford as having given our moral, not to say our material, assistance to the Turkish people and the Turkish government.

"We are always treated as if we had some peculiar alliance with the Turkish government, as if we were their peculiar friends, and even as if we were expected to uphold them in any enormity they might commit. I want to know what evidence there is of that; what interest we have in such a thing. We are, it is true, the allies of the Sultan of Turkey—so is Russia, so is Austria, so is France, and so are others. We are also their partners in a tripartite treaty in which we not only generally, but singly, guarantee with France and Austria the territorial integrity of Turkey. These are our engagements, and they are the engagements that we endeavour to fulfil. And if these engagements, renovated and repeated only four years ago by the wisdom of Europe, are to be treated by the honourable and learned gentleman as idle wind and chaff, and if we are to be told that our political duty is by force to expel the Turks to the other side of the Bosphorus, then politics cease to be an art,
statesmanship becomes a mockery; and instead of being a House of Commons faithful to its traditions, and which is always influenced, I have ever thought, by sound principles of policy—whoever may be its leaders—we had better at once resolve ourselves into one of those revolutionary clubs which settle all political and social questions with the same ease as the honourable and learned member.

"Sir, we refused to join in the Berlin Note because we were convinced that if we made that step we should very soon see a material interference in Turkey; and we were not of opinion that by a system of material guarantees the great question which the honourable and learned gentleman has adverted to, would be solved either for the general welfare of the world or for the interests of England, which after all must be our sovereign care. The government of the Porte was never for a moment misled by the arrival of the British fleet at Besika Bay. They were perfectly aware, when that fleet came there, that it was not to prop up any decaying and obsolete government; nor did its presence there sanction any of those enormities which are the subject of our painful discussion to-night. What may be the fate of the eastern part of Europe it would be arrogant for me to speculate upon; and if I had any thoughts on the subject, I trust I should not be so imprudent or so indiscreet as to take this opportunity to express them. But I am sure that as long as England is ruled by English
parties who understand the principles on which our empire is founded, and who are resolved to maintain that empire, our influence in that part of the world can never be looked upon with indifference. If it should happen that the government which controls the greater portion of those fair lands is found to be incompetent for its purpose, neither England nor any of the great Powers will shrink from fulfilling the high political and moral duty which will then devolve upon them.

"But, sir," he added, before resuming his seat for the last time in that assembly, "we must not jump at conclusions so quickly as is now the fashion. There is nothing to justify us in talking in such a vein of Turkey as has been, and is being, at this moment entertained. The present is a state of affairs which requires the most vigilant examination and the most careful management. But those who suppose that England ever would uphold, or at this moment particularly is upholding Turkey, from blind superstition and from a want of sympathy with the highest aspirations of humanity, are deceived. What our duty is at this critical moment is to maintain the empire of England. Nor will we ever agree to any step, though it may obtain for a moment comparative quiet and a false prosperity, that hazards the existence of that empire."

The effect of the agitation in England against the Turks was to encourage the insurgents to continue the rebellion. Believing themselves to be assured
of English support, they prolonged the struggle until the autumn, when the Porte, in answer to a Russian ultimatum, granted an armistice. In December an international conference was held at Constantinople, which was attended by Lord Salisbury as British plenipotentiary. But the object of the conference failed, as the Turks, convinced that British interests were bound up with the integrity of the Ottoman empire, thought themselves safe in refusing to entertain the proposals that were made for the internal reform of the country.

This was the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the East when Lord Beaconsfield took his seat as a peer at the commencement of the session in February, 1877. Sir William Fraser, who was present, gives the following account of the scene:¹—

"He entered by the door on the right of the bar between two earls, Derby and Bradford; all three wearing their parliamentary robes of scarlet cloth and ermine; preceded by Garter and Black Rod; the Earl-marshal and the Lord Great Chamberlain in their robes—the latter carrying his wand of office.

"The first three steps which Disraeli took were stagey. He appeared to feel that this was a mistake; then walked slowly, and went through the rest of the ceremony with true dignity. After the preliminary of his Patent being read, he was conducted to the lowest bench near the door where he

¹ Disraeli and His Day, p. 414.
had entered—that of the barons; the other peers sat on either side of him. From thence he was conducted to the dukes' bench, on which, as Lord Privy Seal, he had a right to sit. The response to the Lord Chancellor's greeting was gone through with grace; and later, divested of his robes, he took his place as Leader of the House of Lords. I was particularly struck with the perfect ease with which he leaned forward, glanced at the Chancellor, and moved the adjournment of the House. One would have thought that he had passed his life there. This was always his demeanour in the House of Lords.

"In not one of his speeches in the House of Lords was there the slightest trace either of too much self-consciousness, too much familiarity, illness at ease, nor indeed of any quality that a gentleman would not show under the circumstances. Having been for many years used to address the Speaker as 'sir', he never made the mistake of substituting that word for 'my lords'. He adapted himself to his new situation 'as to the manner born'."

Lord Beaconsfield's maiden speech in the House of Lords, which lasted exactly ten minutes, was made during the debate on the address. It was delivered in reply to a vehement and impetuous speech of the Duke of Argyll on the Eastern question. The duke concluded with the observation: "Your lordships must not suppose that I
am influenced in what I have said by feeling". The prime minister observed: "If, my lords, the speech of the noble duke, admirable as it was, is a specimen of his style when not under the influence of feeling, I look forward with considerable apprehension to what I may have to encounter when he shall be under that influence". Lord Beaconsfield then warned the House against dealing with the Eastern question as if it were simply a case of Christianity versus Mohammedan oppression. "If this matter is really to be treated," he said, "it must be treated by statesmen. We must accurately know who are to be responsible hereafter for the condition of the population. We must know what changes in the distribution of territory in the most important part of the globe are to be made as the consequence of this attempted solution. And it is only by considerations of that kind—it is only by bringing our minds, free from all passion, to a calm and sagacious consideration of this subject, and viewing it as statesmen—that we can secure the great interests of this country, which are too often forgotten in declamatory views of circumstances with which we have to deal practically." It is in this way only we can secure an amelioration in the condition of the population of the Ottoman empire."
Chapter XIX.

The Arrest of Russia.

The break-up of the Constantinople conference was immediately followed by a Russian Note issued by Prince Gortschakoff, for the purpose of ascertaining the intentions of the European cabinets which had taken common action with regard to Turkey. "The Porte", he wrote, "pays no regard to its former engagements, to its duties as a member of the European concert, or to the unanimous wishes of the great Powers. Far from having made a step towards a satisfactory solution, the state of the East has become worse, and remains a permanent menace for the peace of Europe, as well as for the sentiments of humanity and the conscience of the Christian people. Under these circumstances, before deciding on the course which he may think right to follow, His Majesty the Emperor wishes to know what course will be determined upon by the cabinets with whom we have acted up to the present, and with whom we desire, as far as possible, to continue proceeding in common action."

Thereupon the great European Powers proceeded to draw up a joint protocol, in which it was notified to the Porte that unless the promised reforms were carried out, and the Turkish forces replaced on a peace footing, the signatories would consider in
common the best means to secure the well-being of the Christian populations and the interests of the general peace. To this protocol Lord Derby affixed the following condition:—"Inasmuch as it is solely in the interests of European peace that Her Britannic Majesty's government have consented to sign the protocol proposed by that of Russia, it is understood beforehand that in the event of the object proposed not being attained—namely, reciprocal disarmament on the part of Russia and Turkey, and peace between them—the protocol in question shall be regarded as null and void".

Turkey refused to comply with the demands of the protocol, appealing to the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris. Russia immediately quitted the European concert, and without consulting the other Powers, declared war. The attitude of the British cabinet at this crisis was explained by Lord Beaconsfield at the Guildhall banquet in the autumn. "No sooner had war been declared", he stated, "than Her Majesty's government felt it to be their duty to announce at once, in language which could not be mistaken, the policy which, under the circumstances, they intended to pursue. It was not a policy framed for the occasion, and merely because war had been declared. It was a policy which, from the opportunities which had been afforded us for some time, we had deeply considered. That policy we unanimously adopted, that policy we have unanimously carried out, and
from that policy we have never swerved. What, then, was that policy? It was a policy of conditional neutrality. In the circumstances of the case we did not believe it was to the honour or the interests of England or of Turkey that we should take any part in the impending contest. But while we announced that neutrality which we were prepared to observe, we declared at the same time that the neutrality must cease if British interests were assailed or menaced. Cosmopolitan critics—men who are the friends of every country save their own—have denounced this policy as a selfish policy. My Lord Mayor, it is as selfish as patriotism. But it is the policy of Her Majesty's government; it is the policy they have adopted from the first. It is the policy they have maintained, and it continues to be their policy to believe that it is their duty to protect British interests abroad. And it is a policy which they believe the people of this country have sanctioned and approved."

Parliament was summoned in January, 1878; and the object of this early meeting was made apparent in the speech from the throne. Kars and Plevna had fallen, and Russia's menacing advance through the Balkans caused the Sultan to appeal to the Powers for intercession; but in view of the possibility of hostilities being prolonged, Parliament was to be asked to supply the means which would enable the country to prepare for emergencies.
It was not long before the expected emergency arose. The Russians continued to march south, and the capital of the Ottoman empire was threatened. Lord Beaconsfield did not hesitate for a moment. He insisted, in spite of dissensions in the cabinet, on ordering the Mediterranean fleet to proceed to Constantinople; and notice was given at the same time by Sir Stafford Northcote in the House of Commons that the government would ask for a vote of credit for six millions. By taking these prompt steps Lord Beaconsfield lost one of his colleagues. Lord Carnarvon, unable to concur in the adoption of these measures, tendered his resignation, explaining his position in the House of Lords on the 25th of January.

Lord Beaconsfield, replying to this statement, declared that he was at a loss to understand that there was sufficient reason for his colleague's retirement. "We were not conscious", he said, "that in sending orders to the fleet to enter the Turkish waters we were doing anything but carrying out that policy which we had frankly expounded to this and the other House of Parliament—which Parliament adopted, and which the country has supported us in maintaining—of conditional neutrality, which Parliament and the country so freely accepted. But", he concluded, amid cheers, "if neutrality depends on holding that the great interests of the country are not to be maintained and vindicated, then I am no longer in favour of neutrality, but in
favour of the interests of the country and the honour of the sovereign."

Russia pushed on as far as San Stefano, where she compelled Turkey to sign a treaty. The negotiations between the two belligerents were conducted with much mysteriousness and secrecy. Consequently, when Austria proposed an international congress to discuss the situation in the East, Lord Beaconsfield stipulated that every article of the treaty of San Stefano should be submitted to the conference, in order that the Powers might consider what articles required their acceptance or concurrence. These conditions were refused by Russia, and Austria's proposition fell to the ground. The resources of diplomacy were exhausted; a portion of Eastern Europe vital to British interests was occupied by a Russian army; the road to India was in danger of being seized. Lord Beaconsfield perceived that the moment had arrived when everything might be gained by a firm attitude and decisive action. Accordingly, in spite of Lord Derby's opposition, he resolved to call out the reserves, and applied to Parliament to sanction the measure. Lord Derby immediately resigned, but to prevent needless alarm at this step he explained in the House of Lords that he did not consider that the measures proposed by the cabinet would necessarily or inevitably tend to bring about a state of war.

On the 8th of April Lord Beaconsfield laid
before the House of Lords the causes which had led up to the present situation. "The treaty of San Stefano", he said, "completely abrogates what is known as Turkey in Europe; it abolishes the dominion of the Ottoman empire in Europe; it creates a large State which, under the name of Bulgaria, is inhabited by many races not Bulgarians. This Bulgaria goes to the shores of the Black Sea and seizes the ports of that sea; it extends to the coast of the Ægean, and appropriates the ports of that coast. The treaty provides for the government of this new Bulgaria under a prince who is to be selected by Russia; its administration is to be organized and supervised by a commissary of Russia; and this new State is to be garrisoned, I daresay for an indefinite period, but at all events for two years certain, by Russia." After detailing the negotiations respecting the proposed international conference which ended in failure, he exclaimed: "When everything was unsettled; when there was no prospect of a settlement; when there seemed no probability of the treaty of San Stefano being submitted for discussion to the European Powers; when all Europe was armed, was England to be disarmed? Was England to be deterred from doing her duty to herself and to Europe by taunts and threats—because we were told that we were menacing when we thought to conciliate?"

The calling out of the reserves, which was sanctioned in Parliament by large majorities, was
The Arrest of Russia.

followed by the issue of orders to the Indian government to despatch a force of 7000 native troops—two regiments of cavalry, six regiments of infantry, and two field batteries of artillery—to Malta. When Russia saw that the English prime minister meant business, and that he had a large reserve on which to draw in the event of hostilities, she paused. The door was opened to diplomatic negotiation by a despatch from Prince Gortschakoff, requesting the British government to state its wishes. Lord Salisbury had succeeded Lord Derby at the foreign office, and on the 27th of May he informed the House of Lords that satisfactory progress was being made towards the arrangement of an international congress.

It will have been seen that the entire credit of this solution of the Eastern deadlock was due to Lord Beaconsfield. Great public discussions were held at the time, in which the prime minister was accused of abrogating the privileges of Parliament. People declared that he had introduced a personal and autocratic element into the government, and that he had taken upon himself to assume a kind of dictatorship. It was argued in and out of Parliament that the ordering out of Indian troops, not only without obtaining the sanction of the legislature, but without informing Parliament at all of the momentous step which was being contemplated, was wholly unconstitutional. Lord Beaconsfield disposed of this latter objection by quoting several
precedents for the employment of Indian troops in foreign wars; and he asserted that there was no Act of Parliament forbidding the use of native Indian troops for European warfare.

There is no doubt that the Conservative prime minister insisted upon having his own way throughout the critical period of 1875 to 1878; and he won for himself during those three years universal recognition as one of the first statesmen in Europe. "He alone seized the Bear by the ear", writes Dr. Georg Brandes in his picturesque study of Lord Beaconsfield, "and dragged him to the congress at Berlin." By his vigorous action and unswerving policy he accomplished what no other interested Power had succeeded in effecting—the peace of Europe; and if Disraeli could point to no other achievement in the course of his public career, he would have fully earned the gratitude of his own and succeeding generations by that single act.

Lord Beaconsfield announced his intention of attending the Berlin congress personally, taking with him Lord Salisbury as the second representative of Great Britain. But before the departure of the plenipotentiaries a secret agreement was concluded with Russia by the British government. The existence of this agreement might never have transpired had not a copying clerk in the Foreign Office, under the impression that it was to be made public immediately, given an account of its contents—repeated from memory—to the Globe. It was seen
by the document in question that England and Russia had come to an understanding on at least two important points connected with the pacific solution of the Eastern crisis. In the first place, Russia's plan of a big Bulgaria was to be discarded, and it was agreed that the country should be divided into two provinces. Secondly, the British government consented not to oppose the cession to Russia of the port of Batoum. One important question, however, was reserved for discussion at the forthcoming congress, namely, the right of the Sultan to exercise military control over the southern Bulgarian province. The disclosure of this private arrangement naturally occasioned a great commotion in political circles; and Lord Salisbury, when questioned on the subject, could only fall back on the assurance that the statements which had been published were "wholly unauthentic".

There was a considerable outcry against the terms of this agreement when they became known. Many people declared that England had pledged herself to surrender the greater part of the most objectionable stipulations contained in the treaty of San Stefano; and others absolutely declined to believe in the existence of an agreement which seemed to signify so great a departure from the policy hitherto pursued by Lord Beaconsfield.

The fact of the matter was, however, that the public were only acquainted with one half of the engagements which had been entered into on behalf
of the country by the British government. It was not until the acquisition of Batoum by Russia had become an accomplished fact beyond recall, that Lord Beaconsfield produced the Anglo-Turkish Convention, which had been signed at Constantinople within a few days of the conclusion of the secret treaty with Russia. This Convention established a defensive alliance between England and Turkey. Lord Beaconsfield pledged England to the defence of the Sultan's Asiatic dominions against Russia; stipulating in return for the cession of Cyprus, to be occupied by England as a military and naval base, and for a guarantee on the part of the Porte as to the future introduction of administrative reforms.

An amusing account is given by Sir William Fraser, who was present on the occasion, of an incident that occurred in the House of Lords shortly before the departure of the plenipotentiaries to Berlin. Lord Granville had expressed his regret that Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury should both be absent at the same time from Her Majesty's councils. To this speech Lord Beaconsfield made the following reply:—"The noble earl has expressed his regret that my noble friend, sitting on my right, and myself should be abroad at the same time. He has been pleased to add that he considers that the absence of the noble marquis and of myself from the cabinet will diminish the personal importance of those that remain. My lords," taking out his
handkerchief and passing it lightly under his nose, "I can conceive no circumstance—ahem!—more calculated to add to it!"

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Chapter XX.

"Peace with Honour."

At the Berlin congress, which assembled on the 13th of June, 1878, under the presidency of Prince Bismarck, Lord Beaconsfield was the object of general curiosity. The history of his remarkable career, the patience and fortitude by which he had won his way to ultimate triumph, and the height of power and influence to which he had attained, made him the most interesting and lionized personality in Berlin. "Schouvaloff and Beaconsfield" said Bismarck, "are the two leading figures in this congress, and I am delighted with watching them. Beaconsfield has wonderful presence of mind, is versatile and energetic, lets nothing excite him, and has admirably defended his cause. English pride is safe in his hands."

Lord Beaconsfield's reputation was fully sustained at Berlin, where he had need on more than one occasion to display those qualities of pluck and resolution which had been the means of bringing Russia to the conference. It was recognized that the British plenipotentiary represented England—
that he was England, as the Iron Chancellor phrased it—and consequently he was able to carry with a high hand at least one vital point which would not have been conceded to a weaker man.

The sittings of the congress lasted one month, and the labours of the plenipotentiaries resulted in the signing of the treaty of Berlin, which effected a considerable modification in the provisions of the Russo-Turkish treaty concluded at San Stefano. The big Bulgaria of the latter agreement was cut in two by the Berlin congress, and two-thirds of the territory which was to have formed the great province was restored to the Sultan. The Balkans, taken roughly as the dividing line, were constituted the frontier of Turkey in Europe. Bulgaria north of the Balkans was formed into a principality with political autonomy. Bulgaria south of the Balkans was restricted in area, and constituted a new province under the designation Eastern Roumelia.

At this point occurred the hitch which nearly resulted in the break-up of the congress. In the secret agreement between England and Russia the question of the Sultan's military rights south of the Balkans, as already observed, had been reserved for future discussion. When this point was brought forward at Berlin, Lord Beaconsfield insisted that Turkey should be conceded the right to garrison the Balkan passes. A heated contest ensued; and when Russia refused to give way, he threatened to break up the conference and return home. The
interposition of Bismarck saved the situation; and for the second time Lord Beaconsfield had the satisfaction of winning a diplomatic victory over Russia by maintaining a bold and courageous attitude.

By the treaty of Berlin the independence of Servia and Roumania was recognized, and the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina were handed over to be occupied and administered by Austria. The territory conceded to Russia consisted of Ardahan, Kars, and Batoum. The acquisition of the latter port was opposed by Lord Beaconsfield, and at one time it was feared that a rupture between England and Russia was inevitable. The point was ultimately conceded by the British plenipotentiary; and in yielding it he was no doubt acting upon the private understanding already arrived at with Russia, which he had counterbalanced by entering into a defensive alliance with the Sultan of Turkey.

These were the fruits of the Berlin congress, and in estimating their value one must examine—as Lord Beaconsfield himself invariably stated—the treaty of Berlin and the Constantinople convention in conjunction. The one was intended to be the complement of the other. It was possible to concede more to Russia in the interests of European peace, in the light of a satisfactory and permanent arrangement with Turkey for the protection of England's vast stake in the East.
This was the great achievement of the international conference at Berlin: a solution—more or less satisfactory—of the dreaded Eastern question had been brought about without war; and Lord Beaconsfield returned to England with Lord Salisbury, bringing, as he told the people who came to welcome his arrival, "peace with honour". The arrival of the plenipotentiaries in London was made the occasion of a triumphant demonstration. The Lord Mayor and Sheriffs received them upon the platform at Charing Cross in their robes of office. Men, women, and children, cheering and waving their hats, lined the streets from the station to Downing Street. Disraeli reached, at that moment, the zenith of his popularity. Congratulatory addresses were poured upon him from all sides, and the streets through which he passed were decked out with flags and triumphal arches as if in honour of royalty. When the Premier had at last entered his official residence the cheers of the crowds which thronged Downing Street drew him to the window, and he reiterated the memorable words that he had spoken at Dover: "Lord Salisbury and I have brought you back peace, I hope with honour, and such a peace as will satisfy our sovereign and add to the fame of our country".

Honours were showered upon Lord Beaconsfield. He received the most prized of all decorations—the Order of the Garter. A great banquet, organized
by Conservative members of both Houses of Parliament, was given to the plenipotentiaries. They were presented with the freedom of the city of London, and entertained by the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House. Never, since the return of the Duke of Wellington after Waterloo, had such a reception been accorded to a public man.

On the 18th of July Lord Beaconsfield laid before the House of Lords the results attained by the plenipotentiaries at Berlin. After detailing the territorial changes effected by the new treaty, he proceeded to deny that these alterations implied in any sense the partition of Turkey. The object of the British government had been to prevent partition; and the whole Powers of Europe, including Russia, came to the unanimous conclusion, he declared, that the best chance for the tranquillity and order of the world was to retain the Sultan as part of the acknowledged political system of Europe. "It is perfectly true", he said, "that the Sultan of Turkey has lost provinces; it is true that his armies have been defeated; it is true that his enemy is even now at his gates. But all that has happened to other Powers. And a sovereign who has not yet forfeited his capital, whose capital has not been occupied by his enemy—and that capital one of the strongest in the world—who has armies and fleets at his disposal, and who still rules over twenty millions of inhabitants, cannot be described as a Power whose dominions have been partitioned."
Lord Beaconsfield then defended himself against the charge of having neglected the interests of Greece. The representatives of the latter country had attended the congress under the mistaken impression that they were to assist at the partition of Turkey, and they put forward claims to two large provinces and an island as an instalment. These demands could not be supported by the British plenipotentiaries, but a rectification of frontier advantageous to Greece was provided for by a clause in the treaty of Berlin.

"Now, my lords," he continued, "I have touched upon most of the points connected with Turkey in Europe. My summary is that at this moment (of course no longer counting Servia or Roumania, once tributary principalities, as part of Turkey; not counting even the new Bulgaria, though it is a tributary principality, as part of Turkey; and that I may not be taunted with taking an element which I am hardly entitled to place in the calculation, omitting even Bosnia) European Turkey still remains a dominion of sixty thousand geographical square miles, with a population of six millions, and that population in a very great degree concentrated and condensed in the provinces contiguous to the capital. My lords, it was said, when the line of the Balkans was carried—and it was not carried until after long and agitating discussions—it was said by that illustrious statesman who presided over our labours, that 'Turkey in Europe once more
exists'. My lords, I do not think that, so far as European Turkey is concerned, this country has any right to complain of the decisions of the congress, or, I would hope, of the labours of the plenipotentiaries. You cannot look at the map of Turkey as it had been left by the treaty of San Stefano, and as it has been rearranged by the treaty of Berlin, without seeing that great results have accrued. If these results had been the consequences of a long war—if they had been the results of a struggle like that we underwent in the Crimea—I do not think they would have been, even then, unsubstantial or unsatisfactory. My lords, I hope that you and the country will not forget that these results have been obtained without shedding the blood of a single Englishman; and if there has been some expenditure, it has been an expenditure which, at least, has shown the resources and determination of this country. Had you entered into that war—for which you were prepared, and well prepared—probably in a month you would have exceeded the whole expenditure you have now incurred."

Before quitting this subject, Lord Beaconsfield alluded to the territory which had been conceded to Russia. He said that the British plenipotentiaries might have broken up the congress, and gone to war to prevent Russia retaining her conquests. But would the game have been worth the candle? Whenever a misunderstanding arose between
Russia and Turkey, the same thing would happen over again: Kars would be taken, and England would again be confronted with a precisely similar difficulty. He did not think that was an occasion for a *casus belli*.

The part of the prime minister's statement, however, which was looked forward to with the greatest interest, was that which referred to the Anglo-Turkish convention and to the defence of our Indian empire. Passing on to discuss the steps which should be taken to put an end to the perpetual recurrence of wars between the Porte and Russia, Lord Beaconsfield proceeded to consider the question of the Sultan's Asiatic dominions.

"My lords," he said, "we occupy with respect to this part of the world a peculiar position, which is shared by no other Power. Our Indian empire is on every occasion on which these discussions occur, or these troubles occur, or these settlements occur—our Indian empire is to England a source of grave anxiety; and the time appeared to have arrived when, if possible, we should terminate that anxiety. In all the questions connected with European Turkey we had the assistance and sympathy sometimes of all, and often of many, of the European Powers; because they were interested in the question who should possess Constantinople, and who should have the command over the Danube and the freedom of the Mediterranean. But when we came to considerations connected with our
Oriental empire itself, they naturally are not so generally interested as they are in those which relate to the European portion of the dominions of the Porte; and we have to look to our own resources alone. . . . Now this was the origin of the convention at Constantinople which is on your lordships' table, and in that convention our object was not merely a military, or chiefly a military, object. Our object was to place this country certainly in a position in which its advice and in which its conduct might, at least, have the advantage of being connected with a military power, and with that force which it is necessary to possess often in great transactions, though you may not fortunately feel that it is necessary to have recourse to that force."

Lord Beaconsfield then spoke of the susceptibilities of France, and explained how careful the British government had been to avoid hurting her feelings or exciting her suspicions. "But", he added, "I must make this observation to your lordships. We have a substantial interest in the East; it is a commanding interest, and its behest must be obeyed. But the interest of France in Egypt, and her interest in Syria, are, as she acknowledges, sentimental and traditionary interests; and although I respect them, and although I wish to see in the Lebanon and Egypt the influence of France fairly and justly maintained—and although her officers and ours in that part of the world, and
especially in Egypt, are acting together with confidence and trust—we must remember that our connection with the East is not merely an affair of sentiment and tradition, but that we have urgent, and substantial, and enormous interests which we must guard and keep. Therefore, when we find that the progress of Russia is a progress which, whatever may be the intentions of Russia, necessarily in that part of the world produces such a state of disorganization and want of confidence in the Porte, it comes to this—that if we do not interfere in vindication of our own interests, that part of Asia must become the victim of anarchy, and ultimately become part of the possessions of Russia.

"Now, my lords, I have ventured to review the chief points connected with the subject on which I wished to address you, namely, what was the policy pursued by us, both at the congress of Berlin and in the convention of Constantinople? I am told, indeed, that we have incurred an awful responsibility by the convention into which we have entered. My lords, a prudent minister certainly would not recklessly enter into any responsibility; but a minister who is afraid to enter into any responsibility is, to my mind, not a prudent minister. We do not, my lords, wish to enter into any unnecessary responsibility; but there is one responsibility from which we certainly shrink—we shrink from the responsibility of handing to our successors a weakened or a diminished empire. Our opinion
"Peace with Honour."

is that the course we have taken will arrest the
great evils which are destroying Asia Minor and
the equally rich countries beyond. We see in the
present state of affairs the Porte losing its influence
over its subjects; we see a certainty, in our opinion,
of increasing anarchy, of the dissolution of all those
ties which, though feeble, yet still exist, and which
have kept society together in those countries. We
see the inevitable result of such a state of things,
and we cannot blame Russia for availing herself
of it.

"But, yielding to Russia what she has obtained,
we say to her, 'Thus far, and no farther'. Asia is
large enough for both of us. There is no reason
for these constant wars, or fears of wars, between
Russia and England. Before the circumstances
which led to the recent disastrous war, when none
of those events which we have seen agitating the
world had occurred, and when we were speaking in
another place of the conduct of Russia in Central
Asia, I vindicated that conduct, which I thought
was unjustly attacked, and I said then—what I
repeat now—there is room enough for Russia and
England in Asia.

"But the room that we require we must secure.
We have therefore entered into an alliance—a defen-
sive alliance—with Turkey, to guard her against
any further attack from Russia. We believe that
the result of this convention will be order and tran-
quillity. And then it will be for Europe—for we
ask no exclusive privileges or commercial advantages—it will then be for Europe to assist England in availing ourselves of the wealth which has been so long neglected and undeveloped in regions once so fertile and so favoured. We are told, as I have said before, that we are undertaking great responsibilities. From those responsibilities we do not shrink. We think that, with prudence and discretion, we shall bring about a state of affairs as advantageous for Europe as for ourselves; and in that conviction we cannot bring ourselves to believe that the act which we have recommended is one that leads to trouble and to warfare."

Lord Beaconsfield again defended his Eastern policy on the occasion of the great Conservative banquet, already alluded to, which took place a week after the initial explanation in the House of Lords. In order to illustrate the necessity and importance of the Anglo-Turkish convention, he put before his audience the probability of what would occur if there had been no such arrangement made, and Russia, having recovered herself financially, were again to assail the dominions of the Sultan in Europe and Asia.

"What would be the probable conduct," he inquired, "under these circumstances, of the government of this country, whoever the ministers might be, whatever party might be in power? I fear there might be hesitation for a time—a want of decision—a want of firmness. But no one doubts
that ultimately England would have said, ‘This will never do; we must prevent the conquest of Asia Minor; we must interfere in this matter and arrest the course of Russia’. No one, I am sure, in this country, who impartially considers this question, can for a moment doubt what under any circumstances would have been the course of this country. Well, then, that being the case, I say it is extremely important that this country should take a step beforehand which should indicate what the policy of England would be; that you should not have your ministers meeting in a council chamber, hesitating and doubting, and considering contingencies, and then acting at last, but acting perhaps too late.

"I say, therefore, that the responsibilities of this country have not been increased. The responsibilities already existed; though I, for one, would never shrink from increasing the responsibilities of this country, if they are responsibilities which ought to be undertaken. The responsibilities of the country are practically diminished by the course we have taken. My lords and gentlemen, one of the results of my attending the congress of Berlin has been to prove, what I always suspected to be an absolute fact, that neither the Crimean war, nor this horrible devastating war which has just terminated, would have taken place if England had spoken with the necessary firmness."

Gladstone, in addressing a Liberal meeting at Southwark, had condemned the Anglo-Turkish
convention in the following terms. "Gentlemen, he said, "there is but one epithet which I think—and I do not pronounce it in a moment of excitement, but I pronounce it very calmly—there is but one epithet which I think fully describes a covenant of this kind. I think it is an 'insane covenant'." Disraeli, invariably happy in his retorts, did not sit down on this occasion without coining one of those extraordinary phrases which will always be handed down to posterity as a specimen of his satirical wit.

"I was astonished", he said, "to learn that the convention of the 4th of June has been described as an insane convention. It is a strong epithet. I do not myself pretend to be as competent a judge of insanity as my right honourable opponent. I will not say to the right honourable gentleman Naviget Anticyram; but I would put this issue to an English jury. Which do you believe most likely to enter into an insane convention—a body of English gentlemen honoured by the favour of their sovereign and the confidence of their fellow-subjects, managing your 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 an opponent and to glorify himself?"

Before quitting this momentous epoch in Disraeli's career, and passing on to other topics, a last word
may be said as to the results achieved by him at the Berlin Congress. All that has been hitherto discussed, and all that has been quoted from the official statements of Lord Beaconsfield, relates solely to the public protocols of the treaty of Berlin. But Lord Beaconsfield himself stated to his political intimates, on his return from the congress, that by far the most important result of his mission to Berlin was the thorough understanding, on matters which affected the mutual interests of England and Germany, at which he had arrived in private conversations with Bismarck.

It may be asked to-day, what has become of this Anglo-German understanding, and what benefits have been derived from it? Bismarck has himself answered that question for us. Dr. Busch states that he said in 1881: "We were on good terms with England, too, under Beaconsfield; but Professor Gladstone perpetrates one piece of stupidity after another. He has alienated the Turks; he commits follies in Afghanistan and at the Cape; and he does not know how to manage Ireland. There is nothing to be done with him."

That is one of the inconveniences of party government. Understandings with foreign governments are difficult, often impossible, because there is no guarantee of stability in our foreign affairs. A strong man, capable of keeping his engagements, may to-morrow be superseded by a weak man who will lack the nerve to carry out the pledges of his
predecessor. Bismarck had faith in the courage and statesmanship of Lord Beaconsfield. In Gladstone he appears to have had none. The fall of the Conservative minister from power in 1880 put a temporary end to any schemes which might have been planned by the two statesmen. And the death of Lord Beaconsfield in the following year permanently destroyed all hope of their being carried out.

Chapter XXI.

Closing Days.

The measures taken by Lord Beaconsfield for the security of our Indian empire did not stop at the Constantinople convention. There was still the question of the defence of the north-western frontier to be dealt with—a question which had been rendered urgent by developments that had taken place in Central Asia during the crisis of 1878. Russia, believing war with England to be imminent, had then made preparations for the delivery of an attack on the borders of India. Her armies had been mobilized within reach of Afghanistan, and her political agents were established at Cabul. The effect of this move on the part of Russia became apparent when a British expedition, which had been sent into Afghanistan for the purpose of establishing diplomatic relations with the Ameer,
received a hostile reception and was not allowed to proceed to the capital.

With these evidences of Russian influence close at hand, the rectification of the Afghan frontier became an object of paramount importance. To this pressing question Lord Beaconsfield turned his attention upon his return to England after the Berlin congress. His views on the subject were communicated to the country in the autumn of that year at the Lord Mayor's banquet. In the speech which he delivered at the Guildhall, he described the north-western frontier of India as "a hap-hazard and not a scientific frontier"; and he expressed the conviction that if the rectification of the frontier were consummated, and if the Anglo-Turkish convention resulted in the preservation of the Sultan's Asiatic dominions, the English people might "dismiss from their minds all anxiety as to the external enemies of their Indian empire". The critics of the government had busied themselves during the autumn recess by declaring that the treaty of Berlin was not being carried out by the signatories, and these accusations provoked from Lord Beaconsfield on this occasion the retort that "the government of the world is carried on by sovereigns and statesmen, and not by anonymous paragraph-writers, or by the hare-brained chatter of irresponsible frivolity".

Attempts at negotiation having failed, it became necessary to coerce the Ameer into compliance with
the British demands. The Afghan war was made the subject of much controversy, and the two secessionists from the cabinet, Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon, strongly opposed the policy of the government. Parliament was summoned in December to vote the necessary supplies, and the opportunity was taken to attack ministers for having entered into what was described as an "unjust" war. Lord Beaconsfield denied that the Ameer had been treated with any want of consideration. "Really," he declared, "the Ameer of Afghanistan has been treated like a spoiled child. He has had messages sent to him, he has had messengers offered to him. He has sent messengers to us, who have been courteously received. We have written him letters, some of which he has not answered, and others he has answered with unkindness. What more could we do?" War had not been commenced with the sole object of obtaining a rectification of the frontier, though this result was regarded as its possible consequence. Describing the difference between what he had defined as a hap-hazard frontier and a scientific one, Lord Beaconsfield stated that the latter could be defended with a garrison of five thousand men, whereas the former would require an army of one hundred thousand men to protect it.

Then, replying to Lord Halifax, who had moved a resolution regretting the conduct of the government and characterizing the war as unnecessary,
Closing Days.

Lord Beaconsfield said: "What I see in the amendment is not an assertion of great principles, which no man honours more than myself. What is at the bottom of it is rather that principle of 'peace at any price', which a certain party in this country upholds. It is that dangerous dogma which I believe animates the ranks before me at this moment, although many of them may be unconscious of it. That deleterious doctrine haunts the people of this country in every form. Sometimes it is a committee; sometimes it is a letter; sometimes it is an amendment to the address; sometimes it is a proposition to stop the supplies. That doctrine has done more mischief than any I can well recall that have been afloat in this century. It has occasioned more wars than the most ruthless conquerors. It has disturbed and nearly destroyed that political equilibrium so necessary to the liberties of nations and the welfare of the world. It has dimmed occasionally for a moment even the majesty of England. And, my lords, to-night you have an opportunity, which I trust you will not lose, of branding these opinions, these deleterious dogmas, with the reprobation of the peers of England."

The Afghan war was brought, for the time being, to a rapid conclusion. The Ameer fled from his capital, and made an unsuccessful attempt to enlist the sympathies of Russia on his behalf. He died soon afterwards, and a convention was entered into
with his successor, by which England is pledged to defend Afghanistan in the event of an invasion during the life of the present Ameer—an obligation which may some day require practical observance. The frontier question was settled by the cession to the English of the passes west of Peshawur. The subsequent massacre of the British resident, who was installed at Cabul in accordance with the terms of the treaty, which necessitated a second punitive expedition, cannot be attributed to any erroneous policy on the part of Lord Beaconsfield. The outrage was due to native treachery, and it is inevitable that certain risks be run by those who are charged with the duty of inaugurating diplomatic intercourse with wild and semi-civilized tribes in Central Asia.

The extermination of the Zulus in South Africa was, on the other hand, an undeniable blunder. But it should be remembered that Sir Bartle Frere was responsible for that policy, and the chief blame attaching to Disraeli’s government was that they endorsed the actions of their agent instead of recalling him. The Transvaal was annexed to the British Crown in 1877 with the practical consent of the mass of the Boer population. The Boers were reduced to bankruptcy, and they lived in constant terror of the Zulu tribes, whose risings they were unable to subdue. We foolishly wiped the Zulus out, and the Boers, having nothing further to gain from us, revolted. Majuba Hill and the restoration of the Transvaal followed; but these events occurred
under a Liberal government. The latter surrender was a crowning blunder. But for this act the Jameson raid would never have taken place, and the federation of South Africa might to-day have been an accomplished fact.

The sands of the Conservative government were running out, and Lord Beaconsfield dissolved Parliament in the spring of 1880. Many people think that he should have appealed to the country immediately after the Berlin congress, when his immense personal popularity would have secured for the Conservatives a new lease of power. That an appeal at that moment would have been successful is not improbable; but it is wholly wrong to attribute the Conservative defeat of 1880 to popular disgust with the state of affairs in Afghanistan and South Africa. The misfortunes and reverses which marked the closing days of the Disraeli government may have alienated some of the supporters of the Conservative party, and they undoubtedly had the effect of stimulating the Liberals to increased activity. These factors may have gone, and probably did go, to swell the sum of Liberal successes; but not in the sense that a great Liberal reaction had set in throughout the country.

There were experienced men in the Conservative party who, knowing the causes which brought about the Conservative victory in 1874, foresaw exactly what would take place in 1880. The Radicals had not been slow to imitate the new
organization of their opponents, and they had created for themselves electoral machinery, similar to theirs in character, but on more democratic and popular lines. The Conservative leaders were warned that this was taking place, and it was impressed upon them that defeat at the next elections would be inevitable, unless renewed efforts were made to improve upon and perfect the system of party organization which had been called into existence before the victory of 1874. To these exhortations the party leaders paid as little attention as is usually paid by those who are momentarily intoxicated with prosperity; and consequently, if the electoral machinery was not actually allowed to rust, nothing was done to keep pace with the energy and activity of the defeated Radicals.

The great Liberal victory of 1880 was not won because the country was dissatisfied with Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy. It was won because the Liberal party possessed—what they lacked in 1874—an organization to supply suitable candidates and to bring voters to the poll. Those who had abstained from voting at the last election now came forward—partly because they felt that Gladstone had been sufficiently punished by six years of opposition, and chiefly because the Caucus took them by the ear and led them to the polling-booths. The result was a large Liberal majority. Lord Beaconsfield resigned office; and Gladstone formed his second administration.
Although in bad health and in his seventy-sixth year, defeat did not drive Lord Beaconsfield into retirement. He continued to take an active part in politics, and frequently spoke in the House of Lords during the short interval of opposition that preceded his death. But, though his intellect was still as vigorous as ever, his life's work was practically over. The last speech he delivered in the Upper House, with the exception of a brief and sympathetic allusion to the assassination of the Tsar in 1881, was on the subject of the retention of Candahar. He was then suffering—as Gladstone suffered at the close of his life—from severe neuralgic pains in the face, and he was compelled to swallow and inhale drugs to obtain relief for the length of time which the speech required for delivery.

Lord Beaconsfield strongly advocated the retention of Candahar, although he did not consider the adoption of this course absolutely essential to the safety of India. "The key of India", he said, "is not Herat or Candahar. The key of India is London. The majesty and sovereignty, the spirit and vigour of your Parliament, the inexhaustible resources, the ingenuity and determination of your people—these are the keys of India." What he thought about the retention of Candahar was that it would "contribute to the maintenance" of our Indian empire.

These were the last views expressed by him on public affairs. A few weeks later he was confined
to his house in Curzon Street; and on the 19th of April, 1881, the news of Disraeli's death cast a gloom, not only over the political world, but over the whole nation. By his own wish he was buried at Hughenden; and two days after the funeral the queen paid a visit to the vault in which he was laid, and placed a wreath upon the coffin of the minister who had enjoyed her friendship as well as her confidence.

In both Houses of Parliament ample tribute was paid to the splendid qualities of the deceased statesman by friends and foes alike. Lord Granville moved that a monument be erected to Lord Beaconsfield in the Abbey, "with an inscription expressive of the high sense entertained by the House of his rare and splendid gifts, and of his devoted labours in Parliament and in great offices of State". The motion was seconded by Lord Salisbury, who bore eloquent testimony to the crowning achievement of Disraeli's life.

"Zeal for the greatness of England", he said, "was the passion of his mind. Opinions might differ, and did differ deeply, as to the measures and the steps by which expression was given to that dominant feeling. But more and more, as his life went on and drew near its close, as the heat and turmoil of controversy were left behind, as the gratification of every possible ambition negatived the suggestion of any inferior motive, and brought out into greater prominence the purity and the
strength of this one intense feeling, the people of this country recognized the force with which this desire dominated his actions, and they repaid it by an affection and reverence which did not depend on, and had no concern with, opinions as to the particular policy pursued. This was his great title to their attachment—that above all things he wished to see England united, and powerful, and great."

Proposing a similar motion in the House of Commons, Gladstone alluded to the career of Lord Beaconsfield as "the most remarkable in our parliamentary history". "My duty", he said, "is to look at these things in the magnitude of their national and historical character; and it is so looking at them that I have not a doubt that the man who for seven years sustained the office of prime minister, the man who for nearly thirty years led, either in one House or in both, a great party in this country, the man who so entwined himself in the interest of the general heart as was shown on the occasion of his illness, is a man in whom those features meet which justify me in calling upon the House for this vote. . . .

"There were certain great qualities of the deceased statesman that I think it right to dwell upon. His extraordinary intellectual powers are as well understood by others as by me, and they are not proper subjects for our present commendation. But there were other great qualities—qualities not merely intellectual in the sense of being dissociated
from conduct, but qualities immediately connected with conduct— with regard to which I should say, were I a younger man, that I should like to stamp the recollection of them on myself for my own future guidance, and with regard to which I would confidently say to others who are younger than myself, that I strongly recommend them for notice and imitation. They were qualities not only written in a marked manner on his career, but possessed by him in a degree undoubtedly extraordinary. I speak, for example, of such as these—his strength of will; his long-sighted persistency of purpose, reaching from his first entrance upon the avenue of life to its very close; his remarkable power of self-government; and last, but not least of all, his great parliamentary courage—a quality in which I, who have associated in the course of my life with some scores of ministers, have, I think, never known but two whom I could pronounce his equal."

It is customary at all times to say kind things of the dead. But nobody can doubt the genuineness with which these sentiments regarding the great Conservative statesman were uttered. Indeed, at this distance of time, when we are able better to appreciate the place which the name of Beaconsfield is destined to hold in the history of the British empire, it seems as if in 1881 adequate justice were hardly done—despite the many noble tributes to the character and attainments of Disraeli—to the
memory of the man who, more than anybody else, has helped to put British imperialism in the front of every political programme, Liberal or Conservative, and who succeeded in banishing from English politics the narrow and unprofitable doctrine of insular seclusion.

Chapter XXII.

Lord Beaconsfield and Posterity.

Disraeli's contemporaries spoke of his remarkable career, and of the great gifts which enabled him to attain the highest position in the State, in spite of social drawbacks and—they might have added—the constant struggle against the bitterest political animosity. They eulogized his unfailing devotion to public business, the nobility and good temper displayed by him alike in office and in opposition, and they acknowledged that he had played a great part in the affairs of the country. But none saw—as we are beginning to see—the vast and permanent influence which the statesmanship of Lord Beaconsfield was destined to exercise upon the whole trend of our national policy.

In attempting to gauge Disraeli's position in the perspective of nineteenth-century history, it must be remembered that a great man is like a great mountain, the grandeur of whose heights can only be appreciated at a distance. The present genera-
The Earl of Beaconsfield.

tion stands too near the colossal figure of Lord Beaconsfield to divine the place that will be assigned to him by posterity. We can only surmise to-day that it will be a great one; greater, perhaps, than many even of his admirers are disposed to think.

Regarded simply as a man, Disraeli displayed a magnanimity towards his enemies and opponents which is rare in the annals of political life. Take, for example, his generous treatment of Carlyle. The Chelsea philosopher, writing of the Reform Bill in 1867, said: "Traitorous politicians grasping at votes, even votes from the rabble, have brought it on. One cannot but consider them traitorous; and for one's own poor share would rather have been shot than have been concerned in it. And yet, after all my silent indignation and disgust, I cannot pretend to be clearly sorry that such a consummation is expedited. I say to myself, Well, perhaps the sooner such a mass of hypocrisies, universal mismanagements, and brutal platitudes and infidelities ends, if not in some improvement then in death and finis, may it not be the better? The sum of our sins increasing steadily day by day will at least be less the sooner the settlement is. Nay, have I not a kind of secret satisfaction of the malicious or even of the judiciary kind (Schadenfreude, 'mischief joy', the Germans call it, but really it is 'justice joy' withal) that he they call Dizzy is to do it; that other jugglers of an unconscious and deeper type, having sold their
poor mother's body for a mess of official pottage, this clever, conscious juggler steps in? 'Soft, you, my honourable friends: I will weigh out the corpse of your mother—mother of mine she never was, but only step-mother and milch cow—and you shan't have the pottage—not yours you observe, but mine.' This really is a pleasing trait of its sort; other traits there are abundantly ludicrous, but they are too lugubrious even to be momentarily pleasant. A superlative Hebrew conjuror spell-binding all the great lords, great parties, great interests of England to his hand in this manner, and leading them by the nose like helpless mesmerized somnambulist cattle to such issue! Did the world ever see a *flebile ludibrium* of such magnitude before? Lath-sword and scissors of Destiny, Pickle-herring and the three Parcae alike busy in it. This too I suppose we had deserved; the end of our poor old England (such an England as we had at last made of it) to be not a fearful tragedy, but an ignominious farce as well."

During his last term of office, Disraeli offered in the most delicate manner the Grand Cross of the Bath and a pension to the man who had always alluded to him with contempt, and who once asked, "How long will John Bull permit this absurd monkey to dance upon his stomach?" After receiving the prime minister's unexpected communication, Carlyle remarked to a friend:¹ "The letter of

¹ Sir William Fraser, *Disraeli and His Day*, p. 494.
Disraeli was flattering, generous, and magnanimous; his overlooking all that I have said and done against him was great". The offer was refused; but Carlyle never forgot the exquisite delicacy of its terms.

Another tribute to Disraeli's personal qualities is contained in the recently-published instalment of Lord Selborne's *Memorials*. "It must be acknowledged", writes the ex-Lord Chancellor, "that he appeared to most advantage in his greatest prosperity. Some men, of whom all thought and spoke well before they became favourites of fortune, have proved unequal to the test of power. This was not Lord Beaconsfield's case. As he rose in power, he rose also in the general opinion of men; and, whatever may be thought of his statesmanship, he justified the ambition which forced its way against all obstacles to the highest place, by bearing himself in that place with dignity and without undue elation; and it was his happiness to win, not the confidence only, but the personal regard of his sovereign."

Disraeli's oratory abounds with examples of his humour and his great powers of satire. Unfortunately, most of the good things he said in private have not been handed down to the present generation. Speaking once of the hardships of parliamentary life, Disraeli said: "These respectable elderly gentlemen", indicating some of his Tory neighbours, "can't stand the hours. They die off like
flies. No man is fit for the House of Commons who has not in his youth led the life of a rake." On another occasion, when some demagogue had been returned for a Radical constituency, he observed: "I don't think he'll give us much trouble. Men of this kind, when once they get into the House of Commons, make desperate efforts to behave like gentlemen." There was a certain noble lord who was very fond of lecturing the House, waggling a forefinger at his audience in a rather absurd fashion. During one of these harangues Disraeli turned to his neighbour on the Treasury bench, and said: "That fellow is the cleverest ass in the House of Commons!"

Many admirable sayings of Disraeli have been preserved, however, by Sir William Fraser. Of his numerous anecdotes about the Conservative statesman, perhaps none is more illustrative of Disraeli's high conception of public life in England, than that which contains the remark, made at a dinner-party after his return from the Berlin congress, "When gentlemen cease to be returned to Parliament, this empire will perish".

Passing from Disraeli's personal characteristics to his claims as a British statesman, the questions naturally suggest themselves, What must be regarded as his greatest achievement? and what has he done for posterity?

In the first place, Disraeli organized and educated the Conservative party. When he entered
Parliament the Tories were a party of privilege. He saw the democratic tendencies of the age, and grasped the fact that the people would not remain satisfied with the Reform Act of 1832. The Tories, as he found them, were a party doomed to failure. He took them in hand and educated them. He formed out of them a great national and popular party, and taught the people of this country that the Conservative was their true friend. He created that generous and almost forgotten doctrine called Tory democracy. And although, when he rose to power, he succumbed—fortunately for the future of the British empire—to the fascinations of foreign policy, it yet remains a fact that more useful domestic legislation was passed during his six years of office than has been passed by any other government before or since.

It may be asked, what has become of this generous creed of Tory democracy? The question is difficult to answer. It grows here and there in the Conservative party like a rank weed, with the sickle always at hand to reduce its proportions. But now that the educator has passed away, it would appear that Tory democracy is dying for want of nutrition, stifled by the thick growth of the old Toryism that chokes its progress. If Disraeli could rise from his ashes like the Phoenix, he would have to begin all over again. He would be compelled to plunge into the old struggle against what, for the want of a better word, may be called the aristocratic element.
The Lord George Bentincks would be there to hand; there would be the same opening for talent and ability; and perhaps he would again succeed. But it would require the genius, the courage, the Jewish imperviousness to insult, the eloquence, and most probably the invective, of a Disraeli to accomplish again what he once achieved.

The crowning work of Disraeli's life, and that which will determine his future place in history, is the broad national policy of imperialism which he has bequeathed to posterity. It is almost inconceivable to the present generation of patriotic Englishmen that only a few years ago the policy of dismemberment and isolation was a cardinal principle among members of the great Liberal party in this country. India and the colonies were regarded as useless sources of expense, and it was seriously advocated that we should abdicate our position as a great Power, and confine our attention to our own insular affairs. This was the narrow doctrine which Disraeli succeeded in stamping out of the sphere of practical politics. The catholic interests of the British empire are now of such universal concern, and have become so inseparable a part of our everyday life, that it is difficult to realize that this larger national patriotism is principally due to the comparatively recent efforts of Lord Beaconsfield.

Therein lies his chief claim to greatness. He achieved many splendid things throughout his brilliant career. He created and organized, as
perhaps no other English statesman has done before him. He was not only the greatest party leader of modern times, but he was, perhaps, the greatest leader of the House of Commons who ever sat within the walls of Parliament. These great achievements were acknowledged by his own generation. It has been left for posterity to recognize the vast services which Lord Beaconsfield has rendered to the country by bequeathing to future generations a national policy which has made England's name great among the nations of the world.
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