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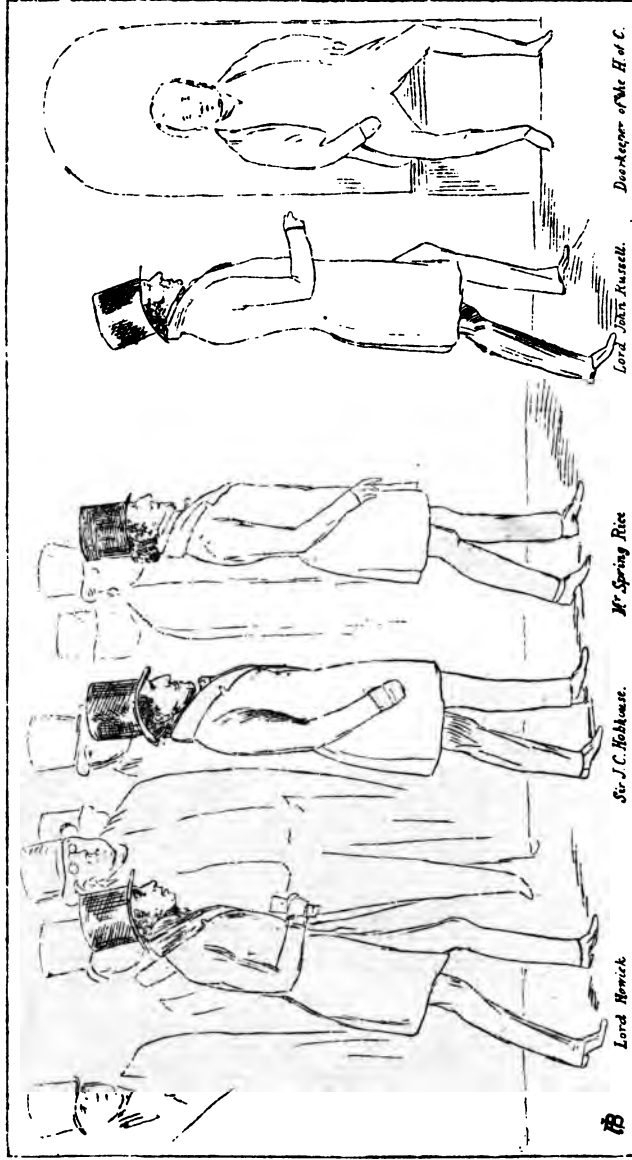
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THE
'Runnymede Letters'

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
SPOTLIGHTS AND THE NEW-SPARKS
AND THE NEW-SPARKS

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET



"THE AGE OF LITTLE MEN...."

Small Letter.

10. 11. 1944

11. 11. 1944

12. 11. 1944

13. 11. 1944



THE END OF THE LINE

THE
'Runnymede Letters'

445-05

BENJAMIN FIELD, BENJAMIN DISRAELI, 1ST EARL OF, 1804-1881

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

FRANCIS HITCHMAN

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Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen

1885

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THE
'Runnymede Letters'

443-05

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

FRANCIS HITCHMAN

AUTHOR OF 'THE PUBLIC LIFE OF THE EARL OF BEACONSFIELD'
ETC.



LONDON

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,B36

INTRODUCTION.

[THE 'Runnymede Letters,' of which the following pages are a reprint, were evoked by the events of 1835 and 1836. The authorship has never been acknowledged, but it is a matter concerning which there can be no doubt. 'Runnymede,' and the author of 'The Crisis Examined,' must have been one and the same person. Lord Beaconsfield himself never disavowed the Letters, though he never claimed them, and it was universally understood, when he explained that he 'was a gentleman of the press and bore no other escutcheon,' and said in a letter to Lady Blessington, that he 'had never made a shilling by all his journalising,' that he referred to his association with the 'Times' in the matter of these Letters.

The course of events during 1834-5-6 was very singular. In January 1834, Earl Grey was still at the head of the Government, and Brougham was Lord Chancellor; Lord Althorp was Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Melbourne was at the Home Office, and Palmerston was Foreign Secretary. The Cabinet had been going to pieces for some time. Lord Durham was the first to desert the sinking ship, and one after another, Ministers went their way. The King was only too glad to be rid of them. He disliked the Whigs generally, and he hated Brougham with a holy hatred. He 'never wanted to see his ugly face again.' Brougham, on his side, in spite of the ardent protestations of loyalty and affection for the King, which he vented in a sickening fashion on every possible occasion during

his 'progress' through Scotland, as Campbell calls his tour, had an equal dislike for the person of his Majesty, and when the King laughed his Whig counsellors out of office, Brougham committed an unpardonable breach of etiquette by sending the Great Seal back to the King in a bag by the hands of General Sir Herbert Taylor. By so acting, Brougham effectually barred all chances which he might have had of returning to office. He tried every expedient, even to offering to undertake the duties of Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer under Lyndhurst, but after 1834 he was rigorously excluded from place and power.

Lord Grey's Ministry went out of office on the 9th of July. A week later a Whig Cabinet was reconstructed, with Lord Melbourne at its head. Lord Grey took no part in it. The Privy Seal was offered to him, but he was disgusted with the unfaithfulness and intriguing of his quondam colleagues, refused the offer, and withdrew to Howick. The death of Lord Spencer, on the 10th of November, gave the King the excuse he had been eagerly seeking, and Peel was 'sent for.' Unfortunately he was in Rome, and a King's messenger had to be despatched in pursuit, the Duke of Wellington undertaking to administer the Government until he could be brought back. In December, Peel was at the head of affairs, with Lyndhurst as Chancellor and the Duke of Wellington as Foreign Secretary. Then came the Lichfield House compact, in the spring of 1835, when O'Connell patched up a truce with the 'base, bloody, and brutal Whigs,' and bound himself to support their measures and their policy generally in consideration of their friendly aid to his proposals. The first effect of the coalition was an attack on the Irish Church, in which the services of the Irish brigade were freely given to the Whigs. The Church was to be despoiled, and the efforts of the Government to save her revenues for religious uses were frustrated by the coalition of Whigs, Radicals, and Repealers. An amendment to the Address was carried on February 26, by which

Ministers were left in a minority of seven. Three adverse divisions followed in quick succession on the Irish Church. First came a resolution proposed by Lord John Russell, 'that the House do resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the temporalities of the Church of Ireland,' which was carried by 309 to 302. On April 6, another division was taken on the same subject, and Ministers found themselves in a minority of 25. On the following day the minority was increased to 27, and on the 8th the Duke of Wellington in the Lords, and Sir Robert Peel in the Commons, announced the resignation of the Ministry.

Ten days later the second Melbourne administration was complete. It may be convenient to give a list of the Ministry in this place:—

First Lord of the Treasury	. Viscount Melbourne.
President of the Council	. Marquis of Lansdowne.
Privy Seal	. Lord Duncannon.
Chancellor of the Exchequer	. Mr. Spring Rice.
Home Secretary	. Lord John Russell.
Foreign Secretary	. Lord Palmerston.
Colonial Secretary	. Mr. Charles Grant; afterwards (May 1835) Lord Glenelg.
Admiralty	. Lord Auckland.
Board of Control	. Sir John Cam Hobhouse.
Secretary at War	. Lord Howick.
Board of Trade	. Mr. Poulett Thomson; afterwards (1840) Lord Sydenham.
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	. Lord Holland.

The Great Seal was in Commission until January 19, 1836, when Pepys became Chancellor with the title of Lord Cottenham, the reasons for which unusual step were in the first place the King's dislike to Brougham, and in the second, Brougham's own impracticable temper and determination to domineer over his friends and colleagues, which made him, to use Lord Melbourne's phrase, 'impossible.'

It will be observed that the Letters breathe throughout a spirit of profound detestation of the principles of Whiggism, the explanation of which is to be found in the little tract 'The Spirit of Whiggism,' appended to the 'Letters of Runnymede.' They are equally distinguished by the fervour of their author's attachment to Sir Robert Peel. There can be no doubt of the sincerity of the writer's feelings at that time. In 1836 Peel had not executed that famous *volte face* which, ten years later, turned his warmest friend and supporter into the bitterest and most unrelenting of his opponents.

In the present condition of public affairs, when the nation is witness to the spectacle of a Minister clinging to office by the help of the votes of disaffected Irishmen, won from them by treaties as disgraceful as the Lichfield House compact itself; when attacks are daily made on the House of Lords; when the Church is threatened in unmistakable terms by members of the Government itself; and when concessions are constantly made to lawlessness, rebellion, and outrage, at the expense of the landed interest, it has been thought desirable to reproduce in a convenient form the comments of the great lost leader of the Tory party on the events of fifty years ago. There is so great a likeness between the two periods that those comments must surely be good for the present distress.

Some notes have been appended which it is hoped will be found useful in explaining what might be otherwise obscure, and in recalling to the minds of the students of politics, the personages who filled the political stage in 1836. There are some few repetitions in the notes, but it has been thought wiser to risk a reproach on that score than to give the reader the trouble of turning back in search of an explanation which may be given in half a line.]

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THE LETTERS
OF
RUNNYMEDE

'Neither for shame nor fear this mask he wore,
That, like a vizor in the battle-field,
But shrouds a manly and a daring brow'

LONDON
MDCCCXXVI

Dedication



TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART., M.P.

July 27, 1836

B

DEDICATION.

TO THE

RIGHT HON. SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART., M.P.

Sir,—I have the honour to dedicate to you a volume illustrative of WHIGS and WHIGGISM. It has been my object to delineate within its pages not only the present characters and recent exploits of the most active of the partisans, but also the essential and permanent spirit of the party. It appeared to me that it might be advantageous to connect the criticism on the character of the hour with some researches into the factious idiosyncrasy of centuries. Political parties are not so inconsistent as the superficial imagine; and, in my opinion, the Whig of a century back does not differ so materially as some would represent from the Whig of the present day. I hope, therefore, that this volume may conduce, not only to the amusement, but to the instruction of my countrymen.

It is now, Sir, some six months past since I seized the occasion of addressing you another

letter, written under very different auspices. The session of Parliament was then about to commence; it is now about to close. These six months have not been uneventful in results. If they have not witnessed any legislative enactment eminently tending to our social welfare, they have developed much political conduct for which our posterity may be grateful: for this session, Sir, has at least been memorable for one great event—an event not inferior, in my estimation, in its beneficial influence on the fortunes of the country, to Magna Charta itself—I mean the rally of the English Constitution; I might use a stronger phrase, I might say its triumph.¹

¹ Referring to the reviving spirit of the Lords, who in the course of the session had rejected in succession the Bill to Reform the Irish Municipal Corporations, the Irish Tithe Bill, the Bill for governing Charitable Trusts by popular election, and the Bill for the Disfranchisement of Stafford. The reason for this succession of disasters is to be found partly in the careless incompetency of Lord Melbourne, but principally in the fact that Lord Lyndhurst led the opposition in the Upper House. In his Autobiography Lord Campbell says: 'In the House of Lords we were at the mercy of our opponents. . . . Lyndhurst avowed their object to be to turn against Lord Melbourne a sentiment of William III. which Lord Melbourne himself had once quoted with approbation, that "while there were debates about the best form of government, some preferring monarchy, some aristocracy, some democracy, he would not pretend to decide between them, but he was sure that the worst government was that which could not carry its own measures." . . . Our party was deplorably ill-off for some peer to take

And it has triumphed because it has become understood. The more its principles have been examined, the more the intention of its various parts has been investigated, and its general scope comprehended, the more beneficent and profound has appeared the polity of our fathers. The public mind of late has been cleared of a vast amount of error in constitutional learning. Scarcely a hired writer would have the front at this day to pretend that a difference of opinion between the two Houses of Parliament is a collision between the Peers and the People. That phrase 'the People' is a little better comprehended now than it used to be; it will not serve for the stalking horse of faction as it did. We know very well that the House of Commons is not the House of 'the People;' we know very well that 'the People' is a body not intelligible in a political sense; we know very well that the Lords and the Commons are both sections of the Nation, and both alike and equally representative of that great community. And we know very well that if the contrary propositions to all these were maintained, the Government of this English Empire might, at this moment, be the

charge of such Bills. Lord Melbourne would give himself no trouble about them. They were left to Duncannon (Lord Privy Seal), who, though a man of excellent good sense, was wholly incompetent to enter the lists with Lyndhurst.'

pastime and plunder of some score of Irish adventurers.

When, Sir, you quitted Drayton in February,¹ the vagabond delegate of a foreign priesthood² was stirring up rebellion against the Peers of England, with the implied, if not the definite, sanction of His Majesty's Ministers. Where is that hired disturber now? Like base coin detected by the very consequences of its currency, and finally nailed against the counter it had deceived, so this bad politician, like a bad shilling, has worn off his edge by his very restlessness. Parliament met, and the King's Ministers exhibited with a flourish their emblazoned catalogue of oligarchical *coups-d'état*, by which they were to entrench themselves in power under the plea of ameliorating our society.³ Not one of these measures has been carried. Yet we were told that their success was certain, and by a simple process—by the close and incontestable union

¹ William IV. opened Parliament in person for the last time February 4, 1836.

² Daniel O'Connell.

³ The Bills promised in the King's Speech included measures for the Reform of Ecclesiastical Establishments, for Tithe Commutation, for the Redress of the Grievances of Dissenters, for the Reform of the Court of Chancery, for the Settlement of the Irish Tithe Dispute, for the Reform of Irish Municipal Corporations, and for the Assimilation of the Irish Poor Law to that of England.

between all true reformers. The union between all true reformers has terminated in the mutiny of Downing Street.¹

I believe that I have commemorated in this volume that celebrated harangue, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the commencement of the session, addressed at a dinner to his constituents.² You may perhaps remember, Sir, the glowing promises of that Right Honourable Gentleman: they seemed almost to announce the advent of a political millennium. 'First and foremost,' announced the Right Honourable Chancellor, 'we shall proceed in our great work of the reform of the Court of Equity;' the *opus magnum* of the gifted Cottenham. It seems the course of nature was reversed here, and the butterfly turned into grub. 'Our earnest attention will then be directed,' quoth Mr. Rice,³ 'to the entire and complete relief of our Dissenting brethren and fellow-subjects.' How liberal, how condescending, and how sincere! The Dissenters are absolutely our fellow-subjects. None but a Whig, a statesman almost eructating with the plenary inspiration of the spirit of the age, could

¹ When Lord John Russell quarrelled with his colleagues on the Irish Church question. See the *Greville Memoirs*, vol. iii. pp. 295 *et seq.*

² Letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, *post*, p. 83.

³ Mr. Spring Rice, afterwards Lord Monteagle.

have been capable of making so philosophical an admission. In the meantime six months have passed, and nothing has been done for our unhappy 'fellow-subjects,' while the Dissenting organs denounce even the projected alleviations as a miserable insult. To justice to Ireland Mr. Rice of course was pledged, and most determined to obtain it; but his Bills have been dishonoured nevertheless. And the settlement of the Irish Tithe, and the Reform of the Irish Corporations, are about as much advanced by this great Whig Government as the relief of the Dissenters and the reform of the Court of Chancery. What have they done then? What pledge have they redeemed? The Ecclesiastical Courts remain unpurged. Even the Stamp Act, through the medium of which the Whigs, as usual, have levelled a blow at the liberty of the press, has not passed yet, and in its present inquisitorial form can never become a law. What then, I repeat, have they done? They promised indeed to break open the prisons like Jack Cade; but as yet the gates are barred; the pensions are still paid, and the soldiers still flogged. Oh! ye Scribes of the Treasury and Pharisees of Downing Street!

Supported in the House of Lords by a body inferior in number to the Peers created by the Whigs during the last five years, upheld

in the House of Commons by a majority of twenty-six, Lord Melbourne still clings to his mulish and ungenerative position of place without power; and with a degree of modest frankness and constitutional propriety equally admirable, pledges himself before his country, that, as long as he is supported by a majority of the House of Commons, he will remain Minister. I apprehend the ratification of a Ministry is as necessary by one House of Parliament as by the other; but I stop not to discuss this. The choice of Ministers was once entrusted to a different authority than that of either Lords or Commons. But this is an old almanack; and I leave Lord Viscount Melbourne to shake its dust off at his next interview with his projected Doge of Windsor.

RUNNYMEDE.

July 27, 1836.

LETTER I.



TO

VISCOUNT MELBOURNE

January 18, 1836

LETTER I.

[It was a curious irony of fate that made William Lamb, Viscount Melbourne, into a Prime Minister. When in 1834 the success of the intrigue against Earl Grey and his colleagues of the Reform Ministry brought him to the front, Greville wrote:—‘Nobody thinks the Government will last long, and everybody “wonders” how Melbourne will do it. He is certainly a queer fellow to be Prime Minister, and he and Brougham are two wild chaps to have the destinies of this country in their hands. I should not be surprised if Melbourne was to rouse his dormant energies, and be excited by the greatness of his position to display the vigour and decision in which he is not deficient. Unfortunately, his reputation is not particularly good; he is considered lax in morals, indifferent in religion, and very loose and pliant in politics. He is supposed to have consented to measures of which he disapproved, because it suited his ease and convenience to do so, and because he was actuated by no strong political principles or opinions.’ It would be difficult to put the case against Lord Melbourne more accurately. His immoralities were notorious, and his relations with his wife had been for years the talk of the town. In a few months he was to figure as the defendant in an action for *crim. con.*, in which, though Campbell succeeded in winning a verdict for him, posterity has very generally agreed that he came out with a sadly smirched reputation. His religious views were peculiar, to say the least. Habitually a curiously profane talker, he delighted in the study

of patristic theology—which landed him in a conviction of unbelief—which he alternated with studies of a very different kind, as hinted more than once by ‘Runnymede,’ and he was a victim to idleness and lounging to an almost incredible extent. Part of his weaknesses may, of course, have been affectation. The story, for example, of his dandling a sofa cushion whilst receiving a deputation on the subject of the Corn Duties, and that of his blowing a feather about the room whilst some grave city men were arguing about the Currency, may be exaggerations, but the fact that they were related and commonly believed, affords very clear evidence of the opinion popularly entertained of him. His political views seem to have been summed up in the saying that the Whigs were the best of all possible political parties; that the policy of leaving things alone was the wisest and most statesmanlike; and that to keep in office was the first duty of a Whig Minister.]

To Viscount Melbourne.

My Lord,—The Marquis of Halifax¹ was wont to say of his Royal Master, that, ‘after all, his favourite Sultana Queen was sauntering.’ It is, perhaps, hopeless that your Lordship should rouse yourself from the embraces of that Siren Desidia to whose fatal influence you are not less a slave than our second Charles, and that you should cease to saunter over the destinies of a nation, and lounge away the glory of an empire. Yet the swift shadows of coming events are

¹ Saville, Marquis of Halifax; not to be confounded with Montagu, Earl of Halifax.

assuredly sufficiently dark and ominous to startle from its indolence even

The sleekest swine in Epicurus' sty.¹

When I recall to my bewildered memory the perplexing circumstance that William Lamb is Prime Minister of England, it seems to me that I recollect with labour the crowning incident of some grotesque dream, or that in some pastime of the season you have drawn for the amusement of a nation a temporary character, ludicrously appropriate only from the total want of connection and fitness between the festive part and the individual by whom it is sustained. Previous to the passing of the famous Act of 1832, for the amendment of popular representation, your reputation, I believe, principally depended upon your talent for prologue writing. No one was held to introduce with more grace and spirit the performances of an amateur society. With the exception of an annual oration against parliamentary reform, your career in the House of Commons was never remarkably distinguished. Your Cabinet, indeed, appears to have been constructed from the materials of your old dramatic company. The domestic policy of the country is entrusted to the celebrated author of *Don*

¹ 'The fattest hog in Epicurus' sty.'—Mason, *Heroic Epistle*.

Carlos; ¹ the Fletcher of this Beaumont, the author of the *Siege of Constantinople* ² (an idea apparently borrowed from your Russian allies) is the guardian of the lives and properties of the Irish clergy, under the charitable supervision of that 'first tragedy man,' the Lord of Mulgrave; ³ Lord Glenelg ⁴ admirably personifies a sleepy audience; while your Chancellor of the Exchequer ⁵ beats Mr. Power ⁶; and your Secre-

¹ Lord John Russell, Home Secretary.

² Viscount Morpeth (Hon. G. W. F. Howard, afterwards seventh Earl of Carlisle), author of *The Last of the Greeks, or the Fall of Constantinople*, a tragedy in five acts and in verse, Chief Secretary for Ireland.

³ Earl of Mulgrave, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

⁴ Lord Glenelg (Right Hon. Charles Grant, first and last Baron Glenelg, of Glenelg in Invernessshire) was the last of the Canningites. He turned Whig at the period of the Reform Bill, and was from 1834 to 1839 Secretary of the Colonies. Lord Glenelg passed out of sight in consequence of his approval of the notorious 'Ordinance' of Lord Durham, in which the Canadian rebels of 1838 who had submitted to the Queen's pleasure, were to be sent to Bermuda under constraint, and punished with death if they returned. The Ordinance was disallowed: Lord Durham resigned and Lord Glenelg retired. He was made a Commissioner of the Land Tax and 'accepted a pension of 2,000*l.* per annum.' He died on April 23, 1866, aged eighty-seven, having enjoyed his pension twenty-seven years.

⁵ Mr. Spring Rice, afterwards Lord Monteagle.

⁶ Tyrone Power, the actor, then (1836) in the height of his popularity. He was drowned in the steamship *President*, which left New York in April, 1841, and was never heard of afterwards.

tary for Foreign Affairs,¹ in his mimetic sympathy with French manners and intimate acquaintance with French character, is scarcely inferior to the late ingenious Charles Mathews. That general adapter from the Spanish, Lord Holland, gives you all the advantage, in the affairs of the Peninsula, of his early studies of Lope de Vega, and, indeed, with his skilful assistance you appear, by all accounts, to have woven a plot absurd and complicated enough even for the grave humour of Madrid or the gay fancy of Seville. For yourself is still reserved a monopoly of your peculiar talent, and doubtless on February 4 you will open your House with an introductory composition worthy of your previous reputation.

I remember some years ago listening to one of these elegant productions from the practised pen of the present Prime Minister of Great Britain, if not of Ireland. I think it was on that occasion that you annunciated to your audience the great moral discovery that the characteristic of the public mind of the present day was

A taste for evil.

Our taste for evil does not seem to be on the wane, since it has permitted this great empire to

¹ Lord Palmerston.

be governed by the Whigs, and has induced even those Whigs to be governed by an Irish rebel.¹ Your prologue, my Lord, was quite prophetic.

If your Royal Master's speech at the opening of his Parliament may share its inspirations, it will tell to the people of England some terrible truths.

It will announce, in the first place, that the policy of your theatrical Cabinet has at length succeeded in dividing the people of England into two hostile camps, in which numbers are arrayed against property, ignorance against knowledge, and sects against institutions.

It will announce to us, that your theatrical Cabinet has also been not less fortunate in maturing the passive resistance of the enemy in Ireland into active hostility, and that you have obtained the civil war from which the Duke of Wellington shrank, without acquiring the political security which might have been its consequence.

It will announce to us, that in foreign affairs you and your company have finally succeeded in destroying all our old alliances without substituting any new ones; and that, after having sacrificed every principle of British policy to secure an intimate alliance with France,² the Cabinet of

¹ O'Connell—an allusion to the Lichfield House compact of 1835.

² Always a 'note' of Whig policy from 1789 to 1884.

the Tuileries has even had the airy audacity to refuse its co-operation in that very treaty in which its promises alone involved you ; and that, while the British Minister can with extreme difficulty obtain an audience at St. Petersburg, the Ambassador of France passes with a polite smile of gay recognition the luckless representative of William IV., who is lounging in an ante-chamber in the enjoyment of an indolence which even your Lordship might envy.

It will announce to us, that in our colonial empire the most important results may speedily be anticipated from the discreet selection of Lord Auckland as a successor to our Clives and our Hastings ;¹ that the progressive improvement of the French in the manufacture of beet-root may compensate for the approaching destruction of our West Indian plantations ; and that, although Canada is not yet independent, the final triumph of liberal principles, under the immediate patronage of the Government, may eventually console us for the loss

¹ George Eden, second Earl of Auckland, born 1784, succeeded to the title May, 1811 ; President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint, with a seat in the Cabinet of Earl Grey, 1830. First Lord of the Admiralty in 1834 and made Governor-General of India in 1835. His administration of India was chiefly memorable for the disastrous Afghan war of 1838. Lord Auckland's services were rewarded with an Earldom in 1839.

of the glory of Chatham and the conquests of Wolfe.

At home or abroad, indeed, an agreeable prospect on every side surrounds you. Your Lordship may exclaim with Hannibal, 'Behind us are the Alps, before us is Eridanus!' And who are your assistants to stem the profound and impetuous current of this awful futurity? At an unconstitutional expenditure of four coronets, which may some day figure as an article in an impeachment, the Whigs have at length obtained a Lord Chancellor,¹ as a lawyer

¹ Christopher Charles Pepys, Earl of Cottenham, who was made Lord Chancellor in order to get rid of the inconvenience of keeping the Great Seal in Commission. According to Campbell, 'Lord Melbourne announced that Brougham could not be reappointed, saying with deep emphasis, "It is impossible to act with him;" and stated the plan proposed to be that Pepys should be Chancellor and that Bickersteth (afterwards Lord Langdale) should succeed him as Master of the Rolls, with a peerage. It was well foreseen that Brougham's exclusion from office would drive him into furious opposition, and Pepys being known to be very feeble in debate, the object was to select an assistant champion for the defence of the Government. A most unfortunate choice was made, and it was very speedily repented of.' It is hardly a secret that on this occasion Brougham's reason gave way. Campbell refers to the fact twice (*Lives of the Chancellors*, vol. viii. pp. 110 and 476-7), and his hint has been more than confirmed by contemporary evidence. The other coronets referred to in the text were those of Lord Oranmore and of Lady Stratheden, the latter of which was bestowed to console her husband, Sir John (afterwards Lord) Campbell for his exclusion from the Chancellorship.

not illustrious, as a statesman a nonentity. The seals of the principal office of the State are entrusted to an individual, who, on the principle that good vinegar is the corruption of bad wine, has been metamorphosed from an incapable author into an eminent politician.¹ His brother Secretaries remind me of two battered female sinners; one frivolous, the other exhausted; one taking refuge from conscious scorn in rouge and the affected giggle of fluttering folly, and the other in strong waters and devotion.² Then Mr. Spring Rice waves a switch, which he would fain persuade you is a shillelagh; while the Rienzi of Westminster smiles with marvelling complacency at the strange chapter of accidents which has converted a man whose friends pelted George Lamb with a cabbage-stalk, into a main prop of William Lamb's Cabinet.

Some yet remain; the acute intelligence of Lansdowne, the polished mind of Thomson,³ Howick's⁴ calm maturity, and the youthful energy of Holland.⁵

¹ Lord John Russell, author of *Don Carlos*, a Tragedy.

² Lords Palmerston and Glenelg. The allusion is of course to Foote's farce, *The Minor*.

³ Poulett Thomson, the President of the Board of Trade.

⁴ Viscount Howick (the present Earl Grey), Secretary at War; 'the bitterest of all that party,' says Greville.

⁵ Fox, Lord Holland, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—a martyr to gout and almost in his dotage in 1836.

And this is the Cabinet that controls the destinies of a far vaster population than owned the sway of Rome in the palmiest hour of its imperial fame! Scarron or Butler should celebrate its political freaks, and the shifting expedients of its ignoble statecraft. But while I watch you in your ludicrous councils, an awful shade rises from behind the chair of my Lord President. Slaves! it is your master; it is Eblis with Captain Rock's bloody cap shadowing his atrocious countenance. In one hand he waves a torch, and in the other clutches a skull. He gazes on his victims with a leer of fiendish triumph. Contemptible as you are, it is this dark connection¹ that involves your fate with even an epic dignity, and makes the impending story of your retributive fortunes assume almost a Dantesque sublimity.

January 18, 1836.

¹ The Lichfield House compact.

LETTER II.



TO

SIR JOHN CAMPBELL

January 19, 1836

LETTER II.

[‘Plain John Campbell’ is perhaps the pleasantest figure in the crowd of mediocrities who came to the front after the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832. He was a Scotchman of the best type—shrewd, conscientious, and of unflagging industry. So much did this last quality impress his contemporaries that it is told of two of the most distinguished of them that meeting in Court on the day of his euthanasia—for surely no man ever had a happier ending to his life—one said to the other, ‘So poor Campbell’s gone! Well, we shall meet him at the Day of Judgment.’ ‘Yes,’ replied the other, ‘and you may take your affidavit that he will be offering to assist the business of the Court by taking the short causes.’ In the cataclysm of 1835 he gave great offence by accepting the post of Attorney-General, which he probably did because, with the proverbial shrewdness of his nation, he foresaw the speedy downfall of Lord Melbourne’s second administration, and did not care to relinquish a very lucrative practice at the bar for the barren honour of a chancellorship which might be brought to an end at any moment and leave him stranded in the Upper House with a pension, it is true, but without any chance of that work which we may fairly believe was dearer to him than its pecuniary rewards. He had held the post of Attorney-General in the first Melbourne administration, with a somewhat inexplicable understanding that he was not to expect to succeed as a matter of right to any vacancy in the Courts (‘Greville,’ vol. iii.

p. 141). When Melbourne returned to power after the short-lived administration of the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, Campbell's aid as Attorney-General was found to be indispensable, and he was consoled for any seeming slight by the elevation of Lady Campbell to the rank of a peeress in her own right with the title of Stratheden, on which account the present Lord Campbell bears a double title. The matter was an arrangement to suit the convenience of the Ministry, and Campbell's acquiescence in it was very generally condemned. 'Pollock and one or two others,' he says in his Autobiography, 'blamed me for not resigning, and said I had lowered the office of Attorney-General, but Abercromby, Follett, and those whose opinions I most regarded, approved, and I have never since repented of any part of my conduct on this occasion.']

To Sir John Campbell.

Sir,—I have always been of opinion—an opinion I imbibed early in life from great authorities—that the Attorney- and Solicitor-General were not more the guardians of the honour and the interests of the Crown than of the honour and the interests of the Bar. It appears to me that you have failed in your duty as representative of this once illustrious body, and therefore it is that I address to you this letter.

Although your political opponent, I trust I am not incapable of acknowledging and appreciating your abilities and acquirements. They are sound, but they are not splendid. You have mastered considerable legal reading, you are gifted with

no ordinary shrewdness, you have enjoyed great practice, and you have gained great experience; you possess undaunted perseverance and invincible industry. But you can advance no claim to the refined subtlety of an Eldon, and still less to the luminous precision, the quick perception, the varied knowledge, and accomplished eloquence of a Lyndhurst. In profound learning you cannot cope for a moment with Sir Edward Sugden;¹ as an advocate you can endure no competition with your eminent father-in-law,² or with Sir William Follett, or—for I am not writing as a partisan—with Mr. Serjeant Wilde. As a pleader I believe you were distinguished, though there are many who, even in this humble province, have deemed that you might yield the palm to Mr. Baron Parke and Mr. Justice Littledale.

But, whatever be your merits or defects, you are still the King's Attorney-General, and as the King's Attorney-General you have a prescriptive, if not a positive, right to claim any seat upon the judgment bench³ which becomes vacant dur-

¹ Afterwards Lord St. Leonards.

² Sir James Scarlett, afterwards Lord Abinger, to whose daughter Campbell was married in September 1821.

³ Greville says that he did urge his claims on Leach's death, but he allows it to be understood that they were overruled by Lord Melbourne.

ing your official tenure. This prescriptive right has never been doubted in the profession. It has been understood and acted upon by members of the bar, of all parties, and at all times. In recent days, Sir Robert Gifford,¹ though a common law lawyer, succeeded to the equity tribunal of Sir Thomas Plomer. It is true that Sir Robert Gifford, for a very short time previous to his accession, had practised in the Court of Chancery, but the right of the Attorney-General to succeed, under any circumstances, was again recognised by Lord Eldon, when Sir John Copley,² who had never been in an Equity Court in his life, became Master of the Rolls. On this occasion it is well known that Leach,³ the Vice-Chancellor, was anxious to succeed Lord Gifford, but his request was not for a moment listened to in preference to the claim of the Attorney-General.

In allowing a judge,⁴ who a very short time back was your inferior officer, to become Lord

¹ Lord Gifford, Master of the Rolls 1824.

² Lord Lyndhurst.

³ When Lord Grey formed his Ministry in 1830, it was expected that Sir John Leach would have been his Lord Chancellor. Lord Grey himself would have preferred Lord Lyndhurst, but Lord Althorp having declared that he could not undertake the leadership in the Commons if Brougham remained there in an official capacity to domineer over him, the well-known arrangement was made.

⁴ Lord Cottenham (Pepys, Solicitor-General in Lord Melbourne's former Administration).

Chancellor of England, and in permitting a barrister, who had not even filled the office of Solicitor-General, to be elevated over your head into the seat of the Master of the Rolls; either you must have esteemed yourself absolutely incompetent to the discharge of those great offices, or you must have been painfully conscious of your marked inferiority to both the individuals who were promoted in your teeth; or last, and bitterest alternative, you must have claimed your right, and been denied its enjoyment.¹ In the first instance, you virtually declared that you were equally unfit for the office you at present hold, and what should have been your consequent conduct is obvious; in the second, you betrayed the interests of the bar; and in the third, you betrayed not only the interests of the bar, but its honour also.

Without imputing to Sir John Campbell any marvellous degree of arrogance, I cannot bring myself to believe that he holds himself absolutely unfit for the discharge of the offices in question. I will not even credit that he has yielded to his unfeigned sense of his marked inferiority to the supernatural wisdom and miraculous acquirements of my Lord Cottenham, or that his down-cast vision has been dazzled by the wide extended

¹ Which last alternative is now known to have been the case.

celebrity that surrounds with a halo the name of Bickersteth! ¹ No, sir, we will not trench upon the manorial right of modesty which is the monopoly of your colleague, Sir Monsey Rolfe,² that public man on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, that shadowy entity which all have heard of, few seen. An individual, it would appear, of a rare humility and admirable patience, and born, as it were, to exemplify the beauty of resignation.

I believe, therefore, that you claimed the office—that you claimed your right, and that you were refused it. That must have been a bitter moment, Sir John Campbell—a moment which might have made you recollect, perhaps even repeat, the Johnsonian definition of a Whig.³ You have not hitherto been held a man deficient in spirit, or altogether uninfluenced by that nobler ambition which spurs us on to great careers, and renders the esteem of our fellow-countrymen not the least valuable reward of our exertions. When therefore you were thus

¹ Afterwards Lord Langdale.

² Afterwards Lord Cranworth.

³ WHIG. The name of a faction. *Johnson's Dictionary*, 1st edition.

Boswell. I drank chocolate, sir, this morning with Mr. Eld, and to my no small surprise found him to be a Staffordshire Whig, a being which I did not believe had existed.

Johnson. Sir, there are rascals in all countries.

Croker's Boswell, edition 1848, p. 606.

insulted, why did you not resent the insult? When your fair ambition was thus scurvily balked, why not have gratified it by proving to a sympathising nation that you were at least worthy of the high post to which you aspired? He who aims to be the guardian of the honour of the Crown, should at least prove that he is competent to protect his own. You ought not to have quitted the Minister's ante-chamber the King's Attorney-General.

Why did you then? Because, as you inform us, your lady is to be ennobled. Is it the carnival, that such jests pass current? Is it part of the code of etiquette in this saturnalia of Whig manners, that the honour of a man is to be vindicated by a compliment to a woman? One cannot refrain from admiring, too, the consistent propriety of the whole arrangement. A gentleman, whom his friends announce as a resolved republican, and to whom, but for this slight circumstance, they assert would have been entrusted the custody of the Great Seal, is to be hoisted up into the House of Lords in the masquerade of a Baron; while yourself, whose delicate and gracious panegyric of the Peers of England is still echoing from the movement benches of the House of Commons to the reeking cellars of the Cowgate, find the only consolation for your wounded honour in your son inscribing

his name in the *libro d'oro* of our hereditary legislators. Why, if Mr. O'Connell were but simultaneously called up by the title of Baron Rathcormac,¹ in honour of his victory, the batch would be quite complete.

What compensation is it for the injured interests, and what consolation to the outraged honour, of the bar, that your amiable lady is to become a peeress? On the contrary, you have inflicted a fresh stigma on the body of which you are the chief. You have shown to the world that the leading advocate of the day, the King's Attorney-General, will accept a bribe! Nay! start not. For the honour of human nature, for the honour of your high profession, of which I am the friend, I will believe that in the moment of overwhelming mortification you did not thus estimate that glittering solace, but such, believe me, the English nation will ever esteem the coronet of Strath-Eden.

Was the grisly spectre of Sir William Horne²

¹ A small market town and polling place in the county of Cork.

² Attorney-General in Earl Grey's Ministry, 1832. Under date February 26, 1835, Greville writes: 'Horne, the late Attorney-General, seems likely to fall between two stools. When Brougham proposed to him to take a puisne judgeship he said he had been an equity lawyer all his life, and had no mind to enter on a course of common law for which he was not qualified, and proposed that he should not go the circuits and

the blooming Eve that tempted you to pluck this fatal fruit? Was it the conviction that a rebellious Attorney-General might be shelved that daunted the hereditary courage of the Campbell? What, could you condescend to be treated by the Minister like a froward child—the parental Viscount shaking in one hand a rod, and in the other waving a toy?

I have long been of opinion, that, among other perfected and projected mischief, there has been on the part of the Whigs a systematic attempt to corrupt the English bar. I shall avail myself of another and early opportunity to discuss this important subject. At present I will only observe, that whether they do or do not obtain their result, your conduct has anticipated the consequence of their machinations; the Whigs may corrupt the bar of England, but you, sir, have degraded it.

January 19, 1836.

be Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords. Brougham told him there would be no difficulty, and then told Lord Grey he had settled it with Horne, but did not tell him what Horne required. The general movement was made, and when Horne desired to see Lord Grey he told him that his terms could not be complied with, so he became a victim to the trickery and shuffling of the Chancellor who wanted to get him out and did not care how.'

LETTER III.



TO

MR. THOMAS ATTWOOD, M.P.

January 21, 1836

LETTER III.

[Thomas Attwood—the ‘King Tom’ of Cobbett’s ‘Political Register’—was one of the most violent agitators of the pre-Reform era and the real inventor of the Caucus. His father, Matthias Attwood, was an ironmaster of Hales Owen, who realised a considerable fortune by obtaining a monopoly of Swedish iron. With this capital he associated himself with Mr. Richard Spooner the elder, and founded the once famous banking house of Spooner, Attwood & Co., with head-quarters in Birmingham and a branch in Gracechurch Street, London. Thomas Attwood presided over the Birmingham business, and distinguished himself from a very early period by the vehemence of his views on financial and political subjects. When the famous Orders in Council during the hostilities with America in 1812 were promulgated, Attwood made himself conspicuous by the violence with which he denounced them, and when in 1817 specie payments were resumed he was equally loud in his condemnation of that step. In fact, throughout the whole of his life he posed as a currency reformer as well as a Radical politician, and at one period appeared before the world as the author of a couple of forgotten pamphlets on the advantages of a paper currency. His theories found small acceptance, and, stung by the indifference with which they were received, he threw himself with ardour into Radical agitation. During the period between 1820 and the passage of the Whig Reform Bill of 1832 he was exceedingly active, and when in 1829 an

unwilling Government had passed the Roman Catholic Relief Bill (Catholic Emancipation) he founded at once the notorious 'Political Union' of Birmingham. His power in Birmingham at this time was something enormous. Mr. McCullagh Torrens, in his 'Life of Lord Melbourne,' quotes a letter in which the then ex-Minister speaks of him as 'the most influential man in England,' and Mr. R. K. Dent, in the extraordinarily sumptuous three volumes which commemorate the glories of 'Old and New Birmingham,' states that in the month of July, 1812, his fellow-townsmen presented Mr. Attwood with a silver cup weighing 128 ounces, the cost of which was subscribed in sixpences. From 1812 his popularity had gone on increasing. He had opposed the monopoly of the East India Company, and, if the accounts of his admirers are to be credited, he was the main instrument in breaking it down, and he was for many years an advocate of all those proposals which are associated with the name of Liberalism. Throughout the whole of the Reform agitation he was one of its most conspicuous figures, and shared with 'Orator Hunt' the very questionable glory of inciting the working classes to rebellion.

The 'Political Union for the Protection of Public Rights' was the outcome of a meeting held in the Royal Hotel at Birmingham at which Attwood presided, supported by Messrs. Scholefield, Muntz, and Shorthouse—the last the father of the author of 'John Inglesant'—and the spirit in which it was devised may be guessed from a few phrases printed in capital letters in the requisition to the High Bailiff for a townsmeeeting. The requisitionists speak of the 'gross mismanagement of public affairs,' the 'general distress which now afflicts the country,' which is only to be remedied by 'an effectual reform in the Commons House of Parliament.' They talk of the further 'redress of public wrongs and grievances,' and speak of a 'political union between the lower and middle classes

of the people' as the only means by which that end may be attained. The French Revolution of 1830, which had a much greater share in bringing about the Whig Revolution of 1832 than is commonly believed,¹ was earnestly watched in Birmingham, and at a dinner to celebrate that event at which between 3,000 and 4,000 persons sat down, Attwood made what appears to have been the first amongst many rather foolish speeches on the subject of reform. One sentence will show its character. After the 'Union Hymn' had been sung Attwood asked his excited audience, 'Where is the one among you who would not follow me to the death in a righteous cause?' The answer was given by the whole assembly, 'who rose as one man and shouted, "All!"' At a meeting in 1831 Attwood made another bombastic speech, allusion to which will be found in 'Runnymede's' letter, in which he said, 'If the king required it, they could produce him in this district at his order within a month two armies each of them as numerous and brave as that which conquered at Waterloo.' When the Lords threw out the Reform Bill, the 'Political Union' issued a proclamation calling for Political Unions like itself all over the country, and threatening in no uncertain manner the alternative of civil war. There is, indeed, an affectation of peacefulness and moderation, but when after speaking of the horrors of war as 'the last dread alternative of an oppressed nation,' the manifesto goes on to say that the reformers will 'humble the oligarchy to the dust,' there cannot be much doubt of what is meant. That paper bore the signature of Thomas Attwood as chairman of the Union.

At this time also Attwood distinguished himself in other ways. Having already in 1830 proposed in writing the formation of an association the members

¹ See Roebuck's *History of the Whig Ministry of 1830*, vol. ii. p. 3 *et seq.*

of which should pledge themselves to pay no taxes if the Government of the day should dare to interfere in the conflict between Belgium and Holland, he next suggested a similar association for the coercion of the Government in the matter of the Reform Bill, and presided at a meeting which was held to vote thanks to Lords Althorp and John Russell, and to pass a resolution to 'stop the supplies.' The Reform Bill once passed, Liberals on all sides recognised the share which Attwood had had in its success, and the City of London, on that ground, presented him with its freedom. In the course of his reply he made a somewhat curious admission: 'I may have given offence,' said he, 'to abler men because I had recourse to measures which trenched on the verge of the law; but I did not resort to such measures until I saw that the extremity of the country required extreme remedies.' After these 'extreme remedies'—which, by the way, have always been very much to the taste of Birmingham—nothing could be more natural than that Attwood should be one of the first two members for the newly enfranchised borough. He sat in Parliament until 1839, speaking very frequently there and almost as frequently in public meetings outside. It cannot be said that he was altogether successful in his capacity of member. The House of Commons—at all events until within a very recent period—was one of the most keenly critical assemblies in the world, and one in which the most pretensions of demagogues speedily found his level. The Rochdale manufacturer who went in as 'the successor to Richard Cobden' was made chairman of the committee for the selection of cigars, and has never held any more distinguished place in the House. In like manner Attwood, who demanded the abolition of the House of Lords and posed almost even as a Republican, never succeeded in winning the ear of the House. When, as in August 1835, he boasted having just returned from a meeting of '10,000 individuals' (men,

women, and children of course) at which it had been observed that 'under the present march of education and diffusion of knowledge, the time would soon approach when the country would neither need a House of Lords nor a King,' members simply smiled and no one attempted to answer. And when, as in February 1836, he presented a petition from 20,000 'individuals' of Birmingham for the Reform of the House of Lords, and made a somewhat absurd speech on the occasion, the petition was ordered to lie upon the table, after a vigorous protest from 2,000 inhabitant householders 'against the proceedings of this self-constituted body' had been read by Mr. Dugdale, M.P. for North Warwickshire.

Attwood's parliamentary career was not prolonged. As the writer of an obituary notice which was published in the 'Annual Register' for 1856 put the matter, 'when Mr. Attwood had sat for some years in Parliament he began to perceive that the reformed House of Commons was not more disposed to accept his currency theories than the unreformed, and he thought also that it had shown a decided inability to grapple with great questions.' He therefore applied for the Chiltern Hundreds in January, 1840, and subsided into private life. He died on March 6, 1856, at Great Malvern, and in 1859 his fellow-townsmen erected a colossal statue to his memory. When in 1865 the bank of Attwood, Spooner, Marshall, and Co. suspended payment with a deficiency of 340,000*l.*, bringing down in its fall the Penny Bank, in which were invested nearly 10,000*l.*, the property of the poorest class of artisans and of their children, Attwood's statue narrowly escaped destruction, but was spared, apparently because he had been 'the Father of Political Unions.']

To Mr. Thomas Attwood, M.P.

Sir,—You may be surprised at this letter being addressed to you; you may be more surprised when I inform you that this address is not occasioned by any conviction of your political importance. I deem you a harmless, and I do not believe you to be an ill-meaning, individual. You are a provincial banker labouring under a financial monomania. But amid the seditious fanfaronnade which your unhappy distemper occasions you periodically to vomit forth, there are fragments of good old feelings which show you are not utterly denationalised in spite of being ‘the friend of all mankind,’¹ and contrast with the philanthropic verbiage of your revolutionary rhetoric like the odds and ends of ancient art which occasionally jut forth from the modern rubbish of an edifice in a classic land—symptoms of better days, and evidences of happier intellect.

The reason that I have inscribed this letter to your consideration is, that you are a fair representative of a considerable class of your countrymen—the class who talk political non-

¹ A phrase used by Attwood to describe Mr. Muntz: ‘My friend and your friend; the friend of humanity and benevolence, the friend of all mankind.’

sense ; and it is these with whom, through your medium, I would now communicate.

I met recently with an observation which rather amused me. It was a distinction drawn in some journal between high nonsense and low nonsense. I thought that distinction was rather happily illustrated at the recent meeting of your Union, which, by-the-bye, differs from its old state as the drivellings of idiotism from the frenzy of insanity. When your chairman, who, like yourself, is 'the friend of all mankind,' called Sir Robert Peel 'an ass,'¹ I thought that Spartan description might fairly range under the head of low nonsense ; but when you yourself, as if in contemptuous and triumphant rivalry with

¹ At the meeting of the Birmingham Political Union on Monday, January 18, 1836, to address the King and petition the House of Commons for a change in the constitution of the House of Lords, which called forth this letter, Attwood said : ' Sir Robert Peel in his Tamworth letter boasted that he was able to carry on the Government, but in a House of Commons of his own choosing he was beaten on the election of Speaker, (i.e. when Sir Charles Sutton was displaced by Mr. Abercrombie), and then he quarrelled with everybody and everything, because that old humbug had been dismissed. What did he do then ? Why, he lost everything, and courted, and flattered, and greased over as he had been till one could hardly see him, off he went again to Tamworth and acknowledged, like an ass as he was, that he had been completely deceived.' Mr. Muntz, the chairman of the meeting, had about half an hour before distinguished himself by applying the same epithet to Sir Robert Peel.

his plebeian folly, announced to us that at the sound of your blatant voice 100,000 armed men would instantly rise in Birmingham, it occurred to me that Nat Lee himself could scarcely compete with you in your claim to the more patrician privilege of uttering high nonsense. If indeed you produce such marvels, the name of Attwood will be handed down to posterity in heroic emulation with that of Cadmus; he produced armed men by a process almost as simple, but the teeth of the Theban king must yield to the jaw of the Birmingham delegate, though I doubt not the same destiny would await both batches of warriors.¹

But these 100,000 armed men are only the

¹ According to *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, the meeting at which this speech was made was held in the Town Hall, and 'at this time (noon) the building was about half filled, but about one o'clock the number began to increase, and for an hour afterwards the hall was two-thirds full.' It was upon this occasion that Attwood asserted that 'within one single week the Union could produce 100,000 fighting men upon Newhall Hill,' and further, that 'if the Tories had their way—if they again recovered their ascendancy—a deluge of blood must and would be shed in England.' Later on in the same speech Attwood called for 5,000*l.* to send delegates all over England to carry on a campaign for the reform of the House of Lords, adding, that 'he doubted not the influence which the men of Birmingham possessed over their countrymen would command the success of 20,000,000 of people and 20,000,000 of hearts. When the men of Birmingham offered to guide them, these 20,000,000 of brave men would respond to their call.'

advanced guard, the imperial guard of Brummagem, the heralds of a mightier host. Nay, compared with the impending legions, can only count as pioneers, or humble sappers at the best. Twenty millions of men are to annihilate the Tories. By the last census, I believe the adult male population of Great Britain was computed at less than 4,000,000. Whence the subsidiary levies are to be obtained, we may perhaps be informed the next time some brainless Cleon, at the pitch of his voice, bawls forth his rampant folly at the top of Newhall Hill.

Superficial critics have sometimes viewed, in a spirit of narrow-minded scepticism, those traditionary accounts of armed hosts which startle us in the credulous or the glowing page of rude or ancient annals. But what was the Great King on the heights of Salamis or in the straits of Issus, what was Gengis Khan, what Tamerlane, compared with Mr. Thomas Attwood of Birmingham! The leader of such an army may well be 'the friend of all mankind,' if only to recruit his forces from his extensive connections.

The truth is, Xerxes and Darius, and the valiant leaders of the Tartars and the Mongols, were ignorant of the mystical yet expeditious means by which 20,000,000 of men are brought into the field by a modern demagogue, to change

a constitution or to subvert an empire. When they hoisted their standard, their chieftains rallied round it, bringing to the array all that population of the country who were not required to remain at home to maintain its order or civilisation. The peasant quitted his plough and the pastor his flock, and the artisan without employ hurried from the pauperism of Babylon or the idleness of Samarcand. But these great leaders with their diminutive forces which astounded the Lilliputian experience of our ancestors, had no conception, with their limited imaginations, of the inexhaustible source whence the ranks of a popular leader may be swollen; they had no idea of 'THE PEOPLE.' It is 'the people' that is to supply their great successor with his millions.

As in private life, we are accustomed to associate the circle of our acquaintance with the phrase 'THE WORLD,' so in public I have invariably observed that 'THE PEOPLE' of the politician is the circle of his interests. The 'people' of the Whigs are the ten-pounders who vote in their favour. At present the municipal constituencies¹ are almost considered

¹ An allusion to the Municipal Reform Act (5 & 6 Will. IV. cap. 76) which abolished the ancient franchises, and placed local self-government in the hands of the ratepayers. It was the first work of Lord Melbourne's second administration, which came into office April 18, 1835, after the short-lived Govern-

by Lords Melbourne and John Russell as, in some instances, to have afforded legitimate claims of being deemed part and parcel of the nation; but I very much fear that the course of events will degrade those bodies from any lengthened participation in this ennobling quality. It is quite clear that the electors of Northamptonshire have forfeited all right to be held portion of 'the people,' since their return of Mr. Maunsell;¹ the people of Birmingham are doubtless those of the inhabitants who huzza the grandiloquence of Mr. Attwood; and the people of England, perchance, those discerning individuals, who, if he were to make a provincial tour of oratory, might club together in the different towns to give him a dinner. I hardly think

ment of Sir Robert Peel—a Government which lasted only from December 10, 1834, to April 8, 1835, and which went out on the question of the Irish Church. The catastrophe was notable inasmuch as it was the first fruits of that alliance between the Irish party and the 'base, bloody, and brutal Whigs' whom O'Connell had abused so heartily and for so many years. The alliance was brought about at Lichfield House, in St. James's Square, early in the year 1835, and is consequently generally known as the 'Lichfield House compact.'

¹ Thomas Philip Maunsell, of Thorpe Malsor, sat for North Northamptonshire from 1835 to 1857. A Conservative country gentleman, not distinguished as an orator, but faithful to his party. He was succeeded in the representation of North Northamptonshire by Mr. George Ward Hunt, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from February to December 1858.

that, all together, these quite amount to 20,000,000.

Yourself and the school to which you belong are apt to describe the present struggle as one between the Conservatives and the people—these Conservatives consisting merely of 300 or 400 peers, and their retainers. You tell us in the same breath, with admirable consistency, that you possess the name, but not the heart of the King; that the Court is secretly, and the Peerage openly, opposed to you; the Church you announce as even beholding you with pious terror. The Universities, and all chartered bodies, come under your ban. The Bar is so hostile, that you have been obliged to put the Great Seal in commission for a year,¹ and have finally, and from

¹ William IV., after Brougham's progress through Scotland in 1834, and after the famous letter in the *Times* which declared that the fall of the Whigs in that year was the exclusive work of the Queen, absolutely refused to allow him to resume the Chancellorship. There was a personal as well as a political reason for this slight. According to Campbell, Brougham was allowed to retain the Great Seal for some time after his colleagues had been deprived of the insignia of their offices, in order that he might deliver judgment in the cases which had been argued before him. At the proper moment he was bound by the established etiquette to return the Great Seal into the hands of the Sovereign. Instead of doing so he sent the *clavis regni* to the King in a bag by the hands of a messenger, 'as a fishmonger,' says Campbell, 'might have sent a salmon for the King's dinner.' When Lord Melbourne formed his second

sheer necessity, entrusted it to the custody of an individual¹ whom by that very tripartite trusteeship you had previously declared unfit for its sole guardianship. The gentlemen of England are against you to a man because of their corn monopoly; the yeomanry from sheer bigotry; the cultivators of the soil because they are the slaves of the owners, and the peasantry because they are the slaves of the cultivators. The free-men of the towns are against you because they are corrupt; the inhabitants of rural towns because they are compelled; and the press is against you because it is not free. It must be confessed that you and your party can give excellent reasons for any chance opposition which you may happen to experience. You are equally felicitous in accounting for the suspicious glance which the fundholder shoots at you; nor can I sufficiently admire the admirable candour with which the prime organ of your faction has recently confessed that every man who possesses 500*l.* per annum is necessarily your opponent. After this, it is superfluous to remark that the merchants, bankers, and ship-owners of

administration in 1835, the Great Seal was consequently put into commission, the Commissioners being the Master of the Rolls, the Vice-Chancellor, and Mr. Justice Bosanquet.

¹ Pepys, Lord Cottenham.

this great commercial and financial country are not to be found in your ranks, and the sneers at our national glory and imperial sway which ever play on the patriotic lips of Whigs, both high and low, only retaliate the undisguised scorn with which their anti-national machinations are viewed by the heroes of Waterloo and the conquerors of Trafalgar. Deduct these elements of a nation, deduct all this power, all this authority, all this skill, and all this courage, all this learning, all this wealth, and all these numbers, and all the proud and noble and national feelings which are their consequence, and what becomes of your 'people?' It subsides into an empty phrase, a juggle as pernicious and as ridiculous as your paper currency!

But if you and your friends, 'the friends of all mankind,' have, as indeed I believe you have not, the brute force and the numerical superiority of the population of this realm marshalled under your banners, do not delude yourselves into believing for a moment that you are in any degree more entitled from that circumstance to count yourselves the leaders of the English people. A nation is not a mere mass of bipeds with no strength but their animal vigour, and no collective grandeur but that of their numbers. There is required to constitute that great creation, a people, some higher endowments and

some rarer qualities,—honour, and faith, and justice; a national spirit fostered by national exploits; a solemn creed expounded by a pure and learned priesthood; a jurisprudence which is the aggregate wisdom of ages; the spirit of chivalry, the inspiration of religion, the supremacy of law; free order, and that natural gradation of ranks which are but a type and image of the economy of the universe; a love of home and country, fostered by traditionary manners and consecrated by customs that embalm ancestral deeds; learned establishments, the institutions of charity, a skill in refined and useful arts, the discipline of fleets and armies; and above all, a national character, serious and yet free, a character neither selfish nor conceited, but which is conscious that as it owes much to its ancestors, so also it will not stand acquitted if it neglect its posterity;—these are some of the incidents and qualities of a great nation like the people of England. Whether these are to be found in ‘the people’ who assemble at the meetings of your Union, or whether they may be more successfully sought for among their 20,000,000 of brethren at hand, I leave you, sir, to decide. I shall only observe, that if I be correct in my estimate of the constituent elements of the English people, I am persuaded that in spite of all the arts of

plundering factions and mercenary demagogues, they will recognise, with a grateful loyalty, the venerable cause of their welfare in the august fabric of their ancient constitution. /

January 21. 1836.

LETTER IV.



TO

LORD BROUGHAM

January 23, 1836



LETTER IV.

[Brougham was at this period at the height of his unpopularity. A few years before the case had been very different. In 1828 he had been a guest at Panshanger, and Greville speaks of the extreme pleasure he derived from his society. 'Brougham,' he says, 'is certainly one of the most remarkable men I ever met; to say nothing of what he is in the world, his almost childish gaiety and animal spirits, his humour mixed with sarcasm, but not ill-natured; his wonderful information and the facility with which he handles every subject, from the most grave and severe to the most trifling, displaying a mind full of varied and extensive information, and a memory which has suffered nothing to escape it;' and so forth. Rogers, too, shared in the very general belief in Brougham's extraordinary capacity. Everybody knows the famous quotation: 'This morning Solon, Lycurgus, Demosthenes, Archimedes, Sir Isaac Newton, Lord Chesterfield, and a great many more, went away in one post-chaise.' By 1830 a change had come over the spirit and temper of the Whig leaders with regard to Brougham. He was no longer regarded with complacency, and his ambition was found to be exceedingly inconvenient. When Lord Grey formed his administration in November 1830, the difficulty which first made itself felt was, as Lord Campbell puts it, 'What was to be done with Brougham?' Lord Grey was afraid of him in the Cabinet, knowing his restless eagerness to distinguish himself, and he dreaded the alternative of leaving him

out of the new administration, knowing also how dangerous an enemy he might be. A Radical opposition headed by Brougham would ruin any Government of moderate Whigs. Lord Grey suggested that he should be made Attorney-General; Lord Althorp shook his head but did not oppose the experiment, and Brougham was accordingly sent for. He called on Lord Grey in due course; the offer was made, but rejected with every mark of indignation. In conversation with Lord Grey he uttered the portentous threat, that he would support the administration only 'in as far as he conscientiously could;' and in the House of Commons the same night he let off the angry temper which had been accumulating for some days past. 'It so happened,' says Campbell, 'that this was the very day for which his notice stood on the great question of Parliamentary Reform, and he entered the House evidently in a very perturbed state, having resolved to bring it on whatever confusion might arise from such a discussion in the existing distracted state of the Government.' At the request of Lord Althorp he postponed his motion, saying, after a brief explanation of his repugnance to doing so, 'As no change that may take place in the administration can by any possibility affect me, I beg it to be understood that in putting off the motion I will put it off until the 25th of this month, and no longer. I will then, and at no more distant period, bring forward the question of Parliamentary Reform, whatever may be the then state of affairs, and whosoever may then be His Majesty's Ministers.'

He intended, in short, to be Chancellor, and he succeeded in forcing Lord Grey to give him the post in spite of the fact that he was probably the most unfit person who could have been chosen for it, and that he was of all men the least likely to distinguish himself or to add lustre to the administration in the House of Lords. His talents were those of a *Nisi Prius* advocate.

Versatile as he was, he knew but little of law and nothing of equity; and Lord Grey was naturally unwilling that his administration should be weighted with a Chancellor whose conduct might seriously discredit it. Campbell, indeed, tells an absurd story of Lord Grey being 'platonically under the fascination of the beautiful Lady Lyndhurst,' and of his being in consequence anxious to retain her husband as his Chancellor. The political circumstances of the time are, however, quite sufficient to explain the hesitation about Brougham without any such blundering scandal. In the end Brougham's obstinacy prevailed, and by November 20 it was announced authoritatively that he was to take the Great Seal. It was not expected that he would have accepted this piece of promotion. 'I was persuaded,' says Greville, 'that he had made to himself a political existence the like of which no man had ever before possessed, and that to have refused the Great Seal would have appeared more glorious than to take it; intoxicated with his Yorkshire honours, swollen with his own importance, and holding in his hands questions which he could employ to thwart, embarrass, and ruin any Ministry, I thought he meant to domineer in the House of Commons, and to gather popularity throughout the country.' Such seems to have been the general opinion outside official circles; but moderate men rejoiced in his election, fancying that when he had taken his seat upon the woolsack his terrible vivacity might be fairly checked.

As Chancellor Brougham was eminently unsuccessful. He tried his hand at legislation, but failed most conspicuously. He attempted by getting Lyndhurst made Lord Chief Baron to muzzle that doughty foe of the Whigs, and succeeded only in putting a new weapon into his hands. He assumed ridiculous airs, and by his egregious vanity contrived to offend the King most seriously. On one occasion when on his way to the Drawing Room he was stopped by the guard with the

information that the King had given orders¹ that no carriage save that of the Speaker should pass through the Horse Guards, but he defiantly called to the coachman to drive on, and broke through the ranks—an escapade which grievously affronted William IV., and brought down upon Brougham a solemn reproof in the House of Lords. When in the midst of the Reform struggle Parliament was suddenly dissolved, he actually, according to Roebuck, usurped the functions of royalty by giving orders not merely for the regalia and royal robes to be prepared, but even for the movements of the troops. If Roebuck's story be true—and there is reason to believe that it is in spite of Campbell's denial of it—no one can be surprised at the King accusing his Chancellor of high treason. In the House of Lords he was not popular. His manner was needlessly offensive at times, as is occasionally the case with successful lawyers; his loquacity was intolerable; and he sometimes fell into errors of taste, which excused if they did not justify Campbell's more than once repeated insinuation of intemperance. Again, when Lord Melbourne formed his first administration Brougham assumed the air of a dictator, and though he formally spoke of the Premier as 'my noble friend at the head of the Government,' he habitually addressed him, to Melbourne's intense annoyance and disgust, as 'Lamb' or 'William'; while in the royal presence he is said to have spoken in a haughty and dictatorial manner which added to the offence given by his previous escapades. Greville says in his diary, under date August 29, 1835, 'The House of Lords has become a bear-garden since Brougham has been in it.' In short, he had by the middle of 1834 done quite enough to justify the 'Times' in saying as it did, that 'For some months past Lord Brougham has been under

¹ It is understood that the order was really given by the Duke of Cumberland as 'Gold Stick.'

a morbid excitement, seldom evinced by those of his Majesty's subjects who are suffered to remain masters of their own actions.'

His crowning folly was, however, his tour in Scotland in the autumn of that year, where the Whigs and the Radicals united to give him a startling reception, and whence he wrote perpetually to the King by post, enraging the sovereign and proving to all reasonable people, by his egregious vanity and self-complacency, that his reason was endangered. He gave further offence by carrying the Great Seal out of England, the King being decidedly of opinion that no judge could legally leave the country without his permission, and that the Great Seal was absolutely sacred. His return was followed by the dismissal of the Whig Ministry by the King—the last occasion on which the sovereign of these realms has taken so decided and so independent a step. It was certainly done in a very peremptory fashion. William IV. was at Brighton when Lord Spencer died, and Lord Althorp was consequently translated to the Upper House. Lord Melbourne went down to make arrangements, and saw the King on the afternoon of Thursday, November 14. On the following day he had a second audience, when he received his dismissal and was informed that the Duke of Wellington had been 'sent for.' Melbourne returned to London and received a visit from Brougham, who was on his way to Holland House. As a matter of course the Chancellor heard the news, but was compelled to promise silence. To the disgust of the other members of the Ministry the *Times* of the next morning contained a full and particular account of the whole proceeding, with the addition that 'the Queen had done it all.'

That letter sealed Brougham's fate. The King was furious. He had never liked the Whigs and he hated Brougham, whose 'mountebank exhibitions,' as Greville calls his performances in Scotland, had thoroughly

disgusted him. When Peel's short-lived administration went out of office in May 1835, and Lord Melbourne returned to power, Brougham fully expected to be restored to his old place of Chancellor. He was disappointed. The King 'wanted never to see his ugly face again,' and the other members of the new Ministry dreaded his intolerable loquacity and his capacity for compromising both himself and his colleagues. He was accordingly passed over. The Great Seal was put in commission, as already mentioned, and Brougham retired to his seat in Westmoreland, where he fretted himself into an attack of mania which, if not absolutely acute, was at least sufficiently so to cause his physicians to keep him under gentle restraint. Unpopularity speedily followed disgrace, and it is not too much to say that at the accession of her present Majesty to the throne, there was no one whose general conduct commanded less respect than that of the ex-Chancellor. His services to that extremely unpleasant personage, 'England's injured Queen,' were forgotten; his exertions in the great and sacred cause of Reform were unheeded; even his contributions to the 'Penny Magazine' and to the publications of the Society for the Confusion of Useless Knowledge were put on one side. All that people remembered was that a Scotch lawyer, not of the first rank—'a bully and a buffoon,' as Sheil called him—had thrust himself into the office of Lord Chancellor of England and had played sundry fantastic tricks therein, with the effect of alienating from himself even those whom he might most reasonably have expected to be his staunchest allies. The following passage from Lord Campbell's Autobiography will explain many things. Writing of 1835, he says: 'In an interview I had with Lord Melbourne he said to me: "Brougham is such a man that I cannot act with him." . . . The removal from the Cabinet of Lord Grey, of whom he stood in some awe, probably aggravated his rashness, capriciousness, and *faithlessness*.

He would lay important Bills on the table of the House of Lords for "measures" of which he had never dropped a hint in the Cabinet; he would promise places five or six deep which were not in his gift; he would communicate irregularly with the King upon subjects out of his department; and he was strongly suspected of writing anonymously against some of his colleagues in the newspapers.']

To Lord Brougham.

My Lord,—In your elaborate mimicry of Lord Bacon,¹ your most implacable enemies must confess that, at least in one respect, you have rivalled your great original—you have contrived to get disgraced. In your Treatise on Hydrostatics you may not have completely equalled the fine and profound researches of 'the Lord Chancellor of Nature;' your most ardent admirers may hesitate in preferring the *Penny Magazine* to the *Novum Organon*; even the musings of Jenkins and the meditations of Tomkins² may not be deemed to come quite as much home 'to men's business and bosoms' as the immortal Essays; but no one can deny,

¹ This allusion to Lord Bacon is not a mere gratuitous piece of spite. 'He thought Lord Bacon's fate was most to be envied. . . . As a judge he boldly and openly said he should excel him . . . he had treatises part begun and part conceived in his own mind which would excel the *Novum Organum*.'—Campbell, *Lives of the Chancellors*, vol. viii. p. 382.

² See Brougham's Dialogue 'On the Objects, Advantages, and Pleasures of Science.'

neither friend nor foe, that you are as much shunned as their author—almost as much despised.

Whether the fame of his philosophical discoveries and the celebrity of his literary exploits may console the late Lord Chancellor of William IV. in the solitude of his political annihilation, as they brought balm to the bruised spirit of the late Lord Chancellor of James I. in the loneliness of his sublime degradation, he best can decide who may witness the writhings of your tortured memory and the restless expedients of your irritable imagination. At present, I am informed that your Lordship is occupied in a translation of your Treatise of Natural Theology into German, on the Hamiltonian system. The translation of a work on a subject of which you know little, into a tongue of which you know nothing, seems the climax of those fantastic freaks of ambitious superficiality which our lively neighbours describe by a finer term than quackery. But if the perturbed spirit can only be prevented from preying on itself by literary occupation, let me suggest to you, in preference, the propriety of dedicating the days of your salutary retirement to a production of more general interest, and, if properly treated, of more general utility. A memoir of the late years of your career might afford your fellow-countrymen that of which at

present they are much in want—a great moral lesson. In its instructive pages we might perhaps learn how a great empire has nearly been sacrificed to the aggrandizement of a rapacious faction; how, under the specious garb of patriotism, a band of intriguing politicians, connected by no community of purpose or of feeling but the gratification of their own base interests, forfeited all the pledges of their previous careers, or violated all the principles of their practised systems, how, at length, in some degree palled with plundering the nation, according to the usual course, they began plundering themselves; how the weakest, and probably the least impure,¹ were sacrificed to those who were more bold and bad; and, finally, how your Lordship especially, would have shrouded yourself in the mantle, while you kicked away the prophet.

If your Lordship would have but the courageous candour to proceed in this great production, you might, perhaps, favour us with a graphic narrative of that memorable interview between yourself and the present Premier, when, with that easy elocution and unembarrassed manner which characterise the former favourite of Castlereagh,

¹ This phrase is apparently intended as in some sort of way a balm to Brougham. His colleagues had jobbed, but he had, in his own phrase, 'kept his hands clean.' The evidence in the Edmunds case will show how far the boast was warranted.

the present First Lord of the Treasury,¹ robbing you of the fruit after you had plundered the orchard,² broke to your startled vision and incredulous ear the unforeseen circumstance that your Lordship was destined to be the scapegoat of Whiggism, and to be hurried into the wilderness with all the curses of the nation and all the sins of your companions. This animated sketch would form an admirable accompaniment to the still richer picture when you offered your congratulatory condolence to Earl Grey on his long meditated retirement from the onerous service of a country as grateful as his colleagues.

Your Lordship, who is well informed of what passes in the Cabinet, must have been scarcely less astonished than the public at the late legal arrangements.³ Every post, till of late, must have brought you from the metropolis intelligence which must have filled you with anxiety almost maturing into hope. But the lion was suddenly reported to be sick, and the jackals as suddenly grew bold. The Prime Minister consulted Sir Benjamin;⁴ the Serjeant Surgeon

¹ Lord Melbourne.

² An allusion to the intrigue by which Lord Grey was driven from office.

³ *i.e.* when the Chancellorship was put in commission. The patronage of the Lord Chancellor at this period was, it is worthy of note, enormous and proportionately valuable.

⁴ Brodie, Serjeant Surgeon to the King.

shook his head, and they passed in trembling precipitation the paltry Rubicon of their spite. When we remember that one voice alone decided your fate, and that that voice issued from the son of Lord Grey, we seem to be recalled to the days of the Greek drama. Your Lordship, although an universalist, I believe, has not yet tried your hand at a tragedy; let me recommend this fresh illustration of the sublime destiny of the ancients. You have deserved a better fate, but not a degrading one; though Achilles caused the destruction of Troy, we deplore his ignoble end from the unequal progeny of Priam.

And is it possible,—are you indeed the man whose scathing voice, but a small lustre gone, passed like the lightning in that great Assembly where Canning grew pale before your terrible denunciation, and where even Peel still remembers your awful reply? Is this indeed the lord of sarcasm, the mighty master of invective? Is this, indeed, the identical man who took the offer of the Attorney-Generalship, and held it up to the scorn of the assembled Commons of England, and tore it, and trampled upon it, and spat upon it in their sympathising sight, and lived to offer the cold-blooded aristocrat, who had dared to insult genius, the consoling compensation of the Privy Seal?

For your Lordship has a genius ; good or bad, it marks you out from the slaves who crouch to an O'Connell and insult a Brougham. Napoleon marched from Elba. You, too, may have your hundred days. What though they think you are dying—what though your health is quaffed in ironical bumpers in the craven secrecy of their political orgies—what if, after all, throwing Brodie on one side and your Teutonic studies on the other, your spectre appear in the House of Lords on February 4 ! Conceive the confusion ! I can see the unaccustomed robes tremble on the dignified form of the lordly Cottenham, and his spick and span coronet fall from the obstetric brow of the baronial Bickersteth,¹ Lansdowne taking refuge in philosophical silence, and Melbourne gulping courage in the goblets of Sion !²

January 23, 1836.

¹ Bickersteth (Henry, Lord Langdale) was the son of a 'general practitioner.'

² Sion House ; the seat of the Duke of Northumberland.

LETTER V.

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TO

SIR ROBERT PEEL

*January* 26, 1836



## LETTER V.

[The letter to Peel was written at the time of his retirement in 1835. The immediate cause of the downfall of the Administration was that disgraceful compact with the disaffected Irishry under the leadership of O'Connell, to which Lord Melbourne committed himself in the middle of March 1835. Mr. McCullagh Torrens writes, that on the first Sunday in that month, the Duke of Sussex, uncle to the Queen, entertained all the members of the Whig Cabinet, with the exception of Brougham, who seems to have been somewhat pointedly left out. At that entertainment it was, it appears from another account, remarked that 'parties in this country were pretty equally balanced, and that power was really the possession of some thirty members. The result was the Lichfield House fortnight after the Duke's dinner, where it was resolved to merge past differences for the sake of forming an administration founded on the general principles in which all could consistently agree.' In other words, the Whigs, whom the King had turned out of office and who had contrived during the three years which had elapsed since the passage of the Reform Bill to achieve an amount of unpopularity without precedent in the annals of any political party, magnanimously consented to forget the ruffianly abuse which O'Connell had heaped upon them for more than twenty years, in consideration of his giving the support of himself and



his 'tail' to their measures. Melbourne of course denied officially having done anything of the sort in the most formal terms, and indeed it is not to be supposed that a Prime Minister would commit himself in any such absurd way. But that the compact was entered into is beyond all question, and the effect was seen in the vote on Lord John Russell's motion to appropriate the surplus funds of the Irish Church to the purposes of general education in Ireland, a proposal which would never have been brought forward but for the determination of the Whigs to conciliate the Irish at any cost. On that occasion Peel was left in a minority first of twenty-five and then of twenty-seven, and found that, the fight being over, there was nothing left for him but to surrender. Melbourne returned to office, by no means to the satisfaction of either the King or the nation, and Peel remained in opposition, though at that time he was, as Lord Beaconsfield has put it elsewhere, the 'only hope' of a suffering people.]

*To Sir Robert Peel.*

Sir,—Before you receive this letter you will, in all probability, have quitted the halls and bowers of Drayton; those gardens and that library where you have realised the romance of Verulam and where you enjoy 'the lettered leisure' that Temple loved. Your present progress to the metropolis may not be as picturesque as that which you experienced twelve months back, when the confidence of your sovereign and the hopes of your country summoned you from the galleries of the Vati-

can and the city of the Cæsars.<sup>1</sup> It may not be as picturesque, but it is not less proud—it will be more triumphant. You are summoned now, like the Knight of Rhodes in Schiller's heroic ballad, as the only hope of a suffering island. The mighty dragon<sup>2</sup> is again abroad, depopulating our fields, wasting our pleasant places, poisoning our fountains, menacing our civilisation. To-day he gorges on Liverpool, to-morrow he riots at Birmingham: as he advances nearer the metropolis, terror and disgust proportionately increase. Already we hear his bellow, more awful than hyænas; already our atmosphere is tainted with the venomous aspirations of his malignant lungs; yet a little while and his incendiary crest will flame on our horizon, and we shall mark the horrors of his insatiable jaws and the scaly volume of his atrocious tail!

In your chivalry alone is our hope. Clad in the panoply of your splendid talents and your spotless character, we feel assured that you will subdue this unnatural and unnational monster;

<sup>1</sup> When William IV. dismissed Lord Melbourne's first administration in July, 1834, Sir Robert Peel was in Italy, and a special messenger had to be sent out to bring him home, the Duke of Wellington consenting to carry on the Government until his return.

<sup>2</sup> O'Connell.

and that we may yet see sedition, and treason, and rapine, rampant as they may have of late figured, quail before your power and prowess.

You are about to renew the combat under the most favourable auspices. When, a year ago, with that devotion to your country which is your great characteristic, scorning all those refined delights of fortune which are your inheritance, and which no one is more capable of appreciating, and resigning all those pure charms of social and domestic life to which no one is naturally more attached, you threw yourself in the breach of the battered and beleaguered citadel of the constitution, you undertook the heroic enterprise with every disadvantage. The national party were as little prepared for the summons of their eminent leader by their sovereign as you yourself could have been when gazing on the frescoes of Michael Angelo. They had little organisation, less system ; their hopes weak, their chieftains scattered ; no communication, no correspondence. Yet they made a gallant rally ; and if their numerical force in the House of Commons were not equal, Sir, to your moral energy, the return of Lord Melbourne, at the best, was but a Pyrrhic triumph ; nor perhaps were your powers ever sufficiently appreciated by your countrymen until you were defeated. Your abandonment of office was worthy of the motives which induced



you originally to accept power. It was not petty pique; it was not a miserable sentiment of personal mortification, that led you to decide upon that step. You retained your post until you found you were endangering the King's prerogative, to support which you had alone accepted his Majesty's confidence. What a contrast does your administration as Prime Minister afford to that of one of your recent predecessors! No selfish views, no family aggrandisement, no family jobs, no nepotism. It cannot be said that during your administration the public service was surfeited with the incapable offspring of the Premier;<sup>1</sup> nor, after having nearly brought about a revolution for power which he has degraded, and lucre which degraded him, can it be said that you slunk into an undignified retirement with a whimpering Jeremiad over 'the pressure from without.' Contrast the serene retirement of Drayton and the repentant solitude of Howick; contrast the statesman, cheered after his factious defeat by the sympathy of a nation, with the coroneted Necker, the worn-out Machiavel, wringing his helpless hands over his

<sup>1</sup> The complaint was made somewhat loudly in the Thirties that the whole of the most lucrative and most comfortable posts in the public service were monopolised—as Sir William Harcourt would say—by 'scions' of the three houses of Grey, Russell, and Elliott. Another family has since been added to the list—that of the Barings.

hearth in remorseful despair and looking up with a sigh at his scowling ancestors !

But affairs are in a very different position now from what they were in November 1835. You have an addition to the scutcheon of your fame in the emblazoned memory of your brief but masterly premiership : they cannot taunt you now with your vague promises of amelioration : you can appeal to the deeds of your Cabinet, and the plans which the applause of a nation sanctioned, and the execution of which the intrigues of a faction alone postponed. Never, too, since the peace of Paris, has the great national party of this realm been so united as at the present moment. It is no exaggeration to say, that among its leaders not the slightest difference of opinion exists upon any portion of their intended policy. Pitt himself, in the plenitude of his power, never enjoyed more cordial confidence than that which is now extended to you by every alleged section of the Conservative ranks ; all private opinions, all particular theories, have merged in the resolute determination to maintain the English constitution in spite of Irish rebels, and to support, without cavil and criticism, its eminent champion in that great course of conduct which you have expounded to them.

That this admirable concord, a just subject of congratulation to the suffering people of this



realm, has been in some degree the result of salutary conferences and frank explanations, I pretend not to deny; nor do I wish to conceal a circumstance in which I rejoice, that at no period have you displayed talents more calculated for the successful conduct of a great party than at the present; but, above all, this admirable concord is to be attributed to the reason, that, however individuals of the Conservative party may have occasionally differed as to the means, they have at all times invariably agreed as to the end of their system, and that end is the glory of the empire and the prosperity of the people.

But it is not only among the leaders in the two Houses of Parliament that this spirit of union flourishes; it pervades the country. England has at length been completely organised; the battle which you told us must be fought in the registry courts has been fought, and in spite of the fanfaronnade of the enemy, we know it has been won. Every parliamentary election that has of late occurred, in country or in town, has proved the disciplined power of the national party. It is not that they have merely exceeded their opponents on the poll, and often by vast majorities; but they have hastened to that poll with an enthusiasm which shows that they are animated with a very different spirit

to that which impels their shamefaced rivals. Contrast these important triumphs with the guerilla warfare of the Government party on town-clerks and aldermen, and be convinced how important have been our efforts in the registry courts, by their feeble yet feverish attempts at what they style Reform Associations.

If we contrast also this faithful picture of the state and spirit of the party of which you are the leader with the situation of your opponents, the difference will be striking. Between the Opposition and the Government party there is this difference; that, however certain sections of the Opposition may occasionally have differed as to measures, their end has always been the same; whereas the several sections of the Ministerial party, while for obvious reasons they agree as to measures, avowedly adopt them because they tend to different ends. The oligarchical Whigs, the English Radicals, the Irish Repealers—the patrons of rich livings, the enemies of Church and State, hereditary magistrates, professors of county reform—the sons of the nobles, the enemies of the peerage—the landed proprietors, the advocates of free corn, can only be united in a perverted sense. Their union then is this: to a certain point they all wish to destroy; but the Whigs only wish to destroy the Tories,

the Radicals the constitution, and the Repealers the empire. The seeds of constant jealousy and inevitable separation are here then prodigally sown.

What are to be the tactics of this heterogeneous band time will soon develop. Dark rumours are about which intimate conduct too infamous, some would fain think, even for the Whigs. But as for myself, history and personal observation have long convinced me that there is no public crime of which the Whigs are not capable, and no public shame which for a sufficient consideration their oligarchical nerves would not endure. But whether they are going to betray their anti-national adherents, or only to bribe them, do you, Sir, proceed in your great course, free and undaunted. At the head of the most powerful and the most united Opposition that ever mustered on the benches opposite a trembling Minister, conscious that by returning you to your constituents he can only increase and consolidate your strength, what have you to apprehend? We look to you, therefore, with hope and with confidence. You have a noble duty to fulfil—let it be nobly done. You have a great task to execute—achieve it with a great spirit. Rescue your sovereign from an unconstitutional thralldom, rescue an august Senate which has already fought the battle of the

people, rescue our National Church, which our opponents hate, our venerable constitution at which they scoff; but above all rescue that mighty body of which all these great classes and institutions are but some of the constituent and essential parts—rescue *the nation*.

*January 26, 1836.*

# LETTER VI.



TO

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

*January* 28, 1836





## LETTER VI.

[Mr. Spring Rice (afterwards Lord Monteagle) was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1836, and was, perhaps, one of the most utterly incompetent persons who ever filled that responsible office. His abilities were of the kind known as 'respectable'—that is to say, he took an ordinary degree at Cambridge and afterwards went to the Bar, where, however, he never practised. He wrote 'F.R.S.' and 'F.G.S.' after his name, but his attainments in geography and science were somewhat limited. He obtained office under the Whigs and held on to its emoluments with prehensile tenacity until the day of his death. Having entered Parliament in 1820, he sat for his native city of Limerick until 1832, when he obtained a seat for the borough of Cambridge, which he retained until his elevation to the peerage. He began as Under Secretary at the Home Office in 1827, in the administration of Mr. Canning; he held afterwards the post of Secretary of the Treasury from 1830 to 1834, in which latter year he was for a short time Colonial Secretary. When Lord Melbourne scrambled back into office in 1835, Mr. Spring Rice was promoted to the Exchequer and held the Chancellorship until 1839. In that year he recognised the fact of his incompetency, which had been patent to the rest of the world ever since his appointment, and having succeeded in getting the finances of the country into an all but inextricable confusion, he obtained from his party leaders the post of Controller of the Exchequer—a patent office value 2,000*l.* per annum—and a seat in the House of Lords as Baron Monteagle.

During his public life there was probably no man who excited more derision and contempt than Mr. Spring Rice. He was a dismally bad speaker, but that fact did not save the House from constant inflictions of his oratory. He was accused of perpetrating one or two flagrant jobs in the exercise of his office, and though the charge was indignantly denied it was never quite satisfactorily disproved. The charge of meddlesomeness was frequently brought against him, and he was recognised as one of those 'uncrowned kings' whom Ireland produces with so much prodigality. As Mr. Hayward puts the matter, Mr. Spring Rice was not merely member for Limerick—he was 'member for all Ireland.' In that capacity he was naturally the friend and associate of O'Connell, and to that fact may undoubtedly be attributed much of the unpopularity of which Mr. Spring Rice was the victim about the time of the publication of this letter. His personal appearance was assuredly not in his favour. In the obituary notice which appeared in the 'Times' in 1856, it is remarked that 'He was undersized of stature . . . a most flagrant offence in the eyes of all Cabinets, and "H.B." (Doyle, the father of 'Punch's' Richard Doyle) made much of it. Dr. Chalmers had just then come to London to deliver addresses, and in one of his addresses he announced with all the emphasis which characterised his oratory, that the then age was an age of little men, or as he was supposed to pronounce it, "leetle" men. "H.B." seized upon the idea, and at once exhibited a specimen of the "leetle" men who governed the nation, Mr. Spring Rice being prominent amongst them. Sometimes, however, he got praise for his smallness, as when in combat with O'Connell, when O'Connell had turned against the Whigs, he fought and beat off the great Irish giant—on which occasion his merits were displayed to the eyes of the world in a picture of little David conquering Goliath.' Both caricatures, the first especially, would probably find favour

in the eyes of King William IV., when in the latter months of his life he made those solitary pilgrimages up St. James's Street to stare in the shop-windows, which so greatly alarmed his household.

When Mr. Spring Rice became Lord Monteagle he retired into private life, for which he was certainly better fitted than for the cares of a great office of the State. He made one effort to emerge from obscurity by attacking Mr. Gladstone's Budget of 1860. The attempt was a failure, though, as Mr. Hayward remarks, 'Mr. Gladstone and his friends naturally spoke with contempt of an attack upon the Budget led by a Whig financier who had been laughed out of the Exchequer; but this did not necessarily invalidate the criticism of Lord Monteagle.' With that effort Spring Rice passed out of the public mind, and during the last few years of his life his name was scarcely heard.]

*To the Chancellor of the Exchequer.*

Sir,—I really think that your celebrated compatriot, Daniel O'Rourke,<sup>1</sup> when, soaring on the back of an eagle, he entered into a conversation with the man in the moon, could scarcely be more amazed than Mr. Spring Rice must be when he finds himself, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, holding a conference with the First Lord of the Treasury. Your colleagues, who, to do them justice, are perpetually apologising for your rapid promotion, account for your rocket-

<sup>1</sup> See the ludicrous story in Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, edition 1859, pp. 134-144.



like rise by the unanswerable reason of your being 'a man of business!' I doubt not this is a capital recommendation to those who are not men of business; and indeed, shrewd without being sagacious, bustling without method, loquacious without eloquence, ever prompt though always superficial, and ever active though always blundering, you are exactly the sort of fussy busy-body who would impose upon and render himself indispensable to indolent and ill-informed men of strong ambition and weak minds. Cumberland,<sup>1</sup> who, in spite of the courtly compliments of his polished Memoirs, could be racy and significant enough in his conversation, once characterised in my presence a countryman of yours as 'a talking potato.' The race of talking potatoes is not extinct.

Your recent harangue at Cambridge was quite worthy of your reputation, and of those to whom it was addressed.<sup>2</sup> Full of popular common-places and ministerial propriety, alike

<sup>1</sup> Richard Cumberland, author of the *West Indian*, and the Sir Fretful Plagiary of Sheridan's *Critic*.

<sup>2</sup> The occasion of this letter was a speech made by Mr. Spring Rice at Cambridge, at a dinner to celebrate the return of Mr. Thomas Hovell, the first Mayor of Cambridge under the Municipal Reform Act, the chief effect of which, as far as Cambridge itself was concerned, was, in Mr. Spring Rice's own words, 'to establish a Liberal domination in the place of a Tory domination.'



the devoted delegate of 'the people' and the trusty servant of the Crown, glorying in your pledges, but reminding your audience that they were voluntary, chuckling in your 'political triumph,'<sup>1</sup> but impressing on your friends that their 'new power' must not be used for party purposes, I can see you with Irish humour winking your eye on one side of your face as you hazard a sneer at 'the Lords,' and eulogising with solemn hypocrisy with the other half of your countenance our 'blessed constitution.' How choice was the style in which you propounded the future measures of the Cabinet! What heartfelt ejaculations of 'Good God, sir!' mingled with rare jargon about 'hoping and trusting!' You even ventured upon a tawdry simile, borrowed for the occasion from Mr. Sheil,<sup>2</sup> who, compared with his bolder and more lawless colleague, always reminds me of the fustian lieutenant, Jack Bunce, in Sir Walter's tale of the *Pirate*, contrasted with his master, the bloody buccaneer, Captain Cleveland.

You commenced your address with a due recollection of the advice of the great Athenian

<sup>1</sup> The 'triumph' referred to, on which Mr. Spring Rice laid great stress, was the passage of the Municipal Corporations Act.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Lalor Sheil, a prominent advocate of Catholic emancipation, and a Whig placeman from 1839 to his death at Florence, where he held the office of British Minister, in 1851.

orator, for your action was quite striking. You clasped the horny hand of the astonished Mayor, and, full of your punch-bowl orgies, aptly alluded to your 'elevated feelings.'<sup>1</sup> As for the exquisite raillery in which your graceful fancy indulged about Tory port and Whig sherry, you might perhaps have recollected that if 'old Tory port affects to be a new mixture, is ashamed of its colours, and calls itself Conservative,' that the Whig sherry has disappeared altogether, and that its place has been deleteriously supplied by Irish whisky from an illicit still, and English Blue Ruin. Your profound metaphysics, however, may amply compensate for this infelicitous flash of jocularly. A Senator, and a Minister, and a Cabinet Minister, who gravely informs us that 'the political history of our times has shown us that there is something in human motive that pervades and extends itself to human action,' must have an eye, I suspect, to the representation of the University. This is, indeed, 'a learned Theban.' That human motives have some slight connection with human conduct, is a principle

<sup>1</sup> See the speech : 'I grasp that hand with more and more elevated feelings when I view in an old and valued friend the first fruits of the Municipal Reform Bill.' Mr. Hovell, the first Mayor of Cambridge under the Municipal Reform Act, had proposed Mr. Spring Rice at the first general election after the Reform Bill.

which will, no doubt, figure as an era in metaphysical discovery. The continental imputations of our shallowness in psychological investigation must certainly now be removed for ever. Neither Kant nor Helvetius can enter the arena with our rare Chancellor of the Exchequer. The fall of an apple was sufficient to reveal the secret of celestial mechanics to the musing eye of Newton, but Mr. Spring Rice for his more abstruse revelations requires a revolution or a Reform Bill. It is 'the political history of our times' that has proved the connection between motives and actions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer must have arrived at this discovery by the recollection of the very dignified and honourable conduct to which the motives of power and place have recently impelled himself and his friends. I cannot help fancying that this display of yours at Cambridge may hereafter be adduced as irrefutable evidence that there is at least one portion of the Irish Protestant population which has not received 'adequate instruction.'<sup>1</sup>

It seems that you and your Katerfelto crew are going to introduce some very wonderful measures to the notice of the impending Parliament. And, first of all, you are about to 'remedy

<sup>1</sup> The word 'adequate' was used with some superfluity in Mr. Spring Rice's speech.



the still existing grievances to which the great dissenting bodies are subject.' 'Good God! sir,' as you would say, are you driven to this? The still existing grievances of the Dissenters! Do you and your beggarly Cabinet yet live upon these sores? Dissenting grievances are like Stilton cheeses and Damascus sabres, never found in the places themselves, though there is always some bustling huckster or other who will insure you a supply. 'The still existing grievances of the Dissenters,' if they exist at all, exist only because, after four years of incapacity, you and your clumsy coadjutors could not contrive to remove and remedy what Sir Robert Peel could have achieved, but for your faction, in four days.

Then we are to proceed in 'our great work of the reform of the Courts of Equity.' I 'hope and trust' not. What! after creating the Court of Review, the laughing-stock of the profession; after having at length succeeded in obtaining a second-rate Lord Chancellor<sup>1</sup> at the expense of four coronets, whose services might have been secured without the waste of one; after having caused more delay, more expense, more mortification and ruin in eight months of reform than the annals of the Court can offer in a similar

<sup>1</sup> Lord Cottenham.

period in the worst days of its management—still must you amend! Spare us, good sir; be content with your last achievements of law reform; be content with having, by your corporation magistrates, made for the first time in England since the days of Charles II., the administration of justice a matter of party. Will not even this satisfy the Whig lechery for mischief?

Then, 'Ireland must be tranquillised.' So I think. Feed the poor, hang the agitators. That will do it. But that's not your way. It is the destruction of the English and Protestant interest that is the Whig specific for Irish tranquillity. And do you really flatter yourself, because an eccentric course of circumstances has metamorphosed an Irish adventurer<sup>1</sup> into the Chancellor of the English Exchequer, that the spirited people of this island will allow you to proceed with impunity in your projected machinations? Rest assured, sir, your career draws rapidly to a close. Providence, that for our sins and the arrogance of our flush prosperity has visited this once great and glorious empire with five years of Whig government, is not implacable. Our God is a God of mercy as well as justice. We may have erred, but we have been chastened. And

<sup>1</sup> Spring Rice himself.



Athens, when ruled by a Disdar Aga, who was the deputy of the chief of the eunuchs at Constantinople, was not so contemptible as England governed by a Limerick lawyer—the deputy of an Irish rebel !

Prepare, then, for your speedy and merited dismissal. It is amusing to fancy what may be the resources of your Cabinet in their permanent retirement. The First Lord of the Treasury, in all probability, will betake himself to Brocket, and compose an epilogue for the drama just closed. Your Lord Chancellor may retire to his native village, like a returned cheese. Lord John, perhaps, will take down his dusty lyre, and console us for having starved Coleridge by pouring forth a monody to his memory. As for the polished Palmerston and the pious Grant, and the other trading statesmen of easy virtue—for them it would be advisable, I think, at once to erect a political Magdalen Hospital. Solitude and spare diet, and some salutary treatises of the English constitution, may, after a considerable interval, capacitate them for re-entering public life, and even filling with an approximation to obscure respectability some of the lower offices of the State. But, sir, for yourself, with your ‘business-like talents,’ which must not be hid under a bushel, it appears to me that it would be both the wisest and the kindest course to

entrust to your charge and instruction a class of beings who, in their accomplishments and indefatigableness, alike in their physical and moral qualities, not a little resemble you—the **INDUSTRIOUS FLEAS**.

*January 28, 1836.*



LETTER VII.



TO

LORD JOHN RUSSELL

*January 30, 1836*





## LETTER VII.

[The line of action adopted by Lord John Russell throughout the intrigue which ended in the retirement of Lord Grey from the Reform Ministry was very generally condemned. He occupied in the administration of Earl Grey the position of Paymaster of the Forces, notoriously rather because of his staunchness to the principles of Liberalism than on account of any affection entertained for him by his chief. The latter did not, indeed, conceal his sentiments in society. Russell retaliated in characteristic fashion by asserting a species of independence which no Minister in the position of Lord Grey could tolerate without a serious loss of dignity and self-respect. Dissensions consequently broke out in the Ministry, and when the Irish Church Establishment was attacked in 1834, Lord John Russell made a speech on the Appropriation Bill which drew from Sheil the remark that 'Johnny had upset the coach.' This was on May 6; and then came the memorable split when the Duke of Richmond, Postmaster-General, Lord Ripon, Privy Seal, Mr. Stanley, Cabinet Secretary, and Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty, seceded. They were followed in their respective offices by the Marquis of Conyngham, the Earl of Carlisle, Lord Auckland, and Mr. Spring Rice. The secret of the whole business was as usual an Irish intrigue. The Catholics spared no effort to secure a provision for their clergy out of the funds of the Irish Church. Sheil was put up to ask the question which drew Lord John so effectively, and afterwards took

great credit to himself for having, as he said, 'sown the seeds of salutary discord.' The strife was ended by the resignation of Lord Althorp, which in its turn was succeeded by that of Lord Grey. Lord Melbourne's feeble first administration, which came to an end through the direct action of the King in the following November, succeeded. He returned to office in April 1835, with Lord John Russell as Home Secretary. 'Rannymede's' letter is a personal attack, based in the main upon the intrigues of July 1834. Lord Beaconsfield's aversion for Lord John Russell was in the early part of his life somewhat pronounced; nor is the fact a matter for surprise, seeing that he regarded him as the type and essence of Whiggism, for the principles of which he always entertained the greatest antagonism. His feeling towards the noble Lord may be best appreciated from a sentence or two from a speech delivered in 1840, on Sir John Yarde Buller's motion of want of confidence in the Melbourne Government. 'The time would come,' he said on that occasion, 'when the Chartists would discover that in a country so aristocratic as England, even treason to be successful must be patrician. They would discover that great truth, and when they found some desperate noble to lead them, they might, perhaps, achieve greater results. When Wat Tyler failed, Henry Bolingbroke changed a dynasty; and although Jack Straw was hanged, a Lord John Straw might become a Secretary of State.' Time modified the severity of these judgments. Earl Russell died during the administration of Lord Beaconsfield (May 28, 1878). Lord Beaconsfield did not 'miss his train,' as happened to another great statesman on a somewhat similar occasion, but promptly offered a public funeral in Westminster Abbey, and on the first available opportunity paid due tribute to the 'eminent career' of the noble Earl in the only fitting place—the House of Lords.]

*To Lord John Russell.*

My Lord,—Your name will descend to posterity—you have burnt your Ephesian temple. But great deeds are not always achieved by great men. Your character is a curious one; events have proved that it has been imperfectly comprehended, even by your own party. Long and, for a period, intimate opportunities of observing you will enable me, if I mistake not, to enter into its just analysis.

You were born with a strong ambition and a feeble intellect. It is an union not uncommon, and in the majority of cases only tends to convert an aspiring youth into a querulous and discontented manhood. But under some circumstances—when combined, for instance, with great station, and consequent opportunities of action—it is an union which often leads to the development of a peculiar talent—the talent of political mischief.

When you returned from Spain, the solitary life of travel and the inspiration of a romantic country acting upon your ambition, had persuaded you that you were a great poet; your intellect, in consequence, produced the feeblest tragedy in our language. The reception of 'Don Carlos' only convinced your ambition that your imaginative powers had been improperly



directed. Your ambition sought from prose-fiction the fame which had been denied to your lyre ; and your intellect in consequence produced the feeblest romance in our literature.<sup>1</sup> Not deterred by the unhappy catastrophe of the fair maid of Arrouca, your ambitions sought consolation in the notoriety of political literature, and your intellect in due time produced the feeblest political essay on record.<sup>2</sup> Your defence of close boroughs, however, made this volume somewhat popular with the Whigs, and flushed with the compliments of Holland House, where hitherto you had been treated with more affection than respect, your ambition resolved on rivalling the fame of Hume and Gibbon. Your *Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe*, published with pompous parade in successive quarto volumes, retailed in frigid sentences a feeble compilation from the gossip of those pocket tomes of small talk which abound in French literature. Busied with the tattle of valets and waiting-maids, you accidentally omitted in your *Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe* all notice of its most vast and most rising empire. This luckless production closed your literary career ; you flung down your futile pen

<sup>1</sup> *The Nun of Arrouca*. A Tale by Lord John Russell. London, 1822, 12mo.

<sup>2</sup> *The Causes of the French Revolution*. By Lord John Russell. London, 1832, 8vo.

in incapable despair; and your feeble intellect having failed in literature, your strong ambition took refuge in politics.

You had entered the House of Commons with every adventitious advantage—an illustrious birth, and the support of an ancient and haughty party. I was one of the audience who assisted at your first appearance, and I remember the cheering attention that was extended to you. Cold, inanimate, with a weak voice and a mincing manner, the failure of your intellect was complete; but your ambition wrestled for a time with the indifference of your opponents and the ill-concealed contempt of your friends.

Having, then, failed alike in both these careers which in this still free country are open to genius, you subsided for some years into a state of listless moroseness which was even pitiable. Hitherto your political opinions had been mild and moderate, and, if partial, at least constitutional; but, as is ever the case with persons of your temperament, despairing of yourself, you began to despair of your country. This was the period when among your intimates you talked of retiring from that public life in which you had not succeeded in making yourself public, when you paced, like a feeble Catiline, the avenues of Holland House; and when the most brilliant



poet<sup>1</sup> of the day, flattered by your friendship, addressed you a remonstrance in which your pique figured as patriotism and your ambition was elevated into genius.

Your friends,—I speak of the circle in which you lived<sup>2</sup>—superficial judges of human character as well as of everything else, always treated you with a species of contempt, which doubtless originated in their remembrance of your failure and their conviction of your feebleness. Lord Grey, only five years ago, would not even condescend to offer you a seat in the Cabinet, and affected to state that, in according you a respectable office, he had been as much influenced by the state of your finances as of your capacity. Virtual Prime Minister of England at this moment, you have repaid Lord Grey for his flattering estimate and his friendly services, and have afforded him, in your present career, some curious meditations for his uneasy solitude, where he wanders, like the dethroned Caliph in the halls of Eblis, with his quivering hand pressed upon his aching heart.

A finer observer of human nature than that forlorn statesman might have recognised at this crisis in a noble with an historic name and no fortune, a vast ambition and a balked career,

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *Poetical Works*, Ed. 1850, p. 458.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* the Holland House coterie.

and soured, not to say malignant, from disappointment, some prime materials for the leader of a revolutionary faction. Those materials have worked well. You have already banished your great leader; you have struck down the solemn idol which you yourself assisted in setting up for the worship of a deluded people; you have exiled from the Cabinet, by your dark and dishonourable intrigues, every man of talent who could have held you in check; and, placing in the seat of nominal leadership an indolent epicurean,<sup>1</sup> you rule this country by a coalition with an Irish rebel,<sup>2</sup> and with a council of colleagues in which you have united the most inefficient members of your own party with the Palmerstons and Grants, the Swiss statesmen, the *condottieri* of the political world, the 'British legion' of public life.

A miniature Mokanna,<sup>3</sup> you are now exhaling upon the constitution of your country which you once eulogised, and its great fortunes of which you once were proud, all that long-hoarded

<sup>1</sup> Melbourne. Mr. Hayward's Essay in the *Quarterly Review* of January 1878 proves how fully this character was deserved.

<sup>2</sup> O'Connell.

<sup>3</sup> See Moore's *Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*. The name was given by Hakim ben Haschem from a silver gauze veil worn by him to 'dim the lustre of his face,' or rather to hide its ugliness. The story is told by D'Herbelot in the *Bibliothèque Orientale*.

venom and all those distempered humours that have for years accumulated in your petty heart and tainted the current of your mortified life—your aim is to reduce everything to your own mean level—to degrade everything to your malignant standard. Partially you have succeeded. You have revenged yourself upon the House of Lords, the only obstacle to your degenerating schemes, by denouncing with a frigid conceit worthy of ‘Don Carlos,’ its solemn suffrage as ‘the whisper of a faction,’ and hallooing on, in a flimsy treble, your Scotch and Irish desperadoes to assail its august independence. You have revenged yourself upon the sovereign who recoiled from your touch, by kissing, in spite of his royal soul, his outraged hand. Notwithstanding your base powers and your father’s fagot votes, the gentlemen of England inflicted upon you an indelible brand, and expelled you from your own county;<sup>1</sup> and you have revenged yourself upon their indignant patriotism by depriving them of their noblest and most useful privileges, and making, for the first time since the reign of Charles II., the administration of justice the business of faction. In all your conduct it is not difficult to detect the

<sup>1</sup> Lord John Russell sat for South Devon in the first reformed Parliament, but being defeated there at the next election was compelled to take refuge at Stroud.



workings of a mean and long-mortified spirit suddenly invested with power—the struggles of a strong ambition attempting, by a wanton exercise of authority, to revenge the disgrace of a feeble intellect.

But, my Lord, rest assured that yours is a mind which, if it succeeded in originating, is not destined to direct, a revolution. Whatever may be the issue of the great struggle now carrying on in this country, whether we may be permitted to be again great, glorious, and free, or whether we be doomed to sink beneath the ignoble tyranny which your machinations are preparing for us, your part in the mighty drama must soon close. To suppose that, with all your efforts and all your desperation, to suppose that, with all the struggles of your ambition to supply the deficiency of your intellect, your Lordship, in those heroic hours when empires are destroyed or saved, is fated to be anything else than an instrument, is to suppose that which contradicts all the records of history and all our experience of human nature.

I think it is Macrobius who tells a story of a young Greek, who, having heard much of the wealth and wisdom of Egypt, determined on visiting that celebrated land. When he beheld the pyramids of Memphis and the gates of Thebes, he exclaimed, ‘O wonderful men! what

must be your gods!' Full of the memory of the glorious divinities of his own poetic land, the blooming Apollo and the bright Diana, the awful beauty of the Olympian Jove and the sublime grace of the blue-eyed Athena, he entered the temples of the Pharaohs. But what was his mingled astonishment and disgust when he found a nation prostrate before the most contemptible and the most odious of created beings! The gods of Egypt are the ministers of England.

I can picture to myself an intelligent foreigner, attracted by the fame of our country, and visiting it for the first time. I can picture to myself his admiration when he beholds our great public works; our roads, our docks, our canals; our unrivalled manufactories, our matchless agriculture. That admiration would not be diminished when he learnt that we were free; when he became acquainted with our social comfort and our still equal laws. 'O! wonderful men,' he would exclaim, 'what must be your governors!' But conceive him now, entered into our political temple; conceive his appalled astonishment as he gazes on the ox-like form of the Lansdowne Apis. On one side he beholds an altar raised to an ape, on the other incense is burned before a cat-like colleague. Here placed in the shapes of Palmerston and Grant, the



worship of two sleek and long-tailed rats ; and then learns, with amazement, that the Lord Chancellor of this great land is an onion or a cheese. Towering above all, and resting on a lurid shrine bedewed with blood and encircled with flame, with distended jaws and colossal tail, is the grim figure of the O'Connell crocodile. But, my Lord, how thunderstruck must be our visitor when he is told to recognise a Secretary of State in an infinitely small scarabæus ;—yes, my Lord, when he learns that you are the leader of the English House of Commons, our traveller may begin to comprehend how the Egyptians worshipped—  
AN INSECT. /

*January 30, 1836.*



**LETTER VIII**

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**TO  
THE PEOPLE**

*February 2 1836*





## LETTER VIII.

### *To The People.*

This is the first direct address that has ever been made to the real people of England. For the last few years, a gang of scribblers, in the pay of a desperate faction, have cloaked every incendiary appeal that they have vomited forth to any section of your numbers, however slight, or however opposed to the honour and happiness of the nation, by elevating the object of their solicitude into that imposing aggregate, the people. Thus have they played, for their ulterior purposes, dissenting sects against the National Church, manufacturing towns against agricultural districts, the House of Commons against the House of Lords, new burgesses against ancient freemen, and finally, the Papists against the Protestants. With scarcely an exception, you may invariably observe, that in advocating the cause of 'the people' these writers have ever stimulated the anti-national passions of the minority. But, in addressing

you now, I address myself in very truth to the English people—to all orders and conditions of men that form that vast society, from the merchant to the mechanic, and from the peer to the peasant.

You are still a great people. You are still in the possession and enjoyment of the great results of civilisation, in spite of those who would destroy your internal prosperity. Your flag still floats triumphant in every division of the globe, in spite of the menaces of dismemberment that threaten your empire from every quarter. Neither domestic nor foreign agitation has yet succeeded in uprooting your supremacy. But how long this imperial integrity may subsist, when it is the object of a faction in your own land to array great classes of your population in hostile collision, and when from the Castle of Dublin to the Castle of Quebec, your honour is tampered with by the deputies of your sovereign, is a question which well deserves your quick and earnest consideration.

In the mesh of unparalleled difficulties in which your affairs are now entangled, who are your guides? Are they men in whose wisdom and experience, in whose virtue and talents, principle and resolution, in whose acknowledged authority and unblemished honour, and deserved celebrity, you are justified in reposing

your hopes and entrusting your confidence? Lucian once amused the ancients with an auction of their gods. Let us see what Mr. George Robins might think of an auction of your Ministers. The catalogue may soon be run over.

A Prime Minister in an easy-chair, reading a French novel. What think you of that lot? Three Secretaries of State, one odious, another contemptible, the third both.<sup>1</sup> They have their price, yet I would not be their purchaser. A new Lord Chancellor,<sup>2</sup> like a new cheese, crude and flavourless: second-rate as a lawyer, as a statesman a nonentity, bought in by his own party from sheer necessity. A President of the India Board,<sup>3</sup> recovering from the silence of years imposed upon him by Canning, by the inspiration of that eloquent man's chair which he now fills. As we are still a naval nation, our First Lord of the Admiralty should be worth something; but, unfortunately, nobody knows his name.<sup>4</sup> The President of the Council<sup>5</sup> has always indicated a tendency to join any

<sup>1</sup> Palmerston, Foreign Secretary; Glenelg, Colonial Secretary; and Russell, Home Secretary.

<sup>2</sup> Pepys, Lord Cottenham.

<sup>3</sup> Sir John Cam Hobhouse.

<sup>4</sup> Lord Minto.

<sup>5</sup> Marquis of Lansdowne.

Government, and therefore should be a marketable article enough. In Egypt, where their favourite food are pumpkins that have run to seed, such a solid and mature intelligence might be worth exporting to the Divan. The Chancellor of the Exchequer,<sup>1</sup> being 'a man of business,' would doubtless fetch 'a long figure;' refer for character to the mercantile deputations who leave the Treasury after an interview, bursting with laughter from sheer admiration of his knowledge and capacity. Lord Howick,<sup>2</sup> who is a Minister on the same principle that the son of an old partner is retained in the firm to keep together the connection, might command a price on this score, were it not notorious that his parent has withdrawn with his person, his capital, and confidence. The remainder may be thrown into one lot, and the auction concluded with the item on the Dutch system.

Were the destinies of a great people ever yet entrusted to such a grotesque and Hudibrastic crew? Why, we want no candid confessions or triumphant revelations from Mr. Sheil; we want no audacious apostacy of a whole party to teach us how such a truckling rout governs England. They govern England as the mock dynasties governed Europe in the time of the Revolution,

<sup>1</sup> Spring Rice.

<sup>2</sup> The present Earl Grey succeeded his father in July 1845.



by a process as sure and as simple, as desperate and as degrading, by being the delegates of an anti-national power. And what is this power beneath whose sirocco breath the fame of England is fast withering? Were it the dominion of another conqueror, another bold bastard with his belted sword, we might gnaw the fetter which we could not burst; were it the genius of Napoleon with which we were again struggling, we might trust the issue to the God of battles with a sainted confidence in our good cause and our national energies: but we are sinking beneath a power, before which the proudest conquerors have grown pale, and by which the nations most devoted to freedom have become enslaved, the power of a foreign priesthood.

The Pope may be an old man, or an old woman, once the case, but the Papacy is independent of the Pope. The insignificance of the Pope is adduced by your enemies as evidence of the insignificance of the Papacy. 'Tis the fatal fallacy by which they mean to ride roughshod over England. Is the Pope less regarded now than when Bourbon sacked Rome? Yet that exploit preceded the massacre of St. Bartholomew and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Constable of Bourbon lived before Sir Phelim O'Neale. The Papacy is as rampant now in Ireland as it was in Europe in the time of



Gregory; and all its energies *are* directed to your humiliation.

Who is this man whose name is ever on your lips? Who is this O'Connell? He is the feed advocate of the Irish priesthood; he is the hired instrument of the Papacy. That is his precise position. Your enemies, that wretched anti-national faction who wish to retain power, or creep into place, by clinging to the skirts of this foreign rebel, taunt those who would expose his destructive arts and unmask the purpose of his desperate principals with the wretched scoff, that we make him of importance by our notice. He cannot be of more importance than he is. Demoralised in character, desperate in fortunes, infinitely over-estimated in talents, he is the most powerful individual in the world because he is entrusted with the delegated influence of the greatest power in existence. But because an individual exercises a great power, it does not follow that he is a great man. O'Connell is not as yet as great as Robespierre, although he resembles that terrific agitator in everything except his disinterestedness. Robespierre presided over public safety as O'Connell over Reform. A precious foster-dam! Would it have been any answer to those who would have struggled against the great insurer of public security, that his intended victims made him of importance by their

notice? Would it have been endured that these deprecators of resistance should have urged, 'He is not a Cæsar, he is not an Alexander, he has no amplitude of mind, he is not a great genius; let him go on murdering, you make him of importance by noticing his career of blood and havoc!'

This man, O'Connell, is the hired instrument of the Papacy; as such, his mission is to destroy your Protestant society, and, as such, he is a more terrible enemy to England than Napoleon, with all his inspiration. Your empire and your liberties are in more danger at this moment than when the army of invasion was encamped at Boulogne.

Now we have a precise idea of the political character of O'Connell. And I have often marvelled when I have listened to those who have denounced his hypocrisy or admired his skill, when they have read of the triumphant demagogue humbling himself in the mud before a simple priest. There was no hypocrisy in this, no craft. The agent recognised his principal, the slave bowed before his lord; and when he pressed to his lips those sacred robes, reeking with whisky and redolent of incense, I doubt not that his soul was filled at the same time with unaffected awe and devout gratitude.

If we have correctly fixed his political character, let us see whether we can as accurately

estimate his intellectual capacity and his moral qualities. The hired writers would persuade you that he is a great man. He has not a single quality of a great man. In proportion as he was so gifted, he would be less fitted for the part which he has to perform. There is a sublime sentiment in genius, even when uncontrolled by principle, that would make it recoil with nausea from what this man has to undergo. He is shrewd, vigorous, versatile; with great knowledge of character, little of human nature; with that reckless dexterity which confounds weak minds, and that superficial readiness that masters vulgar passions; energetic from the certainty of his own desperate means, and from the strong stimulus of his provisional remuneration; inexhaustible in unprincipled expedients, and audacious in irresponsible power; a *nisi prius* lawyer, with the soul of a demagogue. That is the man. He is as little a great orator as a great man. He has not a single quality of a great orator except a good voice. I defy his creatures to produce a single passage from any speech he ever delivered illumined by a single flash of genius, or tinctured with the slightest evidence of taste, or thought, or study. Learning he has none; little reading. His style in speaking, as in writing, is ragged, bald, halting, disjointed. He has no wit, though he may claim his fair



portion of that Milesian humour which every one inherits who bears a hod. His pathos is the stage sentiment of a barn; his invective is slang. When he aspires to the higher style of rhetoric, he is even ludicrous. He snatches up a bit of tinsel, a tawdry riband, or an artificial flower, and mixes it with his sinewy commonplace and his habitual soot, like a chimney-sweeper on May-day.

Of his moral character it might be enough to say, that he is a systematic liar and a beggarly cheat, a swindler and a poltroon. But of O'Connell you can even say more. His public and his private life are equally profligate; he has committed every crime that does not require courage: the man who plunders the peasant can also starve his child.<sup>1</sup> He has denounced your national character and insulted your national honour. He has said that all your men are cowards and all your women wantons. He has reviled your illustrious princes—he has sneered at your pure religion—he has assailed your National Church. He has endeavoured to stir up rebellion against your august Senate, and has described your House of Commons, even when reformed, as an assembly of 'six hundred scoundrels.' Every-

<sup>1</sup> There was much meaning in this denunciation. See T. Campbell-Foster's *Letters on the Condition of the People of Ireland*, 1846.

thing which is established comes under his ban, because everything which is established is an obstacle to the purpose for which he is paid—the destruction of everything which is ENGLISH.

*February 2, 1836.*



# LETTER IX



TO

LORD STANLEY

*February 6, 1836*



## LETTER IX.

[Lord Stanley (afterwards Lord Derby), having retired from the Ministry of Earl Grey when that Government went to pieces on the question of redistributing the property of the Irish Church, speedily took up an attitude of direct hostility to his former colleagues and allied himself with Peel, sitting with him on the front Opposition bench during the second Melbourne administration. He, however, refused office under Sir Robert Peel.]

### *To Lord Stanley.*

My Lord,—The classical historian of our country<sup>1</sup> said of your great ancestor that ‘the Countess of Derby had the glory of being the *last* person in the three kingdoms, and in all their dependent dominions, who submitted to the victorious rebels.’ Charlotte de la Trémouille<sup>2</sup> was a woman who might have shamed the degenerate men of the present day; but your Lordship may claim, with a slight though significant alteration, the eulogium of that illustrious

<sup>1</sup> Hume.

<sup>2</sup> Countess of Derby, who stood the sieges of Lathom House by Fairfax in 1644–5.

princess. The rebels are again victorious, and to your Lordship's lasting honour, you have been the *first* to resist their treasonable authority.

Never has a statesman yet been placed in a position so difficult and so trying as the present heir of the house of Derby; never has a statesman under similar circumstances yet conducted himself with more discretion and more courage. When the acerbities of faction have passed away, posterity will do justice to your disinterestedness and devotion, and the future historian of England will record with sympathising admiration the greatness of your sacrifice.

If the gratification of your ambition had been your only object, your course was clear. Less than three years ago the Whigs, and loudest among them my Lord Melbourne, announced you as the future Prime Minister of England. Young, of high lineage, of illustrious station, and of immaculate character, and unquestionably their ablest orator—among your own party you had no rival. They looked upon you as the only man who could at the same time maintain their power and effectually resist the machinations of those who would equally destroy the constitution and dismember the empire. With what enthusiastic cheers did they not greet the winged words with which you assailed the anti-national enemy

when you rose in the House like a young eagle, and dashed back his treason in the baffled countenance of the priestly delegate !

Who could believe that the same men who cheered you in the House, and chuckled over your triumphs in their coteries, should now be the truckling slaves of the sacerdotal power from whose dark influence they then shrank with disgust and terror ? Who could believe that the projected treason of these very men should have driven you and your high-minded colleagues from the contagion of their councils ? Who could believe that the famous ' Reform Ministry,' that packed a Parliament by bellowing ' gratitude to Lord Grey ' throughout the empire, should finally have expelled that same Lord Grey from his seat, under circumstances of revolting insult ; that the very Lord Melbourne who had always indicated yourself as Lord Grey's successor, should himself have slid into that now sullied seat, where he maintains himself in indolent dependence by a foul alliance with the very man whom he had previously denounced as a traitor ? Can the records of public life, can the secret archives of private profligacy, afford a parallel instance of conduct so base, so completely degrading, so thoroughly demoralised ?

You, my Lord, preferred your honour to your interest, the prosperity of your native land to the



gratification of your ambition. You sacrificed without a pang the proudest station in your country, to prove to your countrymen that public principle was not yet a jest. You did well. The pulse of our national character was beating low. We required some great example to rebrace the energies of our honour. From the moment that you denounced this disgusting thralldom and the base expedients of your chicaning colleagues, a better feeling pervaded England and animated Englishmen. In this sharp exigency you did not forget your duty to yourself as well as to your country. Yours was no Coriolanus part; neither the taunts of the recent supporters who had betrayed you, nor the ready compliments of your former adversaries, tempted you to swerve for a moment from the onward path of a severe and peremptory principle. When Sir Robert Peel was summoned to the helm, in the autumn of 1834, your position was indeed most painful. Your honour and your duty seemed at conflict. You reconciled them. You supported the policy while you declined the power.

These, my Lord, are great deeds. They will live. The defence of Lathom was not more heroic. They will live in the admiration and the gratitude of an ancient and honourable nation, ever ready to sympathise with the pure and

noble, and prompt to recognise a natural leader in blood that is mingled with all the traditionary glories of their race.

You had now placed your character above suspicion. The most virulent of the hired writers of the faction did not dare to impugn the purity of your motives. You had satisfied the most morbid claims of an honour which the worldly only might deem too chivalrous. When, therefore, I find you at length avowedly united with that eminent man, on whom the hopes of his country rest with a deserving and discerning confidence, and who, in his parliamentary talents, his proud station, and his unsullied fame, is worthy of your alliance, I was rejoiced, but not surprised. It is a fit season to 'stand together in your chivalry.' The time is ripe for union and fair for concord. When, some days back, in my letter to Sir Robert Peel—a letter, let me observe in passing, written by one whose name, in spite of the audacious licence of frantic conjecture, has never yet been even intimated, can never be discovered, and will never be revealed—I announced the fact that the great Conservative party was at length completely united, it was a declaration equivalent to England being saved. The debates upon the address have proved the accuracy of my information. The hired writers and the place-hunting dependents of the priestly

junta triumph over the division in the Commons; they might have read their knell in the voice of the tellers. They assure us, with solemn or with sparkling countenance, that they did not reckon upon a moiety of such a majority. And do they indeed think that the people of England care one jot whether there be ten or twenty traitors more or less in the House of Commons? It is not a miserable majority in that assembly, either way, that will destroy or preserve the empire. That very debate, my Lord, over the result of which these short-sighted desperadoes affect to triumph, sealed the doom of the faction and announced the salvation of the country. It will fill every loyal and discerning heart throughout England with more than hope. Whatever the hired writers and the expectant runners may bawl or scribble, that division numbered the days of the present Cabinet. And they know it. The sacerdotal delegates know full well that the moment the Conservatives are united, the priestly plot is baffled.

When the First Lord of the Treasury was reinstalled in the office which he won by so patriotic a process, and which he fills with such diligent ability, shrinking from the contamination of O'Connell, the very mention of whose name in his private circle makes him even now tremble with



compunctious rage, he declared that affairs might be carried on without 'the victorious rebels,' from the mere disunion of the Conservative camp. No one was more completely aware than his Lordship that the moment that disunion ceased, his authority must tremble. To perpetuate distrust, and to excite division among the different sections of the Conservative party, all the energies of the anti-English cabal have of late been directed. The Municipal Bill filled them with a fluttering hope; a severance between the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel was announced as inevitable. To-day a great commoner and a learned lord no longer meet; to-morrow the appropriation clause is to be got rid of by some new juggle, and your Lordship and your fellow-leaders are to return to the tainted benches of the Treasury. Now the conferences at Drayton hang fire; their midnight visits from illustrious Princes bode splits and schisms. We have scarcely recovered from the effect of a suspicious dinner, when our attention is promptly directed to a mysterious call. The debates on the address have laid for ever these restless spectres of the disordered imagination of a daunted yet desperate faction. In a Peel, a Stanley, a Wellington, and a Lyndhurst, the people of England recognise their fitting leaders. Let the priestly party

oppose to these the acrid feebleness of a Russel and the puerile common-place of a Howick. Melbourne's experienced energy, and Lansdowne's lucid perception !

*February 6, 1836.*



LETTER X.



TO

LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK

*February 11, 1836*

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## LETTER X.

[Lord William Bentinck had a somewhat singular career. He was next brother to the Duke of Portland, but preferred an active life to one of inglorious ease, and was consequently kept in pretty constant employment by successive Governments. He was only seventeen when he obtained a commission in the Coldstream Guards, and at five-and-twenty he was entrusted with special duties at the headquarters of Suwarow's army in Italy. In 1803, he being then of the mature age of twenty-eight, was selected to assume the Lieutenant-Governorship of Madras—a post which he held for five years. On his return he joined the army in Spain, but was speedily sent on a diplomatic mission to the Junta in Portugal. Superseded after some months by Mr. Frere, who went out as Minister Plenipotentiary, he again went on active service and commanded a brigade under Sir John Moore at Coruña. Raised to the rank of general of division, he served next under Sir Arthur Wellesley, but was speedily detached from active service to assume the functions of diplomacy. His title was 'Minister Plenipotentiary' of England at the Court of Naples, but to the functions implied in those words were added the duties of commander-in-chief of the Neapolitan forces. In that capacity he did not succeed in making himself especially popular. Queen Caroline quarrelled with him and hurried off to Vienna, where she actually entered into negotiations with Napoleon with the object of inducing that avowed enemy of her husband and herself to send an expedition to expel the

English from Sicily. Napoleon's hands were full, however, and the English remained until the peace. Lord William succeeded in inducing Ferdinand to grant a constitution to his subjects on the purest principles of Liberalism; and when after an erratic military expedition to Catalonia which ended in the disaster of Villa Franca he returned to Naples, he found that the work in which he had been engaged had to be done over again. In 1814 he went to Leghorn to stir up the people of Tuscany to shake off the French yoke, and secured from Ferdinand a solemn promise to respect the constitution to which he had sworn. How Ferdinand kept his oath, the 100,000 Neapolitans who perished by violence in the following thirty years bear witness.

True to the traditions of his party, Lord William Bentinck had tried to turn Sicily into a protected State after the fashion adopted with regard to the Ionian Islands in 1815. In the same way he endeavoured to reconstitute the ancient republic of Genoa. In both cases his action was disavowed by the home authorities, but in spite of all he was sent as British Resident to Rome. He sat for a short time in Parliament for King's Lynn, where he failed to make any conspicuous figure, and in 1827 he was chosen by Mr. Canning as Governor-General of India. His administration was rendered memorable by one great achievement. In 1829 he succeeded in inducing his Council to declare the illegality of the practice of 'Suttee' (according to which Hindoo widows were burned to death when their husbands died). He returned to England four years later, ostensibly on the ground of ill-health, but really because the Government at home wished to promote one of their own men, which was done by giving the Governor-Generalship to Lord Auckland. He left a magnificent reputation in India, and a column was erected to his memory in Calcutta, for which Macaulay wrote the inscription. It states amongst other things that, 'during seven years he ruled India with eminent

prudence, integrity, and benevolence,' that he 'never laid aside the simplicity and moderation of a private citizen,' that he 'gave liberty to the expression of public opinion,' and 'effaced humiliating distinctions.' He was not, however, quite so popular at home. Greville says of him—and the same thing may be found elsewhere—that 'his success in life was greater than his talents warranted, for he was not right-headed, and committed some great blunder or other in every public situation in which he was placed.' The Glasgow address was almost universally condemned. Greville, himself a Whig, and a relative of Lord William, plainly speaks of it as 'silly,' and the world at large was a little startled to find a man of high rank and great wealth openly advocating revolutionary change. It answered its purpose, however, and Lord William Bentinck was member for Glasgow until a few days before his death, on June 17, 1839.]

*To Lord William Bentinck.*

My Lord,—I have just read your Lordship's Address to the Electors of the City of Glasgow; and, when I remember that the author of this production has been entrusted for no inconsiderable period with the government of 100,000,000 of human beings, I tremble. I say not this with reference to the measures of which you have there announced yourself the advocate, but to the manner in which that announcement is expressed. It implies, in my opinion, at the same time, a want of honesty and a want of sense.



This Address to the Electors of the City of Glasgow is made by an individual who has been employed for more than a quarter of a century by his sovereign in foreign service of the utmost importance, ascending, at last, even to the Viceregal throne of India; he is a member of a family of the highest rank and consideration; and some very persevering paragraphs in the Government journals have of late sedulously indicated him as a fit and future member of Lord Melbourne's Cabinet. Your Lordship, therefore, is a very considerable personage; the public are familiar with your name, if not with your career; they are instructed to believe you an individual of great mark and likelihood, of great promise as well as of great performance; as one who is not unwilling to devote to their interests at home all those talents which have been so long exercised, and all that experience which has been so laboriously obtained, in their service in other and distant lands. 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view, sings a bard<sup>1</sup> of that city which your Lordship is to represent: 'tis distance which has invested your Lordship with the haze of celebrity; but I doubt whether the shadowy illusion will be long proof against that nearer inspection and more familiar experi-

<sup>1</sup> Campbell.

ence of your judgment and capacity, which your Lordship has favoured us with in your Address to the Electors of the City of Glasgow.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following is the address alluded to :—

*To the Electors of the City of Glasgow.*

Gentlemen,—It is only in consequence of the very numerous requisition which I have had the honour to receive, that I could have ventured to aspire to the high distinction of representing you in Parliament. Encouraged by this invitation, I shall at once proceed to state, frankly and explicitly, my opinion upon the various topics and measures that are likely to be brought before Parliament in the ensuing session, with a confident hope that in this exposition nothing will be found at variance with those principles which for many years of my life I have professed and practised; and upon which alone, and to no particular competency of my own, I can found a claim to your suffrages.

Permit me then, in the outset, to give my adherence to the now happily established conviction among all reformers, that by firm union, by the abandonment of all separate and minor views, and by a steady support of Lord Melbourne's Ministry, the present and future cause of reform can alone be supported.

With respect to expected measures, I should decidedly support the ministerial plan of Irish Church Reform, imperfect and insufficient as I must consider the measure to be.

I, of course, am a decided friend to a complete reform of the Irish Municipal Corporations.

I am favourable to the shortening of the duration of Parliaments; but without having had occasion seriously to consider this subject, I should prefer, as a present measure, the quinquennial to the triennial term.

With respect to the extension of the suffrage, into the details of which I have never entered, I can only generally state my firm belief that the broader the admission of all the intelligent

There are some, indeed, who affirm—and those, too, persons of no mean authority—that

classes to the government of the country, the greater will be the security of our existing institutions.

I am opposed to the vote by ballot ; I consider it a complete illusion. It will not destroy the exercise of undue influence, but it will give rise to another influence still more pernicious—that of money and corruption, against which there is no security but in publicity. At the same time, as the vote by ballot affects no existing right, I would willingly acquiesce in the general wishes of my constituents to vote for it as an experimental and temporary measure.

I am profoundly penetrated with the indispensable necessity that the two branches of the Legislature should be brought into harmony with each other ; and I am of opinion that the result may be advantageously accomplished through the constitutional exercise of the prerogative of the Crown without any organic change.

I need not promise my support to all measures regarding freedom of trade, and economy and retrenchment in every department of the State, consistently, of course, with efficiency and safety. The Corn Laws are a difficult question. I am for their abolition. If railways, as I believe, may become necessary in the race of competition that we have to run with other countries, the prices of subsistence must in a still greater degree contribute to success. I should hope that an equitable compromise between the agricultural and manufacturing interests might not be found impracticable.

I shall advert, in the last place, to the application for a grant of 10,000*l.* towards the endowment of additional chapels and places of worship for the Established Church of Scotland. I am entirely averse to this grant. The event, of all others, that in my humble judgment would best establish peace and good will and concord among all classes of men, would be a perfect equality of civil and religious rights.



this address may even be considered a manifesto of the least constitutional portion of the Cabinet to whom your Lordship and my Lord Durham are speedily to afford all the weight of your influence and all the advantage of your wisdom. How this may be, events will prove; the effusion is certainly sufficiently marked by the great characteristic of the Whig-Radical school; a reckless readiness to adopt measures, of the details and consequences of which they are obviously, and often avowedly ignorant.

But as this cannot at present be, at least let us be careful not to aggravate an obnoxious distinction. Let the Established Churches retain what they possess, but let nothing more be taken from the public funds. The same religious zeal which exclusively maintains all the places of worship and the ministers of Dissenters, cannot fail to supply those additional aids of which the Established Churches of England and Scotland may stand in need.

I will now conclude with the expression of my very deep regret that the effects of the very long and severe illness which drove me from India, will not allow me, without positive risk, to appear at the election. But if I am so fortunate as to obtain the honour to which I aspire, I shall take the earliest opportunity, after the session, of visiting Glasgow; and should it then be the opinion of the majority of my constituents that the generous confidence which they have been pleased to place in me has been in any degree disappointed, I shall be most ready to resign the trust confided in me.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

W. BENTINCK.

London: February 4, 1836.

The address itself consists of fourteen paragraphs. In the first your Lordship informs us that you come forward in consequence of 'a very numerous requisition.' What 'a very numerous requisition,' by-the-bye, may be, I pretend not to decipher. It may be Hindostanee; it may be Sanscrit; it is not English. With a modesty natural to an Oriental Viceroy, the late Master of the Great Mogul, you then make your salaam to the electors, assuring them that but for this very numerous requisition you 'could not have ventured to aspire to the high distinction of representing Glasgow in Parliament'—of representing Glasgow after having ruled Calcutta!

Your Lordship then proceeds to state, 'frankly and explicitly,' your political creed, 'with a confident hope,' which seems, however, but a somewhat hesitating and trembling trust, that 'nothing will be found at variance with those principles which for many years of your life you have professed and practised.' How many years, my Lord William?

After eulogising 'union among all Reformers,' but of course in favour of Lord Melbourne's Government, and the abandonment of 'all separate and minor views,' you immediately declare, with admirable consistency, that the Ministerial plan of Irish Church Reform does not go far enough, but is 'imperfect and in-



sufficient.' This is certainly a very felicitous method of maintaining union among all Reformers. There is no doubt with what section of that rebellious camp your Lordship will herd, you who are, 'of course, a decided friend to a complete reform in the Irish municipal corporations.'

Your Lordship, it appears, is also 'favourable to the shortening of the duration of Parliaments,'<sup>1</sup> although you ingenuously allow that you 'have had no occasion seriously to consider the subject;' and that you are partial to the 'extension of the suffrage,' into the details of which, however, 'you candidly admit you have never entered!' Admirable specimen of the cautious profundity of Whig Radicalism! Inimitable statesman, who busied with concocting constitutions for Sicily, and destroying empires in India, can naturally spare but few hours to the consideration of the unimportant topics of domestic policy.

Your decisive judgment, however, on the subject of the ballot will clear your Lordship in a moment from any silly suspicion of superficiality. This paragraph is so rich and rare, that it merits the dangerous honour of a quotation:—

I am opposed to the vote by ballot; I consider it

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<sup>1</sup> It should not be forgotten that the Septennial Act, passed in the second year of George I., was a purely Whig measure.

a complete illusion. It will not destroy the exercise of undue influence, but it will give rise to another influence still more pernicious, that of money and corruption, against which there is no security but in publicity. At the same time, as the vote by ballot affects no existing right, I would willingly acquiesce in the general wishes of my constituents, to vote for it as an experimental and temporary measure.

Without stopping to admire your refined distinction between an influence which is undue, and 'another influence' which is pernicious, one cannot too ardently applaud the breathless rapidity with which your Lordship hurries to assure your future constituents that you will willingly support an illusion and a pest.

The ninth paragraph of this memorable production informs us that your Lordship is 'profoundly penetrated' with an idea. Pardon my scepticism, my Lord; whatever other claims you may have to the epithet, I doubt whether your Lordship's *ideas* are radical. I am indeed mistaken if their roots have ever 'profoundly penetrated' your cultured intellect. Was it this 'profound penetration' that prompted the brother of the Duke of Portland to declare his conviction of 'the indispensable necessity of bringing the two branches of the legislature into harmony with each other by the constitutional exercise of the prerogative of the Crown?' Your Lordship may settle this point with his Grace.

The tenth paragraph is only remarkable for the felicity of its diction. The honourable member for Middlesex has at length found in the future member for Glasgow a rival in the elegance of his language and the precision of his ideas.

But now for your masterpiece! 'The Corn Laws are a difficult question; I am for their abolition.' How exquisitely does this sentence paint your weak and puzzled mind and your base and grovelling spirit! Confessing at the same time your inability to form an opinion, yet gulping down the measure to gain the seat. Space alone prevents me from following the noble candidate for Glasgow through the remainder of his address, admirably characteristic as it is of the same mixture of a perplexed intellect and a profligate ambition.

My Lord, I have not the honour of your acquaintance; I bear you no personal ill-will. I stop not here to inquire into the proceedings of your former life—of your Sicilian freaks or of your Spanish exploits, or of your once impending catastrophe in India. I form my opinion of your character from your last public act, and believing as I do, that there is a conspiracy on foot to palm you off on the nation as a great man, in order that your less hackneyed name may prolong the degrading rule of a desperate faction,



I was resolved to chalk your character on your back before you entered the House where you are doomed to be silent or absurd. There are some of your acquaintances who would represent you as by no means an ill-natured man; they speak of you as a sort of dull Quixote. For myself, I believe you to be without any political principle, but that you are unprincipled from the weakness of your head, not from the badness of your heart. Your great connections have thrust you into great places. You have been haunted with a restless conviction that you ought not to be a nonentity, and like bustling men without talents you have always committed great blunders. To avoid the Scylla of passive impotence, you have sailed into the Charybdis of active incapacity.

But you are, or you will be, member for Glasgow. The author of such an address meets, of course, with 'no opposition.' Discriminating electors of Glasgow! Send up your noble member to the House, where the Government newspapers assure us he will soon be a Minister. His difference with the present Cabinet is trifling. He only deems the Irish Church reform 'imperfect and insufficient.' He is, 'of course,' for a complete reform of the Irish corporations. He is for short parliaments, he is for the ballot,<sup>1</sup> he

<sup>1</sup> A slip of the pen. See Address: 'I am opposed to the vote by ballot; I consider it a complete illusion.' As a matter



is for extension of the suffrage, he is for the abolition of the corn laws, the virtual annihilation of the House of Lords, and the gradual destruction of all alliance between the Church and the State. What more can you require? His Sicilian constitution?

It would, however, be disingenuous to conceal that there is at the conclusion of your Lordship's address a sentence which almost leads one to impute its production to other causes than the impulse of a party or the original weakness of your character. It appears that 'a long and severe illness drove you from India,' and even now incapacitates you from personally soliciting the suffrages of your choice constituents. Have, then, the republican electors of Glasgow, eager to be represented by a Lord, selected for their champion in the Senate one of those mere lees of debilitated humanity and exhausted nature which the winds of India and the waves of the Atlantic periodically waft to the hopeless breezes of their native cliffs? The address is ominous;

of fact, the Whigs were always strenuously opposed to the ballot, and Sydney Smith's powerful pamphlet was used as a mine of arguments against it, though when the more advanced section of the Liberal party pressed the matter on, the Whigs were found as yielding as Lord William Bentinck himself, and were quite as willing as he to 'vote for it as an experimental and temporary measure.'

and perhaps, ere the excitement of a session may have passed, congenial Cheltenham will receive, from now glorious Glasgow, the antiquated Governor and the drivelling Nabob !

*February 11, 1836.*

# LETTER XI.



TO

VISCOUNT PALMERSTON

*February 22, 1836*

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## LETTER XI.

[The following letter is an expression of the bitter feeling with which the King, and the Tories generally, regarded Lord Palmerston at the period at which it was written. Starting in life as a Tory, he was at the early age of two-and-twenty appointed a Junior Lord of the Admiralty in the Duke of Portland's administration. In 1809 he became Secretary at War under Spencer Perceval, and when through the death of the latter at the hands of Bellingham Lord Liverpool succeeded to power, Palmerston remained in office. When Lord Liverpool's ill-health forced him to retire, and Mr. Canning was entrusted with the formation of a Ministry, he still retained his place, as also during the Ministry of Lord Goderich. Having turned Canningite,<sup>1</sup> he was not, of course, included in the administration of the Duke of Wellington; but his exclusion from office lasted only from May 26, 1828, to November 22, 1830,

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to his brother, written in January 1828, Palmerston thus explained his somewhat anomalous political position. Speaking of the Whigs he says: 'I very sincerely regret their loss, as I like them much better than the Tories and agree with them much more; but still we, the Canningites, if so we may be termed, did not join their Government, but they came and joined ours; and whatever regard we may feel for them, we have not enlisted with them so as to be bound to follow their fate and fortunes, or to make their retention a condition of our remaining.'

when he became Foreign Secretary, with a seat in the Cabinet, holding that office until the collapse of the Reform Ministry at the end of 1834. He was not included in the first Melbourne administration, but he returned to the Foreign Office when Melbourne went back in April 1835, chiefly, it was understood, through the influence of Lord Grey. He was anything but popular. 'He had offended Talleyrand and other members of the diplomatic body past all hope of forgiveness,' says Mr. Torrens in his 'Life of Lord Melbourne.' His manner towards the representatives of other States was often grievously offensive, and he had been guilty more than once of the gross discourtesy of keeping the members of the Conference on the Belgian question waiting long after the hour appointed for their assembling. In the council chamber itself his manners were said to be rude and unconciliatory, and he took an infinity of pains to prove to his colleagues that he cared nothing for their suggestions or their arguments. They resented this mode of treatment, and, according to Mr. Torrens, complained to Holland and Lansdowne.

When Melbourne was forming his second Cabinet he was urged by some of his most trusted advisers to find some other field for the energies of Palmerston than the Foreign Office; but all such proposals were scouted with indignation. Palmerston knew that in the existing condition of foreign affairs he was indispensable to the new Government, and he flatly refused to give way on this point. Lord Durham was especially anxious to go to the Foreign Office, and is known to have put considerable pressure on Lord Grey to induce him to use his influence with Palmerston, and to persuade Melbourne to make him the most flattering offers. He might have had the Viceroyalty of Ireland with an English peerage, or he might have gone to India as Governor-General. He refused both proposals. The former he scouted as a tinsel appointment, while as regarded the latter he would only say that his health

was not sufficiently robust. Melbourne supported him in spite of Lord Grey's pressure. To satisfy the latter, however, the new Government were prodigal of good things to the Earl's family. His son, Lord Howick, was Secretary at War, with a seat in the Cabinet; his nephew, Sir George Grey, Under Secretary for the Colonies; one son-in-law was made Secretary to the Admiralty and another Ambassador to St. Petersburg. The main point was, however, that Palmerston obtained the Foreign Office. His first act there was hardly one of consummate wisdom. Lord Durham asked for and obtained the Embassy to St. Petersburg, and Palmerston inquired privately whether he would be acceptable to the Czar before submitting his formal appointment to the King. Being told soon afterwards that preliminary inquiries had been made at St. Petersburg, the King was furious, and complained sharply to Melbourne that he had been slighted by the Foreign Secretary. 'Here,' wrote Melbourne to Lansdowne, in a letter quoted by Mr. Torrens, 'here is the devil to pay about this appointment of Durham. The King has taken great offence at the Emperor of Russia's consent having been obtained before Durham was named to him. I send you the correspondence which has passed. There is another long explanatory letter of Palmerston's which went also to him this morning. His censure of Palmerston is so violent that I know not how I can acquiesce under it.' These facts appear to have crept out, and to have given rise to some of the allusions which will be found in the letter of 'Runnymede.' It is pleasant to remember that Lord Beaconsfield changed his opinion of Palmerston considerably before he died.]

*To Viscount Palmerston.*

My Lord,—The Minister who maintains himself in power in spite of the contempt of a whole



nation must be gifted with no ordinary capacity. Your Lordship's talents have never had justice done to them. Permit me to approach you in the spirit of eulogy; if novelty have charms, this encomium must gratify you. Our language commands no expression of scorn which has not been exhausted in the celebration of your character; there is no conceivable idea of degradation which has not been, at some period or another, associated with your career. Yet the seven Prime Ministers, all of whom you have served with equal fidelity, might suffice, one would think, with their united certificates, to vamp up the first; and as for your conduct, so distinguished an orator as your Lordship has recently turned out, can never want a medium for its triumphant vindication, even if it were denied the columns of that favoured journal where we occasionally trace the finished flippancy of your Lordship's airy pen.

The bigoted Tories under whose auspices your Lordship entered public life had always, if I mistake not, some narrow-minded misgiving of your honesty as well as your talents, and with characteristic illiberality doomed you to official insignificance. It was generally understood that under no circumstances was your Lordship ever to be permitted to enter the Cabinet. Had you



been an anticipated Aislabe,<sup>1</sup> you could not have been more rigidly excluded from that select society; you were rapidly advanced to a position which, though eminent, was also impassable; and having attained this acme of second-rate statesmanship, you remained fixed on your pedestal for years, the Great Apollo of aspiring understrappers.

When the ambition of Mr. Canning deprived him of the ablest of his colleagues, your Lordship, with that dexterity which has never deserted you, and which seems a happy compound of the smartness of an attorney's clerk and the intrigue of a Greek of the Lower Empire, wriggled yourself into the vacant Cabinet. The Minister who was forced to solicit the co-operation of a Lansdowne might be pardoned for accepting the proffer of a Palmerston; but even in his extreme distress, Mr. Canning was careful not to promote you from your subordinate office; nor can I conceive a countenance of more blank dismay, if that brilliant rhetorician, while wandering in the Elysian fields, were to learn

<sup>1</sup> Aislabe was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1721, and retired in consequence of his connection with the South Sea Bubble, to make room for Walpole, who continued to hold office both as Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury until 1742, when he was created Earl of Orford. Aislabe died in the same year.

that his favourite portfolio was now in your Lordship's protocolic custody.<sup>1</sup>

A member of Mr. Canning's Cabinet by necessity, you became a member of the Duke of Wellington's by sufferance. You were expelled from your office for playing a third-rate part in a third-rate intrigue.<sup>2</sup> Your Lordship was piqued, and revenged yourself on your country by becoming a Whig. I remember when, in old days, you addressed the Speaker on our side of the House, your oratorical displays were accompanied not only by the blushes, but even the hesitation of youth. These might have been esteemed the not displeasing characteristics of an ingenuous modesty, had they not been associated with a callous confidence of tone and an offensive flippancy of language, which proved that they were rather the consequence of a want of breeding than of a deficiency of self-esteem. The leader of the Whig Opposition was wont to say, in return perhaps for some of those pasquinades with which you were

<sup>1</sup> See the correspondence in vol. i. of Lord Dalling's *Life of Palmerston*.

<sup>2</sup> The 'intrigue' in question (though, perhaps, it hardly deserves so severe a name) consisted in attempts to force the policy of Mr. Canning and Lord Goderich on the Duke of Wellington. The four 'intriguers' were Huskisson, Grant, Dudley, and Palmerston, all of whom joined the Government in January and left it in May.

then in the habit of squibbing your present friends, that your Lordship reminded him of a favourite footman on easy terms with his mistress. But no sooner had you changed your party than all Brooks's announced you as an orator. You made a speech about windmills and Don Quixote, and your initiation into liberalism was hailed complete. Your Lordship, indeed, was quite steeped in the spirit of the age. You were a new-born babe of that political millennium which gave England at the same time a Reform Bill and your Lordship for a Secretary of State. I can fancy Mr. Charles Grant assisting at your adult baptism, and witnessing your regeneration in pious ecstasy.

The intellectual poverty of that ancient faction who headed a revolution with which they did not sympathise in order to possess themselves of a power which they cannot wield, was never more singularly manifested than when they delivered the seals of the most important office in the State to a Tory underling. You owe the Whigs great gratitude, my Lord, and therefore I think you will betray them. Their imbecility in offering you those seals was only equalled by your audacity in accepting them. Yet that acceptance was rather impudent than rash. You were justly conscious that the Cabinet of which you formed so ludicrous a



member, was about to serve out measures of such absorbing interest in our domestic policy, that little time could be spared by the nation to a criticism of your Lordship's labours. During the agitation of Parliamentary Reform your career resembled the last American war in the midst of the revolutions of Europe: it was very disgraceful, but never heard of. Occasionally, indeed, rumours reached the ear of the nation of the Russians being at Constantinople, or the French in Italy and Flanders. Sometimes we were favoured with a report of the effective blockade of our ancient allies, the Dutch; occasionally of the civil wars you had successfully excited in the Peninsula, which we once delivered from a foreign enemy.<sup>1</sup> But when life and property were both at stake, when the Trades' Unions were marching through the streets of the metropolis in battle-array, and Bristol was burning, your countrymen might be excused for generally believing that your Lordship's career was as insignificant as your intellect.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the practical encouragement offered to the various 'Legions' raised for service in Spain and Portugal.

<sup>2</sup> Palmerston took no part in general politics in the early part of his life, confining himself to the business of his office and speaking but very seldom in the House. As a writer in the *Times* put the matter: 'Those who knew him only in his later days as the jaunty and evergreen Premier, always foremost in



But your saturnalia of undetected scrapes and unpunished blunders is now over. The affairs of the Continent obtrude themselves upon our consideration like an importunate creditor who will no longer be denied. There is no party-cry at home to screen your foreign exploits from critical attention. The author of the *New Whig Guide*<sup>1</sup> may scribble silly articles in newspapers about justice to Ireland, but he will not succeed in diverting public notice from the painful consequences of his injustice in Europe. To-night, as we are informed, some results of your Lordship's system of non-interference in the affairs of Spain are to be brought under the consideration of the House of Commons. I am not in the confidence of the Hon. Gentleman who will introduce that subject to the notice of the assembly of which, in spite of the electors of Hampshire, your Lordship has somehow or other contrived to become a member. But I speak of circumstances with

parrying a thrust from the Opposition, in making the best of a bad case, and in covering the retreat of a subordinate, seldom bethought themselves of his twenty years' apprenticeship at the War Office, where he plodded laboriously at the routine of business, writing whole libraries of minutes in a fine, bold, legible hand, and hardly ever opening his mouth on any subject beyond his own special province.'

<sup>1</sup> Edited by 'E.'; written by H. J. Temple, Lord Palmerston, and others; published 1819.

which I am well acquainted, and for the accuracy of which I stake my credit as a public writer, when I declare that of the 10,000 or 12,000 of your fellow-countrymen<sup>1</sup> whom your crimping Lordship inveigled into a participation in the civil wars of Spain for no other purpose than to extricate yourself from the consequences of your blundering policy, not 3,000 effective men are now in the field; such have been the fatal results of the climate and the cat-o'-nine-tails, of ignoble slaughter and of fruitless hardship. Your Lordship may affect to smile, and settle your cravat as if you were arranging your conscience; you may even prompt the most ill-informed man in his Majesty's dominions—I mean, of course, the First Lord of his Majesty's Treasury—to announce in the Upper House that the career of the British Legion has been a progress of triumph, and that its present situation is a state of comparative comfort; but I repeat my statement, and I declare most solemnly, before God and my country, that I am prepared to substantiate it. When the most impudent and the vilest of your Lordship's supporters next amuses the House with his clap-trap appeals to the tears of the widow and the sighs of the orphan, your Lordship may perhaps remem-

<sup>1</sup> Sir De Lacy Evans' force, raised for the support of Queen Isabella against Don Carlos.

ber the responsibility you have yourself incurred, and, sick as the nation may be of this inglorious destruction, there is one silly head, I believe, that it would grieve no one to see added to the heap. It would atone for the havoc, it would extenuate the slaughter, and the member for Westminster,<sup>1</sup> who is a patriot in two countries, would be hailed on his return as the means of having rid both England and Spain of an intolerable nuisance.

For the last five years a mysterious dimness seems to have been stealing over the gems of our imperial diadem. The standard of England droops fitfully upon its staff. He must indeed be an inexperienced mariner who does not mark the ground swell of the coming tempest. If there be a war in Europe to-morrow, it will be a war against English supremacy, and we have no allies. None but your Lordship can suppose that the Cabinet of the Tuileries is not acting in concert with the Court of the Kremlin. Austria, our natural friend on the Continent of Europe, shrinks from the contamination of our political propagandism. If there be an European war, it will be one of those contests wherein a great State requires for its guidance all the resources of a master mind; it would be a crisis which

<sup>1</sup> Evans, who was elected for Westminster in 1833.

would justify the presence of a Richelieu, a Pombal, or a Pitt. O my country! fortunate, thrice fortunate England! with your destinies at such a moment entrusted to the Lord Fanny of diplomacy! Methinks I can see your Lordship, the Sporus<sup>1</sup> of politics, cajoling France with an airy compliment, and menacing Russia with a perfumed cane!

<sup>1</sup> What that thing of silk?  
 Sporus that mere white curd of asses' milk?  
 Satire or sense, alas, can Sporus feel?  
 Who breaks a butterfly upon the wheel?  
 Pope, *on Lord Francis Hervey*.

*February 22, 1836.*



## LETTER XII.



TO

SIR JOHN HOBHOUSE

*February 27, 1836*

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

## LETTER XII.

[There was probably no name which was more familiar to Englishmen in the earlier years of this century than that of John Cam Hobhouse, the friend of Byron, the *protégé* of Sir Francis Burdett, and the 'martyr of liberty'; no one had been more completely forgotten than Hobhouse—then metamorphosed into Lord Broughton—at the time of his death in 1869. The tone adopted by 'Runnymede' in this letter is undeniably severe, but Hobhouse was never popular with his opponents, and always had the credit among them of being a somewhat dull man who made up for the deficiency of his intellect by the violence of his opinions. A 'scion of the house of Whitbread,' he was by birth and training a Whig, but his Whiggism speedily developed into Radicalism of the most advanced school, much to the horror of his worthy and more moderate father, who had been Pitt's Chairman of Committees for many years. His first appearance before the world was in the character of friend and associate of Byron, to whose 'Childe Harold' he wrote elaborate notes. His next was by the publication of a book entitled 'The Substance of some Letters, written by an English Gentleman resident at Paris during the Last Reign of the Emperor Napoleon.' The object of this work was to throw discredit on the restored Bourbons, and to exalt the character and government of that idol of the English Radicals—the Emperor Napoleon. In due course it was translated into French, and gave so much offence to the ruling powers that the translator was

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sentenced to pay a fine of 1,000*l.*, and to twelve months' imprisonment; the printer and the publisher escaping with half the imprisonment, but a similar fine in each case. Hobhouse's next exploit was to publish a pamphlet in which he used expressions which most people not unnaturally regarded as, if not actually treasonable, at least calculated to promote civil disorder. He was not made the victim of a State trial, however, but his words having been read at the table of the House of Commons, he was committed to Newgate on the Speaker's warrant. This was on December 13, 1819, and Hobhouse remained in Newgate until the death of George III. (January 29, 1820). In those days there was no surer passport to popular favour than a collision with the constituted authorities, a fact which Hobhouse speedily realised. He had before solicited the suffrages of the electors of Westminster, but without success, the whole influence of the Whig leaders being given to George Lamb, Lord Melbourne's brother. At the election which followed the accession of George IV., Sir Francis Burdett threw all his influence—which in 1820 was enormous—into the scale in favour of Hobhouse. He subscribed 1,000*l.*, and spoke most ardently in praise of the latter's 'warm heart,' which he described as a 'strong pledge of political integrity.' During twelve years Hobhouse supported by voice and vote every measure brought in by the Whigs, and obtained his reward at last by being appointed Secretary at War in Lord Grey's administration of 1832. In 1833 he became Chief Secretary for Ireland, but was defeated in Westminster by Sir De Lacy Evans. In Lord Melbourne's first administration he held the office of Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests, and in his second, that of President of the Board of Control. He sat in Parliament for Nottingham until 1847, when he had the mortification of finding that his constituents had bettered his instructions, and rejected him for Feargus O'Connor. A seat was, however, found for him at



Harwich, which place he represented until 1851, when he was raised to the peerage as Lord Broughton, of Broughton Giffard in the county of Wilts, and faded from the public view.]

*To Sir John Hobhouse.*

Sir,—Your metamorphosis into a Whig and a Cabinet Minister has always appeared to me even less marvellous than your transformation into a wit and a leader, after having passed the most impetuous years of life in what might have appeared to the inexperienced the less ambitious capacity of a dull dependent. In literature and in politics, until within a very short period, you have always shone with the doubtful lustre of reflected light. You have gained notoriety by associating yourself with another's fame. The commentator of Byron, you naturally became in due season 'Sir Francis Burdett's man,' as Mr. Canning styled you, to your confusion, in the House of Commons; and to which sneer, after having taken a week to arrange your impromptu, you replied in an elaborate imitation of Chatham, admitted by your friends to be the greatest failure in parliamentary memory. At college your dignified respect for the peerage scarcely prepared us for your subsequent sneers at the order. Your readiness to bear the burden of the scrapes of those you honoured by your intimacy,

announced the amiability of your temper. Yet, whether you were sacrificing yourself on the altar of friendship, or concocting notes upon the pasquinades which others scribbled, there was always 'something too ponderous about your genius for a joke;' <sup>1</sup> and when these words fell from your lips on Friday night, to me they seemed to flow with all the practised grace of a *tu quoque*, and to be not so much the inspiration of the moment as the reminiscence of some of those quips and cranks of Mathews <sup>2</sup> and Scrope Davies <sup>3</sup> of which you were the constant, and often the unconscious, victim.

It may be the prejudice of party, perhaps the force of old associations, but to me your new character seems but thinly to veil your ancient reputation. There is a massy poise even in your airiest flights, that reminds one rather of the vulture than the eagle; and your lightest movements are pervaded with a sort of elephan-

<sup>1</sup> This letter was written by way of answer to a speech of Sir John Cam Hobhouse on the affairs of Spain, in the House of Commons, on the night of Friday, February 26, 1836. The expression in inverted commas occurs in the first page, and is applied to an argument of Sir Robert Peel against the British Legion. He had said that the remnant of that anomalous force would be 'dangerous'; Hobhouse endeavoured to turn the saying into ridicule, but with very indifferent success.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Mathews the elder.

<sup>3</sup> 'A little doctor who attends Lady Burdett.'—*Thomas Moore*.

tine grace which forces us to admire rather the painful tutorage of art than nature's happier impulse. Bustling at the university, blustering on the hustings, dangling the seals of office—a humble friend, a demagogue, or a placeman—your idiosyncrasy still prevails, and in your case, 'piddling Theobalds' has, at the best, but turned into 'slashing Bentley.'

Allow me to congratulate you on your plaintive confession, amid the roars of the House, that 'circumstances have brought you and your noble friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, together on the same bench.'<sup>1</sup> The honour of sharing the same seat with an individual might, in another's estimation, have sufficed, without the additional disgrace of calling atten-

<sup>1</sup> 'His noble friend (Palmerston) had succeeded in keeping alive and spreading the great flame of freedom which had marked the character and the intellect of the British people ever since we had been a nation, through circumstances of unparalleled difficulty—he had compromised nothing of the nation's dignity, and stood clearer in the face of his country and of surrounding nations, than any Foreign Secretary who had sat upon that bench. Did the noble lord opposite who laughed at what he had just said suppose that he (Hobhouse) said this from any feeling of private regard for his noble friend. He spoke upon very different grounds. Circumstances had brought his noble friend and himself to sit upon the same bench.' These sentences excited much laughter, there being notoriously no particular affection between Hobhouse and his 'noble friend.'



tion to the stigma. There is something so contaminating in a connection with that man, that when you voluntarily avowed it, we might be excused for admiring your valour rather than your discretion. It is, in truth, a rare conjunction; and Circumstance, 'that unspiritual god,' as your illustrious companion, Lord Byron, has happily styled that common-place divinity, has seldom had to answer for a more degrading combination. You have met, indeed, like the puritan and the prostitute on the banks of Lethe in Garrick's farce, with an equally convenient oblivion of the characteristic incidents of your previous careers; you giving up your annual parliaments and universal suffrage, he casting to the winds his close corporations and borough nominees; you whispering Conservatism on the hustings once braying with your revolutionary uproar, he spouting reform in the still recesses of the dust of Downing Street; the one reeking from a Newgate cell, the other redolent of the boudoirs of Mayfair; yet both of them, alike the Tory underling and the Radical demagogue, closing the ludicrous contrast with one grand diapason of harmonious inconsistency—both merging in the Whig Minister.

That a politician may at different periods of his life, and under very different aspects of public affairs, conscientiously entertain varying



opinions upon the same measure, is a principle which no member of the present House of Commons is entitled to question. I would not deny you, sir, the benefit of the charity of society; but when every change of opinion in a man's career is invariably attended by a corresponding and advantageous change in his position, his motives are not merely open to suspicion—his conduct is liable to conviction. Yet there is one revolution in your sentiments on which I may be permitted particularly to congratulate you, and that country which you assist in misgoverning. Your sympathy on Friday night with the success of the British arms came with a consoling grace and a compensatory retribution from the man who has recorded in a solemn quarto his bitter regret that his countrymen were victorious at Waterloo.<sup>1</sup> I always admired the Whig felicity of your appointment as Secretary at War.

Pardon, sir, the freedom with which I venture to address you. My candour may at least be as salutary as the cabbage-stalks of your late constituents.<sup>2</sup> There are some indeed, who, as I am informed, have murmured at this method of communicating to them my opinion of their characters and careers. Yet I can conceive

<sup>1</sup> The *Letters of an English Gentleman* referred to in the prefatory note.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* at Westminster.

an individual so circumstanced that he would scarcely be entitled to indulge in such querulous sensitiveness. He should be one who had himself published letters without the ratification of his name, and then suppressed them; he should be one who had sat in trembling silence in the House when he was dared to repeat the statement which he had circulated by the press; he should be one to whom it had been asserted in his teeth, that he was 'a liar and a scoundrel, and only wanted courage to be an assassin.' It does not appear to me that such an individual could complain with any justice of the frankness of 'Runnymede.'

*February 27, 1836.*

LETTER XIII.



TO

LORD GLENELG

*March 12, 1836*

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.



### LETTER XIII.

[Charles Grant, first and last Baron Glenelg, was born in India in 1780—a fact which seemed sufficient in the eyes of Lord Grey to justify his appointment in the Reform administration as President of the Board of Control. He must, however, have quitted India very young, for he was no more than one-and-twenty when he left Cambridge as fourth Wrangler and Chancellor's medallist—a position which implies a good deal more than an Indian training can supply. He entered Parliament in 1807 as a Tory, and his official life began in 1819, when he became Chief Secretary for Ireland. His city connections procured for him the appointment, first as Vice-President and then as President of the Board of Trade. When Reform became inevitable he turned Whig, and was rewarded for his change of opinion with the office of President of the Board of Control—or, as would be said in these later days, with the India Office. He was not remarkably successful there. No one impeached his honesty or his candour, but he was very generally regarded as one of the true type of Whig officials—gentlemen who cling to office as tenaciously as a limpet to the rock, and who are distinguished not by any special abilities, but by a kind of patient plodding industry, which is very useful to the State, but which notoriously does not betoken the possession of any exceptionally brilliant abilities.]

In office Lord Glenelg was not distinguished. A lethargic temperament, combined with the acceptance of certain political principles which never developed

themselves so perfectly as under the 'Can't you let it alone?' rule of Lord Melbourne, created grave dangers to the empire, and especially excited against him the wrath of the sovereign. Charles Greville tells a curious story of him when in 1835 the government of Canada was entrusted to three Commissioners. One of them, Sir Charles Grey, was compelled to listen to what Greville describes as 'a most curious burst of eloquence from his Majesty' (William IV.). In the course of it he reminded Sir Charles that Canada had been won 'by the sword,' and charged him by his oath 'strenuously to assert those prerogatives of which persons who ought to have known better have dared even in my presence to deny the existence.' The allusion was very obviously to Lord Glenelg, and, as appears from a subsequent passage in the Diary, the King was perfectly right and Lord Glenelg in the wrong. An ordinary man would have retired at once—Lord Glenelg did nothing of the sort. It was, in fact, at this time a part of the Whig policy for Ministers to represent themselves not as the King's Ministers, but as the representatives of the people—a line of action against which Lord Beaconsfield protested most earnestly on a hundred occasions. Lord Glenelg continued to cling to office, therefore, but he came to grief in 1839. The Canadian insurrection had to be put down with a strong hand, but Lord Durham carried things a little too far. The Papineau rebellion, which had arisen out of the hostility between the English and French races, evoked from the Governor the famous 'Ordinance,' which very nearly lost that colony to England. Under its provisions those of the rebels who had acknowledged their guilt and submitted to the Crown were to be sent as prisoners to Bermuda, and punished with death if they presumed to return. The authorities at home, wiser than Lord Durham, disallowed the Ordinance and recalled its author. Lord Glenelg, who had approved it, felt himself compelled to

retire, and with that step his official career came to an end. A grateful country, however, gave him the office of Commissioner of Land Tax and a pension of 2,000*l.* a year, which he enjoyed until his death in 1866—twenty-seven years—at the age of eighty-seven.]

*To Lord Glenelg.*<sup>1</sup>

My Lord,—Let me not disturb your slumbers too rudely: I will address you in a whisper, and on tiptoe. At length I have succeeded in penetrating the recesses of your enchanted abode. The knight who roused the Sleeping Beauty could not have witnessed stranger marvels in his progress than he who has at last contrived to obtain an interview with the sleeping Secretary.

The moment that I had passed the Foreign Office an air of profound repose seemed to pervade Downing Street, and as I approached the portal of your department, it was with difficulty I could resist the narcotic influence of the atmosphere. Your porter is no Argus. 'His calm, broad, thoughtless aspect breathed repose,' and when he 'slow from the bench arose, and swollen with sleep,' I almost imagined that, like his celebrated predecessor in the Castle of Indolence, he was about to furnish me with a nightcap, slippers, and a *robe de chambre*.

<sup>1</sup> Colonial Secretary in Lord Melbourne's second administration.



I found your clerks yawning, and your under-secretaries just waking from a dream. A dosy, drowsy, drony hum, the faint rustling of some papers like the leaves of autumn, and a few noiseless apparitions gliding like ghosts, just assured me that the business of the nation was not neglected. Every personage and every incident gradually prepared me for the quiescent presence of the master mind, until, adroitly stepping over your private secretary, nodding and recumbent at your threshold, I found myself before your Lordship, the guardian of our colonial empire, stretched on an easy couch in luxurious listlessness, with all the prim voluptuousness of a puritanical Sardanapalus.

I forget who was the wild theorist who enunciated the absurd doctrine that 'ships, colonies, and commerce' were the surest foundation of the empire. What an infinitely ridiculous idea ! But the march of intellect and the spirit of the age have cleansed our brains of this perilous stuff. Had it not been for the invention of ships, the great malady of sea-sickness, so distressing to an indolent Minister, would be unknown ; colonies, like country-houses, we have long recognised to be sources only of continual expense, and to be kept up merely from a puerile love of show ; as for commerce, it is a vulgarism, and fit only for low people. What have such



dainty nobles as yourself and Lord Palmerston to do with cottons and indigoes? Such coarse details you fitly leave to Mr. Poulett Thomson,<sup>1</sup> whose practical acquaintance with tallow is the only blot on the scutcheon of your refined and aristocratic Cabinet.

Although a grateful nation has seized every opportunity of expressing their confidence in your Lordship and your colleagues, and although myself, among more distinguished writers, have omitted no occasion of celebrating your inexhaustible panegyric, it appears to me, I confess, that scant justice has hitherto been done to the grand system of our present administration, and which they are putting in practice with felicitous rapidity and their habitual success. This grand system, it would seem, consists of a plan to govern the country without having anything to do.

The meritorious and unceasing labours of the noble Secretary for Foreign Affairs for the destruction of English influence on the Continent, will soon permit his Lordship to receive his salary without any necessary attendance at his office. Lord Morpeth<sup>2</sup> has nearly got rid of Ireland. The selection of your Lordship to

<sup>1</sup> Then President of the Board of Trade, afterwards distinguished in Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Chief Secretary for Ireland.

regulate the destinies of our colonies insures the speediest and the most favourable results in effecting their emancipation from what one of your principal supporters styles, 'the unjust domination of the mother country;' and we are already promised a Lord Chancellor who is not to preside over the Chancery. The recent government of Lord William Bentinck will, I fear, rob Sir John Hobhouse of half the glory of losing India, and the municipal corporations, if they work as well as you anticipate, may in due season permit Lord John Russell to resume his relinquished lyre. Freed of our colonies, Ireland, and India, the affairs of the Continent consigned to their own insignificance, Westminster Hall delivered over to the cheap lawyers, and our domestic polity regulated by vestries and town-councils, there is a fair probability that the First Lord of the Treasury, who envies you your congenial repose, may be relieved from any very onerous burden of public duty, and that the Treasury may establish the aptness of its title on the *non lucendo* character of its once shining coffers.

*Vive la bagatelle!* His Majesty's Ministers may then hold Cabinet Councils to arrange a whitebait dinner at Blackwall, or prick for an excursion to Richmond or Beulah Spa. Such may be the gay consequences of a Reform

Ministry and a Reform Parliament! No true patriot will grudge them these slight recreations, or hazard even a murmur at their sinecure salaries. For to say the truth, my Lord, if you must remain in office, I for one would willingly consent to an inactivity on your part almost as complete as could be devised by the united genius for sauntering of yourself and that energetic and laborious nobleman who summoned you to a worthy participation in his councils.

Affairs, therefore, my dear Lord Glenelg, are far from disheartening, especially in that department under your own circumspect supervision. What if the Mauritius be restive; <sup>1</sup> let the inhabitants cut each others' throats, that will ultimately produce peace. What if Jamaica <sup>2</sup> be in flames, we have still East India sugar; and by the time we have lost that, the manufacture of beet-root will be perfect. What if Colonel Torrens,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There had been considerable disturbance in the Mauritius consequent upon the abolition of negro slavery, and in February Mr. Roebuck moved for a Committee of Inquiry into the grievances of the disaffected islanders. The Committee was refused, but an impression very generally prevailed that the relations of the Colonial Office with the Mauritius were very unsatisfactory.

<sup>2</sup> Jamaica had become so disturbed since emancipation that the Governor (the Marquis of Sligo) was recalled in September 1836.

<sup>3</sup> The section of economists led by Colonel Torrens advocated systematic emigration as a remedy for popular destitution

perched on the Pisgah height of a joint-stock company, be transporting our fellow-countrymen to the milk and honey of Australia, without even the preparatory ceremony of a trial by jury—let the exiles settle this great constitutional question with the kangaroos. What if Canada be in rebellion—let not the menacing spectre of Papineau<sup>1</sup> or the suppliant shade of the liberal Gosford<sup>2</sup> scare your Lordship's dreams. Slumber on without a pang, most vigilant of Secretaries. I will stuff you a fresh pillow with your unanswered letters, and insure you a certain lullaby by reading to you one of your own despatches.

*March 12, 1836.*

and for the discontent created by the working of the New Poor Law.

<sup>1</sup> The leader of the democratic or French party in the troubles of 1835-7.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Gosford; appointed Governor of Canada on the accession of the second Melbourne administration.



# LETTER XIV.



TO

THE RIGHT HON. EDWARD ELLICE

*March 20, 1836*



## LETTER XIV.

[The opening paragraphs of this letter would seem to have been written in an absolutely ironical mood: when Mr. Ellice died in September 1863, perhaps no one would have been more ready than Lord Beaconsfield to acknowledge that much of what he had said ironically was more than justified in fact. Mr. Ellice was a Whig, and an official Whig to boot, but he was a man of transparent honesty, and one who was moreover capable of making great sacrifices for the principles in which he placed his faith. His official career meant the loss of much money, and of the opportunities of acquiring more, while his political life implied for many years a princely expenditure. Nor did he seek for rewards. Allied though he was by his two marriages to two of the greatest and most influential Whig families—those of Lord Grey and Lord Leicester (Mr. Coke of Holkham), and able, had he so chosen, to command a peerage at any moment, he lived and died a commoner, and an Englishman of whom his countrymen might very reasonably be proud.

The son of a London merchant, Mr. Ellice always retained his connection with the city. He was educated at Winchester and St. Andrews; studied the classics, and attended lectures on Logic, Rhetoric, and Moral Philosophy; but he deserted these higher subjects to take a stool in his father's office. When he was barely eight-and-twenty he obtained a seat in Parliament as member for Coventry, and except during the four years 1826–30, he continued to represent

that city until his death in 1863. The fact affords a somewhat striking proof of his wealth. Coventry was, under the old system, one of the most costly boroughs in England. The franchise was in the hands of the freemen and of the corporation. A great number of the former were non-resident, and it was the custom of candidates to bring down these electors from London and other places in chaises-and-four, and to keep them for three or four days at an hotel, in order that they might record their votes. This Mr. Ellice most religiously did, and as a consequence, his election expenses were such as could be borne only by a capitalist such as he, with possessions in Hudson's Bay, in Canada, and in the West Indies. Yet even he once suffered defeat. A gentleman named Heathcote, with a still longer purse, sent Mr. Ellice into obscurity for four years. He returned to Parliament in 1831, and from that time forward never lost his popularity with the people of Coventry. He found it unnecessary to canvass them. All that he cared to do was to make speeches to his constituents in their ordinary places of resort and to contribute munificently to local charities.

Unfortunately, Mr. Ellice was without doubt a sharer in the two intrigues which respectively brought about the ruin of Lord Grey's Government in 1834, and of that of Sir Robert Peel in 1835. Writing under date July 10, 1834, Charles Greville says:—'I met Duncannon, Ellice, and John Russell this evening riding, and they seemed in very good spirits. I have no doubt Ellice and Duncannon had a main hand in all this business (i.e. the overthrow of Earl Grey), and that they urged on Littleton (the Irish Secretary, who was generally credited with being the prime mover in the intrigue), to do what he did.' Later on Mr. Ellice was indubitably the vehicle of communication between Lord Melbourne's administration and O'Connell. We have it on the authority of Mr. McCullagh Torrens, that when Lord Melbourne's second administration was formed, it



was Mr. Ellice who was deputed to inform O'Connell that his name could not be included in the list of members. O'Connell himself was bitterly disappointed. He had reckoned on office with so much confidence that he had actually commissioned his son to look out for a house suitable for that hospitality which he proposed to dispense when he should have become Lord Chancellor of Ireland. Even the joy of being Lord Mayor of Dublin, and of making State progresses to all the ends of the seven kingdoms of Ireland, hardly consoled him. He had expected to be made head of the judicial system of his country, and he was passed over. All the gold chains in the world, and all that 'me Larding' of which Mr. Thackeray makes such bitter fun, could hardly atone for such a disappointment.

In the Lichfield House compact Mr. Ellice unquestionably acted as go-between. When Lord Melbourne returned to office in virtue of that most flagitious arrangement, Lord Alvanley—one of the 'bucks' of the Regency, a wit and a man of fashion—rose in his place to read a letter lately published by O'Connell, in which he asserted his unshrinking faith in the Repeal of the Union, coupled with the 'reform of the House of Lords,' as the only possible remedy for the woes and sufferings and wrongs of his beloved country. Lord Alvanley went on to say that he wished to know from Lord Melbourne 'how far he coincided with Mr. O'Connell's opinion as regarded the constitution of that House (of Lords) and the Repeal of the Union.' 'I ask him,' he went on, 'on what terms he has negotiated with Mr. O'Connell, and how far he stands committed to that honourable and learned gentleman who most solemnly declares he will never rest until he has effected the Repeal of the Union.' Lord Melbourne's answer was courageous, to say the least. After a scene in which Brougham distinguished himself—not altogether creditably—by entreating Lord Melbourne not to answer the question, the latter distinctly disavowed O'Connell.

‘My noble friend asked me how far I coincided with the opinions of Mr. O’Connell with respect to this House. I answer not at all. . . . The noble Lord asked me whether I have taken any means to secure the assistance of Mr. O’Connell, and if so, upon what terms. I answer that I know not whether I shall have the aid of Mr. O’Connell. I have certainly taken no means to secure it, and most particularly I have made no terms with Mr. O’Connell. . . . There is no foundation, directly or indirectly, for such a statement.’ There is such a thing as economy of truth. Lord Melbourne, personally, had without doubt made no terms with Daniel O’Connell, but somebody had unquestionably done so, and public opinion pointed to Mr. Ellice as the ambassador. Hence the acrimony of ‘Runnymede’s’ letter.]

*To the Right Hon. Edward Ellice.*

Sir,—In this age of faction, it is delightful to turn to one public character whom writers of all parties must unite in addressing in terms of unqualified panegyric. From a ‘man discreditably known in the city,’ you have become a statesman creditably known at Court. Such is the triumph of perseverance in a good cause, undaunted by calumny and undeterred by the narrow-minded scruples of petty intellects. That influence which, in spite of prejudice, you have gained by the uniform straightforwardness of your conduct, you have confirmed by that agreeable and captivating demeanour which secures you the hearts of men as well as their confidence. Un-



influenced by personal motives, always ready to sacrifice self, and recoiling from intrigue with the antipathy of a noble mind, you stand out in bold and favourable relief to the leaders of that party whose destinies, from a purely patriotic motive, you occasionally condescend to regulate.

I ought, perhaps, before this to have congratulated you on your return to that country whose interests are never absent from your thoughts; but I was unwilling to disturb, even with my compliments, a gentleman who, I am aware, has been labouring of late so zealously for the commonweal as the Right Hon. Mr. Ellice. Your devotion in your recent volunteer visit to Constantinople has not been lost on the minds of your countrymen. They readily recognise your pre-eminent fitness to wrestle with the Russian bear; and they who have witnessed in a northern forest a duel between those polished animals, must feel convinced that you are the only English statesman duly qualified to mingle in a combat which is at the same time so dexterous and so desperate. Happy England, whose fortunes are supervised by such an unsalaried steward as the member for Coventry! Thrice fortunate Telemachus of Lambton Castle, guided by such a Mentor!

After the turmoil of party politics, you must have found travel delightful! I can fancy you

gazing upon the blue Symplegades, or roaming amid the tumuli of Troy. The first glance at the Ægean must have filled you with classic rapture. Your cultured and accomplished mind must have revelled in the recollections of the heroic past. How different from the associations of those jobbing politicians, who, when they sail upon Salamis, are only reminded of Greek bonds, and whose thoughts, when they mingle amid the imaginary tumult of the Pnyx at Athens, only recur to the broils of a settling day at the Stock Exchange of London!

In your political career you have emulated the fame, and rivalled, if not surpassed, the exploits of the great Earl of Warwick. He was only a King-maker, but Mr. Ellice is a maker of Ministers. How deeply was Lord Grey indebted to your disinterested services! Amid the musings of the Liternum of Howick,<sup>1</sup> while moralising on the gratitude of a party, how fondly must he congratulate himself on his fortune in such a relative.<sup>2</sup> It is said that his successor is not so prompt to indicate his sense

<sup>1</sup> Liternum was the town to which Scipio Africanus retired in disgust at the injustice of his countrymen, and in which he was buried. His tomb there bears the inscription, *INGRATA PATRIA NE OSSA QUIDEM MEA HABES*. Howick was the seat to which Lord Grey retired after the break-up of the Reform Ministry.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Ellice had married the youngest sister of Earl Grey.



of your services as would be but just. But the ingratitude of men, and especially of Ministers, is proverbial. Lord Melbourne, however, may yet live to be sensible of your amiable exercise of the prerogative of the Crown. In the meantime the unbounded confidence of Lord Palmerston in your good intentions may in some degree console you for the suspicions of the Prime Minister, to say nothing of the illimitable trust of the noble Secretary for the Colonies, who sleeps on in unbroken security as long as you are the guardian angel of his slumbers.

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Distinguished as you are by the inflexible integrity of your conduct, both in public and private life, by your bland manners and your polite carriage, your total absence of all low ambition and your contempt for all intrigue and subterranean practices, you are, if possible, still more eminent for your philosophical exemption from antiquated prejudice. The people of England can never forget that it was your emancipated mind that first soared superior to the mischievous institution of a National Church, and that, with the characteristic liberality of your nature, yours was the intellect that first devised the ingenious plan of appeasing Ireland by the sacrifice of England. Had you been influenced in your conduct by the factious object of establishing your friends in the enjoyment of

a power to exercise which they had previously proved themselves incapable, it might in some degree have deteriorated from the singleness of your purpose; but no one can suppose, for an instant, that in forming a close alliance one year with a man whom twelve months before they had denounced as a rebel, or in decreeing the destruction of an institution which they had just recently pledged themselves to uphold, your pupils of the present administration were actuated by any other motives but the most just, the most disinterested, and the most honourable.

You have recently been gratified by witnessing the proud and predominant influence of your country in the distant and distracted regions of the East. The compliments which were lavished on yourself and your companion by the Czar must have been as flattering to the envoy as they were to the confiding sovereign with whose dignity you were entrusted. It must be some time before the salutes of Odessa cease ringing in your ear, and it cannot be supposed that your excited imagination can speedily disembarass itself of your splendid progress in a steamer over the triumphant waters of the Euxine. Yet, when you have in some degree recovered from the intoxication of success and the inebriating influence of Royal and Imperial condescension, let us hope that you may deign to extend your

practised attention to our domestic situation. The country is very prosperous; the Stock Exchange has not been so active since 1825. They certainly have missed you a little in Spanish, but the railways, I understand, have been looking up since your return, especially the shares of those companies which have no hope or intention of prosecuting their designs. In the meantime, perhaps for you may be destined the glory of inducing Lord Melbourne to tolerate the presence of Mr. O'Connell at an official banquet. That would be an achievement worthy of your great mind. The new Liberal Club, too, which, like Eldorado, is to supply

Shirts for the shirtless, suppers for the starved, may merit your organising patronage. For the rest, the unbounded confidence which subsists between our gracious Sovereign and his Ministers, the complete harmony at length established between the two Houses of Parliament, the perfect tranquillity of Ireland, vouched by the *de facto* member for Dublin, and guaranteed by Lord Plunket, and the agreeable circumstance that the people of England are arrayed in two hostile and determined parties, all combine to assure us of a long, a tranquil, and a prosperous administration of our affairs by the last Cabinet which was constructed under your auspices.

March 20, 1836.

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**LETTER XV.**



**TO**

**VISCOUNT MELBOURNE**

*March 30, 1836*

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## LETTER XV.

*To Viscount Melbourne.*

My Lord,—I always experience peculiar gratification in addressing your Lordship—your Lordship is such a general favourite. I have read somewhere of ‘the best-natured man with the worst-natured muse.’<sup>1</sup> I have always deemed your Lordship the best-natured Minister with the worst-natured party. And really, if you have sometimes so lost your temper—if for those Epicurean shrugs of the shoulder, and *nil admirari* smiles, which were once your winning characteristics, you have occasionally of late substituted a little of the Cambyses’ vein, and demeaned yourself as if you were practising ‘Pistol’ for the next private theatricals at Panshanger—very extenuating circumstances may, I think, be found in the heterogeneous and Hudi-brastic elements of that party which Fate, in a freak of fun, has called upon your Lordship to

<sup>1</sup> ‘The best good man with the worst-natured muse’  
(Sackville, Lord Buckhurst).—*Rochester.*

regulate. What a crew ! I can compare them to nothing but the Schwalbach swine in the Brunnen Bubbles, guzzling and grunting in a bed of mire, fouling themselves, and bedaubing every luckless passenger with their contaminating filth.<sup>1</sup>

We are all now going into the country,<sup>2</sup> and you and your colleagues are about to escape for a season from what your Lordship delicately terms the 'badgering' of Parliament. I trust you will find the relaxation renovating. How you will recreate yourselves, we shall be anxious to learn. I think the Cabinet might take to cricket ; they are a choice eleven. With their peculiarly patriotic temperaments and highly national feelings, they might venture, I think, to play against 'all England.' Lord Palmerston and Lord Glenelg, with their talent for keeping in, would assuredly secure a good score. Lord John, indeed, with all his flourishing, will probably end in knocking down his own wicket ; and as for Sir Cam,<sup>3</sup> the chances certainly are that he will be 'caught out,' experiencing the same fate in play as in politics. If you could only engage Lord Durham to fling sticks at the seals of the

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter, 'the Schwein-General,' in Sir Francis Head's *Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassau*.

<sup>2</sup> Written on the eve of the Easter recess.

<sup>3</sup> Sir John Cam Hobhouse.



Foreign Office, and the agile Mr. Ellice to climb a greasy pole for the Colonial portfolio, I think you will have provided a very entertaining programme of Easter sports.

My Lord, they say, you know, when things are at the worst, they generally mend. On this principle our affairs may really be considered highly promising. The state of Spain demonstrates the sagacity of our Foreign Secretary.<sup>1</sup> The country is divided into two great parties; we have contrived to interfere without supporting either, but have lavished our treasure and our blood in upholding a Camarilla. This is so bad, that really the happiest results may speedily be anticipated. Canada is in a state of rebellion, and therefore after Easter we may perhaps find loyalty and peace predominant, especially when we recall to our recollection the profound intellect<sup>2</sup> your Lordship has selected for the settlement of that distracted colony. The Whigs, my Lord, seem indeed to have a happy knack in the choice of Governors, and almost to rival in their appointments the Duke in *Don Quixote*. To them we are indebted alike for the prescient firmness of a Gosford<sup>3</sup> and the substantial judg-

<sup>1</sup> Palmerston, whose action in the matter of Sir De Lacy Evans' Foreign Legion was a very sore subject at this time.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Glenelg.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Gosford, Governor of Canada.

ment of a Sligo.<sup>1</sup> The spring-like promise of the experienced Elphinstone will explain the genial seed so deftly sown by the noble member for Glasgow,<sup>2</sup> and complete the trio. Three wise and learned rulers! To whomsoever of my leash my Lord Glenelg may award the golden palm, I doubt not it will prove an apple of sufficient discord.

But all our praises why should Lords engross? particularly when the appointments of Lord Auckland<sup>3</sup> and Lord Nugent<sup>4</sup> are duly mentioned.

Rise, honest muse, and sing Sir Francis Head!<sup>5</sup>

The convenient candour of that celebrated functionary will at least afford one solacing reminiscence for your Easter holidays.

But what is Spanish anarchy or Canadian rebellion, the broils of Jamaica or the impending catastrophe of Hindostan, when Ireland is tranquil? And who can doubt the tranquillity of

<sup>1</sup> Lately displaced from the Government of Jamaica.

<sup>2</sup> Lord William Bentinck.

<sup>3</sup> Governor-General of India, under whose administration the disastrous Afghan war occurred.

<sup>4</sup> High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands under Lord Grey, but recalled by Sir Robert Peel.

<sup>5</sup> Sir F. B. Head; appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada in 1835. Under his administration the rebellion of 1837 broke out.

Ireland? Has not your Lordship the bond of the trustworthy Mr. O'Connell, whose private praises you celebrate with such curious felicity, and the choice collateral security of the veracious Lord Plunket. With such a muniment in the strong box of your Cabinet securities, what care you for the charges of Baron Smith and the calendar of Tipperary? And yet, my Lord, though Ireland is tranquil, and though the Papists, in their attempts on the lives of their rivals, seem of late charitably to have substituted perjury for massacre, I fancy I mark a cloud upon your triumphant brow at my incidental mention of that fortunate land. Be of good cheer, my Lord; and if you cannot be bold, at least be reckless. In spite of the elaborate misrepresentations of party, the state of Irish affairs is very simple. The point lies in a nutshell, and may be expressed in a single sentence. Your Lordship's accommodation bills with Mr. O'Connell are becoming due, and unless you can contrive to get them renewed, the chances are your Lordship's firm will become bankrupt.

It seems, my Lord, that the hon. member for Finsbury<sup>1</sup> is about to move a petition to our gracious sovereign to intercede with the King of the French in favour of the State-victims of

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Duncombe.

the three glorious days, persecuted like other great men for anticipating their age, and attempting to do that in 1830 the consummation of which was reserved for 1835. My Lord, buffoonery after a while wearies; put an end, I beseech you, to the farce of your Government, and, to save time, consent at once that you and your colleagues should be substituted in their stead. Nay, I wish not to be harsh; my nature is not vindictive. I would condemn you to no severer solitude than the gardens of Hampton Court, where you might saunter away the remaining years of your now ludicrous existence, sipping the last novel of *Paul de Kock*, while lounging over a sun-dial.

March 30, 1836.



# LETTER XVI.



TO

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*April 18, 1836*





## LETTER XVI.

[The immediate occasion of the following letter was the debate in the House of Lords on the second reading of the Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Bill, the object of which, whether avowed or not, was to break down the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. In the course of that debate Lord Lyndhurst made a powerful speech, urging that the effect of the Bill would be to throw the control of public affairs entirely into the hands of the Roman Catholic clergy, who at that time, and in fact ever since the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act, exercised a tyranny which can only be described as ferocious. At parliamentary elections Catholic priests uniformly denounced those who did not vote for the candidates of their choice as enemies of their country and their God. The Municipal Corporations Bill proposed to extend the popular vote in such a way as to bring not merely parliamentary candidates but candidates for the offices of town councillor or alderman under the same influences. It was against this principle, and against the tyranny of O'Connell, whose 'rent' was extorted from the starving peasantry at the doors of the chapels and under the pressure of the Irish priesthood, all over Ireland, that the invective of 'Runnymede' was directed.]

*To the House of Lords.*

My Lords,—If there be one legislative quality more valuable than another, it is the power of

discriminating between the CAUSE and the PRETEXT. For two sessions of Parliament an attempt has been made to force upon your Lordships' adoption a peculiar scheme of policy under the pretext of doing 'justice to Ireland.' A majority of the members of the House of Commons, no matter how obtained, have not felt competent, or inclined, to penetrate beneath the surface of this plausible plea. They have accepted the pretext as a sound and genuine principle of conduct, and have called for your Lordships' co-operation in measures which you have declined to sanction, because you believe you have distinguished the concealed from the ostensible motive of their proposition. Your Lordships believe, that under the pretext of doing 'justice to Ireland,' you are called upon to do 'injustice to England,' and to assist the cause of Irish independence and papal supremacy.

My Lords, the English nation agrees with you. The experience of the last few years has not been lost upon your reflective countrymen. Under the pretext of emancipating the Irish people, they have witnessed the establishment of the dominion of a foreign priesthood—under the pretext of Parliamentary Reform, they have witnessed the delusive substitution of the Whig Government—under the pretext of Municipal



Reform in England, they have seen a sectarian oligarchy invested with a monopoly of power, tainting the very fountains of justice, and introducing into the privacy of domestic life all the acerbities of public faction—and under the pretext of ‘justice to Ireland,’ they have already beheld the destruction of Protestant ascendancy, and the Papacy, if not supreme, at least rampant. The English nation are reaping the bitter fruits of not sufficiently discriminating between the ostensible and concealed purposes of legislation. Had they been aware some years back, as they now keenly feel, that they were only extending power and privileges to a priesthood when they thought they were emancipating a people, the miserable dilemmas of modern politics would never have occurred. They would not have witnessed the gentlemen of Ireland driven from its parliamentary representation, and deprived of their local influence; they would not have witnessed a fierce and bloody war waged against the property of the Protestant Church and the lives of its ministers; they would not have witnessed the Imperial Parliament occupied in a solemn debate on the propriety of maintaining the legislative union. Political revolutions are always effected by virtue of abstract pleas. ‘Justice to Ireland’ is about as definite as ‘the Rights of Man.’ If the Irish have an equal right with

ourselves to popular corporations, have they less a right to a domestic Legislature or a native Sovereign? My Lords, are you prepared to go this length? Are you prepared to dismiss circumstances from your consideration, and legislate solely upon principles? Is the British Senate an assembly of dreaming schoolmen, that they are resolved to deal with words in preference to facts? Is a great empire to be dissolved by an idle logomachy? If Dublin have an equal right with Westminster to the presence of a Parliament, is the right of York less valid? Be consistent, my Lords, in the development of the new system of politics. Repeal the Union, and revive the Heptarchy.

When the Irish papists were admitted to the Imperial Parliament, we were told that they would consist of a few gentlemen of ancient family and fortune. That class is already banished from our councils. When the Protestant Establishment in Ireland was reformed by the Whigs, we were told that the Church in Ireland would then be as safe as the Church in Yorkshire. That Establishment is now an eleemosynary one. When the repeal of the union was discussed in the English Parliament, we were told that it was only supported by a feeble section. That section now decides the fate of the British Government and the policy of the

British empire. Because much has been conceded, we are told that all must be given up ; because the Irish papists have shown themselves unworthy of a political franchise, we are told that it necessarily follows that they should be entrusted with a municipal one ; because

This new system of inductive reasoning may pass current with some bankrupt noble, panting to nestle in the bowers of Downing Street ; this topsy-turvy logic may flash conviction on the mind of some penniless expectant of the broken victuals of the official banquet ; but the people of England recoil with disgust from the dangerous balderdash, and look up to your Lordships as their hereditary leaders, to stand between the ark of the constitution and the unhallowed hands that are thrust forward to soil its splendour and violate its sanctity. The people of England are not so far divorced from their ancient valour, that after having withstood Napoleon and the whole world in arms, they are to sink before a horde of their manumitted serfs and the *nisi prius* demagogue whom a foreign priesthood have hired to talk treason on their blasphemous behalf.<sup>1</sup> After having routed the lion, we will not be preyed upon by the wolf. If we are to fall, if this great empire, raised by the heroic

<sup>1</sup> Daniel O'Connell.



energies of the English nation—that nation of which your fathers formed a part—is indeed to be dissolved, let us hope that the last moments of our career may prove at least an euthanasia : let no pestilent blight, after our meridian glory, sully the splendour of our setting ; and whether we fall before the foreign foe we have so often baffled, or whether by some mysterious combination of irresistible circumstances, our empire sinks like the Queen of the Adriatic beneath the waves that we still rule, let not the records of our future annalist preserve a fact which, after all our greatness, might well break the spirit of the coming generations of our species. Let it not be said that we truckled to one, the unparalleled and unconstitutional scope of whose power is only equalled by the sordid meanness of his rapacious soul. Let it not be said that the English constitution sank before a rebel without dignity and a demagogue without courage. This grand pensionary of bigotry and sedition presumes to stir up the people of England against your high estate. Will the Peers of England quail to this brawling mercenary—this man who has even degraded crime, who has deprived treason of its grandeur and sedition of its sentiment ; who is paid for his patriotism, and whose philanthropy is hired by the job—audacious, yet a poltroon—agitating a people,



yet picking their pockets ; in mind a Catiline, in action a Cleon ?<sup>1</sup>

This disturber is in himself nothing. He has neither learning, wit, eloquence, nor refined taste, nor elevated feeling, nor a passionate and creative soul. What ragged ribaldry are his public addresses, whether they emanate from his brazen mouth or from his leaden pen ! His pathos might shame the maudlin Romeo of a barn ; his invective is the reckless abandonment of the fish-market. Were he a man of genius, he would be unsuited to the career for

<sup>1</sup> The allusion here is to Lyndhurst's famous attack upon O'Connell (April 26, 1836). It is impossible to do justice to it in a line. After painting the 'Liberator' in colours which no one could misinterpret, Lyndhurst went on to say :—'This person has so scathed himself, has so exhibited himself in a variety of postures—not always the most seemly and decent—amid the shouts and applause of a multitude, that all description on my part is wholly unnecessary. But these exhibitions have not been bootless to him ; he has received lavish contributions, I may say ducal contributions, from the connections of the present Government, while at the same time he has wrung, by the aid of the priests, the miserable pittance from the hands of the starving and famishing peasant. This person has in every shape and form insulted your Lordships, your Lordships' House, and many of you individually ; he has denounced you, doomed you to destruction, and availing himself of your courtesy, he comes to your Lordships' bar, he listens to your proceedings, he marks you and measures you as his victims. "Etiam in senatum venit ; notat designatque oculis ad cædem unumquemque nostrum."'

which he is engaged ; for, after all, he is but a slave. But it is the awful character of his master that invests this creature with his terrible consideration. However we may detest or despise the *nisi prius* lawyer hired to insult and injure the realm of England, we know that he is the delegate of the most ancient and powerful priesthood in Europe. It is as the great papal nominee that this O'Connell, with all his vileness, becomes a power to control which requires no common interference.

My Lords, the English nation believes that that interference can be efficiently exercised by your august assembly. In you are reposed their hopes ; you will not disappoint them. In a few hours, in obedience to the mandate of the papal priesthood, that shallow voluptuary who is still Prime Minister of England, will call upon your Lordships with cuckoo note, to do 'justice to Ireland.' Do it. Justice to Ireland will best be secured by doing justice to England. The people of England created the empire. At the time when we were engaged in that great strife which will rank in the estimation of posterity with the Punic wars and the struggles of the Greeks against Asia, the very men who are now menacing your illustrious order and stirring up war against our national institutions, were in communication with our most inveterate foe,

and soliciting invasion. My Lords, you will not forget this; you will not forget to distinguish their pretext from their cause. These men cannot be conciliated. They are your foes because they are the foes of England. They hate our free and fertile isle. They hate our order, our civilisation, our enterprising industry, our sustained courage, our decorous liberty, our pure religion. This wild, reckless, indolent, uncertain, and superstitious race have no sympathy with the English character. Their fair ideal of human felicity is an alternation of clannish broils and coarse idolatry. Their history describes an unbroken circle of bigotry and blood. And now, forsooth, the cry is raised that they have been misgoverned! How many who sound this party shibboleth have studied the history of Ireland? A savage population, under the influence of the Papacy, has, nevertheless, been so regulated, that they have contributed to the creation of a highly-civilised and Protestant empire. Why, is not that the paragon of political science? Could Machiavel teach more? My Lords, shall the delegates of these tribes, under the direction of the Roman priesthood, ride roughshod over our country—over England—haughty, and still imperial England? Forbid it all the memory of your ancestors! Rest assured that if you perform your high and august office

as becomes you, rest assured that in this agony of the Protestant cause and the British empire, the English nation will not desert you. All parties and all sects of Englishmen, in this fierce and yet degrading struggle, must ultimately rally round your House. My Lords, be bold, be resolute, be still 'the pillars of the State.'

*April 18, 1836.*



LETTER XVII.



TO

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

*April 23, 1836*



## L E T T E R   X V I I . '

\* [The former letter of 'Runnymede' produced its due effect. The House of Lords read the Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Bill a second time, but dealt with it in Committee with such effect that, as Lord John Russell piteously complained on June 9, they completely changed the character of the measure. 'We sent up to the other House of Parliament,' said he, 'a Bill for the Regulation of Municipal Corporations of Borough Towns in Ireland. That Bill has been returned to us with the title altered, with the preamble changed, and, of a Bill consisting of 140 clauses, 106 have been in substance omitted, eighteen other clauses have been introduced, and of the whole purport and intention of the original Bill little is to be found in the Bill which has now come down to us.' The result was a conflict between the two Houses of Parliament, a conference, and, in the end, the rejection of the Bill. The Irish brigade were, of course, furious, and on July 5 Mr. Smith O'Brien rose to move certain resolutions expressive of their indignation. Mr. Rigby Wason begged him not to press his motion. O'Connell protested that he was sensible of 'the indignity offered to the people of Ireland,' but thought that the course pursued by O'Brien was injudicious. In the end the matter dropped, and nothing more was heard of Irish Corporations in the last Parliament of the reign of William IV.]

*To the House of Lords.*

My Lords,—You have unfurled the national standard. Its patriotic and hearty motto is, ‘Justice for England.’ The English nation will support you in your high endeavours. Fear not that they will be backward. They recognise your Lordships as their natural leaders, who have advanced, according to your hereditary duty, to assist them in the extremity of their degraded fortunes. The time is come for bold and vigorous conduct; the time is come to rid ourselves of that base tyranny, offensive to the pride of every Englishman, no matter what his religious sect or class of political opinions. The English nation will not be ruled by the Irish priesthood. Five years of Whig government have not yet so completely broken our once proud spirit, that we can submit without a murmur or a struggle to such a yoke. If Athens, even in her lower fortunes, could free herself of her thirty tyrants, let us hope that England, in spite of all the jobs of our corrupt and corrupting Government, may yet chase away those gentlemen who, fresh from the unction of M’Hale<sup>1</sup> and the mild injunctions of the

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop of Tuam—‘the Lion of St. Jarlath’s.’



apostolic Kehoe, have undertaken to guard over the rights and liberties, the property and the religion, of Protestant England. We have not reformed the third estate of the realm in order that England should be governed by the nominees of the Papacy. There is not a man in Britain, Tory or Radical, Episcopalian or Presbyterian, who can stand this long; there is not a man in Britain who at the bottom of his heart is not proud of our empire, and who does not despise the inferior race who dare to menace its integrity. However faction may corrupt and machinate, the people of England will never long submit to a Milesian master; and when they reflect upon their present degradation, and are conscious that they have experienced it only to secure in power the dull and desperate remains of a once haughty oligarchy, long baffled in their anti-national attempts upon the free realm of England, the nation will rise in its wrath, and execute vengeance upon the cabal which has thus trifled with this great country's immemorial honour.

The English nation requires justice; and it is not content to receive that justice by instalments—a process that may suit their lately manumitted serfs, but which will not accord with their stern and determined spirits, habituated to the ennobling exercise and the proud enjoyment

of an ancient liberty. They require justice, and they will have that justice full and free. It must be meted out speedily and not scantily. They require this justice, with the Peers of England at their head, and the result will prove whether the Milesian peasantry, led on by the papist priesthood, can cope with this proud and powerful society. It is not just to England that the Sovereign should be deprived of his undoubted prerogative; it is not just to England that M'Hale and Kehoe should dictate to our King the servants whom our Royal master should employ; it is not just to England that the King of England should by any such an anti-national process be surrounded by the Ministers, not of his choice, but of his necessity; it is not just to England that a knot of papist legislators should deal with the polity and property of our Protestant Church; it is not just to England that no English blood in Ireland should be secure from plunder or assassination; it is not just to England that a hired disturber, paid by the Roman priesthood, should ramble over our country to stir up rebellion against your Lordships' august estate; that his ribald tongue should soil and outrage all that we have been taught to love, honour, and obey—our women, our princes, and our laws; and lastly, it is not just to England that its constitution should be

attacked, its empire menaced, and its religion scoffed at.

My Lords, the same party that demands justice for Ireland is not less clamorous in its requisition of justice for Canada. Will you grant it?<sup>1</sup> Justice for Botany Bay, too, is, I have heard, in the market, and the cry is said to be worth some good 2,000*l.* per annum. The noble member for Glasgow, the vigorous writer of that lucid address which I had the honour of transferring from its original Sanscrit and first introducing to the notice of the British public,<sup>2</sup> has, I believe, already done justice to India. My Lords! when and where is this dangerous nonsense to terminate? How compatible is the prevalence of such windy words with the subsistence of an empire? It may be as well for your Lordships to ponder on the consequences. The English nation formed the empire, ours is the imperial isle, England is the Metropolitan country; and we might as well tear out the living heart from the human form, and bid the heaving corpse still survive, as suppose that a great empire can endure without some concentration of power and vitality.

My Lords, the season is ripe for action. In

<sup>1</sup> Disaffection in Canada was at this moment assuming a serious character. The Papineau rebellion broke out in 1837.

<sup>2</sup> *V. ante*, Letter to Lord William Bentinck, p. 133.



spite of all the machinations of the anti-English faction, never was your great assembly more elevated in the esteem and affection of your countrymen than at this perilous hour. The English are a reflecting and observant people; they ponder even amid tumult; they can draw a shrewd moral even from the play of their own passions; and they cannot but feel, that after all the revolutionary rhetoric which has been dinned into their ears of late in panegyric of a Reform Ministry and a Reformed Parliament, and in simultaneous depreciation of your Lordships' power and usefulness, that not only in eloquence and knowledge, in elevation of thought and feeling, and even in practical conduct, your Lordships need fear no comparison with that assembly which, from a confusion of ideas, is in general supposed to be more popular in its elements and character, but that on all occasions when the dignity of the empire and the rights of the subject have been threatened and assailed, the national cause has invariably found in your Lordships' House that support and sympathy which have been denied to it by the other Chamber.

Your Lordships, therefore, commence the conflict with the anti-English party under great advantages. Not only is your cause a just one, and your resolution to maintain its justice



unshakable, but there happens in your instance that which unfortunately cannot always be depended on in those great conjunctures which decide the fate of crowns and nations. The sympathy of the nation is arrayed under your banner. And inasmuch as the popularity which you now enjoy is to be distinguished from that volatile effusion which is the hurry-skurry offspring of ignorance and pride, but is founded on the surer basis of returning reason and mellowed passions and sharp experiences, you may rest assured that the support of your countrymen will not be withdrawn from you in the hour of trial.

But, my Lords, do not undervalue the enemy which, at the head of the English nation, you are about to combat. If you imagine that you are going to engage only an ignorant and savage population, led on by a loose-tongued poltroon, you will indeed deceive yourselves, and the truth will not be in you. My Lords, you are about to struggle with a foe worthy even of the Peers of England, for he is a foe that has placed his foot upon the neck of Emperors. My Lords, you are about to struggle with the Papacy, and in its favourite and devoted land. Whether the conspiracy of the Irish priests be more successful than the fleets of Spain, and more fatal to the freedom and the faith of England,

time can alone prove, and Providence can alone decide. But let us not forget that Heaven aids those who aid themselves, and, firm in the faith that nerved the arms of our triumphant fathers, let us meet without fear that dark and awful power, that strikes at once at the purity of our domestic hearths and the splendour of our imperial sway.

*April 23, 1836.*

LETTER XVIII.



TO

THE LORD CHANCELLOR

*April 30, 1836*

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.



## LETTER XVIII.

[It cannot be said that the promotion of Sir Charles Christopher Pepys to the Chancellorship was a stroke of genius on the part of Lord Melbourne. Greville, who, when his temper is not exacerbated, is one of the best judges of men and things of his generation, says of it: 'Pepys's is perhaps one of the most curious instances of elevation that ever occurred. A good sound lawyer, in leading practice at the Bar, never heard of in politics, no orator, a plain, undistinguished man to whom expectation never pointed, and upon whom the Solicitor-Generalship fell, as it were by accident, finds himself Master of the Rolls a few months after his appointment by the sudden death of Leach, and in little more than one year from that time a Peer and Chancellor.' Greville's amazement is not surprising. Pepys was nothing and nobody. He came out from Cambridge with an ordinary degree in the year 1803—the year in which Parke and Coltman distinguished themselves as Wranglers. He was the pupil of Tidd and of Romilly; but he was at the Bar for twenty-two years before he was in a position to take silk, and he would probably never have been heard of but for the fact of his having attracted the notice of Earl Fitzwilliam, who sent him into Parliament for Higham Ferrars and for Malton successively. When Sir John Leach, the Master of the Rolls, was compelled to retire through ill-health in September 1834, Pepys, to the astonishment of everybody, was preferred to his vacant place, and when the Great Seal was put in commission after Brougham's

exit from office, he was naturally made one of the Commissioners. When at last it was discovered that the judicial business of the country was suffering somewhat severely from the necessity for employing three judges to do the work of one, Pepys was made Lord Chancellor—not perhaps entirely to the gratification of suitors in that Court, and certainly not to that of the Bar or of his party in Parliament. According to Campbell, he ‘could hardly put two sentences together,’ and in the House of Lords was an utter failure. He died in 1851, and the ‘Times’ did not even mention the fact.]

*To the Lord Chancellor.*

My Lord,—The gay liver, who, terrified by the consequences of his excesses, takes to water and a temperance society, is in about the same condition as the Whig Ministers in their appointment of a Lord Chancellor, when, still smarting under the eccentric vagaries of a Brougham, they sought refuge in the calm reaction of your sober Lordship. This change from Master Shallow to Master Silence was for a moment amusing; but your Lordship has at length found the faculty of speech, and your astonished countrymen begin to suspect that they may not be altogether the gainers in the great transition from humbug to humdrum. We have escaped from the eagle to be preyed upon by the owl. For your Lordship is also a Reformer, a true Reformer; you are to proceed in the grand course of social amelioration and

party jobbing,<sup>1</sup> and the only substantial difference, it seems, that a harassed nation is to recognise, is that which consists between the devastation of the locust and the destruction of the slug.

Your Lordship has figured during the last week in the double capacity of a statesman and a legislator. With what transcendent success, let the blank dismay that stamped the countenance of the Prime Minister bear flattering witness, as he hung with an air of awkward astonishment on the accents of your flowing eloquence, and listened with breathless surprise, if not admiration, to the development of those sage devices which, by a curious felicity of fortune, have succeeded in arraying against them the superficial prejudices of all parties. Yet one advantage, it cannot be denied, has resulted from your Lordship's last triumphant exhibition. The public at length become acquainted with the object of Lord Langdale's<sup>2</sup> surprising elevation, and the agreeable office which it appears the noble Master of the Rolls is to fulfil in the Senate of Great Britain. We have heard before

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the very curious arrangement by which Campbell became for a while Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> (Bickersteth). Lord Cottenham had brought in a Bill for the Reform of the Court of Chancery, which was read a first time in the Lords on April 28, in spite of a somewhat strenuous protest from Lord Langdale.



of a Lord Chancellor's devil; but my Lord Cottingham is the first guardian of the Great Seal whom his considerate colleagues have supplied not only with a coronet, but a critic.

That your Lordship should be an advocate for 'justice to Ireland,' might reasonably have been expected from your eminent situation. Your party may share with you the odium or the glory of your political projects, but the laurels which you have recently acquired by your luminous eloquence and your profound legal knowledge are all your Lordship's own, and I doubt whether any of your friends or your opponents will be aspiring enough to envy you their rich fruition.

And here, as it is the fashion to do 'justice to Whiggism,' I cannot but pause to notice the contrast, so flattering to the judgment and high principle of your Lordship's party, which their legal appointments afford when compared with those of the annihilated Tories, and especially of the late Government. The administration of justice is still a matter of some importance, and we naturally shrink from the party who have entrusted its conduct to men so notoriously incompetent as a Sugden<sup>1</sup> or a Scarlett,<sup>2</sup> or placed upon the judgment seat such mere politi-

<sup>1</sup> Lord St. Leonards.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Abinger.



real adventurers as an Alderson and a Parke, a Patteson and a Coleridge, a Taunton and a Tindal! How refreshing is it, after such a prostitution of patronage and power, to turn to a Lord Chief Justice like a Denman, raised to his lofty post by the sheer influence of his unequalled learning and his unrivalled practice, or to recognise the homage which has been paid to professional devotion in the profound person of Mr. Baron Williams!

I say nothing of your Lord Chancellors; one you have discarded, and the other you are about to deprive of his functions. And, indeed, it cannot be denied, that the appointment of your Lordship to the custody of the Great Seal, as a preliminary step to the abolition of the office of Lord Chancellor itself,<sup>1</sup> displayed a depth of statecraft in your party for which the nation has hitherto given them scarcely sufficient credit. Had it been entrusted to a Hardwicke, an Eldon, or a Lyndhurst, to some great functionary to whom the public had been accustomed to look up with confidence, and the profession with respect, some murmurs might naturally have arisen at the menaced disturbance of an ancient

<sup>1</sup> There was at this time a great controversy about the division of the judicial from the legislative functions of the Lord Chancellor, and Lord Cottenham's proposals of April 28, 1836—which came to nothing—were in this direction.

order which had long contributed to that pure and learned administration of justice which was once the boast of Britons. But if the Whigs, as their organs daily assure us, are indeed to be our perpetual masters, we may be excused for viewing with indifference, if not with complacency, that promised arrangement by which the most important duties of the State are no longer assigned at the caprice of a party, which, with a singularly sound judgment, has periodically selected for their performance an Erskine, a Brougham, and finally, your learned Lordship. The still haughty Venetians sometimes console themselves with the belief that their State would not have fallen if the last of their Doges had not unfortunately been a plebeian; the Bar of England, that illustrious body which has contributed to our fame and our felicity not less than the most celebrated of our political institutions, may perhaps, in a sympathetic strain of feeling, some day be of opinion that they would not have been expelled from their high and just position in our society, if the last of the Lord Chancellors had been worthy of being their chief; and posterity may perhaps class together, in the same scale of unsuitable elevation, the ignoble Manini and the feeble Cottenham.

My Lord, the same spirit that would expel the heads of our Church from the Senate, would

banish the head of our law from the King's Council. Under pretext of reform and popular government, your party, as usual, are assailing all the democratic elements of our constitution. The slang distinction of the day between the political and legal duties of a Lord Chancellor tends, like all the other measures of the party which has elevated your Lordship to the peerage, and is now about to lower you to a clerkship, to the substitution of an oligarchical government. We may yet live to regret that abrogated custom which, by giving the head of the law a precedence over the haughtiest peers, and securing his constant presence in the Cabinet of the sovereign, paid a glorious homage to the majesty of jurisprudence, announced to the world that our political constitution was eminently legal, guaranteed that there should be at least one individual in the realm who was not made a Minister because he was a noble, insured the satisfactory administration of domestic justice, and infused into our transactions with foreign Courts and Cabinets that high and severe spirit of public rectitude which obtained our own rights by acknowledging those of others.

Will the hybrid thing which, under Lord Cottenham's scheme of legal reform, is to be baptized in mockery a Lord Chancellor, afford these great advantages in the Cabinet or the



Senate? He is to be a lawyer without a court, and a lawyer without a court will soon be a lawyer without law. The Lord High Chancellor of England will speedily subside into a political nonentity like the President of the Council; that office which is the fitting appanage of pompous imbecility. Lord Cottenham may be excused for believing that to make a Lord Chancellor it is enough to plant a man upon a woolsack, and thrust a wig upon his head and a gold-embroidered robe upon his back; but the people of England have been accustomed to recognise in a Lord Chancellor, a man who has won his way to a great position by the exercise of great qualities—a man of singular acuteness, and profound learning, and vast experience, and patient study, and unwearied industry—a man who has obtained the confidence of his profession before he challenges the confidence of his country, and who has secured eminence in the House of Commons before he has aspired to superiority in the House of Lords—a man who has expanded from a great lawyer into a great statesman, and who brings to the woolsack the commanding reputation which has been gained in the long and laborious years of an admired career.

My Lord, this is not your portrait. You are the child of reform, the chance offspring of political agitation and factious intrigue. The



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Whigs have stirred up and made muddy even the fountain of justice; for a moment an airy bubble, glittering in the sunshine, floated on the excited surface; but that brilliant bubble soon burst and vanished, and a scum, thick and obscure, now crests the once pure and tranquil waters.

*April 30, 1836.*



# LETTER XIX.



TO

VISCOUNT MELBOURNE

*May* 15, 1886

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## LETTER XIX.

[This letter, the last of the 'Runnymede' series, is a final protest against the attempt of the Whigs to govern England by the help of the Irish vote.]

*To Viscount Melbourne.*

My Lord,—I had the honour of addressing you on the eve of your last holidays; the delightful hour of relaxation again approaches: I wish you again to retire to the bowers of Brocket with my congratulations. The campaign about to close has been brief, but certainly not uneventful; I will not say disastrous, because I wish to soothe, rather than irritate, your tortured feelings. The incidents have been crowded, as in the last act of one of those dramas to which it was formerly your ambition to supply an epilogue. Why did that ambition ever become so unnaturally elevated? Why was your Lordship not content to remain agreeable? Why did you aspire to be great? A more philosophical moderation would have saved you much annoy-

ance and your country much evil; yourself some disgraceful situations, perhaps some ludicrous ones. When I last addressed you, your position was only mischievous; it is now ridiculous. Your dark master, the Milesian Eblis, has at length been vanquished by that justice for which he is so clamorous, and which he has so long outraged. The poisoned chalice of revolutionary venom which your creatures prepared for our august Senate, august although you are a member of it, has been returned to their own lips. The House of Lords, decried for its ignorance and inefficiency by adventurers without talents and without education, has vindicated its claims to the respect of the country for its ability and its knowledge. Held up to public scorn by your hirelings as the irresponsible tyrants of the land, a grateful nation recognises in the Peers of England the hereditary trustees of their rights and liberties, the guardians of their greatness, and the eloquent and undaunted champions of the integrity of their empire. The greater portion of the nation has penetrated the superficial characteristics of Whig Machiavelism. Your hollow pretences all evaporated, your disgraceful manœuvres all detected, your reckless expedients all exhausted, we recognise only a desperate and long-baffled oligarchy, ready to sacrifice, for the possession of a power

to which they are incompetent, the laws, the empire, and the religion of England.

My Lord, it requires no prophet to announce that the commencement of the end is at length at hand. The reign of delusion is about to close. The man who obtains property by false pretences is sent to Botany Bay. Is the party that obtains power by the same means to be saved harmless? You have established a new colony in Australia; it wants settlers. Let the Cabinet emigrate. My Lord Glenelg, with all his Canadian experience, will make an excellent colonial governor. And there your Lordship may hide your public discomfiture and your private mortification. And, indeed, a country where nature regulates herself on an exactly contrary system to the scheme she adopts in the older and more favoured world, has some pretensions, it would seem, to the beneficial presence of your faction. The land where the rivers are salt, where the quadrupeds have fins and the fish feet, where everything is confused, discordant, and irregular, is indicated by Providence as the fitting scene of Whig government.

The Whigs came into office under auspices so favourable, that they never could have been dislodged from their long-coveted posts except by their own incompetence and dishonesty. From circumstances which it would not be difficult to



explain, they were at once sanctioned by the King and supported by the people. In the course of five years they have at once deceived the sovereign and deluded the nation. After having reconstructed the third estate for their own purposes, in the course of five years a majority of the English representatives is arrayed against them; wafted into power on the wings of the public press, dusty from the march of intellect, and hoarse with clamouring about the spirit of the age, in the course of five years they are obliged to declare war against the journals, the faithful mirrors of the public mind. With peace, reform, and retrenchment for their motto, in the course of five years they have involved us in a series of ignoble wars, deluged the country with jobs and placemen, and have even contrived to increase the amount of the public debt.

What rashness and what cowardice, what petty prudence and what vast recklessness, what arrogance and what truckling, are comprised in the brief annals of this last assault of your faction upon the constitutional monarchy of England! Now hinting at organic changes, now whimpering about the pressure from without; dragged through the mud on the questions of military discipline and the pension list, yet ready at the next moment to plunder the Church or taint the very fountain of justice; threatening



the Peers of England on one day, and crouching on the next before the Irish priests! A few months back you astounded the public by announcing that you had purchased a Lord Chancellor at the price of three coronets.<sup>1</sup> The cost has been considered not only exorbitant but unconstitutional: but the nation, wearied by your vexatious delay of justice, was content to be silent, and awaited the anticipated presence of a Minos. You produced Cottenham. Moses and his green spectacles was not in a more ludicrous position than your Lordship with your precious purchase. Yet this impotent conclusion was announced in January as a *coup-d'état*, and the people of England were daily congratulated on an arrangement now universally acknowledged as the most ridiculous act even of your administration. Moralists have contrasted the respective careers of the knave and the fool, and have consoled humanity by the conviction that the scoundrel in the long run is not more fortunate than the simpleton. I leave this controverted question to the fabler and the essayist; the man of the world, however, will not be surprised at the fate of a political party, the enormity of whose career is only equalled by the feebleness of their conduct.

<sup>1</sup> Those of Lady Stratheden (wife of John, Lord Campbell); Bickersteth (Lord Langdale), and Pepys (Lord Cottenham).

My Lord, the Whigs a century back or so were at least no fools. When the Dukes of Somerset and Argyll attended a Privy Council without being summoned,<sup>1</sup> and forced a dying Queen to appoint the Duke of Shrewsbury Prime Minister, they did not perpetrate a greater outrage than the Whig leader, who, by virtue of a papist conspiracy, returned to the post from which he had been properly expelled, and became the Minister, not of the King's choice but of the King's necessity. These same Whig leaders, when thus unconstitutionally established in power, introduced the Peerage Bill, which if passed into a law, would have deprived the Sovereign of his prerogative of creating further Peers, and they remodelled the House of Commons by the Septennial Act.

The Whigs in 1718 sought to govern the country by 'swamping' the House of Commons; in 1836 it is the House of Lords that is to be

<sup>1</sup> See *Hume*, chap. xi. par. 43. Queen Anne's life was despaired of (July 30, 1714). 'The Committee of the Council assembled at the Cockpit adjourned to Kensington. The Dukes of Somerset and Argyll, informed of the desperate situation in which she lay, repaired to the palace, and without being summoned, entered the Council Chamber. The members were surprised at their appearance, but the Duke of Shrewsbury thanked them for their readiness to give their assistance at such a critical juncture, and desired they would take their places.' Queen Anne died in the morning of August 1.



‘swamped!’ In 1718 the *coup-d’état* was to prevent any further increase of the Lords; in 1836 the Lords are to be outnumbered: different tactics to obtain the same purpose—the establishment of an oligarchical government by virtue of a Republican cry. Where Argyll and Walpole failed, is it probable that Lord Melbourne and Lord John Russell will succeed? The Whigs, a century back, were men of great station, great talents, great eloquence, supported by two-thirds of the nobles of the land; by the Dissenters, because they attacked the Church, inasmuch as the Establishment, like every other national institution, is an obstacle to oligarchical power; and by the commercial and ‘moneyed interest’ of the country, now, like every other interest of property, arrayed against them. And what are you? Is it your eloquence, your knowledge, your high descent, and vast property, or the following of your order, that introduce you into the King’s Cabinet? No, you are the slave of a slave, the delegate of a deputy, the second-hand nominee of a power the most odious and anti-national in existence, foreign to all the principles and alien to all the feelings of Britons. My Lords, the popular and boisterous gale that originally drove your party into power has long since died away, and though some occasional and fitful gusts may have deceived

you into believing that your sails were to be ever set and your streamers ever flying, the more experienced navigators have long detected the rising of the calm yet steady breeze fatal to your course. It is a wind which may be depended on—a great monsoon of national spirit, which will clear the seas of those political pirates who have too long plundered us under false colours.

And yet, my Lord, let us not part in anger. Yours is still a gratifying, even a great position. Notwithstanding all your public degradation and all your private annoyances,<sup>1</sup> that man is surely to be envied who has it in his power to confer an obligation on every true-hearted Englishman. And this your Lordship still can do; you can yet perform an act which will command the gratitude of every lover of his country; you can—RESIGN.

*May 15, 1836.*

<sup>1</sup> The famous case, *Norton v. Lord Melbourne*, was making much noise at this time, and was tried on June 26. The jury gave their verdict for Melbourne, and the Whigs were loud in their assertion that Lord Grantley had pushed the matter on for political purposes. The vagaries of Lady Caroline Lamb had been a source of deep and bitter trouble, but they of course had ceased with her death in 1828.



**THE**  
**SPIRIT OF WHIGGISM**

[In the following pages Lord Beaconsfield expounds that theory of the English Constitution which he had previously set forth in his pamphlet 'A Vindication of the English Constitution in a Letter to a Noble and Learned Lord.' The same theory is expounded in another way in the three great novels, 'Coningsby,' 'Sybil,' and 'Tancred.' His contemporaries never seem to have understood it, while his assailants of a later date appear to have written and spoken concerning him in absolute ignorance of his real political creed. The concluding paragraph of the tract ought, in the minds of all candid men, to disperse at once and for ever the innumerable calumnies levelled at Lord Beaconsfield during and since the Reform struggle of 1859-1867.]

## CHAPTER I.

ENGLAND has become great by her institutions. Her hereditary Crown has in a great degree insured us from the distracting evils of a contested succession; her Peerage, interested, from the vast property and the national honours of its members, in the good government of the country, has offered a compact bulwark against the temporary violence of popular passion; her House of Commons, representing the conflicting sentiments of an estate of the realm not less privileged than that of the Peers, though far more numerous, has enlisted the great mass of the lesser proprietors of the country in favour of a political system which offers them a constitutional means of defence and a legitimate method of redress; her Ecclesiastical Establishment, preserved by its munificent endowment from the fatal necessity of pandering to the erratic fancies of its communicants, has maintained the sacred cause of learning and religion, and preserved orthodoxy while it has secured toleration; her law of primogeniture has sup-

plied the country with a band of natural and independent leaders, trustees of those legal institutions which pervade the land, and which are the origin of our political constitution. That great body corporate, styled a nation—a vast assemblage of human beings knit together by laws and arts and customs, by the necessities of the present and the memory of the past—offers in this country, through these its vigorous and enduring members, a more substantial and healthy framework than falls to the lot of other nations. Our stout-built constitution throws off with more facility and safety those crude and dangerous humours which must at times arise in all human communities. The march of revolution must here at least be orderly. We are preserved from those reckless and tempestuous sallies that in other countries, like a whirlwind, topple down in an instant an ancient crown, or sweep away an illustrious aristocracy. This constitution, which has secured order, has consequently promoted civilisation; and the almost unbroken tide of progressive amelioration has made us the freest, the wealthiest, and the most refined society of modern ages. Our commerce is unrivalled, our manufacturers supply the world, our agriculture is the most skilful in Christendom. So national are our institutions, so completely have they arisen from the temper



and adapted themselves to the character of the people, that when for a season they were apparently annihilated, the people of England voluntarily returned to them, and established them with renewed strength and renovated vigour.

The constitution of England is again threatened, and at a moment when the nation is more prosperous, more free, and more famous than at any period of its momentous and memorable career. Why is this? What has occasioned these distempered times, which make the loyal tremble and the traitor smile? Why has this dark cloud suddenly gathered in a sky so serene and so splendid? Is there any analogy between this age and that of the first Charles? Are the same causes at work, or is the apparent similarity produced only by designing men, who make use of the perverted past as a passport to present mischief? These are great questions, which it may be profitable to discuss and wise to study.

Rapin, a foreigner who wrote our history, in the course of his frigid yet accurate pages, indulged in one philosophical observation. Struck at the same time by our greatness and by the fury of our factions, the Huguenot exclaimed, 'It appears to me that this great society can only be dissolved by the violence of its political parties.' What are these parties? Why are they violent? Why should they exist? In

resolving these questions, we may obtain an accurate idea of our present political position, and by pondering over the past we may make that past not a prophecy as the disaffected intend, but a salutary lesson by which the loyal may profit.

The two great parties into which England has during the last century and a half been divided, originated in the ancient struggle between the Crown and the aristocracy. As long as the Crown possessed or aspired to despotic power, the feeling of the nation supported the aristocracy in their struggles to establish a free government. The aristocracy of England formed the constitution of the Plantagenets; the wars of the Roses destroyed that aristocracy, and the despotism of the Tudors succeeded. Renovated by more than a century of peace and the spoils of the Papacy, the aristocracy of England attacked the first Stuarts, who succeeded to a despotism which they did not create. When Charles the First, after a series of great concessions which ultimately obtained for him the support of the most illustrious of his early opponents, raised the royal standard, the constitution of the Plantagenets, and more than the constitution of the Plantagenets, had been restored and secured. But a portion of the able party which had succeeded in effecting such a vast and beneficial revolution was not content

to part with the extraordinary powers which they had obtained in this memorable struggle. This section of the aristocracy were the origin of the English Whigs, though that title was not invented until the next reign. The primitive Whigs—'Parliament-men,' as they liked to call themselves, 'Roundheads,' as they were in time dubbed—aspired to an oligarchy. For a moment they obtained one; but unable to maintain themselves in power against the returning sense and rising spirit of a generous and indignant people, they called to their aid that domestic revolutionary party which exists in all countries, and an anti-national enemy in addition. These were the English Radicals, or Root-and-Branch men, and the Scotch Covenanters. To conciliate the first they sacrificed the Crown; to secure the second they abolished the Church. The constitution of England in Church and State was destroyed, and the Whig oligarchy, in spite of their machinations, were soon merged in the common ruin.

The ignoble tyranny to which this great nation was consequently subject produced that reaction which is in the nature of human affairs. The ancient constitution was in time restored, and the Church and the Crown were invested with greater powers than they had enjoyed previously to their overthrow. So hateful had been



the consequences of Whig rule, that the people were inclined rather to trust the talons of arbitrary power than to take refuge under the wing of these pretended advocates of popular rights. A worthless monarch and a corrupted court availed themselves of the offered opportunity; and when James the Second ascended the throne, the nation was again prepared to second the aristocracy in a struggle for their liberties. But the Whigs had profited by their previous experiment: they resolved upon a revolution, but they determined that that revolution should be brought about by as slight an appeal to popular sympathies as possible. They studiously confined that appeal to the religious feelings of the nation. They hired a foreign prince and enlisted a foreign army in their service. They dethroned James, they established themselves in power without the aid of the mass; and had William the Third been a man of ordinary capacity, the constitution of Venice would have been established in England in 1688. William the Third told the Whigs that he would never consent to be a Doge. Resembling Louis Philippe in his character as well as in his position, that extraordinary prince baffled the Whigs by his skilful balance of parties; and had Providence accorded him an heir, it is probable that the oligarchical faction would never have revived in England. The Whigs have ever



been opposed to the national institutions because they are adverse to the establishment of an oligarchy. Local institutions, supported by a landed gentry, check them; hence their love of centralisation and their hatred of unpaid magistrates. An independent hierarchy checks them; hence their affected advocacy of toleration and their patronage of the Dissenters. The power of the Crown checks them; therefore they always labour to reduce the sovereign to a nonentity, and by the establishment of the Cabinet they have virtually banished the King from his own councils. But, above all, the Parliament of England checks them, and therefore it may be observed that the Whigs at all times are quarrelling with some portion of those august estates. They despair of destroying the Parliament; by it, and by it alone, can they succeed in their objects. Corruption for one part, force for the other, then, is their motto. In 1640 they attempted to govern the country by the House of Commons, because the aristocracy was then more powerful in the House of Commons than in the House of Lords, where a Peerage, exhausted by civil wars, had been too liberally recruited from the courtiers of the Tudors and the Stuarts. At the next revolution which the Whigs occasioned, they attempted to govern the country by the House of Lords, in which they

were predominant; and, in order to guarantee their power for ever, they introduced a Bill to deprive the King of his prerogative of making further Peers. The revolution of 1640 led to the abolition of the House of Lords because the Lords opposed the oligarchy. Having a majority in the House of Lords, the Whigs introduced the Peerage Bill, by which the House of Lords would have been rendered independent of the sovereign; unpopular with the country, the Whigs attacked the influence of popular election, and the moment that, by the aid of the most infamous corruption, they had obtained a temporary majority in the Lower House, they passed the Septennial Act. The Whigs of the eighteenth century 'swamped' the House of Commons; the Whigs of the nineteenth would 'swamp' the House of Lords. The Whigs of the eighteenth century would have rendered the House of Lords unchangeable; the Whigs of the nineteenth remodel the House of Commons.

I conclude here the first chapter of the 'Spirit of Whiggism'—a little book which I hope may be easily read and easily remembered. The Whig party have always adopted popular cries. In one age it is Liberty, in another Reform; at one period they sound the tocsin against popery, in another they ally themselves with papists. They have many cries, and various modes of

conduct; but they have only one object—the establishment of an oligarchy in this free and equal land. I do not wish this country to be governed by a small knot of great families, and therefore I oppose the Whigs. /

## CHAPTER II.

WHEN the Whigs and their public organs favour us with their mysterious hints that the constitution has provided the sovereign with a means to re-establish at all times a legislative sympathy between the two Houses of Parliament, it may be as well to remind them that we are not indebted for this salutary prerogative to the forbearance of their party. Suppose their Peerage Bill had passed into an Act, how would they have carried the Reform Bill of 1832? The Whigs may reply, that if the Peerage Bill had become a law, the Reform Bill would never have been introduced; and I believe them. In that case, the British House of Lords would have been transformed into a Venetian Senate, and the old walls of St. James's might have witnessed scenes of as degrading mortification as the famous ducal palace of the Adriatic.

George III. routed the Whigs, consolidated by half a century of power; but an ordinary monarch would have sunk beneath the Coalition and the India Bill. This scheme was the last



desperate effort of the oligarchical faction previous to 1830. Not that they were inactive during the great interval that elapsed between the advent of Mr. Pitt and the resurrection of Lord Grey : but, ever on the watch for a cry to carry them into power, they mistook the yell of Jacobinism for the chorus of an emancipated people, and fancied, in order to take the throne by storm, that nothing was wanting but to hoist the tricolour and to cover their haughty brows with a red cap. This fatal blunder clipped the wings of Whiggism ; nor is it possible to conceive a party that had effected so many revolutions and governed a great country for so long a period, more broken, sunk, and shattered, more desolate and disheartened, than these same Whigs at the Peace of Paris. From that period till 1830, the tactics of the Whigs consisted in gently and gradually extricating themselves from their false position as the disciples of Jacobinism, and assuming their ancient post as the hereditary guardians of an hereditary monarchy. To make the transition less difficult than it threatened, they invented Liberalism, a bridge by which they were to regain the lost mainland, and daintily recross on tiptoe the chasm over which they had originally sprung with so much precipitation. A dozen years of ' liberal principles ' broke up the national party of England, cemented by half a

century of prosperity and glory, compared with which all the annals of the realm are dim and lacklustre. Yet so weak intrinsically was the oligarchical faction, that their chief, despairing to obtain a monopoly of power for his party, elaborately announced himself as the champion of his patrician order, and attempted to coalesce with the liberalised leader of the Tories. Had that negotiation led to the result which was originally intended by those interested, the Riots of Paris would not have occasioned the Reform of London.

It is a great delusion to believe that revolutions are ever effected by a nation. It is a faction, and generally a small one, that overthrows a dynasty or remodels a constitution. A small party, stung by a long exile from power, and desperate of success except by desperate means, invariably has recourse to a *coup-d'état*. An oligarchical party is necessarily not numerous. Its members in general attempt, by noble lineage or vast possessions, to compensate for their poverty of numbers. The Whigs, in 1830, found themselves by accident in place, but under very peculiar circumstances. They were in place but not in power. In each estate of the realm a majority was arrayed against them. An appeal to the Commons of England, that constituency which, in its elements, had undergone no altera-

tion since the time of Elizabeth, either by the influence of the legislature or the action of time—that constituency which had elected Pym, and Selden, and Hampden, as well as Somers, Walpole, and Pulteney—an appeal to this constituency, it was generally acknowledged, would be fatal to the Whigs, and therefore they determined to reconstruct it. This is the origin of the recent parliamentary reform: the Whigs, in place without being in power, resolved as usual upon a *coup-d'état*, and looked about for a stalking-horse. In general the difficult task had devolved upon them of having to accomplish their concealed purpose while apparently achieving some public object. Thus they had carried the Septennial Act on the plea of preserving England from popery, though their real object was to prolong the existence of the first House of Commons in which they could command a majority.

But in the present instance they became sincerely parliamentary reformers, for by parliamentary reform they could alone subsist; and all their art was dedicated so to contrive, that in this reformation their own interest should secure an irresistible predominance.

But how was an oligarchical party to predominate in popular elections? Here was the



difficulty. The Whigs had no resources from their own limited ranks to feed the muster of the popular levies. They were obliged to look about for allies wherewith to form their new popular estate. Any estate of the Commons modelled on any equitable principle, either of property or population, must have been fatal to the Whigs; they, therefore, very dexterously adopted a small minority of the nation, consisting of the sectarians, and inaugurating them as the people with a vast and bewildering train of hocus-pocus ceremonies, invested the Dissenters with political power. By this *coup-d'état* they managed the House of Commons, and having at length obtained a position, they have from that moment laid siege to the House of Lords, with the intention of reducing that great institution and making it surrender at discretion. This is the exact state of English politics during the last five years. The Whigs have been at war with the English constitution. First of all they captured the King; then they vanquished the House of Commons; now they have laid siege to the House of Lords. But here the fallacy of their grand scheme of political mystification begins to develop itself. Had, indeed, their new constituency, as they have long impudently pretended, indeed been 'the people,' a struggle



between such a body and the House of Lords would have been brief but final. The absurdity of supposing that a chamber of two or three hundred individuals could set up their absolute will and pleasure against the decrees of a legislative assembly chosen by the whole nation, is so glaring that the Whigs and their scribes might reasonably suspect that in making such allegations they were assuredly proving too much. But as 'the people' of the Whigs is in fact a number of Englishmen not exceeding in amount the population of a third-rate city, the English nation is not of opinion that this arrogant and vaunting moiety of a class privileged for the common good, swollen though it may be by some jobbing Scots and rebel Irish, shall pass off their petty and selfish schemes of personal aggrandisement as the will of a great people, as mindful of its duty to its posterity, as it is grateful for the labours of its ancestors. The English nation, therefore, rallies for rescue from the degrading plots of a profligate oligarchy, a barbarising sectarianism, and a boroughmongering Papacy round their hereditary leaders—the Peers. The House of Lords, therefore, at this moment represents everything in the realm except the Whig oligarchs, their tools—the Dissenters, and their masters—the Irish priests. In the mean-

time the Whigs bawl aloud that there is a 'collision'! It is true there is a collision; but it is not a collision between the Lords and the people, but between the Ministers and the Constitution.

### CHAPTER III.

It may be as well to remind the English nation that a revolutionary party is not necessarily a liberal one, and that a republic is not indispensably a democracy. Such is the disposition of property in England, that were a republic to be established here to-morrow, it would partake rather of the oligarchical than of the aristocratic character. We should be surprised to find in how few families the power of the State was concentrated. And although the framers of the new commonwealth would be too crafty to base it on any avowed and ostensible principle of exclusion; but on the contrary would in all probability ostentatiously inaugurate the novel constitution by virtue of some abstract plea about as definite and as prodigal of practical effects as the rights of man or the sovereignty of the people, nevertheless I should be astonished were we not to find that the great mass of the nation, as far as any share in the conduct of public affairs was concerned, were as completely shut out from the fruition and exercise of power

as under that Venetian polity which has ever been the secret object of Whig envy and Whig admiration. The Church, under such circumstances, would probably have again been plundered, and therefore the discharge of ecclesiastical duties might be spared to the nation; but the people would assuredly be practically excluded from its services, which would swarm with the relations and connections of the senatorial class; for, whether this country be governed only by the House of Commons, or only by the House of Lords, the elements of the single chamber will not materially differ; and although in the event of the triumph of the Commons, the ceremony of periodical election may be retained (and we should not forget that the Long Parliament soon spared us that unnecessary form), the selected members will form a Senate as irresponsible as any House of Parliament whose anomalous constitution may now be the object of Whig sneers or Radical anathemas.

The rights and liberties of a nation can only be preserved by institutions.) It is not the spread of knowledge or the march of intellect that will be found sufficient sureties for the public welfare in the crisis of a country's freedom. Our interest taints our intelligence, our passions paralyse our reason. Knowledge and capacity are too often the willing tools of a powerful fac-



tion or a dexterous adventurer. Life is short, man is imaginative; our means are limited, our passions high.

In seasons of great popular excitement, gold and glory offer strong temptations to needy ability. The demagogues throughout a country, the orators of town-councils and vestries, and the lecturers of mechanics' institutes, present, doubtless in most cases unconsciously, the ready and fit machinery for the party or the individual that aspires to establish a tyranny. Duly graduating in corruption, (the leaders of the mob become the oppressors of the people.) Cultivation of intellect and diffusion of knowledge may make the English nation more sensible of the benefits of their social system, and better qualified to discharge the duties with which their institutions have invested them, but they will never render them competent to preserve their liberties without the aid of these institutions. Let us for a moment endeavour to fancy Whiggism in a state of rampant predominance; let us try to contemplate England enjoying all those advantages which our present rulers have not yet granted us, and some of which they have as yet only ventured to promise by innuendo. Let us suppose our ancient monarchy abolished, our independent hierarchy reduced to a stipendiary sect, the gentlemen of England deprived of their magisterial

functions, and metropolitan prefects and sub-prefects established in the counties and principal towns, commanding a vigorous and vigilant police, and backed by an army under the immediate orders of a single House of Parliament. Why, these are threatened changes—ay, and not one of them that may not be brought about to-morrow, under the plea of the ‘spirit of the age’ or ‘county reform’ or ‘cheap government.’ But where then will be the liberties of England? Who will dare disobey London?) the enlightened and reformed metropolis! And can we think, if any bold Squire, in whom some of the old blood might still chance to linger, were to dare to murmur against this grinding tyranny, or appeal to the spirit of those neighbours whose predecessors his ancestors had protected, can we flatter ourselves that there would not be judges in Westminster Hall prepared and prompt to inflict on him all the pains and penalties, the dungeon, the fine, the sequestration, which such a troublesome Anti-Reformer would clearly deserve? Can we flatter ourselves that a Parliamentary Star Chamber and a Parliamentary High Commission Court would not be in the background to supply all the deficiencies of the laws of England? When these merry times arrive—the times of extraordinary tribunals and extraordinary taxes—and, if we proceed in our present

course, they are much nearer than we imagine—the phrase ‘Anti-Reformer’ will serve as well as that of ‘Malignant,’ and be as valid a plea as the former title for harassing and plundering all those who venture to wince under the crowning mercies of centralisation.

Behold the Republic of the Whigs! Behold the only Republic that can be established in England except by force! And who can doubt the swift and stern termination of institutions introduced by so unnatural and irrational a process. I would address myself to the English Radicals. I do not mean those fine gentlemen or those vulgar adventurers, who, in this age of quackery, may sail into Parliament by hoisting for the nonce the false colours of the movement; but I mean that honest and considerable party, too considerable, I fear, for their happiness and the safety of the State—who have a definite object which they distinctly avow—I mean those thoughtful and enthusiastic men who study their unstamped press, and ponder over a millennium of operative amelioration. Not merely that which is just, but that which is also practicable, should be the aim of a sagacious politician. Let the Radicals well consider whether, in attempting to achieve their avowed object, they are not, in fact, only assisting the secret views of a party whose scheme is infinitely more adverse to their

own than the existing system, whose genius I believe they entirely misapprehend. The monarchy of the Tories is more democratic than the Republic of the Whigs. It appeals with a keener sympathy to the passions of the millions; it studies their interest with a more comprehensive solicitude. Admitting for a moment that I have mistaken the genius of the English constitution, what chance, if our institutions be overthrown, is there of substituting in their stead a more popular polity? This hazard, both for their own happiness and the honour of their country, the English Radicals are bound to calculate nicely. If they do not, they will find themselves, too late, the tools of a selfish faction or the slaves of a stern usurper.



#### CHAPTER IV.

A CHAPTER on the English constitution is a natural episode on the spirit of Whiggism. There is this connection between the subjects—that the spirit of Whiggism is hostile to the English constitution.) No political institutions ever yet flourished which have been more the topic of discussion among writers of all countries and all parties than our famous establishment of ‘King, Lords, and Commons;’ and no institutions ever yet flourished, of which the character has been more misrepresented and more misconceived. One fact alone will illustrate the profound ignorance and the perplexed ideas. The present Whig leader of the House of Commons, a member of a family who pique themselves on their constitutional reputation, an author who has even written an elaborate treatise on our polity, in one of his speeches, delivered only so late as the last session of Parliament, declared his desire and determination to uphold the present settlement of the ‘three estates of the realm, viz.—

King, Lords, and Commons.' Now, his Gracious Majesty is no more an estate of the realm than Lord John Russell himself. The three estates of the realm are the estate of the Lords Spiritual, the estate of the Lords Temporal, and the estate of the Commons. An estate is a popular class established into a political order. It is a section of the nation invested for the public and common good with certain powers and privileges. Lord John Russell first writes upon the English constitution, and then reforms it, and yet, even at this moment, is absolutely ignorant of what it consists. A political estate is a complete and independent body. Now, all power that is independent is necessarily irresponsible. The sovereign is responsible because he is not an estate; he is responsible through his Ministers; he is responsible to the estates and to them alone.

When the Whigs obtained power in 1830, they found the three estates of the realm opposed to them, and the Government, therefore, could not proceed. They resolved, therefore, to remodel them. They declared that the House of Commons was the House of the people, and that the people were not properly represented. They consequently enlarged the estate of the Commons; they increased the number of that privileged order who appear by their representa-

tives in the Lower House of Parliament. They rendered the estate of the Commons more powerful by this proceeding, because they rendered them more numerous; but they did not render their representatives one jot more the representatives of the people. Throwing the Commons of Ireland out of the question, for we cannot speculate upon a political order so unsettled that it has been thrice remodelled during the present century, some 300,000 individuals sent up, at the last general election, their representatives to Westminster. Well, are these 300,000 persons the people of England? Grant that they are; grant that these members are divided into two equal portions. Well, then, the people of England consist of 150,000 persons. I know that there are well-disposed persons that tremble at this reasoning, because, although they admit its justice, they allege it leads to universal suffrage. We must not show, they assert, that the House of the people is not elected by the people. I admit it; we must not show that the House of the people is not elected by the people, but we must show that the House of Commons is not the House of the people, that it never was intended to be the House of the people, and that, if it be admitted to be so by courtesy, or become so in fact, it is all over with the English constitution.

It is quite impossible that a whole people can be a branch of a legislature. If a whole people have the power of making laws, it is folly to suppose that they will allow an assembly of 300 or 400 individuals, or a solitary being on a throne, to thwart their sovereign will and pleasure. But I deny that a people can govern itself. Self-government is a contradiction in terms. Whatever form a government may assume, power must be exercised by a minority of numbers. I shall, perhaps, be reminded of the ancient republics. I answer, that the ancient republics were as aristocratic communities as any that flourished in the middle ages. The Demos of Athens was an oligarchy living upon slaves. There is a great slave population even in the United States, if a society of yesterday is to illustrate an argument on our ancient civilisation.

But it is useless to argue the question abstractedly. The phrase 'the people' is sheer nonsense. It is not a political term. It is a phrase of natural history. A people is a species; a civilised community is a nation. Now, a nation is a work of art and a work of time. A nation is gradually created by a variety of influences—the influence of original organisation, of climate, soil, religion, laws, customs, manners, extraordinary accidents and incidents in their history, and the individual character of their



illustrious citizens. These influences create the nation—these form the national mind, and produce in the course of centuries a high degree of civilisation. If you destroy the political institutions which these influences have called into force, and which are the machinery by which they constantly act, you destroy the nation. The nation, in a state of anarchy and dissolution, then becomes a people; and after experiencing all the consequent misery, like a company of bees spoiled of their queen and rifled of their hive, they set to again and establish themselves into a society.

Although all society is artificial, the most artificial society in the world is unquestionably the English nation. Our insular situation and our foreign empire, our immense accumulated wealth and our industrious character, our peculiar religious state, which secures alike orthodoxy and toleration, our church and our sects, our agriculture and our manufactures, our military services, our statute law, and supplementary equity, our adventurous commerce, landed tenure, and unprecedented system of credit, form, among many others, such a variety of interests, and apparently so conflicting, that I do not think even the Abbé Sieyès himself could devise a scheme by which this nation could be absolutely and definitely represented.

The framers of the English constitution were fortunately not of the school of Abbé Sieyès. Their first object was to make us free; their next to keep us so. While, therefore, they selected equality as the basis of their social order, they took care to blend every man's ambition with the perpetuity of the State. Unlike the levelling equality of modern days, the ancient equality of England elevates and creates. Learned in human nature, the English constitution holds out privilege to every subject as the inducement to do his duty. As it has secured freedom, justice, and even property to the humblest of the commonwealth, so, pursuing the same system of privileges, it has confided the legislature of the realm to two orders of the subjects—orders, however, in which every English citizen may be constitutionally enrolled—the Lords and the Commons. The two estates of the Peers are personally summoned to meet in their chamber: the more extensive and single estate of the Commons meets by its representatives. Both are political orders, complete in their character, independent in their authority, legally irresponsible for the exercise of their power. But they are the trustees of the nation, not its masters; and there is a High Court of Chancery in the public opinion of the nation at large, which exercises a vigilant control over these privileged

classes of the community, and to which they are equitably and morally amenable. Estimating, therefore, the moral responsibility of our political estates, it may fairly be maintained that, instead of being irresponsible, the responsibility of the Lords exceeds that of the Commons. The House of Commons itself not being an estate of the realm, but only the representatives of an estate, owes to the nation a responsibility neither legal nor moral. The House of Commons is responsible only to that privileged order who are its constituents. Between the Lords and the Commons themselves there is this prime difference—that the Lords are known, and seen, and marked; the Commons are unknown, invisible, and unobserved. The Lords meet in a particular spot; the Commons are scattered over the kingdom. The eye of the nation rests upon the Lords, few in number, and notable in position; the eye of the nation wanders in vain for the Commons, far more numerous, but far less remarkable. As a substitute the nation appeals to the House of Commons, but sometimes appeals in vain; for if the majority of the Commons choose to support their representatives in a course of conduct adverse to the opinion of the nation, the House of Commons will set the nation at defiance. They have done so once; may they never repeat that destructive career! Such are

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our two Houses of Parliament—the most illustrious assemblies since the Roman Senate and Grecian Areopagus; neither of them is the ‘House of the People,’ but both alike represent the ‘Nation.’



CHAPTER V.

THERE are two propositions, which, however at the first glance they may appear to contradict the popular opinions of the day, are nevertheless, as I believe, just and true. And they are these:—

First. That there is no probability of ever establishing a more democratic form of government than the present English constitution.

Second. That the recent political changes of the Whigs are, in fact, a departure from the democratic spirit of that constitution.

Whatever form a government may assume, its spirit must be determined by the laws which regulate the property of the country. You may have a Senate and Consuls, you may have no hereditary titles, and you may dub each householder or inhabitant a citizen; but if the spirit of your laws preserves masses of property in a particular class, the government of the country will follow the disposition of the property. So also you may have an apparent despotism without any formal popular control,

and with no aristocracy, either natural or artificial, and the spirit of the government may nevertheless be republican. Thus the ancient polity of Rome, in its best days, was an aristocracy, and the government of Constantinople is the nearest approach to a democracy on a great scale, and maintained during a great period, that history offers. The constitution of France during the last half century has been fast approaching that of the Turks. The barbarous Jacobins blended modern equality with the refined civilisation of ancient France; the barbarous Ottomans blended their equality with the refined civilisation of ancient Rome. Paris secured to the Jacobins those luxuries that their system never could have produced: Byzantium served the same purpose to the Turks. Both the French and their turbaned prototypes commenced their system with popular enthusiasm, and terminated it with general subjection. Napoleon and Louis Philippe are playing the same part as the Soleimans and the Mahmouds. The Chambers are but a second-rate Divan; the Prefects but inferior Pachas: a solitary being rules alike in the Seraglio and the Tuileries, and the whole nation bows to his despotism on condition that they have no other master save himself.

The disposition of property in England throws

the government of the country into the hands of its natural aristocracy. I do not believe that any scheme of the suffrage, or any method of election, could divert that power into other quarters. It is the necessary consequence of our present social state. I believe, the wider the popular suffrage, the more powerful would be the natural aristocracy. This seems to me an inevitable consequence; but I admit this proposition on the clear understanding that such an extension should be established on a fair, and not a factious, basis. Here, then, arises the question of the ballot, into the merits of which I shall take another opportunity of entering, recording only now my opinion, that in the present arrangement of the constituencies, even the ballot would favour the power of the natural aristocracy, and that, if the ballot were simultaneously introduced with a fair and not a factious extension of the suffrage, it would produce no difference whatever in the ultimate result.

Quitting, then, these considerations, let us arrive at the important point. Is there any probability of a different disposition of property in England—a disposition of property which, by producing a very general similarity of condition, would throw the government of the country into the hands of any individuals whom popular esteem or fancy might select?



It appears to me that this question can only be decided by ascertaining the genius of the English nation. What is the prime characteristic of the English mind? I apprehend I may safely decide upon its being industry. Taking a general but not a superficial survey of the English character since the Reformation, a thousand circumstances convince me that the salient point in our national psychology is the passion for accumulating wealth, of which industry is the chief instrument. We value our freedom principally because it leaves us unrestricted in our pursuits; and that reverence for law and all that is established, which also eminently distinguishes the English nation, is occasioned by the conviction that, next to liberty, order is the most efficacious assistant of industry.

And thus we see that those great revolutions which must occur in the history of all nations, when they happen here produce no permanent effects upon our social state. Our revolutions are brought about by the passions of creative minds taking advantage, for their own aggrandisement, of peculiar circumstances in our national progress. They are never called for by the great body of the nation. Churches are plundered, long rebellions maintained, dynasties changed, parliaments abolished; but when the storm is passed, the features of the social landscape



remain unimpaired ; there are no traces of the hurricane, the earthquake, or the volcano ; it has been but a tumult of the atmosphere, that has neither toppled down our old spires and palaces nor swallowed up our cities and seats of learning, nor blasted our ancient woods, nor swept away our ports and harbours. The English nation ever recurs to its ancient institutions—the institutions that have alike secured freedom and order ; and after all their ebullitions, we find them, when the sky is clear, again at work, and toiling on at their eternal task of accumulation.

There is this difference between the revolutions of England and the revolutions of the Continent—the European revolution is a struggle against privilege ; an English revolution is a struggle for it. If a new class rises in the State, it becomes uneasy to take its place in the natural aristocracy of the land : a desperate faction or a wily leader takes advantage of this desire, and a revolution is the consequence. Thus the Whigs in the present day have risen to power on the shoulders of the manufacturing interest. To secure themselves in their posts, the Whigs have given the new interest an undue preponderance ; but the new interest, having obtained its object, is content. The manufacturer, like every other Englishman, is as aristocratic as the landlord. The manufacturer begins to lack in movement. Under

Walpole the Whigs played the same game with the commercial interest ; a century has passed, and the commercial interest are all as devoted to the constitution as the manufacturers soon will be. Having no genuine party, the Whigs seek for succour from the Irish papists ; Lord John Russell, however, is only imitating Pym under the same circumstances. In 1640, when the English movement was satisfied, and the constitutional party, headed by such men as Falkland and Hyde, were about to attain power, Pym and his friends, in despair at their declining influence and the close divisions in their once unanimous Parliament, fled to the Scotch Covenanters, and entered into a 'close compact' for the destruction of the Church of England as the price of their assistance. So events repeat themselves ; but if the study of history is really to profit us, the nation at the present day will take care that the same results do not always occur from the same events.

When passions have a little subsided, the industrious ten-pounder, who has struggled into the privileged order of the Commons, proud of having obtained the first step of aristocracy, will be the last man to assist in destroying the other gradations of the scale which he or his posterity may yet ascend ; the new member of a manufacturing district has his eye already upon a

neighbouring park, avails himself of his political position to become a county magistrate, meditates upon a baronetcy, and dreams of a coroneted descendant.

The nation that esteems wealth as the great object of existence will submit to no laws that do not secure the enjoyment of wealth. Now, we deprive wealth of its greatest source of enjoyment, as well as of its best security, if we deprive it of power. The English nation, therefore, insists that property shall be the qualification for power, and the whole scope of its laws and customs is to promote and favour the accumulation of wealth and the perpetuation of property. We cannot alter, therefore, the disposition of property in this country without we change the national character. Far from the present age being hostile to the supremacy of property, there has been no period of our history where property has been more esteemed, because there has been no period when the nation has been so industrious.

Believing, therefore, that no change will occur in the disposition of property in this country, I cannot comprehend how our government can become more democratic. The consequence of our wealth is an aristocratic constitution; the consequence of our love of liberty is an aristocratic constitution founded on an equality of civil rights. And who can deny that an



aristocratic constitution resting on such a basis, where the legislative, and even the executive office may be obtained by every subject of the realm, is, in fact, a noble democracy? The English constitution, faithful to the national character, secures to all the enjoyment of property and the delights of freedom. Its honours are a perpetual reward of industry; every Englishman is toiling to obtain them; and this is the constitution to which every Englishman will always be devoted, except he is a Whig.

In the next Chapter I shall discuss the second proposition.



## CHAPTER VI.

THE Tories assert that the whole property of the country is on their side ; and the Whigs, wringing their hands over lost elections and bellowing about 'intimidation,' seem to confess the soft impeachment. Their prime organ also assures us that every man with 500*l.* per annum is opposed to them. Yet the Whig-Radical writers have recently published, by way of consolation to their penniless proselytes, a list of some twenty Dukes and Marquises, who, they assure us, are devoted to 'Liberal' principles, and whose revenues, in a paroxysm of economical rhodomontade, they assert, could buy up the whole income of the rest of the hereditary Peerage. The Whig-Radical writers seem puzzled to reconcile this anomalous circumstance with the indisputably forlorn finances of their faction in general. Now, this little tract on the 'Spirit of Whiggism' may perhaps throw some light upon this perplexing state of affairs. For myself, I see in it only a fresh illustration of the principles which I have demonstrated, from the

whole current of our history, to form the basis of Whig policy. This union of oligarchical wealth and mob poverty is the very essence of the 'Spirit of Whiggism.'

The English constitution, which, from the tithing-man to the Peer of Parliament, has thrown the whole government of the country into the hands of those who are qualified by property to perform the duties of their respective offices, has secured that diffused and general freedom, without which the national industry would neither have its fair play nor its just reward, by a variety of institutions, which, while they prevent those who have no property from invading the social commonwealth, in whose classes every industrious citizen has a right to register himself, offer also an equally powerful check to the ambitious fancies of those great families, over whose liberal principles and huge incomes the Whig-Radical writers gloat with the self-complacency of lackeys at the equipages of their masters. There is ever an union in a perverted sense between those who are beneath power and those who wish to be above it; and oligarchies and despotisms are usually established by the agency of a deluded multitude. The Crown, with its constitutional influence over the military services; a Parliament of two houses, watching each other's proceedings with constitutional

jealousy ; an independent hierarchy, and, not least, an independent magistracy, are serious obstacles in the progressive establishment of that scheme of government which a small knot of great families, these dukes and marquises, whose revenues according to the Government organ, could buy up the income of the whole peerage, naturally wish to introduce. We find, therefore, throughout the whole period of our more modern history, a powerful section of the great nobles ever at war with the national institutions ; checking the Crown ; attacking the independence of that House of Parliament in which they happen to be in a minority, no matter which ; patronising sects to reduce the influence of the Church ; and playing town against country to overcome the authority of the gentry.

It is evident that these aspiring oligarchs, as a party, can have little essential strength ; they can count upon nothing but their retainers. To secure the triumph of their cause, therefore, they are forced to manœuvre with a pretext, and while they aim at oligarchical rule, they apparently advocate popular rights. They hold out, consequently, an inducement to all the uneasy portion of the nation to enlist under their standard ; they play their discontented minority against the prosperous majority, and, dubbing their partisans 'the people,' they flatter themselves that their



projects are irresistible. The attack is unexpected, brisk, and dashing, well matured, dexterously mystified. Before the nation is roused to its danger, the oligarchical object is often obtained; and then the oligarchy, entrenched in power, count upon the nation to defend them from their original and revolutionary allies. If they succeed, a dynasty is changed, or a Parliament reformed, and the movement is stopped; if the Tories or the Conservatives cannot arrest the fatal career which the Whigs have originally impelled, then away go the national institutions; the crown falls from the King's brow; the crosier is snapped in twain; one House of Parliament is sure to disappear, and the gentlemen of England, dexterously dubbed Malignants, or Anti-Reformers, or any other phrase in fashion, the dregs of the nation sequester their estates and install themselves in their halls; and 'liberal principles' having thus gloriously triumphed, after a due course of plunder, bloodshed, imprisonment, and ignoble tyranny, the people of England, sighing once more to be the English nation, secure order by submitting to a despot, and in time, when they have got rid of their despot, combine their ancient freedom with their newly-regained security by re-establishing the English constitution.

The Whigs of the present day have made



their assault upon the nation with their usual spirit. They have already succeeded in controlling the sovereign and in remodelling the House of Commons. They have menaced the House of Lords, violently assailed the Church, and reconstructed the Corporations. I shall take the two most comprehensive measures which they have succeeded in carrying, and which were at the time certainly very popular, and apparently of a very democratic character,—their reform of the House of Commons, and their reconstruction of the municipal corporations. Let us see whether these great measures have, in fact, increased the democratic character of our constitution or not—whether they veil an oligarchical project, or are, in fact, popular concessions inevitably offered by the Whigs in their oligarchical career.

The result of the Whig remodelling of the order of the Commons has been this—that it has placed the nomination of the Government in the hands of the popish priesthood. Is that a great advance of public intelligence and popular liberty? Are the parliamentary nominees of M'Hale and Kehoe more germane to the feelings of the English nation, more adapted to represent their interests, than the parliamentary nominees of a Howard or a Percy? This papist majority, again, is the superstructure of a basis formed by some Scotch Presbyterians and some English

Dissenters, in general returned by the small constituencies of small towns—classes whose number and influence, intelligence and wealth, have been grossly exaggerated for factious purposes, but classes avowedly opposed to the maintenance of the English constitution. I do not see that the cause of popular power has much risen, even with the addition of this leaven. If the suffrages of the Commons of England were polled together, the hustings-books of the last general election will prove that a very considerable majority of their numbers is opposed to the present Government, and that therefore, under this new democratic scheme, this great body of the nation are, by some hocus-pocus tactics or other, obliged to submit to the minority. The truth is, that the new constituency has been so arranged that an unnatural preponderance has been given to a small class, and one hostile to the interests of the great body. Is this more democratic? The apparent majority in the House of Commons is produced by a minority of the Commons themselves; so that a small and favoured class command a majority in the House of Commons, and the sway of the administration, as far as that House is concerned, is regulated by a smaller number of individuals than those who governed it previous to its reform.

But this is not the whole evil: this new class,

with its unnatural preponderance, is a class hostile to the institutions of the country, hostile to the union of Church and State, hostile to the House of Lords, to the constitutional power of the Crown, to the existing system of provincial judicature. It is, therefore, a class fit and willing to support the Whigs in their favourite scheme of centralisation, without which the Whigs can never long maintain themselves in power. Now, centralisation is the death-blow of public freedom ; it is the citadel of the oligarchs, from which, if once erected, it will be impossible to dislodge them.

But can that party be aiming at centralised government which has reformed the municipal corporations ? We will see. The reform of the municipal corporations of England is a covert attack on the authority of the English gentry,—that great body which perhaps forms the most substantial existing obstacle to the perpetuation of Whiggism in power. By this democratic Act the county magistrate is driven from the towns where he before exercised a just influence, while an elective magistrate from the towns jostles him on the bench at quarter sessions, and presents in his peculiar position an anomaly in the constitution of the bench, flattering to the passions, however fatal to the interests, of the giddy million. Here is a lever to raise the question of county

reform whenever an obstinate shire may venture to elect a representative in Parliament hostile to the liberal oligarchs. Let us admit, for the moment, that the Whigs ultimately succeed in subverting the ancient and hereditary power of the English gentry. Will the municipal corporations substitute themselves as an equivalent check on a centralising Government? Whence springs their influence? From property? Not half a dozen have estates. Their influence springs from the factitious power with which the reforming Government has invested them, and of which the same Government will deprive them in a session, the moment they cease to be corresponding committees of the reforming majority in the House of Commons. They will either be swept away altogether, or their functions will be limited to raising the local taxes which will discharge their expenses of the detachment of the metropolitan police, or the local judge or governor, whom Downing Street may send down to preside over their constituents. With one or two exceptions, the English corporations do not possess more substantial and durable elements of power than the municipalities of France. What check are they on Paris? These corporations have neither prescription in their favour, nor property. Their influence is maintained neither by tradition nor substance. They have no indirect authority



over the minds of their townsmen; they have only their modish charters to appeal to, and the newly engrossed letter of the law. They have no great endowments of whose public benefits they are the official distributors; they do not stand on the vantage-ground on which we recognise the trustees of the public interests; they neither administer to the soul nor the body; they neither feed the poor nor educate the young; they have no hold on the national mind; they have not sprung from the national character; they were born by faction, and they will live by faction. Such bodies must speedily become corrupt; they will ultimately be found dangerous instruments in the hands of a faction. The members of the country corporations will play the game of a London party, to secure their factitious local importance and obtain the consequent results of their opportune services.

I think I have now established the two propositions with which I commenced my last chapter: and I will close this concluding one of the 'Spirit of Whiggism' with their recapitulation, and the inferences which I draw from them. If there be a slight probability of ever establishing in this country a more democratic government than the English constitution, it will be as well, I conceive, for those who love their rights, to maintain that constitution; and if the

