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## CHAPTER V

### WAR FINANCE—TAX OR LOAN

(1854)

THE expenses of a war are the moral check which it has pleased the Almighty to impose upon the ambition and lust of conquest, that are inherent in so many nations. There is pomp and circumstance, there is glory and excitement about war, which, notwithstanding the miseries it entails, invests it with charms in the eyes of the community, and tends to blind men to those evils to a fearful and dangerous degree. The necessity of meeting from year to year the expenditure which it entails is a salutary and wholesome check, making them feel what they are about, and making them measure the cost of the benefit upon which they may calculate.

—GLADSTONE.

THE finance of 1854 offered nothing more original or ingenious than bluntly doubling the income tax (from seven pence to fourteen pence), and raising the duties on spirits, sugar, and malt. The draught was administered in two doses, first in a provisional budget for half a year (March 6), next in a completed scheme two months later. During the interval the chancellor of the exchequer was exposed to much criticism alike from city experts and plain men. The plans of 1853 had, in the main, proved a remarkable success, but they were not without weak points. Reductions in the duties of customs, excise, and stamps had all been followed by increase in their proceeds. But the succession duty brought in no more than a fraction of the estimated sum—the only time, Mr. Gladstone observes, in which he knew the excellent department concerned to have fallen into such an error. The proposal for conversion proved, under circumstances already described, to have no attraction for the fundholder. The operation on the South Sea stock was worse than a

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failure, for it made the exchequer, in order to pay off eight millions at par, raise a larger sum at three and a half per cent., and at three per cent. in a stock standing at 87.<sup>1</sup> All this brought loudish complaints from the money market. The men at the clubs talked of the discredit into which Gladstone had fallen as a financier, and even persons not unfriendly to him spoke of him as rash, obstinate, and injudicious. He was declared to have destroyed his prestige and overthrown his authority.<sup>2</sup>

This roused all the slumbering warrior in him, and when the time came (May 8), in a speech three and a half hours long, he threw his detractors into a depth of confusion that might have satisfied the Psalmist himself. Peremptorily he brushed aside the apology of his assailants for not challenging him by a direct vote of want of confidence, that such a vote would be awkward in a time of war. On the contrary, he said, a case so momentous as the case of war is the very reason why you should show boldly whether you have confidence in our management of your finances or not; if you disapprove, the sooner I know it the better. Then he dashed into a close and elaborate defence in detail, under all the heads of attack,—his manner of dealing with the unfunded debt, his abortive scheme of conversion, his mode of charging deficiency bills. This astonishing mass of dry and difficult matter was impressed in full significance upon the House, not only by the orator's own buoyant and energetic interest in the performance, but by the sense which he awoke in his hearers, that to exercise their attention and judgment upon the case before them was a binding debt imperatively due to themselves and to the country, by men owning the high responsibility of their station. This was the way in which he at all times strove to stir the self-respect of the House of Commons. Not sparing his critics a point or an argument, he drove his case clean home with a vigour that made it seem as if the study of Augustine and Dante and old divines were

<sup>1</sup> Northcote, *Financial Policy*, p. 242; Buxton, *Mr. Gladstone: A Study*, pp. 154-5.      <sup>2</sup> Greville, Part III. i. pp. 150, 151, 157.



after all the best training for an intimate and triumphant mastery of the proper amount of gold to be kept at the bank, the right interest on an exchequer bond and an exchequer bill, and all the arcana of the public accounts.<sup>1</sup> Even where their case had something in it, he showed that they had taken the wrong points. Nor did he leave out the spice of the sarcasm that the House loves. A peer had reproached him for the amount of his deficiency bills. This peer had once himself for four years been chancellor of the exchequer. 'My deficiency bills,' cried Mr. Gladstone, 'reached three millions and a half. How much were the bills of the chancellor whom this figure shocks? In his first year they were four millions and a half, in the second almost the same, in the third more than five and a quarter, in the fourth nearly five millions and a half.' Disraeli and others pretended that they had foreseen the failure of the conversion. Mr. Gladstone proved that, as matter of recorded fact, they had done nothing of the sort. 'This is the way in which mythical history arises. An event happens without attracting much notice; subsequently it excites interest; then people look back upon the time now passed, and see things not as they are or were, but through the haze of distance—they see them as they wish them to have been, and what they wish them to have been, they believe that they were.'

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For this budget no genius, only courage, was needed; but Mr. Gladstone advanced in connection with it a doctrine that raised great questions, moral, political, and economic, and again illustrated that characteristic of his mind which always made some broad general principle a necessity of action. All through 1854, and in a sense very often since, parliament was agitated by Mr. Gladstone's bold proposition that the cost of war should be met by taxation at the time, and not by loans to be paid back by another generation. He did not advance his abstract doctrine without qualification. This, in truth, Mr. Gladstone hardly ever did, and

<sup>1</sup> Not many years before (1838) Talleyrand had surprised the French institute by a paper in which he passed a eulogy on strong theological studies; their influence on vigour as well as on finesse of mind; on the skilful ecclesiastical diplomatists that those studies had formed.

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it was one of the reasons why he acquired a bad name for sophistry and worse. Men fastened on the general principle, set out in all its breadth and with much emphasis; they overlooked the lurking qualification; and then were furiously provoked at having been taken in. 'I do not know,' he wrote some years later to Northcote, 'where you find that I laid down any general maxim that all war supplies were to be raised by taxes. . . . I said in my speech of May 8, revised for Hansard, it was the duty and policy of the country to make *in the first instance* a great effort from its own resources.' The discussions of the time, however, seem to have turned on the unqualified construction. While professing his veneration and respect for the memory of Pitt, he opened in all its breadth the question raised by Pitt's policy of loan, loan, loan. The economic answer is open to more dispute than he then appeared to suppose, but it was the political and moral reasons for meeting the demands of war by tax and not by loan that coloured his economic view. The passage in which he set forth the grounds for his opinion has become a classic place in parliamentary discussion, but it is only too likely for a long time to come to bear reproducing, and I have taken it as a motto for this chapter. His condemnation of loans, absolutely if not relatively, was emphatic. 'The system of raising funds necessary for wars by loan practises wholesale, systematic, and continual deception upon the people. The people do not really know what they are doing. The consequences are adjourned into a far future.' I may as well here complete or correct this language by a further quotation from the letter to Northcote to which I have already referred. He is writing in 1862 on Northcote's book on *Twenty Years of Finance*. 'I cannot refrain,' he says, 'from paying you a sincere compliment, first on the skill with which you have composed an eminently readable work on a dry subject; and secondly, on the tact founded in good feeling and the love of truth with which you have handled your materials throughout.' He then remarks on various points in the book, and among the rest on this:—

Allow me also to say that I think in your comparison of the effect of taxes and loans you have looked (p. 262) too much to the effect on labour at the moment. Capital and labour are in permanent competition for the division of the fruits of production. When in years of war say twenty millions annually are provided by loan say for three, five, or ten years, then two consequences follow.

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1. An immense factitious stimulus is given to labour at the time—and thus much more labour is brought into the market.

2. When that stimulus is withdrawn an augmented quantity of labour is left to compete in the market with a greatly diminished quantity of capital.

Here is the story of the *misery* of great masses of the English people after 1815, or at the least a material part of that story.

I hold by the doctrine that war loans are in many ways a great evil: but I admit their necessity, and in fact the budget of 1855 was handed over by me to Sir George Lewis, and underwent in his hands little alteration unless such as, with the growing demands of the war, I should myself have had to make in it, *i.e.* some, not very considerable, enlargement.

Writing a second letter to Northcote a few days later (August 11, 1862), he goes a little deeper into the subject:—

The general question of loans *v.* taxes for war purposes is one of the utmost interest, but one that I have never seen worked out in print. But assuming as *data* the established principles of our financial system, and by no means denying the necessity of loans, I have not the least doubt that it is for the interest of labour, as opposed to capital, that as large a share as possible of war expenditure should be defrayed from taxes. When war breaks out the wages of labour on the whole have a tendency to rise, and the labour of the country is well able to bear some augmentation of taxes. The sums added to the public expenditure are likely at the outset, and for some time, to be larger than the sums withdrawn from commerce. When war ends, on the contrary, a great mass of persons are dismissed from public employment, and, flooding the labour market, reduce the rate of wages. But again, when war comes, it is quite certain that a large share of the war taxes will be laid upon property: and that, in war, property will bear a

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larger share of our total taxation than in peace. From this it seems to follow at once that, up to the point at which endurance is practicable, payment by war-taxes rather than by taxes in peace is for the interest of the people at large. I am not one of those who think that our system of taxation, taken as a whole, is an over-liberal one towards them. These observations are mere contributions to a discussion, and by no means pretend to dispose of the question.

## II

In the autumn he had a sharp tussle with the Bank of England, and displayed a toughness, stiffness, and sustained anger that greatly astonished Threadneedle Street. In the spring he had introduced a change in the mode of issuing deficiency bills, limiting the quarterly amount to such a sum as would cover the maximum of dividends payable, as known by long experience to be called for. The Bank held this to be illegal; claimed the whole amount required, along with balances actually in hand, to cover the entire amount payable; and asked him to take the opinion of the law officers. The lawyers backed the chancellor of the exchequer. Then the Bank took an opinion of their own; their counsel (Kelly and Palmer) advised that the attorney and solicitor were wrong; and recommended the Bank to bring their grievance before the prime minister. Mr. Gladstone was righteously incensed at this refusal to abide by an opinion invited by the Bank itself, and by which if it had been adverse he would himself have been bound. 'And then,' said Bethell, urging Mr. Gladstone to stand to his guns, 'its counsel call the Bank a trustee for the public! Proh pudor! What stuff lawyers will talk. But 'tis their vocation.' Mr. Gladstone's letters were often prolix, but nobody could be more terse and direct when occasion moved him, and the proceedings of the lawyers with their high Bank views and the equivocal faith of the directors in bringing fresh lawyers into the case at all provoked more than one stern and brief epistle. The governor, who was his private friend, winced. 'I do not study diplomacy in letters of this kind,' Mr. Gladstone replied, 'and there is no sort of doubt that I am very

angry about the matter of the opinion; but affected and sarcastic politeness is an instrument which in writing to you I should think it the worst taste and the worst feeling to employ. I admire the old fashion according to which in English pugilism (which, however, I do not admire) the combatants shook hands before they fought; only I think much time ought not to be spent upon such salutations when there is other work to do.

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In a letter to his wife seven years later, Mr. Gladstone says of this dispute, 'Mr. Arbuthnot told me to-day an observation of Sir George Lewis's when at the exchequer here. Speaking of my controversy with the Bank in 1854, he said, "It is a pity Gladstone puts so much heat, so much irritability into business. Now I am as cool as a fish."' The worst of being as cool as a fish is that you never get great things done, you effect no improvements and you carry no reforms, against the lethargy or selfishness of men and the tyranny of old custom.<sup>1</sup>

Now also his attention was engaged by the controversies on currency that thrive so lustily in the atmosphere of the Bank Charter Act, and, after much discussion with authorities both in Lombard Street and at the treasury, without committal he sketched out at least one shadow of a project of his own. He knew, however, that any great measure must be undertaken by a finance minister with a clear position and strong hands, and he told Graham that even if he saw his way distinctly to a plan, he did not feel individually strong enough for the attempt. Nor was there time. To reconstitute the Savings' Bank finance, to place the chancery and some other accounts on a right basis, and to readjust the banking relations properly so-called between the Bank and the state, would be even more than a fair share of financial work for the session. Before the year was over he passed a bill, for which he had laid before the cabinet elaborate argumentative supports, removing a number of objections to the then existing system of dealing with the funds drawn from Savings Banks.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> 17 and 18 Vict., c. 50.

The year closed with an incident that created a considerable stir, and might by misadventure have become memorable. What has been truly called a warm and prolonged dispute<sup>1</sup> arose out of Mr. Gladstone's removal of a certain official from his post in the department of woods and forests. As Lord Aberdeen told the Queen that he could not easily make the case intelligible, it is not likely that I should succeed any better, and we may as well leave the thick dust undisturbed. Enough to say that Lord John Russell thought the dismissal harsh; that Mr. Gladstone stood his ground against either the reversal of what he had done, or any proceedings in parliament that might look like contrition, but was willing to submit the points to the decision of colleagues; that Lord John would submit no point to colleagues 'affecting his personal honour'—to such degrees of heat can the quicksilver mount even in a cabinet thermometer. If such quarrels of the great are painful, there is some compensation in the firmness, patience, and benignity with which a man like Lord Aberdeen strove to appease them. Some of his colleagues actually thought that Lord John would make this paltry affair a plea for resigning, while others suspected that he might find a better excuse in the revival of convocation. As it happened, a graver occasion offered itself.

<sup>1</sup> Walpole's *Russell*, ii. p. 243 n.

## CHAPTER VI

### CRISIS OF 1855 AND BREAK-UP OF THE PEELITES

(1855)

PARTY has no doubt its evils; but all the evils of party put together would be scarcely a grain in the balance, when compared with the dissolution of honourable friendships, the pursuit of selfish ends, the want of concert in council, the absence of a settled policy in foreign affairs, the corruption of certain statesmen, the caprices of an intriguing court, which the extinction of party connection has brought and would bring again upon this country.—EARL RUSSELL.<sup>1</sup>

THE administrative miscarriages of the war in the Crimea during the winter of 1854-5 destroyed the coalition government.<sup>2</sup> When parliament assembled on January 23, 1855, Mr. Roebuck on the first night of the session gave notice of a motion for a committee of inquiry. Lord John Russell attended to the formal business, and when the House was up went home accompanied by Sir Charles Wood. Nothing of consequence passed between the two colleagues, and no word was said to Wood in the direction of withdrawal. The same evening as the prime minister was sitting in his drawing-room, a red box was brought in to him by his son, containing Lord John Russell's resignation. He was as much amazed as Lord Newcastle, smoking his evening pipe of tobacco in his coach, was amazed by the news that the battle of Marston Moor had begun. Nothing has come to light since to set aside the severe judgment pronounced upon this proceeding by the universal opinion of contemporaries, including Lord John's own closest political allies. That a minister should run away from a hostile motion upon affairs for which responsi-

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<sup>1</sup> On Bute's plan of superseding party by prerogative, in the introduction to vol. iii. of the *Bedford Correspondence*.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.

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bility was collective, and this without a word of consultation with a single colleague, is a transaction happily without a precedent in the history of modern English cabinets.<sup>1</sup> It opened an intricate and unexpected chapter of affairs.

The ministerial crisis of 1855 was unusually prolonged; it was interesting as a drama of character and motive; it marked a decisive stage in the evolution of party, and it was one of the turning points in the career of the subject of this biography. Fortunately for us, Mr. Gladstone has told in his own way the whole story of what he calls this 'sharp and difficult passage in public affairs,' and he might have added that it was a sharp passage in his own life. His narrative, with the omission of some details now dead and indifferent, and of a certain number of repetitions, is the basis of this chapter.

#### I

On the day following Lord John's letter the cabinet met, and the prime minister told them that at first he thought it meant the break-up of the government, but on further consideration he thought they should hold on, if it could be done with honour and utility. Newcastle suggested his own resignation, and the substitution of Lord Palmerston in his place. Palmerston agreed that the country, rightly, or wrongly, wished to see him at the war office, but he was ready to do whatever his colleagues thought best. The whigs thought resignation necessary. Mr. Gladstone thought otherwise, and scouted the suggestion that as Newcastle was willing to resign, Lord John might come back. Lord John himself actually sent a sort of message to know whether he should attend the cabinet. In the end Lord Aberdeen carried all their resignations to the Queen. These she declined to accept, and she 'urged with the greatest eagerness that the decision should be reconsidered.' It is hard at this distance of time to understand how any cabinet under national circumstances of such gravity could have thought of the ignominy of taking to flight from a motion of censure, whatever a single colleague like Lord John

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. x. of Lord Stanmore's *Earl of Aberdeen*.



Russell might deem honourable. On pressure from the Queen, the whigs in the government, Lord John notwithstanding, agreed to stand fire. Mr. Gladstone proceeds:—

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Lord John's explanation, which was very untrue in its general effect, though I believe kindly conceived in feeling as well as tempered with some grains of policy and a contemplation of another possible premiership, carried the House with him, as Herbert observed while he was speaking. Palmerston's reply to him was wretched. It produced in the House (that is, in so much of the House as would otherwise have been favourable), a flatness and deadness of spirit towards the government which was indescribable; and Charles Wood with a marked expression of face said while it was going on, 'And this is to be our leader!' I was myself so painfully full of the scene, that when Palmerston himself sat down I was on the very point of saying to him unconsciously, 'Can anything more be said?' But no one would rise in the adverse sense, and therefore there was no opening for a minister, Palmerston [now become leader in the Commons] had written to ask me to follow Lord John on account of his being a *party*. But it was justly thought in the cabinet that there were good reasons against my taking this part upon me, and so the arrangement was changed.

Roebuck brought forward his motion. Mr. Gladstone resisted it on behalf of the government with immense argumentative force, and he put the point against Lord John which explains the word 'untrue' in the passage just quoted, namely, that though he desired in November the substitution of Palmerston for Newcastle as war minister, he had given it up in December, and yet this vital fact was omitted.<sup>1</sup> It was not for the government, he said, either to attempt to make terms with the House by reconstruction of a cabinet, or to shrink from any judgment of the House upon their acts. If they had so shrunk, he exclaimed, this is the sort of epitaph that he would expect to have written over their remains:—'Here lie the dishonoured ashes of a ministry that found England in peace and left it in war, that was content

<sup>1</sup> 'This *suppressio veri* is shocking, and one of the very worst things he ever did.'—*Greville*, III. i. p. 232.

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to enjoy the emoluments of office and to wield the sceptre of power, so long as no man had the courage to question their existence: they saw the storm gathering over the country; they heard the agonising accounts that were almost daily received of the sick and wounded in the East. These things did not move them, but so soon as a member of opposition raised his hand to point the thunderbolt, they became conscience-stricken into a sense of guilt, and hoping to escape punishment, they ran away from duty.' Such would be their epitaph. Of the proposed inquiry itself,—an inquiry into the conduct of generals and troops actually in the field, and fighting by the side of, and in concert with, foreign allies, he observed—'Your inquiry will never take place as a real inquiry; or, if it did, it would lead to nothing but confusion and disturbance, increased disasters, shame at home and weakness abroad; it would convey no consolation to those whom you seek to aid, but it would carry malignant joy to the hearts of the enemies of England; and, for my part, I shall ever rejoice, if this motion is carried to-night, that my own last words, as a member of the cabinet of the Earl of Aberdeen have been words of solemn and earnest protest against a proceeding which has no foundation either in the constitution or in the practice of preceding parliaments; which is useless and mischievous for the purpose which it appears to contemplate; and which, in my judgment, is full of danger to the power, dignity and usefulness of the Commons of England.' A journalistic observer, while deploring the speaker's adherence to 'the dark dogmatisms of medieval religionists,' admits that he had never heard so fine a speech. The language, he says, was devoid of redundancy. The attitude was calm. Mr. Gladstone seemed to feel that he rested upon the magnitude of the argument, and had no need of the assistance of bodily vehemence of manner. His voice was clear, distinct, and flexible, without monotony. It was minute dissection without bitterness or ill-humoured innuendo. He sat down amid immense applause from hearers admiring but unconvinced. Mr. Gladstone himself records of this speech: 'Hard and heavy work,

especially as to the cases of three persons: Lord John Russell, Duke of Newcastle, and Lord Raglan. Ministers were beaten (January 29) by 325 to 148, and they resigned.

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*Jan. 30, 1855.*—Cabinet 1-2. We exchanged friendly adieus. Dined with the Herberts. This was a day of personal light-heartedness, but the problem for the nation is no small one.

The Queen sent for Lord Derby, and he made an attempt to form a government. Without aid from the conservative wing of the fallen ministry there was no hope, and his first step (*Jan. 31*) was to call on Lord Palmerston, with an earnest request for his support, and with a hope that he would persuade Mr. Gladstone and Sidney Herbert to rejoin their old political connection; with the intimation moreover that Mr. Disraeli, with a self-abnegation that did him the highest credit, was willing to waive in Lord Palmerston's favour his own claim to the leadership of the House of Commons. Palmerston was to be president of the council, and Ellenborough minister of war. In this conversation Lord Palmerston made no objection on any political grounds, or on account of any contemplated measures; he found no fault with the position intended for himself, or for others with whom he would be associated. Lord Derby supposed that all would depend on the concurrence of Mr. Gladstone and Herbert. He left Cambridge House at half-past two in the afternoon, and at half-past nine in the evening he received a note from Lord Palmerston declining. Three hours later he heard from Mr. Gladstone, who declined also. The proceedings of this eventful day, between two in the afternoon and midnight, whatever may have been the play of motive and calculation in the innermost minds of all or any of the actors, were practically to go a long way, though by no means the whole way, as we shall see, towards making Mr. Gladstone's severance from the conservative party definitive.

*Jan. 31.*—Lord Palmerston came to see me between three and four, with a proposal from Lord Derby that he and I, with S. Herbert should take office under him; Palmerston to be president of the council and lead the House of Commons. Not finding me when he called before, he had gone to S. Herbert, who seemed

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to be disinclined. I inquired (1) whether Derby mentioned Graham? (2) Whether he had told Lord Palmerston if his persevering with the commission he had received would depend on the answer to this proposal. (3) How he was himself inclined. He answered the two first questions in the negative, and said as to the third, though not keenly, that he felt disinclined, but that if he refused it would be attributed to his contemplating another result, which other result he considered would be agreeable to the country. I then argued strongly with him that though he might form a government, and though if he formed it, he would certainly start it amidst immense clapping of hands, yet he could not have any reasonable prospect of stable parliamentary support; on the one hand would stand Derby with his phalanx, on the other Lord J. Russell, of necessity a centre and nucleus of discontent, and between these two there would and could be no room for a parliamentary majority such as would uphold his government. He argued only rather faintly the other way, and seemed rather to come to my way of thinking.

I said that even if the proposition were entertained, there would be much to consider; that I thought it clear, whatever else was doubtful, that we could not join without him, for in his absence the wound would not heal kindly again, that I could not act without Lord Aberdeen's approval, nor should I willingly separate myself from Graham; that if we joined, we must join in force. But I was disposed to wish that if all details could be arranged, we should join in that manner rather than that Derby should give up the commission, though I thought the best thing of all would be Derby forming a ministry of his own men, provided only he could get a good or fair foreign secretary instead of Clarendon, who in any case would be an immense loss. . . .

I went off to speak to Lord Aberdeen, and Palmerston went to speak to Clarendon, with respect to whom he had told Derby that he could hardly enter any government which had not Clarendon at the foreign office. When we reassembled, I asked Lord Palmerston whether he had made up his mind for himself independently of us, inasmuch as I thought that if he had, that was enough to close the whole question? He answered, Yes; that he should tell Derby he did not think he could render him useful

service in his administration. He then left. It was perhaps 6.30. Herbert and I sat down to write, but thought it well to send off nothing till after dinner, and we went to Grillion's where we had a small but merry party. Herbert even beyond himself amusing. At night we went to Lord Aberdeen's and Graham's, and so my letter came through some slight emendations to the form in which it went.<sup>1</sup> I had doubts in my mind whether Derby had even intended to propose to Herbert and me *except* in conjunction with Palmerston, though I had no doubt that without Palmerston it would not do; and I framed my letter so as not to assume that I had an independent proposal, but to make my refusal a part of his.

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Feb. 2.—I yesterday also called on Lord Palmerston and read him my letter to Lord Derby. He said: 'Nothing can be better.'

Lord Derby knew that, though he had the country gentlemen behind him, his own political friends, with the notable and only half-welcome exception of Mr. Disraeli, were too far below mediocrity in either capacity or experience to face so angry and dangerous a crisis. Accordingly he gave up the task. Many years after, Mr. Gladstone recorded his opinion that here Lord Derby missed his one real chance of playing a high historic part. 'To a Derby government,' he said, 'now that the party had been *drubbed* out of protection, I did not in principle object; for old ties were with me more operatively strong than new opinions, and I think that Lord Derby's error in not forming an administration was palpable and even gross. Such, it has appeared, was the opinion of Disraeli.<sup>2</sup> Lord Derby had many fine qualities; but strong parliamentary courage was not among them. When Lord Palmerston (probably with a sagacious discernment of the immediate future) declined, he made no separate offer to the Peelites. Had Lord Derby gone on, he would have been supported by the country, then absorbed in the consideration of the war. None of the three occa-

<sup>1</sup> At Lord Aberdeen's the question seems to have been discussed on the assumption that the offer to Mr. Gladstone and Herbert was meant to be independent of Palmerston's acceptance or refusal, and the im-

pression there was that Mr. Gladstone had been not wholly disinclined to consider the offer.

<sup>2</sup> Mallesbury's *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, i. pp. 8, 37.

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sions when he took office offered him so fine an opportunity as this; but he missed it.'

On the previous day, Mr. Gladstone records:—'Saw Mr. Disraeli in the House of Lords and put out my hand, which was very kindly accepted.' To nobody was the hour fraught with more bitter mortification than to Mr. Disraeli, who beheld a golden chance of bringing a consolidated party into the possession of real power flung away.

## II

Next, at the Queen's request, soundings in the whig and Peelite waters were undertaken by Lord Lansdowne, and he sent for Mr. Gladstone, with a result that to the latter was ever after matter of regret.

*Feb. 2.*—In consequence of a communication from Lord Lansdowne, I went to him in the forenoon and found him just returned from Windsor. He trusted I should not mind speaking freely to him, and I engaged to do it, only premising that in so crude and dark a state of facts, it was impossible to go beyond first impressions. We then conversed on various combinations, as (1) Lord J. Russell, premier, (2) Lord Palmerston, (3) Lord Clarendon, (4) Lord Lansdowne himself. Of the first I doubted whether, in the present state of feeling, he could get a ministry on its legs. In answer to a question from him, I added that I thought, viewing my relations to Lord Aberdeen and to Newcastle, and *his* to them also, the public feeling would be offended, and it would not be for the public interest, if I were to form part of his government (*i.e.* Russell's). Of the second I said that it appeared to me Lord Palmerston could not obtain a party majority. Aloof from him would stand on the one hand Derby and his party, on the other Lord J. Russell, who I took it for granted would never serve under him. Whatever the impression made by Russell's recent conduct, yet his high personal character and station, forty years career, one-half of it in the leadership of his party, and the close connection of his name with all the great legislative changes of the period, must ever render him a power in the state, and render it impossible for a government depending on the liberal party to live independently of him. I also hinted at injurious effects which

the substitution of Palmerston for Lord Aberdeen would produce on foreign Powers at this critical moment, but dwelt chiefly on the impossibility of his having a majority. In this Lord Lansdowne seemed to agree.

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Lastly, I said that if Lord Lansdowne himself could venture to risk his health and strength by taking the government, this would be the best arrangement. My opinion was that at this crisis Derby, if he could have formed an administration, would have had advantages with regard to the absorbing questions of the war and of a peace to follow it, such as no other combination could possess. Failing this, I wished for a homogeneous whig government. The best form of it would be under him. He said he might dare it provisionally, if he could see his way to a permanent arrangement at the end of a short term; but he could see nothing of the sort at present.

*An autobiographic note of 1897 gives a further detail of moment:—* He asked whether I would continue to hold my office as chancellor of the exchequer in the event of his persevering. He said that if I gave an affirmative reply he would persevere with the commission, and I think intimated that except on this condition he would not. I said that the working of the coalition since its formation in December 1852 had been to me entirely satisfactory, but that I was not prepared to co-operate in its continuation under any other head than Lord Aberdeen. I think that though perfectly satisfied to be in a Peelite government which had whigs or radicals in it, I was not ready to be in a whig government which had Peelites in it. It took a long time, with my slow-moving and tenacious character, for the Ethiopian to change his skin.

In the paper that I have already mentioned, as recording what, when all was near an end, he took to be some of the errors of his life, Mr. Gladstone names as one of those errors this refusal in 1855 to join Lord Lansdowne. 'I can hardly suppose,' he says, more than forty years after that time, 'that the eventual failure of the Queen's overture to Lord Lansdowne was due to my refusal; but that refusal undoubtedly constituted one of his difficulties and helped to bring about the result. I have always looked back upon it with pain as a serious and even gross error of judgment. It was, I think,

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injurious to the public, if it contributed to the substitution as prime minister of Lord Palmerston for Lord Lansdowne,—a personage of greater dignity, and I think a higher level of political principle. There was no defect in Lord Lansdowne sufficient to warrant my refusal. He would not have been a strong or very active prime minister; but the question of the day was the conduct of the war, and I had no right to take exception to him as a head in connection with this subject. His attitude in domestic policy was the same as Palmerston's, but I think he had a more unprejudiced and liberal mind, though less of motive force in certain directions.'

### III

The next day Mr. Gladstone called on Lord Aberdeen, who for the first time let drop a sort of opinion as to their duties in the crisis on one point; hitherto he had restrained himself. He said, 'Certainly the most natural thing under the circumstances, if it could have been brought about in a satisfactory form, would have been that you should have joined Derby.' On returning home, Mr. Gladstone received an important visitor and a fruitless visit.

At half-past two to-day Lord John Russell was announced; and sat till three—his hat shaking in his hand. A communication had reached him late last night from the Queen, charging him with the formation of a government, and he had thought it his duty to make the endeavour. I repeated to him what I had urged on Lord Lansdowne, that a coalition with advantages has also weaknesses of its own, that the late coalition was I thought fully justified by the circumstances under which it took place, but at this juncture it had broken down. This being so, I thought what is called a homogeneous government would be best for the public, and most likely to command approval; that Derby if he could get a good foreign minister would have had immense advantages with respect to the great questions of war and peace. Lord John agreed as to Derby; thought that every one must have supported him, and that he ought to have persevered.

I held to my point, adding that I did not think Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmerston represented opposite principles,



but rather different forms of the same principles connected with different habits and temperaments. He said that Lord Palmerston had agreed to lead the House of Commons for him, he going as first minister to the Lords; but he did not mention any other alteration. Upon the whole his tone was low and doubtful. He asked whether my answer was to be considered as given, or whether I would take time. But I said as there was no probability that my ideas would be modified by reflection, it would not be fair to him to ask any delay.

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With the single exception of Lord Palmerston, none of his colleagues would have anything to do with Lord John, some even declining to go to see him. Wood came to Mr. Gladstone, evidently in the sense of the Palmerston premiership. He declared that Aberdeen was impossible, to which, says Mr. Gladstone, 'I greatly demurred.'

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Thus the two regular party leaders had failed; Lord Aberdeen, the coalition leader, was almost universally known to be out of the question; the public was loudly clamouring for Lord Palmerston. A Palmerston ministry was now seen to be inevitable. Were the Peelites, then, having refused Lord Derby, having refused Lord John, having told Lord Lansdowne that he had better form a system of homogeneous whigs, now finally to refuse Lord Palmerston, on no better ground than that they could not have Lord Aberdeen, whom nobody save themselves would consent on any terms to have? To propound such a question was to answer it. Lord Aberdeen himself, with admirable freedom from egotism, pressed the point that in addition to the argument of public necessity, they owed much to their late whig colleagues, 'who behaved so nobly and so generously towards us after Lord John's resignation.'

'I have heard club talk and society talk,' wrote an adherent to Mr. Gladstone late one night (February 4), 'and I am sure that in the main any government containing good names in the cabinet, provided Lord John is not in it, will obtain general support. Lord Clarendon is universally, or nearly so, looked

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on as essential. Next to him, I think you are considered of vital importance in your present office. After all, rightly or wrongly, Lord Palmerston is master of the situation in the country; he is looked upon as the man. If the country sees you and Sidney Herbert holding aloof from him, it will be said the Peelites are selfish intriguers.' The same evening, another correspondent said to Mr. Gladstone: 'Two or three people have come in since eleven o'clock with the news of Brooks's and the Reform. Exultation prevails there, and the certainty of Palmerston's success to-morrow. There is a sort of rumour prevalent that Lord Palmerston may seek Lord J. Russell's aid. . . . This would, of course, negative all idea of your joining in the concern. Otherwise a refusal would be set down as sheer impracticability, or else the selfish ambition of a clique which could not stand alone, and should no longer attempt to do so. If the refusal to join Palmerston is to be a going over to the other side, and a definite junction within a brief space, that is clear and intelligible. But a refusal to join Lord Palmerston and yet holding out to him a promise of support, is a half-measure which no one will understand, and which, I own, I cannot see the grounds to defend.'

We shall now find how after long and strenuous dubitation, the Peelite leaders refused to join on the fifth of February, and then on the sixth they joined. Unpromising from the very first cabinet, the junction was destined to a swift and sudden end. Here is the story told by one of the two leading actors.

*Sunday, Feb. 4.*—Herbert came to me soon after I left him, and told me Palmerston had at last got the commission. He considered that this disposed of Lord Lansdowne; and seemed himself to be disposed to join. He said *we* must take care what we were about, and that we should be looked upon by the country as too nice if we declined to join Palmerston; who he believed (and in this I inclined to agree), would probably form a government. He argued that Lord Aberdeen was out of the question; that the vote of Monday night was against him; that the country would not stand him.

No new coalition ought to be formed, I said, without a prospect

of stability; and joining Lord Palmerston's cabinet would be a new coalition. He said he rather applied that phrase to a junction with Derby. I quite agreed we could not join Derby except under conditions which might not be realised; but if we *did* it, it would be a reunion, not a coalition. In coalition the separate existence is retained. I referred to the great instances of change of party in our time; Palmerston himself, and Stanley with Graham. But these took place when parties were divided by great questions of principle; there were none such now, and no one could say that the two sides of the House were divided by anything more than this, that one was rather more stationary, the other more movable. He said, 'True, the differences are on the back benches.'

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I said I had now for two years been holding my mind in suspense upon the question I used to debate with Newcastle, who used to argue that we should grow into the natural leaders of the liberal party. I said, it is now plain this will not be; we get on very well with the independent liberals, but the whigs stand as an opaque body between us and them, and moreover, there they will stand and ought to stand.

Lord Palmerston came a little after two, and remained perhaps an hour. Lord Lansdowne had promised to join him if he formed an administration on a basis sufficiently broad. He wished me to retain my office; and dwelt on the satisfactory nature of my relations with the liberal party. He argued that Lord Aberdeen was excluded by the vote on Monday night; and that there was now no other government in view. My argument was adverse, though without going to a positive conclusion. I referred to my conversation of Wednesday, Jan. 31, in favour of a homogeneous government at this juncture.

At half-past eleven I went to Lord Aberdeen's and stayed about an hour. His being in the Palmerston cabinet which had been proposed, was, he said out of the question; but his *velleities* seemed to lean rather to *our* joining, which surprised me. He was afraid of the position we should occupy in the public eye if we declined. . . .

Feb. 5.—The most irksome and painful of the days; beginning with many hours of anxious consultation to the best of our power, and ending amidst a storm of disapproval almost

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At 10.30 I went to Sir James Graham, who is still in bed, and told him the point to which by hard struggles I had come. The case with me was briefly this. I was ready to make the sacrifice of personal feeling; ready to see him (Lord Aberdeen) expelled from the premiership by a censure equally applicable to myself, and yet to remain in my office; ready to overlook not merely the inferior fitness, but the real and manifest unfitness, of Palmerston for that office; ready to enter upon a new venture with him, although in my opinion without any reasonable prospect of parliamentary support, such as is absolutely necessary for the credit and stability of a government—upon the one sole and all-embracing ground that the prosecution of the war with vigour, and the prosecution of it to and for peace, was now the question of the day to which every other must give way. But then it was absolutely necessary that if we joined a cabinet after our overlooking all this and more, it should be a cabinet in which confidence should be placed with reference to war and peace. Was the Aberdeen cabinet without Lord Aberdeen one in which I could place confidence? I answer, No. He was vital to it; his love of peace was necessary to its right and steady pursuit of that great end; if, then, *he* could belong to a Palmerston cabinet, I might; but without him I could not.

In all this, Sir J. Graham concurred. Herbert came full of doubts and fears, but on the whole adopted the same conclusion. Lord Aberdeen sent to say he would not come, but I wrote to beg him, and he appeared. On hearing how we stood, he said his remaining in the cabinet was quite out of the question; and that he had told Palmerston so yesterday when he glanced at it. But he thought we should incur great blame if we did not; which, indeed, was plainly beyond all dispute.

At length, when I had written and read aloud the rough draft of an answer, Lord Aberdeen said he must strongly advise our joining. I said to him, 'Lord Aberdeen, when we have joined the Palmerston cabinet, you standing aloof from it, will you rise in your place in the House of Lords and say that you give that cabinet your confidence with regard to the question of war and

peace?' He replied, 'I will express my hope that it will do right, but not my confidence, which is a different thing.' 'Certainly,' I answered, 'and that which you have now said is my justification. The unswerving honesty of your mind has saved us. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred in your position at the moment would have said, "Oh yes, I shall express my confidence." But you would not deviate an inch to the right or to the left.'

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Herbert and I went to my house and despatched our answers. Now began the storm. Granville met us driving to Newcastle. Sorry beyond expression; he almost looked displeased, which for him is much. *Newcastle*: I incline to think you are wrong. *Canning*: My impression is you are wrong. Various letters streaming in, all portending condemnation and disaster. Herbert became more and more uneasy.

*Feb. 6.*—The last day I hope of these tangled records; in which we have seen, to say nothing of the lesser sacrifice, one more noble victim struck down, and we are set to feast over the remains. The thing is bad and the mode worse.

Arthur Gordon came early in the day with a most urgent letter from Lord Aberdeen addressed virtually to us, and urging us to join. He had seen both Palmerston and Clarendon, and derived much satisfaction from what they said. We met at the admiralty at twelve, where Graham lay much knocked up with the fatigue and anxiety of yesterday. I read to him and Lord Aberdeen Palmerston's letter of to-day to me. Herbert came in and made arguments in his sense. I told him I was at the point of yesterday, and was immovable by considerations of the class he urged. *The only security worth having lies in men*; the man is Lord Aberdeen; moral union and association with him must continue, and must be publicly known to continue. I therefore repeated my question to Lord Aberdeen, whether he would in his place as a peer declare, if we joined the cabinet, that it had his confidence with reference to war and peace? He said, much moved, that he felt the weight of the responsibility, but that after the explanation and assurances he had received, he would. He was even more moved when Graham said that though the leaning of his judgment was adverse, he would place himself absolutely

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in the hands of Lord Aberdeen. To Herbert, of course, it was a simple release from a difficulty. Palmerston had told Cardwell, 'Gladstone feels a difficulty first infused into him by Graham; Argyll and Herbert have made up their minds to do what Gladstone does.' Newcastle joined us, and was in Herbert's sense. I repeated again that Lord Aberdeen's declaration of confidence enabled me to see my way to joining. . . .

I went to Lord Aberdeen in his official room after his return from Palmerston. It was only when I left that room to-day that I began to realise the pang of parting. There he stood, struck down from his eminence by a vote that did not dare to avow its own purpose, and for his wisdom and virtue; there he stood endeavouring to cure the ill consequences to the public of the wrong inflicted upon himself, and as to the point immediately within reach successful in the endeavour. I ventured, however, to tell him that I hoped our conduct and reliance on him would tend to his eminence and honour, and said, 'You are not to be of the cabinet, but you are to be its tutelary deity.'

I had a message from Palmerston that he would answer me, but at night I went up to him.

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The rush of events was now somewhat slackened. Lord John called on Graham, and complained of the Peelites for having selfishly sought too many offices, alluding to what Canning had done, and imputing the same to Cardwell. He also thought they had made a great mistake in joining Palmerston. He seemed sore about Mr. Gladstone, and told Graham that Christopher, a stout tory, had said that if Gladstone joined Derby, a hundred of the party would withdraw their allegiance. At the party meeting on Feb. 21, Lord Derby was received with loud cries of 'No Puseyites; No papists,' and was much reprehended for asking Gladstone and Graham to join.

'I ought to have mentioned before,' Mr. Gladstone writes here, 'that, during our conferences at the admiralty, Lord Aberdeen expressed great compunction for having allowed the country to be dragged without adequate cause into the

war. So long as he lived, he said with his own depth and force, it would be a weight upon his conscience. He had held similar language to me lately at Argyll House; but when I asked him at what point *after* the fleet went to Besika Bay it would have been possible to stop short, he alluded to the *sommation*, which we were encouraged however, as he added, by Austria to send; and thought *this* was the false step. Yet he did not seem quite firm in the opinion.

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Then came the first cabinet (Feb. 10). It did not relieve the gloom of Mr. Gladstone's impressions. He found it more 'acephalous' than ever; 'less order; less unity of purpose.' The question of the Roebuck committee was raised, on which he said he thought the House would give it up, if government would promise an investigation under the authority of the crown. The fatal subject came up again three days later. Palmerston said it was plain from the feeling in the House the night before, that they were set upon it; if they could secure a fair committee, he was disposed to let the inquiry go forward. On this rock the ship struck. One minister said they could not resign in consequence of the appointment of the committee, because it stood affirmed by a large majority when they took office in the reconstructed cabinet. Mr. Gladstone says he 'argued with vehemence upon the breach of duty which it would involve on our part towards those holding responsible commands in the Crimea, if we without ourselves condemning them were to allow them to be brought before another tribunal like a select committee.'

Dining the same evening at the palace, Mr. Gladstone had a conversation on the subject both with the Queen and Prince Albert. 'The latter compared this appointment of a committee to the proceedings of the Convention of France; but still seemed to wish that the government should submit rather than retire. The Queen spoke openly in that sense, and trusted that she should not be given over into the hands of those "who are the least fit to govern." Without any positive and final declaration, I intimated to each that I did not think I could bring my mind to acquiesce in the pro-

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position for an inquiry by a select committee into the state of the army in the Crimea.'

Time did not remove difficulties. Mr. Gladstone and Graham fought with extreme tenacity, and the first of them with an ingenuity for which the situation gave boundless scope. To the argument that they accepted office on reconstruction with the decision of the House for a committee staring them in the face, he replied:—'Before we were *out*, we were *in*. Why did we go out? Because of that very decision by the House of Commons. Our language was: The appointment of such a committee is incompatible with the functions of the executive, therefore it is a censure on the executive; therefore we resign! But it is not a whit *more* compatible with the functions of the executive now than it was then; therefore it is not one whit less a censure; and the question arises, (1) whether any government ought to allow its (now) principal duty to be delegated to a committee or other body, especially to one not under the control of the crown? (2) whether *that* government ought to allow it, the members of which (except one) have already resigned rather than allow it? In what way can the first resignation be justified on grounds which do not require a second?' He dwelt mainly on these two points—That the proposed transfer of the functions of the executive to a select committee of the House of Commons, with respect to an army in the face of the enemy and operating by the side of our French allies, and the recognition of this transfer by the executive government, was an evil greater than any that could arise from a total or partial resignation. Second, that it was clear that they did not, as things stood, possess the confidence of a majority of the House. 'I said that the committee was itself a censure on the government. They had a right to believe that parliament would not inflict this committee on a government which had its confidence. I also,' he says, 'recited my having ascertained from Palmerston (upon this recital we were agreed) on the 6th, before our decision was declared, his intention to oppose the committee. . . .'

Graham did not feel disposed to govern without the confidence of the House of Commons, or to be responsible



for the granting of a committee which the cabinet had unanimously felt to be unprecedented, unconstitutional, and dangerous. Lord Palmerston met all this by a strong practical clincher. He said that the House of Commons was becoming unruly from the doubts that had gone abroad as to the intentions of the government with respect to the committee; that the House was determined to have it; that if they opposed it they should be beaten by an overwhelming majority; to dissolve upon it would be ruinous; to resign a fortnight after taking office would make them the laughing-stock of the country.

Mr. Gladstone, Herbert, and Graham then resigned. Of the Peelite group the Duke of Argyll and Canning remained.

*Feb. 22.*—After considering various *sites*, we determined to ask the Manchester school to yield us, at any rate for to-morrow, the old place devoted to ex-ministers.<sup>1</sup> Sir J. Graham expressed his wish to begin the affair, on the proposal of the first name [of the committee].

Cardwell came at 4 to inform me that he had declined to be my successor; and showed me his letter, which gave as his reason disinclination to step into the cabinet over the bodies of his friends. It seems that Palmerston and Lord Lansdowne, who assists him, sent Canning to Lord Aberdeen to invoke his aid with Cardwell and prevail on him to retract. But Lord Aberdeen, though he told Canning that he disapproved (at variance here with what Graham and I considered to be his tone on Monday, but agreeing with a note he wrote in obscure terms the next morning), said he could not make such a request to Cardwell, or again play the peculiar part he had acted a fortnight ago. The cabinet on receiving Cardwell's refusal were at a deadlock. Application was to be made, or had been made, to Sir Francis Baring, but it seems that he is reluctant; he is, however, the best card they have to play.

*Feb. 28.*—On Sunday, Sir George Lewis called on me, and

<sup>1</sup> On Feb. 23, he writes to Mr. Hayter, the government whip: 'We have arranged to sit in the orthodox ex-ministers' place to-night, i.e. second bench immediately below the gangway. This avoids constructions and comparisons which we could hardly otherwise have escaped; and Bright and his friends agreed to give it us. Might I trust to your kindness to have some cards put in the place for us before prayers!'

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said my office had been offered him. This was after being refused by Cardwell and Baring. He asked my advice as to accepting it. This I told him I could not give. He asked if I would assist him with information in case of his accepting. I answered that he might command me precisely as if instead of resigning I had only removed to another department. I then went over some of the matters needful to be made known. On Tuesday he came again, acquainted me with his acceptance, and told me he had been mainly influenced by my promise.<sup>1</sup>

This day at a quarter to three I attended at the palace to resign the seals, and had an audience of about twenty minutes. The Queen, in taking them over, was pleased to say that she received them with great pain. I answered that the decision which had required me to surrender them had been the most painful effort of my public life. The Queen said she was afraid on Saturday night [Feb. 17, when he had dined at the palace] from the language I then used that this was about to happen. I answered that we had then already had a discussion in the cabinet which pointed to this result, and that I spoke as I did, because I thought that to have no reserve whatever with H.M. was the first duty of all those who had the honour and happiness of being her servants. I trusted H.M. would believe that we had all been governed by no other desire than to do what was best for the interests of the crown and the country. H.M. expressed her confidence of this, and at no time throughout the conversation did she in any manner indicate an opinion that our decision had been wrong. She spoke of the difficulty of making arrangements for carrying on the government in the present state of things, and I frankly gave my opinion to H.M. that she would have little peace or comfort in these matters, until parliament should have returned to its old organisation in two political parties; that at present we were in a false position, and that both sides of the House were demoralised—the ministerial side overcharged with an excess of official men, and the way stopped up against expectants, which led to subdivision,

<sup>1</sup> While Lewis went to the exchequer, Sir Charles Wood succeeded the colonial office, which Sir George Graham at the admiralty, Lord John Grey had left for the home office, then on his way to Vienna, agreed to come back to the cabinet and took where he succeeded Palmerston.

jealousy, and intrigue; the opposition so weak in persons having experience of affairs as to be scarcely within the chances of office, and consequently made reckless by acting without keeping it in view; yet at the same time, the party continued and must continue to exist, for it embodied one of the great fundamental elements of English society. The experiment of coalition had been tried with remarkable advantage under a man of the remarkable wisdom and powers of conciliation possessed by Lord Aberdeen, one in entire possession too of H.M.'s confidence. They intimated that there were peculiar disadvantages, too, evidently meaning Lord J. Russell. I named him in my answer, and said I thought that even if he had been steady, yet the divisions of the ministerial party would a little later have brought about our overthrow.<sup>1</sup> H.M. seeming to agree in my main position, as did the Prince, asked me: But when will parliament return to that state? I replied I grieved to say that I perceived neither the time when, nor the manner how, that result is to come about; but until it is reached, I fear that Y.M. will pass through a period of instability and weakness as respects the executive. She observed that the prospect is not agreeable. I said, True, madam, but it is a great consolation that all these troubles are upon the surface, and that the throne has for a long time been gaining and not losing stability from year to year. I could see but one danger to the throne, and that was from encroachments by the House of Commons. No other body in the country was strong enough to encroach. This was the consideration which had led my resigning colleagues with myself to abandon office that we might make our stand against what we thought a formidable invasion. . . . I thought the effect of the resistance was traceable in the good conduct of the House of Commons last night, when another attempt at encroachment was proposed and firmly repelled. . . . I expressed my comfort at finding that our motives were so graciously appreciated by H.M. and withdrew.

Loud was the public outcry. All the censure that had been foretold in case they should refuse to join, fell with double force upon them for first joining and then seceding.

<sup>1</sup> This seems to contradict the proposition in the article on Greville in the *Eng. Hist. Rev.* of 1887.

## CHAPTER VII

### POLITICAL ISOLATION

(1855-1856)

*ἡκιστα γὰρ πόλεμος ἐπὶ βῆροῖς χωρεῖ.*—THUC. i. 122.

War is the last thing in all the world to go according to programme.

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STATESMEN are invincibly slow to learn the lesson put by Thucydides long centuries ago into the mouth of the Athenian envoys at Sparta, and often repeated in the same immortal pages, that war defies all calculations, and if it be protracted comes to be little more than mere matter of chance, over which the combatants have no control. A thousand times since has history proved this to be true. Policy is mastered by events; unforeseen sequels develop novel pretexts, or grow into startling and hateful necessities; the minister finds that he is fastened to an inexorable chain.

Mr. Gladstone now had this fatal law of mundane things brought home to him. As time went on, he by rapid intuition gained a truer insight into the leading facts. He realised that Mahometan institutions in the Ottoman empire were decrepit; that the youthful and vigorous elements in European Turkey were crushed under antiquated and worn-out forms and forces unfit for rule. He awoke to the disquieting reflection how the occupation of the Principalities had been discussed, day after day and month after month, entirely as a question of the payment of forty thousand pounds a year to Turkey, or as a violation of her rights as suzerain, but never in reference to the well-being, happiness, freedom, or peace of the inhabitants. He still held that the war in its origin was just, for it had been absolutely necessary, he

said, to cut the meshes of the net in which Russia had entangled Turkey. He persisted in condemning the whole tone and policy of Russia in 1854. By the end of 1854, in Mr. Gladstone's eyes, this aggressive spirit had been extinguished, the Czar promising an almost unreserved acceptance of the very points that he had in the previous August angrily rejected. The essential objects of the war were the abolition of Russian rights in the Principalities, and the destruction of Russian claims upon Greek Christians under Ottoman sway. These objects, Mr Gladstone insisted, were attained in January 1855, when Russia agreed to three out of the Four Points—so the bases of agreement were named—and only demurred upon the plan for carrying out a portion of the fourth. The special object was to cancel the preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea. No fewer than seven different plans were simultaneously or in turn propounded. They were every one of them admitted to be dubious, inefficient, and imperfect. I will spare the reader the mysteries of limitation, of counterpoise, of counterpoise and limitation mixed. Russia preferred counterpoise, the allies were for limitation. Was this preference between two degrees of the imperfect, the deficient, and the ineffective a good ground for prolonging a war that was costing the allies a hundred million pounds a year, and involved to all the parties concerned the loss of a thousand lives a day? Yet, for saying No to this question, Mr. Gladstone was called a traitor, even by men who in 1853 had been willing to content themselves with the Vienna note, and in 1854 had been anxious to make peace on the basis of the Four Points. In face of pleas so wretched for a prolongation of a war to which he had assented on other grounds, was he bound to silence? 'Would it not, on the contrary,' he exclaimed, 'have been the most contemptible effeminacy of character, if a man in my position, who feels that he has been instrumental in bringing his country into this struggle, were to hesitate a single moment when he was firmly convinced in his own mind that the time had arrived when we might with honour escape from it?'

The prospect of reducing Russia to some abstract level of

BOOK strength, so as to uphold an arbitrary standard of the  
 IV. balance of power—this he regarded as mischief and chimera.  
 1855. Rightly he dreaded the peril of alliances shifting from  
 day to day, like quicksands and sea-shoals—Austria moved  
 by a hundred strong and varying currents, France drawing  
 by unforeseen affinities towards Russia. Every war with  
 alliances, he once said, should be short, sharp, decisive.<sup>1</sup>

As was to be expected, the colleagues from whom he had parted insisted that every one of his arguments told just as logically against the war in all its stages, against the first as legitimately as the last. In fact, we can never say a plain sure aye or no to questions of peace and war, after the sword has once left the scabbard. They are all matter of judgment on the balance of policy between one course and another; and a very slight thing may incline the balance either way, even though mighty affairs should hang on the turn of the scale. Meanwhile, as the months went on, Sebastopol still stood untaken, excitement grew, people forgot the starting point. They ceased to argue, and sheer blatancy, at all times a power, in war-time is supreme. Mr. Gladstone's trenchant dialectic had no more chance than Bright's glowing appeals. Shrewd and not unfriendly onlookers thought that Graham and Gladstone were grievously mistaken in making common cause with the peace party, immediately after quitting a war government, and quitting it, besides, not on the issues of the war. Herbert was vehement in his remonstrances. The whole advantage of co-operation with the Manchester men, he cried, would be derived by them, and all the disrepute reaped by us. 'For the purposes of peace, they were the very men we ought to avoid. As advocates for ending the war, they were out of court, for they were against beginning it.'<sup>2</sup> If Gladstone and Graham had gone slower, their friends said, they might have preached moderation to ministers and given reasonable advice to people out of doors. As it was, they threw the game into the hands of Lord Palmerston. They were stamped as doctrinaires, and what was worse, doctrinaires suspected of a spice of personal animus against old friends. Herbert insisted that the Man-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert to Gladstone, May 27, 1855.

chester school 'forgot that the people have flesh and blood, and propounded theories to men swayed by national feeling.' As a matter of fact, this was wholly untrue. Cobden and Bright, as everybody nowadays admits, had a far truer perception of the underlying realities of the Eastern question in 1854, than either the Aberdeen or the Palmerston cabinet, or both of them put together. What was undeniable was that the public, with its habits of rough and ready judgment, did not understand, and could not be expected to understand, the new union of the Peelites with a peace party, in direct opposition to whose strongest views and gravest warnings they had originally begun the war. 'In Gladstone,' Cornwall Lewis said, 'people ascribe to faction, or ambition, or vanity, conduct which I believe to be the result of a conscientious, scrupulous, ingenuous, undecided mind, always looking on each side of a question and magnifying the objections which belong to almost every course of action.'<sup>1</sup>

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A foreign envoy then resident in England was struck by the general ignorance of facts even among leading politicians. Of the friends of peace, he says, only Lord Grey and Gladstone seemed to have mastered the Vienna protocols: the rest were quite astonished when the extent of the Russian concessions was pointed out to them. The envoy dined with Mr. Gladstone at the table of the Queen, and they talked of Milner Gibson's motion censuring ministers for losing the opportunity of the Vienna conferences to make a sound and satisfactory peace. Mr. Gladstone said to him that he should undertake the grave responsibility of supporting this motion, 'because in his opinion the concessions promised by Russia contain sufficient guarantees. Those very concessions will tear to pieces all the ancient treaties which gave an excuse to Russia for interfering in the internal affairs of Turkey.'<sup>2</sup>

At all times stimulated rather than checked by a difficult situation, Mr. Gladstone argued the case for peace to the

<sup>1</sup> *Many Memories*, p. 229.

to July, 1855, is to be found in

<sup>2</sup> Vitzthum, *St. Petersburg and Martin's Prince Consort*, iii. pp. 281-  
London, i. p. 170. A full account of 307.

these parliamentary events from May

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House during the session of 1855 in two speeches of extraordinary power of every kind. His position was perfectly tenable, and he defended it with unsurpassed force. For the hour unfortunately his influence was gone. Great newspapers thought themselves safe in describing one of these performances as something between the rant of the fanatic and the trick of the stage actor; a mixture of pious grimace and vindictive howl, of savage curses and dolorous forebodings; the most unpatriotic speech ever heard within the walls of parliament. In sober fact, it was one of the three or four most masterly deliverances evoked by the Crimean war. At the very same time Lord John Russell was still sitting in the cabinet, though he had held the opinion that at the beginning of May the Austrian proposal ought to have ended the war and led to an honourable peace. The scandal of a minister remaining in a government that persisted in a war condemned by him as unnecessary was intolerable, and Lord John resigned (July 16).

The hopes of the speedy fall of Sebastopol brightened in the summer of 1855, but this brought new alarms to Lord Palmerston. 'Our danger,' he said in remarkable words, 'will then begin—a danger of peace and not a danger of war.' To drive the Russians out of the Criméea was to be no more than a preliminary. England would go on by herself, if conditions deemed by her essential were not secured. 'The British nation is unanimous, for I cannot reckon Cobden, Bright, and Co. for anything.'<sup>1</sup> His account of the public mind was indubitably true. Well might Aberdeen recall to his friends that, with a single exception, every treaty concluded at the termination of our great wars had been stigmatised as humiliating and degrading, ignominious, hollow and unsafe. He cited the peace of Utrecht in 1713, the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, the peace of Paris in 1763, the peace of Versailles in 1783, and the peace of Amiens in 1801. The single exception was the peace of Paris in 1814. It would have been difficult in this case, he said, for patriotism or faction to discover humiliation 'in a treaty dictated at the head of a victorious army in the capital of the enemy.'

<sup>1</sup> Ashley, ii. pp. 320, 325.



While the storm was raging, Mr. Gladstone made his way with his family to Penmaenmawr, whence he writes to Lord Aberdeen (Aug. 9): 'It was a charitable act on your part to write to me. It is hardly possible to believe one is not the greatest scoundrel on earth, when one is assured of it from all sides on such excellent authority. . . . I am busy reading Homer about the Sebastopol of old time, and all manner of other fine fellows.' In another letter of the same time, written to Sir Walter James, one of the most closely attached of all his friends, he strikes a deeper note:—

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Sept. 17.—If I say I care little for such an attack you will perhaps think I make little of sympathy like yours and Lord Hardinge's, but such, I beg you and him to believe, is not the case. Public life is full of snares and dangers, and I think it a fearful thing for a Christian to look forward to closing his life in the midst of its (to me at least) essentially fevered activity. It has, however, some excellent characteristics in regard to mental and even spiritual discipline, and among these in particular it absolutely requires the habits of resisting temper and of suppressing pain. I never allow myself, in regard to my public life, to realise, *i.e.* to dwell upon, the fact that a thing is *painful*. Indeed life has no time for such broodings: neither in session nor recess is the year, the day, or the hour long enough for what it brings with it. Nor was there ever a case in which it was so little difficult to pass over and make little of a personal matter: for if indeed it be true, as I fear it is, that we have been committing grave errors, that those errors have cost many thousands of lives and millions of money, and that no glare of success can effectually hide the gloom of thickening complications, the man who can be capable of weighing his own fate and prospects in the midst of such contingencies has need to take a lesson from the private soldier who gives his life to his country at a shilling a day.

'We are on our way back,' he writes at the end of September, 'after a month of sea-bathing and touring among the Welsh mountains. Most of my time is taken up with Homer and Homeric literature, in which I am immersed with great delight up to my ears; perhaps I should say out

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of my depth.' Mr. Gladstone was one of the men whom the agitations of politics can never submerge. Political interests were what they ought to be, a very serious part of life; but they took their place with other things, and were never suffered, as in narrower natures sometimes happens, to blot out 'stars and orbs of sun and moon' from the spacious firmament above us. He now found a shelter from the intensity of the times in the systematic production of his book on Homer, a striking piece of literature that became the most definite of his pursuits for two years or more. His children observed that he never lounged or strolled upon the shore, but when the morning's labour was over—and nothing was ever allowed to break or mutilate the daily spell of serious work—he would stride forth staff in hand, and vigorously breast the steepest bluffs and hills that he could find. This was only emblematic of a temperament to which the putting forth of power was both necessity and delight. The only rest he ever knew was change of effort.

While he was on the Welsh coast Sebastopol fell, after a siege of three hundred and fifty days. Negotiations for peace were opened tolerably soon afterwards, ending, after many checks and diplomatic difficulties, in the Treaty of Paris (March 30, 1856), as to which I need only remind the reader, with a view to a future incident in Mr. Gladstone's history, that the Black Sea was neutralised, and all warships of every nation excluded from its waters. Three hundred thousand men had perished. Countless treasure had been flung into the abyss. The nation that had won its last victory at Waterloo did not now enhance the glory of its arms, nor the power of its diplomacy, nor the strength of any of its material interests. It was our French ally who profited. The integrity of Turkey was so ill confirmed that even at the Congress of Paris the question of the Danubian Principalities was raised in a form that in a couple of years reduced Turkish rule over six millions of her subjects to the shadow of smoke. Of the confidently promised reform of Mahometan dominion there was never a beginning nor a sign. The vindication of the standing European order proved so ineffectual that the Crimean war was only the sanguinary

prelude to a vast subversion of the whole system of European states.

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## II

Other interests now came foremost in Mr. Gladstone's mind. The old ground so constantly travelled over since the death of Peel was for three years to come traversed again with fatiguing iteration. In the spring of 1856 Lord Derby repeated the overtures that he had made in specific form in 1851 and in 1855. The government was weak, as Mr. Gladstone had predicted that it would be. Lord Derby told Sir William Heathcote, through whom he and Mr. Gladstone communicated, that as almost any day it might be overturned, and he might be sent for by the Queen, he was bound to see what strength he might rely upon, and he was anxious to know what were Mr. Gladstone's views on the possibility of co-operation. What was the nature of his relations with other members of the Peel government who had also been in the cabinet of Lord Aberdeen? Did they systematically communicate? Were they a party? Did they intend to hold and to act together? These questions were soon answered:—

On the first point, Mr. Gladstone said, you cannot better describe my views for present purposes than by saying that they are much like Lord Derby's own as I understand them—there was nothing in them to prevent a further consideration of the subject, if public affairs should assume such a shape as to recommend it. On the second, I said Graham, Herbert, Cardwell and I communicated together habitually and confidentially; that we did not seek to act, but rather eschewed acting, as a party; that our habits of communication were founded upon long political association, general agreement, and personal friendship; that they were not, however, a covenant for the future, but a natural growth and result of the past.

Then he proceeds to tell with a new and rather startling conclusion the old story of the Peelite responsibility for the broken and disorganized state of the House of Commons:—

We, the friends of Lord Aberdeen, were a main cause of disunion and weakness in the executive government, and must be so,

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from whichever side the government were formed, so long as we were not absolutely incorporated into one or the other of the two great parties. For though we had few positively and regularly following us, yet we had indirect relations with others on both sides of the House, which tended to relax, and so far disable, party connections, and our existence as a section encouraged the formation of other sections all working with similar effects. I carried my feeling individually so far upon the subject as even to be ready, if I had to act alone, to surrender my seat in parliament, rather than continue a cause of disturbance to any government to which I might generally wish well.<sup>1</sup>

This exchange of views with Lord Derby he fully reported to Graham, Herbert, and Cardwell, whom Lord Aberdeen, at his request, had summoned for the purpose. Herbert doubted the expediency of such communications, and Graham went straight to what was a real point. 'He observed that the question was of the most vital consequence, Who should lead the House of Commons? This he thought must come to me, and could not be with Disraeli. I had said and repeated, that I thought we could not bargain Disraeli out of the saddle; that it must rest with him (so far as we were concerned) to hold the lead if he pleased; that besides my looking to it with doubt and dread, I felt he had this right; and that I took it as one of the *data* in the case before us upon which we might have to consider the question of political junction, and which might be seriously affected by it.' Of these approaches in the spring of 1856 nothing came. The struggle in Mr. Gladstone's mind went on with growing urgency. He always protested that he never at any time contemplated an isolated return to the conservative ranks, but 'reunion of a body with a body.'

Besides his sense of the vital importance of the reconstruction of the party system, he had two other high related aims. The commanding position that had first been held in the objects of his activity by the church, then, for a considerable space, by the colonies, was now filled by finance. As he put it in a letter to his sympathetic brother Robertson: He

<sup>1</sup> Memo. April 17, 1856.

saw two cardinal subjects for the present moment in public affairs, a rational and pacific foreign policy, and second, the due reduction in our establishments, economy in administration, and finance to correspond. In 1853 he had, as he believed, given financial pledges to the country. These pledges were by the present ministers in danger of being forgotten. They were incompatible with Palmerston's spirit of foreign policy. His duty, then, was to oppose that policy, and to labour as hard as he could for the redemption of his pledges. Yet isolated as he was, he had little power over either one of these aims or the other. The liberal party was determined to support the reigning foreign policy, and this made financial improvement desperate. Of Lord Derby's friends he was not hopeful, but they were not committed to so dangerous a leader.<sup>1</sup> As he put it to Elwin, the editor of the *Quarterly*: There is a policy going a begging; the general policy that Sir Robert Peel in 1841 took office to support—the policy of peace abroad, of economy, of financial equilibrium, of steady resistance to abuses, and promotion of practical improvements at home, with a disinclination to questions of reform, gratuitously raised.<sup>2</sup>

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His whole mind beset, possessed, and on fire with ideals of this kind, and with sanguine visions of the road by which they might be realised—it was not in the temperament of this born warrior to count the lions in his path. He was only too much in the right, as his tribulations of a later date so amply proved, in his perception that neither Palmerston nor Palmerstonian liberals would take up the broken clue of Peel. The importunate presence of Mr. Disraeli was not any sharper obstacle to a definite junction with conservatives, than was the personality of Lord Palmerston to a junction with liberals. As he had said to Graham in November 1856, 'the pain and strain of public duty is multiplied tenfold by the want of a clear and firm ground from which visibly to act.' In rougher phrase, a man must have a platform and work with a party. This indeed is for sensible men one of the rudiments of practical politics.

<sup>1</sup> To Robertson Gladstone, Dec. 16, 1856.

<sup>2</sup> To Mr. Elwin, Dec. 2, 1856.

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Of a certain kind of cant about public life and office Mr. Gladstone was always accustomed to make short work. The repudiation of desire for official power, he at this time and always roundly denounced as 'sentimental and maudlin.' One of the not too many things that he admired in Lord Palmerston was 'the manly frankness of his habitual declarations that office is the natural and proper sphere of a public man's ambition, as that in which he can most freely use his powers for the common advantage of his country.' 'The desire for office,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'is the desire of ardent minds for a larger space and scope within which to serve the country, and for access to the command of that powerful machinery for information and practice, which the public departments supply. He must be a very bad minister indeed, who does not do ten times the good to the country that he would do when out of office, because he has helps and opportunities which multiply twentyfold, as by a system of wheels and pulleys, his power for doing it.' It is true, as the smallest of men may see—and the smaller the man, the more will he make of it—that this sterling good sense may set many a snare for the politician; but then even the consecrated affectations of our public life have their snares too.

The world was not in the secret of the communications with Lord Derby, but the intrinsic probabilities of a case often give to the public a trick of divination. In the middle of December (1856) articles actually appeared in the prints of the day announcing that Mr. Gladstone would at the opening of the next session figure at the head of the opposition. The tories, they said, wanted a leader, Mr. Gladstone wanted a party. They were credulous, he was ingenious. The minority in a party must yield to a majority, and he stood almost by himself. He would be a returned prodigal in the conservative household, for unlike Sir James Graham, he had never merged himself in the ordinary ruck of liberalism. A tory peer writes to assure him that there never was such a chance for the reunion of the party. Even the nobleman who had moved Mr. Gladstone's expulsion from the Carlton said that he supposed reunion must pretty soon come off. A few, per-

haps under a score, made a great noise, but if Lord Derby would only form a government, the noisy ones would be as glad as the rest. True—and here the writer came nearer to the central difficulty—‘Disraeli ought *at first* to lead the Commons,’ because he had been leader before; second, he had the greater number of followers; third, because on public grounds he must desire to see Mr. Gladstone at the exchequer; and to transfer to him both the great subject of finance and the great prize of leadership would be impossible. So easy do flat impossibilities ever seem to sanguine simpletons in Pall Mall. Another correspondent has been staying at a grand country-house, full of tory company, and the state of parties was much discussed—‘There was one unanimous opinion,’ he tells Mr. Gladstone, ‘that nothing could save the conservative party except electing you for their leader.’ The same talk was reported from the clubs. ‘The difficulty was Disraeli, not so much for any damage that his hostility could do the party, as because Lord Derby had contracted relations with him which it would perhaps be impossible for him to disown.’

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Meanwhile the sagacious man in the tents of the tories, whose course was so neatly chalked out for him by sulky followers not relishing his lead, was, we may be sure, entirely wide-awake, watching currents, gales, and puffs of wind without haste, without rest. Disraeli made a bold stroke for party consolidation by inviting to his official dinner at the opening of the session of 1857, General Peel, the favourite brother of the great minister and his best accredited representative. Peel consulted Mr. Gladstone on the reply to Disraeli's invitation, and found him strongly adverse. The public, said Mr. Gladstone, views with much jealousy every change of political position not founded on previous parliamentary co-operation for some national object. Mr. Gladstone might have put it on the narrower ground, that attendance at the dinner would be an explicit condonation of Disraeli's misdeeds ten years before, and a direct acceptance of his leadership henceforth.

Elwin believed that he had the direct sanction of Lord Derby for a message from him to Mr. Gladstone suggesting

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communication. After much ruminating and consulting, Mr. Gladstone wrote (Dec. 13, 1856) in sufficiently circuitous language to Elwin, that though he should not be justified in communicating with Lord Derby, considered simply as a political leader with whom he was not in relations of party, yet, he proceeds, 'remembering that I was once his colleague, and placing entire reliance on his honour, I am ready to speak to him in confidence and without reserve on the subject of public affairs, should it be his desire.' His three friends, Graham, Aberdeen, and Herbert, still viewed the proceeding with entire disfavour, and no counsels were ever dictated by sincerer affection and solicitude. Your financial scheme, says Graham, is conceived in the very spirit of Peel; it would be most conducive to national welfare; you alone and in high office can carry it; but it must be grafted on a pacific policy and on a moderate scale of public expenditure; it is not under Palmerston that such blessings are to be anticipated; but then are they more probable under Derby and Disraeli? Lord Aberdeen took another line, insisting that to make any sort of approach to Lord Derby, after joining Palmerston only the previous year, would be unjustifiable; the bare apprehension of a vicious policy would be no intelligible ground for changing sides; more tangible reasons would be needed, and they were only too likely soon to arrive from Palmerston's foreign policy. Then a reasonable chance might come. Herbert, in his turn, told Mr. Gladstone that though he might infuse vigour and respectability into a party that stood much in need of both, yet he would always be in a false position. 'Your opinions are essentially progressive, and when the measures of any government must be liberal and progressive, the country will prefer the men whose antecedents and mottoes are liberal, while the conservatives will always prefer a leader whose prejudices are with themselves.' As Graham put it to him: 'If you were to join the tory party to-morrow, you would have neither their confidence nor their real good will, and they would openly break with you in less than a year.' It all reminds one of the chorus in Greek plays, sagely expostulating with a hero bent on some dread deed of fate.



## III

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In the autumn of 1856 ecclesiastical questions held a strong place in Mr. Gladstone's interests. The condemnation of Archdeacon Denison for heresy roused him to lively indignation. He had long interviews with the archdeacon, drafted answers for him, and flung his whole soul into the case, though he was made angry by Denison's oscillations and general tone. 'Gladstone tells me,' said Aberdeen, 'that he cannot sleep for it, and writes to me volumes upon volumes. He thinks that Denison ought to have been allowed to show that his doctrine, whether in accordance or not with the articles, is in accordance with scripture. And he thinks the decision ought to have been in his case as it was in Gorham's, that the articles are comprehensive, that they admit Denison's view of the Eucharist as well as that of his opponents.'<sup>1</sup>

His closing entry for the year (1856) depicts an inner mood:—

It appears to me that there are few persons who are so much as I am enclosed in the invisible net of pendent steel. I have never known what tedium was, have always found time full of calls and duties, life charged with every kind of interest. But now when I look calmly around me, I see that these interests are for ever growing and grown too many and powerful, and that were it to please God to call me I might answer with reluctance. . . . See how I stand. Into politics I am drawn deeper every year; in the growing anxieties and struggles of the church I have no less [interest] than I have heretofore; literature has of late acquired a new and powerful hold upon me; the fortunes of my wife's family, which have had, with all their dry detail, all the most exciting and arduous interest of romance for me now during nine years and more; seven children growing up around us, and each day the object of deeper thoughts and feelings, and of higher hopes to Catherine and me,—what a network is here woven out of all that the heart and all that the mind of man can supply. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Simpson's *Many Memories*, p. 238.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GENERAL ELECTION—NEW MARRIAGE LAW

(1857)

No wave on the great ocean of Time, when once it has floated past us, can be recalled. All we can do is to watch the new form and motion of the next, and launch upon it to try in the manner our best judgment may suggest our strength and skill.—GLADSTONE.

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IN spite of wise counsels of circumspection, Mr. Gladstone clung to the chances that might come from personal communication between himself and Lord Derby. Under pressure from his friends, he agreed with Lord Derby to put off an interview until after the debate on the address. Then, after parliament met, they took the plunge. We are now at the beginning of February.

This afternoon at three I called on Lord Derby and remained with him above three hours, in prosecution of the correspondence which had passed between us.

I told him that I deliberately disapproved of the government of Lord Palmerston, and was prepared and desirous to aid in, any proper measures which might lead to its displacement. That so strong were my objections that I was content to act thus without inquiring who was to follow, for I was convinced that any one who might follow would govern with less prejudice to the public interests. That in the existing state of public affairs I did not pretend to see far, but thus far I saw clearly. I also told him that I felt the isolated position in which I stood, and indeed in which we who are called Peelites all stand, to be a great evil as tending to prolong and aggravate that parliamentary disorganization which so much clogs and weakens the working of our government and I denounced myself as a public nuisance,

adding that it would be an advantage if my doctor sent me abroad for the session.

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He concurred in the general sentiments which I had expressed, but said it was material for him, as he had friends with and for whom to act, and as I had alluded to the possibility, in the event of a change, of his being invited by the Queen to form a government, to consider beforehand on what strength he could rely. He said he believed his friends were stronger than any other single section, but that they were a minority in both Houses. Weak in 1852, he was weaker now, for it was natural that four years of exclusion from office should thin the ranks of a party, and such had been his case. He described the state of feeling among his friends, and adverted to the offer he had made in 1851 and in 1855. The fact of an overture made and not accepted had led to much bitterness or anger towards us among a portion of his adherents. He considered that in 1855 Lord Palmerston had behaved far from well either to Herbert and me, or to him.<sup>1</sup>

Other interviews followed; resolutions were discussed, amendments, forms of words. They met at discreet dinners. 'Nobody,' Lord Derby tells him, 'except Disraeli knows the length to which our communications have gone.' Nobody, that is to say, excepting also Mr. Gladstone's three personal allies; them he kept accurately informed of all that passed at every stage. On February 13 the government presented their budget. In introducing his plan, Cornwall Lewis rashly quoted, and adopted as his own, the terrible heresy of Arthur Young, that to multiply the number of taxes is a step towards equality of burden, and that a good system of taxation is one that bears lightly on an infinite number of points. The reader will believe how speedily an impious opinion of this sort kindled volcanic flame in Mr. Gladstone's breast. He thought moreover that he espied in the ministerial plan a prospective deficiency a year ahead. To maintain a steady surplus of income over expenditure, he reflected; to lower indirect taxes when excessive in amount, for the relief of the people, and bearing in mind the reproductive power inherent in such operations; to simplify our

<sup>1</sup> See above pp. 525-8.

BOOK IV. 1857. fiscal system by concentrating its pressure on a few well chosen articles of extended consumption; and to conciliate support to the income-tax by marking its temporary character, and by associating it with beneficial changes in the tariff: these aims have been for fifteen years the labour of our life. By this budget he found them in principle utterly reversed. He told his friends that the shade of Peel would appear to him if he did not oppose such plans with his whole strength. When the time came (Feb. 3), 'the government was fired into from all quarters. Disraeli in front; Gladstone on flank; John Russell in rear. Disraeli and Gladstone rose at same time. Speaker called the former. Both spoke very well. It was a night of triumph for Gladstone.'<sup>1</sup>

There is another note of the proceedings on Lewis's budget:—

*Saturday, Feb. 14.*—I was engaged to meet Graham, Herbert, and Cardwell at Lord Aberdeen's, and I knew from Lord Derby that he was to see his friends at noon. So I went to him on my way, first to point out the *deficit* of between five and six millions for 1858-9 which is created by this budget, with the augmentations of it in subsequent years; and secondly, to say that in my opinion it was hopeless to attack the scheme in detail, and that it must be resisted on the ground of deficit as a whole, to give a hope of success. I said that if among the opposition there still lingered a desire to revive and extend indirect taxation, I must allow that the government had bid high for support from those who entertained it; that it was the worst proposition I had ever heard from a minister of finance. At Lord Aberdeen's we examined the figures of the case, and drafted two resolutions which expressed our opinions.

The more serious point, however, was that they all wished me to insist upon taking the motion into my own hands; and announcing this to Lord J. Russell as well as to Lord Derby. As to the second I had no difficulty, could I have acceded to the first. But I did not doubt that Disraeli would still keep hold of so much of his notice of Feb. 3 as had not been set aside by the

<sup>1</sup> Phillimore's Diary.

budget. I said that from motives which I could neither describe nor conquer I was quite unable to undertake to enter into any squabble or competition with him for the possession of a post of prominence. We had much conversation on political prospects: Graham wishing to see me lead the Commons under Lord John as prime minister in the Lords; admitting that the same thing would do under Lord Derby, but for Disraeli, who could not be thrown away like a sucked orange; and I vehemently deploring our position, which I said, and they admitted, was generally condemned by the country.

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I again went to Derby, as he had requested, at five; and he told me that he had had with him Malmesbury, Hardwicke, Disraeli, Pakington, Walpole, Lytton. They had all agreed that the best motion would be a resolution (from Disraeli) on Monday, before the Speaker left the chair, which would virtually rest the question on deficit. I made two verbal suggestions on the resolution to improve its form.

Late in the evening Lord Derby writes, enclosing a note received at dinner from Disraeli, 'I hope I may take it for granted that there is now a complete understanding between us as to the move on Monday night.' 'My dear lord,' runs the note, 'I like the resolution as amended. It is improved. Yours ever, D.' When Monday came, the move was duly made, and Gladstone and Disraeli again fought side by side as twin champions of the cause of reduced expenditure. Time had incensed Mr. Gladstone still further, and he conducted a terrific fusillade. He recounted how between 1842 and 1853 two and twenty millions of taxation had been taken off without costing a farthing. 'A man may be glad and thankful to have been an Englishman and a member of the British parliament during these years, bearing his part in so blessed a work. But if it be a blessed work, what are we to say of him who begins the undoing of it?' The proposal of the government showed a gross, a glaring, an increasing deficiency, a deficiency unparalleled in the financial history of a quarter of a century. It was deluding the people and trifling with national interests. It is certain that no financier before or since ever, in Cromwellian phrase, made such a

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conscience of the matter, or ever found the task more thankless.<sup>1</sup> Great as was the effect of the close and searching argument that accompanied all this invective, even Mr. Gladstone's friends thought it too impassioned and too severe upon Lewis, in whose favour there was consequently a reaction. The cool minister contented himself with quoting Horace's lines upon the artist skilled in reproducing in his bronze fierce nails or flowing hair, yet who fails because he lacks the art to seize the whole.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of February (1857), at a party meeting of 160 members, Lord Derby told his men that the course taken by Mr. Disraeli upon the budget had been concerted with him and had his entire approval; spoke with admiration of Mr. Gladstone; justified political union when produced by men finding themselves drawn to the same lobby by identity of sentiment; and advised them not to decline such accession of strength as would place their party in a position to undertake the government of the country. The newspapers cried out that the long-expected coalition had at length really taken place. In their hearts the conservative managers were not sure that Mr. Gladstone's adhesion would not cost them too dearly. 'He would only benefit us by his talents' (says Lord Malmesbury) 'for we should lose many of our supporters. The Duke of Beaufort, one of our staunchest adherents, told me at Longleat that if we coalesced with the Peelites he would leave the party, and I remember in 1855, when Lord Derby attempted to form a government, and offered places to Gladstone and Herbert, that no less than eighty members of the House of Commons threatened to leave him.'<sup>3</sup> All these schemes and calculations were destined to be rudely interrupted.

## II

While he was acting with Lord Derby on the one hand, Mr. Gladstone sought counsel from Cobden on the other, having great confidence in his 'firmness and integrity of

<sup>1</sup> The reader will find a candid statement of the controversy in Northcote, *Financial Policy*, pp. 306-329.

<sup>2</sup> *Ars Poetica*, 32-5.

<sup>3</sup> Malmesbury, *Memoirs*, ii. pp. 56-7. See above, p. 536.

purpose,' and hoping for support from him in face of a faint-hearted disposition to regard Lord Palmerston as a magician against whom it was vain to struggle. Events were speedily to show that Lord Palmerston had more magic at his disposal than his valiant foe believed. The agent of the British government in the China seas—himself, by the way, a philosophic radical—had forced a war upon the Chinese. The cabinet supported him. On the motion of Cobden, the House censured the proceeding. Mr. Gladstone, whose hatred of high-handed iniquities in China had been stirred in early days,<sup>1</sup> as the reader may recall, made the most powerful speech in a remarkable debate. 'Gladstone rose at half-past nine,' Phillimore says (Mar. 3), 'and delivered for nearly two hours an oration which enthralled the House, and which for argument, dignity, eloquence, and effect is unsurpassed by any of his former achievements. It won several votes. Nobody denies that his speech was the finest delivered in the memory of man in the House of Commons.' Apart from a rigorous examination of circumstance and fact in the special case, as in the famous precedent of Don Pacifico seven years before, he raised the dispute to higher planes and in most striking language. He examined it both by municipal and international law, and on 'the higher ground of natural justice'—'that justice which binds man to man; which is older than Christianity, because it was in the world before Christianity; which is broader than Christianity, because it extends to the world beyond Christianity; and which underlies Christianity, for Christianity itself appeals to it. . . . War taken at the best is a frightful scourge upon the human race; but because it is so, the wisdom of ages has surrounded it with strict laws and usages, and has required formalities to be observed which shall act as a curb upon the wild passions of man. . . . You have dispensed with all these precautions. You have turned a consul into a diplomatist, and that metamorphosed consul is forsooth to be at liberty to direct the whole might of England against the lives of a defenceless

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<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 225.

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people.' Disraeli in turn denounced proceedings which began in outrage and ended in ruin, mocked at 'No reform, new taxes, Canton blazing, Persia invaded,' as the programme of the party of progress and civilisation, and reprobated a prime minister who had professed almost every principle, and connected himself with almost every party. Palmerston replied by a stout piece of close argument, spiced by taunts about coalitions, combinations, and eloquent flourishes. But this time in parliament his slender majority failed him.

March 3, '57.—Spoke on Cobden's resolutions, and voted in 263-247—a division doing more honour to the House of Commons than any I ever remember. Home with C. and read Lord Ellesmere's *Faust*, being excited, which is rare with me. (*Diary.*)

The repulse was transient. The minister appealed to the constituencies, and won a striking triumph. Nearly all the Manchester politicians, with Bright and Cobden at their head, were ruthlessly dismissed, and the election was a glorious ratification not only of the little war among the Chinese junks, but of the great war against the Czar of Russia, and of much besides. This, said Mr. Gladstone, was not an election like that of 1784, when Pitt appealed on the question whether the crown should be the slave of an oligarchic faction; nor like that of 1831, when Grey sought a judgment on reform; nor like that of 1852, when the issue was the expiring controversy of protection. The country was to decide not upon the Canton river, but whether it would or would not have Lord Palmerston for prime minister. 'The insolent barbarian wielding authority at Canton who had violated the British flag' was indeed made to play his part. But the mainspring of the electoral victory was to be sought in the profound public weariness of the party dispersions of the last eleven years; in the determination that the country should be governed by men of intelligible opinions and definite views; in the resolution that the intermediate tints should disappear; in the conviction that Palmerston was the helmsman for the hour. The result was justly compared to the plébiscitè taken in France four or five years earlier, whether they would have Louis Napoleon for



emperor or not. It was computed that no fewer than one-sixth, or at best one-seventh, of the most conspicuous men in the former House of Commons were thrust out. The Derbyites were sure that the report of the coalition with the Peelites had done them irreparable harm, though their electioneering was independent. At Oxford Mr. Gladstone was returned without opposition. On the other hand, his gallant attempt to save the seat of his brother-in-law in Flintshire failed, his many speeches met much rough interruption, and to his extreme mortification Sir Stephen Glynne was thrown out.

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The moral of the general election was undoubtedly a heavy shock to Mr. Gladstone, and he was fully conscious of the new awkwardness of his public position. Painful change seemed imminent even in his intimate relations with cherished friends. Sidney Herbert had written to him that as for Gladstone, Graham, and himself, they were not only broken up as a party, but the country intended to break them up and would resent any attempt at resuscitation; they ought on no account to reappear as a triumvirate on their old bench. Mr. Gladstone's reply discloses in some of its phrases a peculiar warmth of sensibility, of which he was not often wont to make much display:—

*To Sidney Herbert.*

March 22, 1857.—I did not reply to your letter when it arrived, because it touches principally upon subjects with respect to which I feel that my mind has been wrought into a state of sensitiveness which is excessive and morbid. For the last eleven years, with the exception of only two among them, the pains of political strife have not for us found their usual and proper compensation in the genial and extended sympathies of a great body of comrades, while suspicion, mistrust, and criticism have flanked us on both sides and in unusual measure. Our one comfort has been a concurrence of opinion which has been upon the whole remarkably close, and which has been cemented by the closer bonds of feeling and of friendship. The loss of this one comfort I have no strength to face. Contrary to your supposition, I have nothing with which to replace it; but the attachments, which

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began with political infancy, and which have lived through so many storms and so many subtler vicissitudes will never be replaced. You will never be able to get away from me as long as I can cling to you, and if at length, urged by your conscience and deliberate judgment, you effect the operation, the result will not be to throw me into the staff of Lord Derby. I shall seek my duty, as well as consult my inclination, first, by absconding from what may be termed general politics, and secondly, by appearing, wherever I must appear, only in the ranks.

I can neither give even the most qualified adhesion to the ministry of Lord Palmerston, nor follow the liberal party in the abandonment of the very principles and pledges which were original and principal bonds of union with it. So, on the other hand, I never have had any hope of conservative reconstruction except (and that slender and remote) such as presupposed the co-operation—I am now speaking for the House of Commons only—of yourself and Graham in particular. By adopting Reform as a watchword of present political action he has certainly inserted a certain amount of gap between himself and me, which may come to be practically material or may not. If you make a gap upon this opportunity, I believe it will be a novelty in political history: it will be the first case on record of separation between two men, all of whose views upon every public question, political, administrative, or financial, are I believe in as exact accordance as under the laws of the human mind is possible. . . .

His leaning towards the conservative party seemed to become more decided rather than less. Lord Aberdeen had written to him as if the amalgamation of Peel's friends with the liberal party had practically taken place. 'If that be true,' Mr. Gladstone replies (April 4, 1857), 'then I have been deceiving both the world and my constituents, and the deception has reached its climax within the last fortnight, during which I have been chosen without opposition to represent Oxford under a belief directly contrary in the minds of the majority of my constituents.' He saw nothing but evil in Lord Palmerston's supremacy. That was his unending refrain. He tells one of his constituents, the state of things 'is likely to end in much political con-

fusion if it is not stopped by the failure of Lord Palmerston's physical force, the only way of stopping it which I could view with regret, for I admire the pluck with which he fights against the infirmities of age, though in political and moral courage I have never seen a minister so deficient.' Cobden asked him in the course of the first session of the new parliament, to take up some position adverse to the ministers. 'I should not knowingly,' Mr. Gladstone replies (June 16, 1857), 'allow any disgust with the state of public affairs to restrain me from the discharge of a public duty; but I arrived some time ago at the conclusion, which has guided my conduct since the dissolution, that the House of Commons would sooner and more healthily return to a sense of its own dignity and of its proper functions, if let alone by a person who had so thoroughly worried both it and the country as myself.'

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## III

This stern resolve to hold aloof did not last. Towards the end of the session a subject was brought before parliament that stirred him to the very depths of heart and conscience. It marked one more stage of the history of English laws in that immense process of the secularisation of the state, against which, in his book of 1838, Mr. Gladstone had drawn up, with so much weight of reading and thought, a case so wholly unavailing. The legal doctrine of marriage had been established against the theological doctrine by Lord Hardwicke's famous act of 1753, for that measure made the observance of certain requirements then set up by law essential to a good marriage. A further fundamental change had begun with the legalisation of civil marriage in 1836. The conception of marriage underlying such a change obviously removed it from sacrament, or anything like a sacrament, to the bleak and frigid zone of civil contract; it was antagonistic, therefore, to the whole ecclesiastical theory of divorce.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is a striking indication of the tenacity of custom against logic that in France, though civil marriage was made not merely permissive, as with us, but compulsory in 1792, divorce was banished from French law from 1816 down to 1884.

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A royal commission issued a report in 1853, setting forth the case against the existing system of dissolving marriage, and recommending radical changes. In the following year the cabinet of which Mr. Gladstone was a member framed and introduced a bill substantially conforming to these recommendations. For one reason or another it did not become law, nor did a bill of similar scope in 1856. In the interval of leisure that followed, Mr. Gladstone was pressed, perhaps by Bishop Wilberforce, thoroughly to consider the matter. With his prepossessions, there could be little doubt that he would incline to that view of marriage, and the terms and legal effects of loosening the marriage tie, that the Council of Trent had succeeded in making the general marriage law of catholic Europe. The subject was one peculiarly calculated to interest and excite him. Religion and the church were involved. It raised at our own hearths the eternal question of rendering to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to the church what belongs to the church. It was wrapped up with topics of history and of learning. It could not be discussed without that admixture of legality and ethics which delights a casuistic intellect. Above all, it went to the root both of that deepest of human relations, and of that particular branch of morals, in which Mr. Gladstone always felt the vividest concern. So, in short, being once called upon for a practical purpose to consider divorce and the many connected questions of re-marriage, he was inevitably roused to a fervour on one side, not any less heated and intense than the fervour of the mighty Milton on the other side two centuries before. He began operations by an elaborate article in the *Quarterly Review*.<sup>1</sup> Here he flings himself upon the well-worn texts in the Bible familiar to the readers of *Tetrachordon*,—if, indeed, *Tetrachordon* have any readers,—with a dialectical acuteness and force that only make one wonder the more how a mind so powerful as Mr. Gladstone's could dream that, at that age of the world, men would suffer one of the most far-reaching of all our social problems, whatever be the right or wrong social solution, to be in the slightest degree affected by

<sup>1</sup> July 1857. Reprinted in *Gleanings*, vi. p. 47.

a Greek word or two of utterly disputable and unfixed significance.

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I may note in passing that in another department of supposed Levitical prohibition—the case of the wife's sister—he had in 1849 strongly argued against relaxation, mainly on the ground that it would involve an alteration of the law and doctrines of the church of England, and therefore of the law of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Experience and time revolutionised his point of view, and in 1869, in supporting a bill legalising these marriages, he took the secular and utilitarian line, and said that twelve or fourteen years earlier (about the time on which we are now engaged) he formed the opinion that it was the mass of the community to which we must look in dealing with such a question, and that the fairest course would be to legalise the marriage contracts in question, and legitimise their issue, leaving to each religious community the question of attaching to such marriages a religious character.<sup>2</sup>

The Divorce bill of 1857 was introduced in the Lords, and passed by them without effective resistance. It was supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury and nine other prelates. Authorities no less exalted than Bishop Wilberforce were violently hostile, even at one stage carrying amendments (ultimately rejected), not only for prohibiting the inter-marriage of the guilty parties, but actually imposing a fine or imprisonment on either of them. This, I fancy, is the high-water mark of the ecclesiastical theory in the century.<sup>3</sup> Lord Mahon in a letter to Mr. Gladstone at this date pictures Macaulay's New Zealander being taken to the House of Lords and hearing learned lords and reverend prelates lay down the canon that marriage is indissoluble by the law of England and by the law of the church. But who, he might have asked, are those two gentlemen listening so intently? Oh, these are two gentlemen whose marriages were dissolved last year. And that other man? Oh, he was divorced last week. And those

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, June 20, 1849.

<sup>3</sup> It may be said that the exaction

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, July 20, 1869. See also of damages comes to the same thing. *Gleanings*, vi. p. 50.

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three ladies. Oh, their marriages may in all probability be dissolved in another year or two. Still this view of the absurdity of existing practice did not make a convert.

As soon as the bill came down to the House of Commons Mr. Gladstone hastened up to London in the dog-days. 'A companion in the railway carriage,' he wrote to Mrs. Gladstone, 'more genial than congenial, offered me his *Times*, and then brandy! This was followed by a proposal to smoke, so that he had disabled me from objecting on personal grounds.' Tobacco, brandy at odd hours, and the newspaper made a triple abomination in a single dose, for none of the three was ever a favourite article of his consumption. In London he found the counsels of his friends by no means encouraging for the great fight on which he was intent. They deprecated anything that would bring him into direct collision with Lord Palmerston. They urged that violent opposition now would be contrasted with his past silence, and with his own cabinet responsibility for the very same proposal. Nothing would be intelligible to the public, Lord Aberdeen said, beyond a 'carefully moderated course.' But a carefully moderated course was the very last thing possible to Mr. Gladstone when the flame was once kindled, and he fought the bill with a holy wrath as vehement as the more worldly fury with which Henry Fox, from very different motives, had fought the marriage bill of 1753. The thought that stirred him was indicated in a phrase or two to his wife at Hawarden: 'July 31.—Parliamentary affairs are very black; the poor church gets deeper and deeper into the mire. I am to speak to-night; it will do no good; and the fear grows upon me from year to year that when I finally leave parliament, I shall not leave the great question of state and church better, but perhaps even worse, than I found it.'

The discussion of the bill in the Commons occupied no fewer than eighteen sittings, more than one of them, according to the standard of those primitive times, inordinately long. In the hundred encounters between Mr. Gladstone and Bethell, polished phrase barely hid unchristian desire to retaliate and provoke. Bethell boldly taunted Mr. Gladstone with insincerity. Mr. Gladstone, with a vivacity very

like downright anger, reproached Bethell with being a mere hewer of wood and drawer of water to the cabinet who forced the bill into his charge; with being disorderly and abusing the privileges of speech by accusations of insincerity, 'which have not only proceeded from his mouth but gleamed from those eloquent eyes of his, which have been continuously turned on me for the last ten minutes, instead of being addressed to the chair.' On every division those who affirmed the principle of the bill were at least two to one. 'All we can do,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to his wife, 'is to put shoulder to shoulder, and this, please God, we will do. Graham is with us, much to my delight, and much too, let me add, to my surprise. I am as thankful to be in parliament for this (almost) as I was for the China vote. . . . Yesterday ten and a-half hours, rather angry; to-day with pacification, but still tough and prolonged.' An unfriendly but not wholly unveracious chronicler says of this ten hours' sitting (August 14) on a single clause: 'Including questions, explanations, and interlocutory suggestions, Mr. Gladstone made nine-and-twenty speeches, some of them of considerable length. Sometimes he was argumentative, frequently ingenious and critical, often personal, and not less often indignant at the alleged personality of others.'

He made no pretence of thinking the principle of divorce *a vinculo* anything but an immense evil, but he still held himself free, if that view were repudiated, to consider the legislative question of dissolubility and its conditions. He resorted abundantly to what Palmerston called 'the old standard set-up form of objecting to any improvement, to say that it does not carry out all the improvements of which the matter in hand is susceptible.' One of the complaints of which he made most was the inequality in the bill between the respective rights of husband and wife. 'It is the special and peculiar doctrines of the Gospel,' he said, 'respecting the personal relation of every Christian, whether man or woman, to the person of Christ, that form the firm, the broad, the indestructible basis of the equality of the sexes under the Christian law.' Again, 'in the vast majority of instances where the woman falls into sin, she does so from

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motives less impure and ignoble than those of the man.' He attacks with just vigour the limitation of legal cruelty in this case to the cruelty of mere force importing danger to life, limb, or health, though he was shocked in after years, as well he might be, at the grotesque excess to which the doctrine of 'mental cruelty' has been carried in some States of the American Union. In this branch of the great controversy, at any rate, he speaks in a nobler and humaner temper than Milton, who writes with a tyrannical Jewish belief in the inferiority of women to men, and wives to husbands, that was in Mr. Gladstone's middle life slowly beginning to melt away in English public opinion. His second complaint, and in his eyes much the more urgent of the two, was the right conferred by the government bill upon divorced persons to claim marriage by a clergyman in a church, and still more bitterly did he resent the obligation imposed by the bill upon clergymen to perform such marriages. Here the fight was not wholly unsuccessful, and modifications were secured as the fruit of his efforts, narrowing and abating, though not removing his grounds of objection.<sup>1</sup>

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Before the battle was over, he was torn away from the scene by a painful bereavement. Mrs. Gladstone was at Hagley nursing her beloved sister, Lady Lyttelton. He wrote to his wife in the fiercest hours of the fight (11 Carlton House Terrace, Aug. 15): 'I read too plainly in your letter of yesterday that your heart is heavy, and mine too is heavy along with yours. I have been in many minds about my duty to-day; and I am all but ready to break the bands even of the high obligations that have kept me here with

<sup>1</sup> In republishing in 1878 his article from the *Quarterly* (*Gleanings*, vi. p. 106), he says his arguments have been too sadly illustrated by the mischievous effects of the measure. The judicial statistics, however, hardly support this view, that petitions for divorce were constantly increasing, and at an accelerating rate of progression. In England the proportion of divorce petitions to marriages and

the proportion of divorce decrees to population are both of them lower than they were a few years ago. Mr. Gladstone used to desire the prohibition of publicity in these proceedings, until he learned the strong view of the president of the Court that the hideous glare of this publicity acts probably as no inconsiderable deterrent.



reference to the marriage bill. You have only to speak the word by telegraph or otherwise, showing that I can help to give any of the support you need, and I come to you. As matters stand I am wanted in the House to-day, and am wanted for the Divorce bill again on Monday.' Before Monday came, Lady Lyttelton was no more. Four days after her death, Mr. Gladstone wrote to Mr. Arthur Gordon from Hagley :—

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The loss suffered here is a dreadful one, but it is borne in the way which robs death and all evil of its sting. My deceased sister-in-law was so united with my wife; they so drew from their very earliest years, and not less since marriage than before it, their breath so to speak in common, that the relation I bore to her conveys little even of what I have lost; but that again is little compared to my wife's bereavement; and far above all to that of Lyttelton, who now stands lonely among his twelve children. But the retrospect from first to last is singularly bright and pure. She seemed to be one of those rare spirits who do not need affliction to draw them to their Lord, and from first to last there was scarce a shade of it in her life. When she was told she was to die, her pulse did not change; the last communion appeared wholly to sever her from the world, but she smiled upon her husband within a minute of the time when the spirit fled.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SECOND DERBY GOVERNMENT.

(1858)

EXTRAVAGANCE and exaggeration of ideas are not the essential characteristic of either political party in this country. Both of them are composed in the main of men with English hearts and English feelings. Each of them comprises within itself far greater diversities of political principles and tendencies, than can be noted as dividing the more moderate portion of the one from the more moderate portion of the other. . . . But while the great English parties differ no more in their general outlines than by a somewhat varied distribution of the same elements in each, they are liable to be favourably or unfavourably affected and their essential characteristics unduly exaggerated, by circumstances of the order that would be termed accidental.—GLADSTONE.

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THE turn of the political wheel is constantly producing strange results, but none has ever been more strikingly dramatic than when, on February 20, Bright and Milner Gibson, who had been ignominiously thrown out at Manchester the year before, had the satisfaction of walking to the table of the House of Commons as victorious tellers in the division on the Conspiracy to Murder bill that overthrew Lord Palmerston. A plot to slay the French Emperor had been organized by a band of Italian refugees in London. The bombs were manufactured in England. Orsini's design miscarried, but feeling in France was greatly excited, and the French government formally drew attention at St. James's to the fact that bodies of assassins abused our right of asylum. They hinted further that the amity of the crown called for stronger law. Palmerston very sensibly did not answer the French despatch, but introduced a bill with new powers against conspiracy. He in an instant became the

most unpopular man in the country, and the idol of the year before was now hooted in the Park.

Mr. Gladstone was at first doubtful, but soon made up his mind. To Mrs. Gladstone he writes (Feb. 17):—

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As respects the Conspiracy bill, you may depend upon our having plenty of fight; the result is doubtful; but if the bill gets into the House of Lords it will pass. Lord Aberdeen is strong against it. From him I went to-day to Lord Lyndhurst, and I found Lord Brougham with him. A most interesting conversation followed with these two wonderful old men at 80 and 86 (coming next birthday) respectively, both in the fullest possession of their faculties, Brougham vehement, impulsive, full of gesticulation, and not a little rambling, the other calm and clear as a deep pool upon rock. Lord Lyndhurst is decidedly against the bill, Brougham somewhat inclines to it; being, as Lord Lyndhurst says, half a Frenchman. [Lord Lyndhurst expounded the matter in a most luminous way from his point of view. Brougham went into raptures and used these words: 'I tell you what, Lyndhurst, I wish I could make an exchange with you. I would give you some of my walking power, and you should give me some of your brains.' I have often told the story with this brief commentary, that the compliment was the highest I have ever known to be paid by one human being to another.]<sup>1</sup>

The debate showed a curious inversion of the parts usually played by eminent men. Palmerston vainly explained that he was doing no more than international comity required, and doing no worse than placing the foreign refugee on the same footing in respect of certain offences as the British subject. Mr. Gladstone (Feb. 19), on the other hand, 'as one who has perhaps too often made it his business to call attention to the failings of his countrymen,' contended that if national honour was not henceforth to be a shadow and a name, it

<sup>1</sup> The portion within brackets is from a letter of Mr. Gladstone's to Lady Lyndhurst, Aug. 31, 1883, and he continues:—'I have often compared Lord Lyndhurst in my own mind with the five other lord chancellors who since his time have been my colleagues in cabinet; much to the disadvantage in certain respects

of some of them. Once I remember in the Peel cabinet the conversation happened to touch some man (there are such) who was too fond of making difficulties. Peel said to your husband, "That is not your way, Lyndhurst." Of all the intellects I have ever known, his, I think, worked with the least friction.'

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was the paramount, absolute, and imperative duty of Her Majesty's ministers to protest against the imputation upon us of favour for assassination, 'a plant which is congenial neither to our soil nor to the climate in which we live.'<sup>1</sup> One of the truest things said in the debate was Disraeli's incidental observation that 'the House should remember that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, when there is a quarrel between two states, it is generally occasioned by some blunder of a ministry.' Mr. Disraeli perhaps consoled himself by the pithy saying of Baron Brunnov, that if no one made any blunders, there would be no politics. The blood of the *civis Romanus*, however, was up, and Palmerston, defeated by a majority of nineteen, at once resigned.

Lord Derby, whose heart had failed him three years earlier, now formed his second administration, and made one more attempt to bring Mr. Gladstone over to the conservative ranks. Lord Lansdowne had told the Queen that no other government was possible, and an hour after he had kissed hands the new prime minister applied to Mr. Gladstone. The decisions taken by him in answer to this and another application three months later, mark one more of the curious turning points in his career and in the fate of his party.

Feb. 20, 1858.—Dined at Herbert's with Graham. We sat till 12½, but did not talk quite through the crisis. Palmerston has resigned. He is down. I must now cease to denounce him. 21.—St. James's morning, and holy communion. Westminster Abbey in evening, when I sat by Sir George Grey. From St. James's I went to Lord Aberdeen's. There Derby's letter reached me. We sent for Herbert and I wrote an answer. Graham arrived and heard it; with slight modifications it went. The case though grave was not doubtful. Made two copies and went

<sup>1</sup> 'Happily for the reputation of the House, but unhappily for the ministry, the debate assumed once more, with Gladstone's eloquence, a statesmanlike character. The foremost speaker of the House showed himself worthy of his reputation . . . much as there was to lament in the too radical tone of his often fine-spun argumentation. His thundering periods were received with thundering echoes of applause.'—Vitzthum, *St. Petersburg and London*, i. p. 273.

off before 6 with S. Herbert. We separated for the evening with the fervent wish that in public life we might never part.

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Two or three letters exhibit the situation :—

*Lord Derby to Mr. Gladstone.*

*St. James's Square, Feb. 21, 1858.*—In consequence of the adverse vote of the other night, in which you took so prominent and distinguished a part, the government, as you know, has resigned; and I have been entrusted by the Queen with the difficult task, which I have felt it my duty not to decline, of forming an administration. In doing so, I am very desirous, if possible, of obtaining the co-operation of men of eminence, who are not at this moment fettered by other ties, and whose principles are not incompatible with my own. Believing that you stand in this position, it would afford me very great satisfaction if I could obtain your valuable aid in forming my proposed cabinet; and if I should be so fortunate as to do so, I am sure there would be on all hands a sincere desire to consult your wishes, as far as possible, as to the distribution of offices. I would willingly include Sidney Herbert in this offer; but I fear he is too intimately associated with John Russell to make it possible for him to accept.

*Mr. Gladstone to Lord Derby.*

*10 Great George Street, Feb. 21, 1858.*—I am very sensible of the importance of the vote taken on Friday; and I should deeply lament to see the House of Commons trampled on in consequence of that vote. The honour of the House is materially involved in giving it full effect. It would therefore be my first wish to aid, if possible, in such a task; and remembering the years when we were colleagues, I may be permitted to say that there is nothing in the fact of your being the head of a ministry, which would avail to deter me from forming part of it.

Among the first questions I have had to put to myself, in consequence of the offer which you have conveyed in such friendly and flattering terms, has been the question whether it would be in my power by accepting it, either alone or in concert with others, to render you material service. After the long years during which we have been separated, there would be various matters

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of public interest requiring to be noticed between us; but the question I have mentioned is a needful preliminary. Upon the best consideration which the moment allows, I think it plain that alone, as I must be, I could not render you service worth your having. The dissolution of last year excluded from parliament men with whom I had sympathies; and it in some degree affected the position of those political friends with whom I have now for many years been united through evil and (much more rarely) through good report. Those who lament the rupture of old traditions may well desire the reconstitution of a party; but the reconstitution of a party can only be effected, if at all, by the return of the old influences to their places, and not by the junction of an isolated person. The difficulty is even enhanced in my case by the fact that in your party, reduced as it is at the present moment in numbers, there is a small but active and not unimportant section who avowedly regard me as the representative of the most dangerous ideas. I should thus, unfortunately, be to you a source of weakness in the heart of your own adherents, while I should bring you no party or group of friends to make up for their defection or discontent.

For the reasons which I have thus stated or glanced at, my reply to your letter must be in the negative.

I must, however, add that a government formed by you at this time will, in my opinion, have strong claims upon me, and upon any one situated as I am, for favourable presumptions, and in the absence of conscientious difference on important questions, for support. I have had an opportunity of seeing Lord Aberdeen and Sidney Herbert; and they fully concur in the sentiments I have just expressed.

Mr. Gladstone had no close personal or political ties with the Manchester men at this moment, but we may well believe that a sagacious letter from Mr. Bright made its mark upon his meditations:—

*Mr. Bright to Mr. Gladstone.*

*Reform Club, Feb. 21, '58.*—Coming down Park Lane just now, I met a leading lawyer of Lord Derby's party, who will doubtless be in office with him if he succeeds in forming a government.

He told me that Lord Derby and his friends were expecting to be able to induce you to join them.

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Will you forgive me if I write to you on this matter? I say nothing but in the most friendly spirit, and I have some confidence that you will not misinterpret what I am doing. Lord Derby has only about one-third of the House of Commons with him—and it is impossible by any management, or by any dissolution, to convert this minority into a majority. His minority in the House is greater and more powerful than it is in the country—and any appeal to the country, now or hereafter, must, I think, leave him in no better position than that in which he now finds himself. The whole liberal party in the country dislike him, and they dislike his former leader in the Commons; and notoriously his own party in the country, and in the House, have not much confidence in him. There is no party in the country to rally round him, as Peel was supported in 1841. A Derby government can only exist upon forbearance, and will only last till it is convenient for us and the whigs to overthrow it. Lord Palmerston may give it his support for a time, but he can give it little more than his own vote and speeches, for the liberal constituencies will not forgive their members if they support it. If you join Lord Derby, you link your fortunes with a constant minority, and with a party in the country which is every day lessening in numbers and in power. If you remain on our side of the House, you are with the majority, and no government can be formed without you. You have many friends there, and some who would grieve much to see you leave them—and I know nothing that can prevent your being prime minister before you approach the age of every other member of the House who has or can have any claim to that high office.

If you agree rather with the men opposite than with those among whom you have been sitting of late, I have nothing to say. I am sure you will follow where 'the right' leads, if you only discover it, and I am not hoping or wishing to keep you from the right. I think I am not mistaken in the opinion I have formed of the direction in which your views have for some years been tending. You know well enough the direction in which the opinions of the country are tending. The minority which invites you to join

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it, if honest, must go or wish to go, in an opposite direction, and it cannot therefore govern the country. Will you unite yourself with what must be, from the beginning, an inevitable failure?

Don't be offended, if, by writing this, I seem to believe you will join Lord Derby. I don't believe it—but I can imagine your seeing the matter from a point of view very different to mine—and I feel a strong wish just to say to you what is passing in my mind. You will not be the less able to decide on your proper course. If I thought this letter would annoy you, I would not send it. I think you will take it in the spirit in which it is written. No one knows that I am writing it, and I write it from no idea of personal advantage to myself, but with a view to yours, and to the interests of the country. I may be mistaken, but think I am not. Don't think it necessary to reply to this. I only ask you to read it, and to forgive me the intrusion upon you—and further to believe that I am yours, with much respect.

*Mr. Gladstone to Mr. Bright.*

10 Great George Street, Feb. 22, '58.—Your letter can only bear one construction, that of an act of peculiar kindness which ought not to be readily forgotten. For any one in whom I might be interested I should earnestly desire, upon his entering public life, that, if possible, he might with a good conscience end in the party where he began, or else that he might have broad and definite grounds for quitting it. When neither of these advantages appears to be certainly within command, there remains a strong and paramount consolation in seeking, as we best can, the truth and the public interests; and I think it a marked instance of liberality, that you should give me credit for keeping this object in my view.

My seeking, however, has not on the present occasion been very difficult. The opinions, such as they are, that I hold on many questions of government and administration are strongly held; and although I set a value, and a high value, upon the power which office gives, I earnestly hope never to be tempted by its exterior allurements, unless they are accompanied with the reasonable prospect of giving effect to some at least of those opinions and with some adequate opening for public good. On



the present occasion I have not seen such a prospect; and before I received your letter yesterday afternoon I had made my choice.

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This ended the first scene of the short fifth act. The new government was wholly conservative.

## II

Throughout the whole of this period, Mr. Gladstone's political friends were uneasy about him. 'He writes and says and does too much,' Graham had told Lord Aberdeen (Dec. 1856), and a year and a half later the same correspondent notices a restless anxiety for a change of position, though at Gladstone's age and with his abilities he could not wonder at it. Mr. Gladstone was now approaching fifty; Graham was nearer seventy than sixty; and Aberdeen drawing on to seventy-five. One of the most eminent of his friends confessed that he was 'amazed at a man of Gladstone's high moral sense of feeling being able to *bear* with Dizzy. I can only account for it on the supposition, which I suppose to be the true one, that personal dislike and distrust of Palmerston is the one absorbing feeling with him. . . . I see no good ground for the violent personal prejudice which is the sole ruling motive of Gladstone's and Graham's course—especially when the alternative is such a man as Dizzy.' Then comes some angry language about that enigmatic personage which at this cooling distance of time need not here be transcribed. At the end of 1856 Lord Aberdeen told Mr. Gladstone that his position in the House was 'very peculiar.' 'With an admitted superiority of character and intellectual power above any other member, I fear that you do not really possess the sympathy of the House at large, while you have incurred the strong dislike of a considerable portion of Lord Derby's followers.'

Things grew worse rather than better. Even friendly journalists in the spring of 1858 wrote of him as 'the most signal example that the present time affords of the man of speculation misplaced and lost in the labyrinth of practical politics.' They call him the chief orator and the weakest man in the House of Commons. He has exhibited at every

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stage traces of an unhappy incoherence which is making him a mere bedouin of parliament, a noble being full of spirit and power, but not to be tamed into the ordinary ways of civil life. His sympathies hover in hopeless inconsistency between love for righteous national action, good government, freedom, social and commercial reform, and a hankering after a strong, unassailable executive in the old obstructive tory sense. He protests against unfair dealing with the popular voice in the Principalities on the Danube, but when the popular voice on the Thames demands higher honours for General Havelock he resists it with the doctrine that the executive should be wholly free to distribute honours as it pleases. He is loudly indignant against the supersession of parliament by diplomacy, but when a motion is made directly pointing to the rightful influence of the House over foreign affairs, he neither speaks nor votes. Is it not clear beyond dispute that his cannot be the will to direct, nor the wisdom to guide the party of progress out of which the materials for the government of this country will have to be chosen? <sup>1</sup>

In organs supposed to be inspired by Disraeli, Mr. Gladstone's fate is pronounced in different terms, but with equal decision. In phrases that must surely have fallen from the very lips of the oracle itself, the public was told that 'cerebral natures, men of mere intellect without moral passion, are quite unsuited for governing mankind.' The days of the mere dialectician are over, and the rulers of Christendom are no longer selected from the serfs of Aristotle. Without the emotions that soar and thrill and enkindle, no man can attain 'a grand moral vision.' When Mr. Gladstone aims at philosophy, he only reaches casuistry. He reasons like one of the sons of Ignatius Loyola. What their Society is to the Jesuit, his own individualism is to Mr. Gladstone. He supports his own interests as much from intellectual zeal as from self-love. A shrewd observer is quoted: 'looking on Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Sidney Herbert sitting side by side, the former with his rather saturnine face and straight black hair, and the latter eminently handsome, with his bright, cold smile and subtlety of aspect, I

<sup>1</sup> See *Spectator*, May 8, 1858.

have often thought that I was beholding the Jesuit of the closet really devout, and the Jesuit of the world, ambitious, artful, and always on the watch for making his rapier thrusts.' Mr. Gladstone, in a word, is extremely eminent, but strangely eccentric, 'a Simeon Stylites among the statesmen of his time.'<sup>1</sup>

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In May an important vacancy occurred in the ministerial ranks by Lord Ellenborough's resignation of the presidency of the board of control. This became the occasion of a renewed proposal to Mr. Gladstone. He tells the story in a memorandum prepared (May 22) for submission to Aberdeen and Graham, whom Lord Derby urged him to consult.

*Memorandum by Mr. Gladstone submitted to Lord Aberdeen and Sir James Graham. May 22, '58.*

*Secret.*—Last week after Mr. Cardwell's notice but before the debate began, Mr. Walpole, after previously sounding Sir William Heathcote to a similar effect, called me aside in the lobby of the House of Commons and inquired whether I could be induced to take office. I replied that I thought that question put by him of his own motion—as he had described it—was one that I could hardly answer. It seemed plain, I said, that the actual situation was one so entirely belonging to the government as it stood, that they must plainly work through it unchanged; that the head of the government was the only person who could make a proposal or put a question about taking office in it; I added, however, that my general views were the same as in February.

This morning I had a note from Walpole asking for an appointment; and he called on me at four o'clock accordingly. He stated that he came by authority of Lord Derby to offer me the board of control or, if I preferred it, the colonial office. That he had told Lord Derby I should, he thought, be likely to raise difficulties on two points: first, the separation from those who have been my friends in public life; secondly, the leadership of the House of Commons. I here interrupted him to say it must be in his option to speak or to be silent on the latter of these subjects;

<sup>1</sup> *Press*, April 7, 1858.

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it was one which had never been entertained or opened by me in connection with this subject, since the former of the two points had offered an absolute preliminary bar to the acceptance of office. He, however, explained himself as follows, that Mr. Disraeli had stated his willingness to surrender the leadership to Sir James Graham, if he were disposed to join the government; but that the expressions he had used in his speech of Thursday<sup>1</sup> (apparently those with respect to parties in the House and to office), seemed to put it beyond the right of the government to make any proposal to him. He at the same time spoke in the highest terms not only of the speech, but of the position in which he thought it placed Sir James Graham; and he left me to infer that there would have been, but for the cause named, a desire to obtain his co-operation as leader of the House of Commons. With respect to the proposal as one the acceptance of which would separate me from my friends, he hoped it was not so. It was one made to me alone, the immediate vacancy being a single one; but the spirit in which it was made was a desire that it should be taken to signify the wish of the government progressively to extend its basis, as far as it could be effected compatibly with consistency in its opinions. He added that judging from the past he hoped he might assume that there was no active opposition to the government on the part of my friends, naming Lord Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, and the Duke of Newcastle.

I told him with respect to the leadership that I thought it handsome on the part of Mr. Disraeli to offer to waive it on behalf of Sir James Graham; that it was a subject which did not enter into my decision for the reason I had stated; and I hinted also that it was one on which I could never negotiate or make stipulations. It was true, I said, I had no broad differences of principle from the party opposite; on the whole perhaps I differed more from Lord

<sup>1</sup> I wish to state that it is by the courtesy of hon. gentlemen that I occupy a seat on this (the ministerial) side of the House, although I am no adherent of Her Majesty's government. By no engagement, express or implied, am I their supporter. On the contrary, my sympathies and opinions are with the liberal party

sitting on the opposite side of the House, and from recent kind communications I have resumed those habits of friendly intercourse and confidential communication with my noble friend (Lord John Russell) which formerly existed between us.—*May 20, 1858.*

Palmerston than from almost any one, and this was more on account of his temper and views of public conduct, than of any political opinions. Nay more, it would be hard to show broad differences of public principle between the government and the bench opposite.

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I said, however, that in my view the proposal which he had made to me could not be entertained. I felt the personal misfortune and public inconvenience of being thrown out of party connection; but a man at the bottom of the well must not try to get out, however disagreeable his position, until a rope or a ladder is put down to him. In this case my clear opinion was that by joining the government I should shock the public sentiment and should make no essential, no important, change in their position.

I expressed much regret that accidental causes had kept back from my view at the critical moment the real extent of Lord Derby's proposals in February; that I answered him then as an individual with respect to myself individually. . . . I could not separate from those with whom I had been acting all my life long, in concert with whom all the habits of my mind and my views of public affairs had been formed, to go into what might justly be called a cabinet of strangers, since it contained no man to whom I had ever been a colleague, with the single exception of Lord Derby, and that twelve or fourteen years ago.

While I did not conceive that public feeling would or ought to approve this separation, on the other hand I felt that my individual junction would and could draw no material accession of strength to the cabinet. He made the marked admission that if my acceptance must be without the *approval* of friends, that must undoubtedly be an element of great weight in the case. This showed clearly that Lord Derby was looking to me in the first place, and then to others beyond me. He did not, however, found upon this any request, and he took my answer as an absolute refusal. His tone was, I need not say, very cordial; and I think I have stated all that was material in the conversation, except that he signified they were under the belief that Herbert entertained strong personal feelings towards Disraeli.

Returning home, however, at seven this evening I found a note

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from Walpole expressing Lord Derby's wish in the following words: 'That before you finally decide on refusing to accept the offer he has made either of the colonies or of the India board he wishes you would consult Sir James Graham and Lord Aberdeen.' In order to meet this wish, I have put down the foregoing statement.

Lord Aberdeen agreed with Mr. Gladstone that on the whole the balance inclined to *no*.

Graham, in an admirable letter, truly worthy of a wise, affectionate and faithful friend, said, 'My judgment is, on this occasion, balanced like your own.' He ran through the catalogue of Mr. Gladstone's most intimate political friends; the result was that he stood alone. Fixed party ties and active official duties would conduce to his present happiness and his future fame. He might form an intimate alliance with Lord Derby with perfect honour. His natural affinities were strong, and his 'honest liberal tendencies' would soon leaven the whole lump and bring it into conformity with the shape and body of the times. As for the leadership in the Commons, Graham had once thought that for Gladstone to sit on the treasury bench with Disraeli for his leader would be humiliation and dishonour. Later events had qualified this opinion. Of course, the abdication of Disraeli could not be made a condition precedent, but the concession would somehow be made, and in the Commons pre-eminence would be Gladstone's, be the conditions what they might. In fine, time was wearing fast away, Gladstone had reached the utmost vigour of his powers, and present opportunities were not to be neglected in vain expectation of better.

### III

Before this letter of Graham's arrived, an unexpected thing happened, and Mr. Disraeli himself advanced to the front of the stage. His communication, which opens and closes without the usual epistolary forms, just as it is reproduced here, marks a curious episode, and sheds a strange light on that perplexing figure:—

*Mr. Disraeli to Mr. Gladstone.*

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*Confidential.*

I think it of such paramount importance to the public interests, that you should assume at this time a commanding position in the administration of affairs, that I feel it a solemn duty to lay before you some facts, that you may not decide under a misapprehension.

Our mutual relations have formed the great difficulty in accomplishing a result, which I have always anxiously desired.

Listen, without prejudice, to this brief narrative.

In 1850, when the balanced state of parties in the House of Commons indicated the future, I endeavoured, through the medium of the late Lord Londonderry, and for some time not without hope, to induce Sir James Graham to accept the post of leader of the conservative party, which I thought would remove all difficulties.

When he finally declined this office, I endeavoured to throw the game into your hands, and your conduct then, however unintentional, assisted me in my views.

The precipitate ministry of 1852 baffled all this. Could we have postponed it another year, all might have been right.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding my having been forced publicly into the chief place in the Commons, and all that occurred in consequence, I was still constant to my purpose, and in 1855 suggested that the leadership of the House should be offered to Lord Palmerston, entirely with the view of consulting your feelings and facilitating your position.

Some short time back, when the power of dissolution was certain, and the consequences of it such as, in my opinion, would be highly favourable to the conservative party, I again confidentially sought Sir James Graham, and implored him to avail himself of the favourable conjuncture, accept the post of leader in the H. of C., and allow both of us to serve under him.

He was more than kind to me, and fully entered into the state of affairs, but he told me his course was run, and that he had not strength or spirit for such an enterprise.

Thus you see, for more than eight years, instead of thrusting myself into the foremost place, I have been, at all times, actively prepared to make every sacrifice of self for the public good, which

BOOK I have ever thought identical with your accepting office in a con-  
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Don't you think the time has come when you might deign to be magnanimous ?

Mr. Canning was superior to Lord Castlereagh in capacity, in acquirements, in eloquence, but he joined Lord C. when Lord C. was Lord Liverpool's lieutenant, when the state of the tory party rendered it necessary. That was an enduring, and, on the whole, not an unsatisfactory connection, and it certainly terminated very gloriously for Mr. Canning.

I may be removed from the scene, or I may wish to be removed from the scene.

Every man performs his office, and there is a Power, greater than ourselves, that disposes of all this.

The conjuncture is very critical, and if prudently yet boldly managed, may rally this country. To be inactive now is, on your part, a great responsibility. If you join Lord Derby's cabinet, you will meet there some warm personal friends ; all its members are your admirers. You may place me in neither category, but in that, I assure you, you have ever been sadly mistaken. The vacant post is, at this season, the most commanding in the commonwealth ; if it were not, whatever office you filled, your shining qualities would always render you supreme ; and if party necessities retain me formally in the chief post, the sincere and delicate respect which I should always offer you, and the unbounded confidence, which on my part, if you choose you could command, would prevent your feeling my position as anything but a form.

Think of all this in a kindly spirit. These are hurried lines, but they are heartfelt. I was in the country yesterday, and must return there to-day for a county dinner. My direction is Langley Park, Slough. But on Wednesday evening I shall be in town.—  
B. DISRAELI. *Grosvenor Gate, May 25, 1858.*

None of us, I believe, were ever able to persuade Mr Gladstone to do justice to Disraeli's novels,—the spirit of whim in them, the ironic solemnity, the historical paradoxes, the fantastic glitter of dubious gems, the grace of high comedy, all in union with a social vision that often pierced deep below the surface. In the comparative stiff-



ness of Mr. Gladstone's reply on this occasion, I seem to hear the same accents of guarded reprobation :—

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*Mr. Gladstone to Mr. Disraeli.*

11 *Carlton House Terrace, May 25, '58.*—MY DEAR SIR,—The letter you have been so kind as to address to me will enable me, I trust, to remove from your mind some impressions with which you will not be sorry to part.

You have given me a narrative of your conduct since 1850 with reference to your position as leader of your party. But I have never thought your retention of that office matter of reproach to you, and on Saturday last I acknowledged to Mr. Walpole the handsomeness of your conduct in offering to resign it to Sir James Graham.

You consider that the relations between yourself and me have proved the main difficulty in the way of certain political arrangements. Will you allow me to assure you that I have never in my life taken a decision which turned upon those relations.

You assure me that I have ever been mistaken in failing to place you among my friends or admirers. Again I pray you to let me say that I have never known you penurious in admiration towards any one who had the slightest claim to it, and that at no period of my life, not even during the limited one when we were in sharp political conflict, have I either felt any enmity towards you, or believed that you felt any towards me.

At the present moment I am awaiting counsel which at Lord Derby's wish I have sought. But the difficulties which he wishes me to find means of overcoming, are broader than you may have supposed. Were I at this time to join any government I could not do it in virtue of party connections. I must consider then what are the conditions which make harmonious and effective co-operation in cabinet possible—how largely old habits enter into them—what connections can be formed with public approval—and what change would be requisite in the constitution of the present government, in order to make any change worth a trial.

I state these points fearlessly and without reserve, for you have yourself well reminded me that there is a Power beyond us that disposes of what we are and do, and I find the limits of choice in public life to be very narrow.—I remain, etc.

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The next day Mr. Gladstone received Graham's letter already described. The interpretation that he put upon it was that although Graham appeared to lean in favour of acceptance, 'yet the counsel was indecisive.' On ordinary construction, though the counsellor said that this was a case in which only the man himself could decide, yet he also said that acceptance would be for the public good. 'Your affirmative advice, had it even been more positive, was not approval, nor was Lord Aberdeen's. On the contrary it would have been like the orders to Balaam, that he should go with the messengers of Balak, when notwithstanding the command, the act was recorded against him.' We may be quite sure that when a man draws all these distinctions, between affirmative advice, positive advice, approval, he is going to act without any advice at all, as Mr. Gladstone was in so grave a case bound to do. He declined to join.

*Mr. Gladstone to Lord Derby.*

*Private.*

11 C. H. Terrace, May 26, '58.—I have this morning received Sir James Graham's reply, and I have seen Lord Aberdeen before and since. Their counsel has been given in no narrow or unfriendly spirit. It is, however, indecisive, and leaves upon me the responsibility which they would have been glad if it had been in their power to remove. I must therefore adhere to the reply which I gave to Mr. Walpole on Saturday; for I have not seen, and I do not see, a prospect of public advantage or of material accession to your strength, from my entering your government single-handed.

Had it been in your power to raise fully the question whether those who were formerly your colleagues, could again be brought into political relation with you, I should individually have thought it to be for the public good that, under the present circumstances of the country, such a scheme should be considered deliberately and in a favourable spirit. But I neither know that this is in your power, nor can I feel very sanguine hopes that the obstacles in the way of this proposal on the part of those whom it would embrace, could be surmounted. Lord Aberdeen is the person who could best give a dispassionate and weighty opinion on that

subject. For me the question, confined as it is to myself, is a narrow one, and I am bound to say that I arrive without doubt at the result.

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'I hope and trust,' said Graham, when he knew what Mr. Gladstone had done, 'that you have decided rightly; my judgment inclined the other way. I should be sorry if your letter to Lord Derby led him to make any more extended proposal. It could not possibly succeed, as matters now stand; and the abortive attempt would be injurious to him. The reconstruction of the fossil remains of the old Peel party is a hopeless task. No human power can now reanimate it with the breath of life; it is decomposed into atoms and will be remembered only as a happy accident, while it lasted.'<sup>1</sup>

## IV

In one remarkable debate of this summer the solitary statesman descended from his pillar. Now was the time of the memorable scheme for the construction of the Suez Canal, that first emanated from the French group of Saint Simonian visionaries in the earlier half of the century. Their dream had taken shape in the fertile and persevering genius of Lesseps, and was at this time the battle-ground of engineers, statesmen, and diplomatists in every country in Europe. For fifteen years the British government had used all their influence at Constantinople to prevent the Sultan from sanctioning the project. In June a motion of protest was made in the House of Commons. Lord Palmerston persisted that the scheme was the greatest bubble that ever was imposed upon the credulity and simplicity of the people of this country; the public meetings on its behalf were got up by a pack of foreign projectors; traffic by the railway would always beat traffic by steamer through the canal; it would be a step towards the dismemberment of the Turkish

<sup>1</sup> 'I wish,' said Mr. Disraeli to Bishop Wilberforce in 1862, 'you could have induced Gladstone to join Lord Derby's government when Lord Ellenborough resigned in 1858. It was not my fault that he did not; I almost went on my knees to him.'—*Life*, iii. p. 70.

Vitzthum reports a conversation with Mr. Disraeli in January 1858, of a different tenour:—'We are at all times ready,' he said, 'to take back this deserter, but only if he surrenders unconditionally.'—Vitzthum, i. p. 269.

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empire; it would tend to dismember our own empire by opening a passage between the Mediterranean and the Indian ocean, which would be at the command of other nations and not at ours. Away, then, with such a sacrifice of the interest of Great Britain to philanthropic schemes and philosophic reveries! So much for the sound practical man. Mr. Gladstone followed. Don't let us, he said, have governments and ex-governments coming down to instruct us here on bubble schemes. As a commercial project, let the Suez Canal stand or fall upon commercial grounds. With close reasoning, he argued against the proposition, that the canal would tend to sever Turkey from Egypt. As to possible danger to our own interests, was it not a canal that would fall within the control of the strongest maritime power in Europe? And what could that power be but ourselves? Finally, what could be more unwise than to present ourselves to the world as the opponents of a scheme on the face of it beneficial to mankind, on no better ground than remote and contingent danger to interests of our own, with the alleged interest of Turkey merely thrust hypocritically in for the purpose of justifying a policy purely narrow-minded and wholly selfish? The majority against the motion was large, as it was in the case of the seven cardinals against Galileo. Still the canal was made, with some very considerable consequences that were not foreseen either by those who favoured it or those who mocked it as a bubble. M. de Lesseps wrote to Mr. Gladstone from Constantinople that the clearness of his speech had enabled him to use it with good effect in his negotiations with the Porte. 'Your eloquent words, the authority of your name, and the consideration that attaches to your character, have already contributed much and will contribute more still to hinder the darkening and complication of a question of itself perfectly clear and simple, and to avoid the troubling of the relations between two countries of which it is the natural mission to hold aloft *together* the flag of modern civilisation.'

Mr. Gladstone took an active interest in the various measures—some of them extremely singular—proposed by Mr. Disraeli for the transfer of the government of India from

the Company to the crown. Writing early in the year to Sir James Graham he argued that their object should be steadily and vigorously to resist all attempts at creating a monster military and civil patronage, and to insist upon a real check on the Indian minister. He had much conversation with Mr. Bright—not then an intimate acquaintance—on the difficulty of the problem to govern a people by a people. The two agreed strongly as to one prominent possibility of mischief: they both distrusted the discretion confided to the Indian minister in the use of the Indian army. Mr. Gladstone set a mark upon the bill by carrying a clause to provide that the Indian army should not be employed beyond the frontiers of India without the permission of parliament. This clause he privately hoped would ‘afford a standing-ground from which a control might be exercised on future Palmerstons.’

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## CHAPTER X

### THE IONIAN ISLANDS

(1858-1859)

THE world is now taking an immense interest in Greek affairs, and does not seem to know why. But there are very good reasons for it. Greece is a centre of life, and the only possible centre for the Archipelago, and its immediate neighbourhood. But it is vain to think of it as a centre from which light and warmth can proceed, until it has attained to a tolerable organization, political and economical. I believe in the capacity of the people to receive the boon.—GLADSTONE (1862).

BOOK IV. At the beginning of October, while on a visit to Lord  
1858. Aberdeen at Haddo, Mr. Gladstone was amazed by a letter from the secretary of state for the colonies—one of the two famous writers of romance then in Lord Derby's cabinet—which opened to him the question of undertaking a special mission to the Ionian islands. This, said Bulwer Lytton, would be to render to the crown a service that no other could do so well, and that might not inharmoniously blend with his general fame as scholar and statesman. 'To reconcile a race that speaks the Greek language to the science of practical liberty seemed to me a task that might be a noble episode in your career.' The origin of an invitation so singular is explained by Phillimore:—

*November 2nd, 1858.*—Lord Carnarvon (then under-secretary at the colonial office) sent an earnest letter to me to come to the C. O. and advise with Rogers and himself as to drawing the commission. I met Bulwer Lytton there, overflowing with civility. The offer to Gladstone had arisen as I expected from Lord C., and he had told B. L. the conversation which he (C.) and I had together in the summer, in which I told Lord C. that I thought Gladstone would accept a mission extraordinary to Naples. . . .

I risked without authority from G. this communication. Lord C. bore it in mind, and from this suggestion of mine sprang in fact this offer. So Lord C. said to me.

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Lord Malmesbury very sensibly observed that to send Mr. Gladstone to Naples was out of the question, in view of his famous letters to Lord Aberdeen. To the new proposal Mr. Gladstone replied that his first impulse on any call from a minister of the crown to see him on public business, would be to place himself at the minister's disposal. The interview did not occur for a week or two. Papers were sent from the colonial office to Hawarden, long letters followed from the secretary of state, and Mr. Gladstone took time to consider. The constitution of the Ionian islands had long been working uneasily, and what the colonial secretary invited him to undertake was an inquiry on the spot into our relations there, and into long-standing embarrassments that seemed to be rapidly coming to a head. Sir John Young, then lord high commissioner of the Ionian islands, had been with him at Eton and at Oxford, besides being a Peelite colleague in parliament, and Mr. Gladstone was not inclined to be the instrument of indicating disparagement of his friend. Then, moreover, he was in favour of 'a very liberal policy' in regard to the Ionian islands, and possibly the cabinet did not agree to a very liberal policy. As for personal interest and convenience, he was not disposed to raise any difficulty in such a case.

The Peelite colleagues whose advice he sought were all, with the single exception of the Duke of Newcastle, more or less unconditionally adverse. Lord Aberdeen (October 8) admitted that Mr. Gladstone's name, acquirements, and conciliatory character might operate powerfully on the Ionians; still many of them were false and artful, and the best of them little better than children. 'It is clear,' he said, 'that Bulwer has sought to allure you with vague declarations and the attractions of Homeric propensities: . . . I doubt if Homer will be a *cheval de bataille* sufficiently strong to carry you safely through the intricacies of this enterprise.' The sagacious Graham also warned him that

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little credit would be gained by success, while failure would be attended by serious inconveniences: in any case to quell 'a storm in a teapot' was no occupation worthy of his powers and position. Sidney Herbert was strong that governments were getting more and more into the bad habit of delegating their own business to other people; he doubted success, and expressed his hearty wish that we could be quit of the protectorate altogether, and could hand the islands bodily over to Greece, to which by blood language, religion, and geography they belonged.

I have said that these adverse views were almost unqualified, and such qualification as existed was rather remarkable. 'The only part of the affair I should regard with real pleasure,' wrote Lord Aberdeen, 'would be the means it might afford you of drawing closer to the government, and of naturally establishing yourself in a more suitable position; for in spite of Homer and Ulysses, your Ionian work will by no means be *tanti* in itself.' Graham took the same point: 'An approximation to the government may be fairly sought or admitted by you. But this should take place on higher grounds.' Thus, though he was now in fact unconsciously on the eve of his formal entry into a liberal cabinet, expectations still survived that he might re-join his old party.

As might have been expected, the wanderings of Ulysses and the geography of Homer prevailed in Mr. Gladstone's mind over the counsels of parliamentary Nestors. Besides the ancient heroes, there was the fascination of the orthodox church, so peculiar and so irresistible for the anglican school to which Mr. Gladstone belonged. Nor must we leave out of account the passion for public business so often allied with the student's temperament; the desire of the politician out of work for something definite to do; Mr. Gladstone's keen relish at all times for any foreign travel that came in his way; finally, and perhaps strongest of all, the fact that his wife's health had been much shaken by the death of her sister, Lady Lyttelton, and the doctors were advising change of scene, novel interests, and a southern climate. His decision was very early a foregone conclusion. So his



doubting friends could only wish him good fortune. Graham said, 'If your hand be destined to lay the foundation of a Greek empire on the ruins of the Ottoman, no hand can be more worthy, no work more glorious. *Recidiva manu posuisssem Pergama* was a noble aspiration;<sup>1</sup> with you it may be realised.'

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He hastened to enlist the services as secretary to his commission of Mr. Lacaita, whose friendship he had first made seven years before, as we have seen, amid the sinister tribunals and squalid dungeons of Naples. For dealings with the Greco-Italian population of the islands he seemed the very man. 'As regards Greek,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to him, 'you are one of the few persons to whom one gives credit for knowing everything, and I assumed on this ground that you had a knowledge of ancient Greek, such as would enable you easily to acquire the *kind* of acquaintance with the modern form, such as is, I presume, desirable. That is my own predicament; with the additional disadvantage of our barbarous English pronunciation.' Accompanied by Mrs. Gladstone and their eldest daughter, and with Mr. Arthur Gordon, the son of Lord Aberdeen, and now, after long service to the state, known as Lord Stanmore, for private secretary, Mr. Gladstone left England on November 8, 1858, and he returned to it, on the 8th of March 1859.

## II

The Ionian case was this. By a treaty made at Paris in November 1815, between Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia, the seven islands—scattered along the coast from Epiros to the extreme south of the Morea—were constituted into a single free and independent state under the name of the United States of the Ionian Islands, and this state was placed under the immediate and exclusive protection of Great Britain. The Powers only thought of keeping the islands out of more dubious hands, and cared little or not at all about conferring any advantage upon either us or the Ionians. The States were to regulate their own internal organization, and Great

<sup>1</sup> *Virg. Æn.* iv. 344.

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Britain was 'to employ a particular solicitude with regard to the legislation and general administration of those states,' and was to appoint a lord high commissioner to reside there with all necessary powers and authorities. The Duke of Wellington foretold that it would prove 'a tough and unprofitable job,' and so in truth it did. A constitutional charter in 1817 formed a system of government that soon became despotic enough to satisfy Metternich himself. The scheme has been justly described as a singularly clever piece of work, appearing to give much while in fact giving nothing at all. It contained a decorous collection of chapters, sections, and articles imposing enough in their outer aspect, but in actual operation the whole of them reducible to a single clause enabling the high commissioner to do whatever he pleased.

This rough but not ill-natured despotism lasted for little more than thirty years, and then in 1849, under the influence of the great upheaval of 1848, it was changed into a system of more popular and democratic build. The old Venetians, when for a couple of centuries they were masters in this region, laid it down that the islanders must be kept with their teeth drawn and their claws clipped. Bread and the stick, said Father Paul, that is what they want. This view prevailed at the colonial office, and maxims of Father Paul Sarpi's sort, incongruously combined with a paper constitution, worked as ill as possible. Mr. Gladstone always applied to the new system of 1849 Charles Buller's figure, of first lighting the fire and then stopping up the chimney. The stick may be wholesome, and local self-government may be wholesome, but in combination or rapid alternation they are apt to work nothing but mischief either in Ionian or any other islands. Sir Charles Napier—the Napier of Scinde—who had been Resident in Cephalonia thirty years before, in Byron's closing days, describes the richer classes as lively and agreeable; the women as having both beauty and wit, but of little education; the poor as hardy, industrious, and intelligent—all full of pleasant humour and vivacity, with a striking resemblance, says Napier, to his countrymen, the Irish. The upper class was mainly Italian in origin,

and willingly threw all the responsibility for affairs on the British government. The official class, more numerous in proportion to population than in any country in Europe, scrambled for the petty salaries of paltry posts allotted by popular election. Since 1849 they had increased by twenty-five per cent., and were now one in a hundred of the inhabitants. The clergy in a passive way took part with the demagogues. Men of ability and sense were not wanting, but being unorganized, discouraged, and saturated with distrust, they made no effort to stem the jobbery, corruption, waste, going on around them. Roads, piers, aqueducts, and other monuments of the British protectorate reared before 1849, were falling to pieces. Taxes were indifferently collected. Transgressors of local law went unpunished. In ten years the deficit in the revenue had amounted to nearly £100,000, or two-thirds of a year's income. The cultivators of the soil figured in official reports as naturally well affected, and only wishing to grow their currants and their olives in peace and quietness. But they were extremely poor, and they were ignorant and superstitious, and being all these things it was inevitable that they should nurse discontent with their government. Whoever wanted their votes knew that the way to get them was to denounce the Englishman as *ερεπόδοφος και ξένος*, heretic, alien and tyrant. There was a senate of six members, chosen by the high commissioner from the assembly. The forty-two members of the assembly met below galleries that held a thousand persons, and nothing made their seats and salaries so safe as round declamations from the floor to the audience above, on the greatness of the Hellenic race and the need for union with the Greek kingdom. The municipal officer in charge of education used to set as a copy for the children, a prayer that panhellenic concord might drive the Turks out of Greece and the English out of the seven islands.

Cephalonia exceeded the rest of the group both in population and in vehemence of character, while Zante came first of all in the industry and liveliness of its people.<sup>1</sup> These

<sup>1</sup> See Sir C. Napier's *The Colonies: treating of their value generally and of the Ionian Islands in particular.*

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two islands were the main scene and source of difficulty. In Cephalonia nine years before the date with which we are now dealing, an agrarian rising had occurred more like a bad whiteboy outrage than a national rebellion, and it was suppressed with cruel rigour by the high commissioner of the day. Twenty-two people had been hanged, three hundred or more had been flogged, most of them without any species of judicial investigation. The fire-raising and destruction of houses and vineyards were of a fierce brutality to match. These Ionian atrocities were the proceedings with which Prince Schwarzenberg had taunted Lord Aberdeen by way of rejoinder to Mr. Gladstone's letters on barbarous misgovernment in Naples, and the feelings that they had roused were still smouldering. Half a dozen newspapers existed, all of them vehemently and irreconcilably unionist, though all controlled by members of the legislative assembly who had taken an oath at the beginning of each parliament to respect and maintain the constitutional rights of the protecting sovereign. The liberty of unlicensed printing, however, had been subject to a pretty stringent check. By virtue of what was styled a power of high police, the lord high commissioner was able at his own will and pleasure to tear away from home, occupation, and livelihood anybody that he chose, and the high police found its commonest objects in the editors of newspapers. An obnoxious leading article was not infrequently followed by deportation to some small and barren rock, inhabited by a handful of fishermen. Not Cherubim and Seraphim, said Mr. Gladstone, could work such a system. A British corporal with all the patronage in his hands, said another observer, would get on better than the greatest and wisest statesman since Pericles, if he had not the patronage. It was little wonder that a distracted lord high commissioner, to adopt the similes of the florid secretary of state, should one day send home a picture like Salvator's Massacre of the Innocents, or Michel Angelo's Last Judgment, and the next day recall the swains of Albano at repose in the landscapes of Claude; should one day advise his chiefs to wash their hands of the Ionians, and on the morrow should hint that perhaps

the best thing would be by a bold *coup d'état* to sweep away the constitution.<sup>1</sup>

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## III

Immediately after Mr. Gladstone had started, what the secretary of state described as the most serious misfortune conceivable happened. A despatch was stolen from the pigeon-holes of the colonial office, and a morning paper printed it. It had been written home some eighteen months before by Sir John Young, and in it he advised his government, with the assent of the contracting powers, to hand over either the whole of the seven islands to Greece, or else at least the five southern islands, while transforming Corfu and its little satellite of Paxo into a British colony. It was true that a few days later he had written a private letter, wholly withdrawing this advice and substituting for it the exact opposite, the suppression namely of such freedom as the islanders possessed. This second fact the public did not know, nor would the knowledge of it have made any difference. The published despatch stood on record, and say what they would, the startling impression could not be effaced. Well might Lytton call it an inconceivable misfortune. It made Austria uneasy, it perturbed France, and it irritated Russia, all of them seeing in Mr. Gladstone's mission a first step towards the policy recommended in the despatch. In the breasts of the islanders it kindled intense excitement, and diversified a chronic disorder by a sharp access of fever. It made Young's position desperate, though he was slow to see it, and practically it brought the business of the high commissioner extraordinary to nought before it had even begun.

He learned the disaster, for disaster it was, at Vienna, and appears to have faced it with the same rigorous firmness and self-command that some of us have beheld at untoward

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers, relative to the mission of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone to the Ionian Islands in 1858.* Presented in 1861. *Finlay's History of Greece*, vii. p. 305, etc. *Letters by Lord Charles Fitzroy, etc., showing the anomalous political and financial position of the Ionian Islands.* (Ridgway, 1850). *Le Gouvernement des Îles*

*Ioniennes.* Lettre à Lord John Russell, par François Lenormant. (Paris, Amyot, 1861.) *The Ionian Islands in relation to Greece.* By John Dunn Gardner, Esqr., 1859. *Four years in the Ionian Islands.* By Whittingham. Pamphlet by S. G. Potter, D.D. See also *Gleanings*, iv. p. 287.

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moments long after. The ambassador told him that he ought to see the Austrian minister. With Count Buol he had a long interview accordingly, and assured him that his mission had no concern with any question of Ionian annexation whether partial or total. Count Buol on his part disclaimed all aggressive tendencies in respect of Turkey, and stated emphatically that the views and conduct of Austria in her Eastern policy were in the strictest sense conservative.

Embarking at Trieste on the warship *Terrible*, Nov. 21, and after a delightful voyage down the Adriatic, five days after leaving Vienna (Nov. 24th) Mr. Gladstone found himself at Corfu—the famous island of which he had read such memorable things in Thucydides and Xenophon, the harbour where the Athenians had fitted out the expedition to Syracuse, so disastrous to Greek democracy; where the young Octavian had rallied his fleet before the battle of Actium, so critical for the foundation of the empire of the Cæsars; and whence Don John had sallied forth for the victory of Lepanto, so fatal to the conquering might of the Ottoman Turks. It was from Corfu that the brothers Bandiera had started on their tragic enterprise for the deliverance of Italy fourteen years before. Mr. Gladstone landed under a salute of seventeen guns, and was received with all ceremony and honour by the lord high commissioner and his officers.

He was not long in discovering what mischief the stolen despatch had done, and may well have suspected from the first in his inner mind that his efforts to undo it would bear little fruit. The morning after his arrival the ten members for Corfu came to him in a body with a petition to the Queen denouncing the plan of making their island a British colony, and praying for union with Greece. The municipality followed suit in the evening. The whole sequel was in keeping. Mr. Gladstone with Young's approval made a speech to the senate, in which he threw over the despatch, severed his mission wholly from any purpose or object in the way of annexation, and dwelt much upon a circular addressed by the foreign office in London to all its ministers abroad

disclaiming any designs of that kind. He held levees, he called upon the archbishop, he received senators and representatives, and everywhere he held the same emphatic language. He soon saw enough to convince him of the harm done to British credit and influence by the severities in Cephalonia; by the small regard and frequent contempt shown by many Englishmen for the religion of the people for whose government they were responsible; by the diatribes in the London press against the Ionians as brigands, pirates, and barbarians; and by the absence in high commissioners and others 'of tact, good sense, and good feeling in the sense in which it is least common in England, the sense namely in which it includes a disposition to enter into and up to a certain point sympathise with those who differ with us in race, language, and creed.' Perhaps his penetrating eye early discovered to him that forty years of bad rule had so embittered feeling, that even without the stolen despatch, he had little chance.

He made a cruise round the islands. His visit shook him a good deal with respect to two of the points—Corfu and Ithaca—on which it has been customary to dwell as proving Homer's precise local knowledge. The rain poured in torrents for most of the time, but it cleared up for a space to reveal the loveliness of Ithaca. In the island of Ulysses and Penelope he danced at a ball given in his honour. In Cephalonia he was received by a tumultuous mob of a thousand persons, whom neither the drenching rains nor the unexpected manner of his approach across the hills could baffle. They greeted him with incessant cries for union with Greece, thrust disaffected papers into his carriage, and here and there indulged in cries of *κάτω ἡ προστασία*, down with the protectorate, down with the tyranny of fifty years. This exceptional disrespect he ascribed to what he leniently called the history of Cephalonia, meaning the savage dose of martial law nine years before. He justly took it for a marked symbol of the state of excitement at which under various influences the popular mind had arrived. Age and infirmity prevented the archbishop from coming to offer his respects, so after his levee

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Mr. Gladstone with his suite repaired to the archbishop. 'We found him,' says Mr. Gordon, 'seated on a sofa dressed in his most gorgeous robes of gold and purple, over which flowed down a long white beard. . . . Behind him stood a little court of black-robed, black-bearded, black-capped, dark-faced priests. He is eighty-six years old, and his manners and appearance were dignified in the extreme. Speaking slowly and distinctly he began to tell Gladstone that the sole wish of Cephalonia was to be united to Greece, and there was something very exciting and affecting in the tremulous tones of the old man saying over and over again, "*questa infelice isola, questa isola infelice*," as the tears streamed down his cheeks and long silvery beard. It was like a scene in a play.'

At Zante (Dec. 15), the surface was smoother. A concourse of several thousands awaited him; Greek flags were flying on all sides in the strong morning sea-breeze; the town bands played Greek national tunes; the bells were all ringing; the harbour was covered with boats full of gaily dressed people; and the air resounded with loud shouts *ζήτω ὁ φιλέλλην Γλάδστων, ζήτω ἡ ἔνωσις μετὰ τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Long live Gladstone the Philhellene, hurrah for union with Greece.

Every room and passage in the residency, Mr. Gordon writes to Lord Aberdeen, was already thronged. . . . Upstairs the excitement was great, and as soon as Gladstone had taken his place, in swept Gerasimus the bishop (followed by scores of swarthy priests in their picturesque black robes) and tendered to him the petition for union. But before he could deliver it, Gladstone stopped him and addressed to him and to the assembly a speech in excellent Italian. Never did I hear his beautiful voice ring out more clear or more thrillingly than when he said, '*Ecco l'inganno*.' . . . It was a scene not to be forgotten. The priests, with eye and hand and gesture, expressed in lively pantomime to each other the effect produced by each sentence, in what we should think a most exaggerated way, like a chorus on the stage, but the effect was most picturesque.

He attended a banquet one night, went to the theatre the next, where he was greeted with lusty zetos, and at mid-



night embarked on the *Terrible* on his way to Athens. His stay in the immortal city only lasted for three or four days, and I find no record of his impressions. They were probably those of most travellers educated enough to feel the spell of the Violet Crown. Illusions as to the eternal summer with which poets have blessed the Isles of Greece vanished as they found deep snow in the streets, icicles on the Acropolis, and snow-balling in the Parthenon. He had a reception only a shade less cordial than if he were Demosthenes come back. He dined with King Otho, and went to a *Te Deum* in honour of the Queen's birthday. Finlay, the learned man who had more of the true spirit of history than most historians then alive, took him to a meeting of the legislature; he beheld some of the survivors of the war of independence, and made friends with one valiant lover of freedom, the veteran General Church. Though, thanks to the generosity of an Englishman, they had a university of their own at Corfu, the Ionians preferred to send their sons to Athens, and the Athenian students immediately presented a memorial to Mr. Gladstone with the usual prayer for union with the Hellenic kingdom. On the special object of his visit, he came away from Athens with the impression that opinion in Greece was much divided on the question of immediate union with the Ionian islands. In truth his position had been a false one. Everybody was profoundly deferential, but nobody was quite sure whether he had come to pave the way for union, or to invite the Athenian government to check it, and when Rangabé, the foreign minister, found him without credentials or instructions, and staved off all discussion, Mr. Gladstone must have felt that though he had seen one of the two or three most wondrous historic sites on the globe, that was all.

Of a jaunt to wilder scenes a letter of Mr. Arthur Gordon's gives a pleasant glimpse:—

You will like an account of an expedition the whole party made yesterday to Albania to pay a visit to an old lady, a great proprietress, who lives in a large ruinous castle at a place called Filates. She is about the greatest personage in these regions, and

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it was thought that the lord high commissioner should pay her a visit if he wished to see Albania. . . . It was a lovely morning, and breakfast was laid on the balcony of the private apartments looking over the garden and commanding the loveliest of views across the strait. Gladstone was in the highest spirits, full of talk and *romping boyishly*. After breakfast the L. H. C.'s barge and the cutters of the *Terrible* conveyed us on board the pretty little gunboat.

We reached Sayada in about two hours, and were received on landing by the governor of the province, who had ridden down from Filates to meet us. We went to the house of the English vice-consul, whilst the long train of horses was preparing to start, but after a few minutes' stay there Gladstone became irrepressibly restless, and insisted on setting off to walk—I of course walked too. The old steward also went with us, and a guard of eight white-kilted palikari on foot. The rest of the party rode, and from a slight hill which we soon reached, it was very pretty to look back at the long procession starting from Sayada and proceeding along the narrow causeway running parallel to our path, the figures silhouetted against the sea. Filates is about 12 miles from Sayada, perhaps more, the path is rugged and mountainous, and commands some fine views. Our palikari guards fired off their long Afghan-looking guns in every direction, greatly to Gladstone's annoyance, but there was no stopping them.

Scouts on the hills gave warning of our approach, and at the entrance to Filates we were met by the whole population. First the Valideh's retainers, then the elders, then the moolahs in their great green turbans, the Christian community, and finally, on the top of the hill, the Valideh's little grandson, gorgeously dressed, and attended by his tutor and a number of black slaves. The little boy salaamed to Gladstone with much grace and self-possession, and then conducted us to the castle, in front of which all the townsfolk who were not engaged in receiving us were congregated in picturesque groups on the smooth grassy lawns and under the great plane trees. The castle is a large ruinous enclosure of walls and towers, with buildings of all sorts and ages within. The Valideh herself, attired in green silk and a fur pelisse, her train held by two negro female slaves, received us at

the head of the stairs and ushered us into a large room with a divan round three sides of it. Sweetmeats and water and pipes and coffee were brought as usual, some of the cups and their filigree stands very handsome. We went out to see the town, preceded by a tall black slave in a gorgeous blue velvet jacket, with a great silver stick in his hand. Under his guidance we visited the khans, the bazaar and the mosque; not only were we allowed to enter the mosque with our shoes on, but on Gladstone expressing a wish to hear the call to prayer, the muezzin was sent up to the top of the minaret to call the azan two hours before the proper time. The sight of the green-turbaned imam crying the azan for a Frank was most singular, and the endless variety of costume displayed by the crowds who thronged the verandahs which surround the mosque was most picturesque. The gateway of the castle too was a picturesque scene. Retainers and guards, slaves and soldiers, and even women, were lounging about, and a beautiful tame little pet roedeer played with the pretty children in bright coloured dresses, clustering under the cavernous archway.

We had dinner in another large room. I counted thirty-two dishes, or I may say courses, for each dish at a Turkish dinner is brought in separately, and it is rude not to eat of all! The most picturesque part of the dinner, and most unusual, was the way the room was lighted. Eight tall, grand Albanians stood like statues behind us, each holding a candle. It reminded me of the torch-bearers who won the laird his bet in the *Legend of Montrose*.

After dinner there was a long and somewhat tedious interval of smoking and story-telling in the dark, and we called upon Lacaita to recite Italian poetry, which he did with much effect, pouring out sonnet after sonnet of Petrarch, including that which my father thinks the most beautiful in the Italian language, that which has in it the 'lampeggiar del angelico riso.' This showed me how easy it was to fall into the habits of a country. Gladstone is as unoriental as any man well can be, yet his calling on Lacaita to recite was really just the same thing that every Pasha does after dinner, when he orders his tale-teller to repeat a story. The ladies meanwhile were packed off to the harem for the night, Lady Bowen acting as their interpreter. My L. H. C., his two secretaries, his three aide-de-camps, Captains Blomfield and

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After a month of cloudless sunshine it took it into its head to rain this night of all nights in the year, and rain as it only does in these regions. Gladstone and I walked down again despite of wind, rain, and mud, and our palikari guard—to keep up their spirits, I suppose—chanted wild choruses all the way. We nearly got stuck altogether in the muddy flat near Sayada, and got on board the *Osprey* wet through, my hands so chilled I could hardly steer the boat. Of course we had far outwalked the riding party, so we had to wait. What a breakfast we ate! that is those of us who could eat, for the passage was rough and Gladstone and the ladies flat on their backs and very sorry for themselves.

Mr. Gladstone's comment in his diary is brief:—'The whole impression is saddening; it is all indolence, decay, stagnation; the image of God seems as if it were nowhere. But there is much of wild and picturesque.' The English in the island, both civil and military, adopted the tone of unfriendly journals in London, and the garrison went so far as not even to invite Mr. Gladstone to mess, a compliment never omitted before. The Ionians, on the other hand, like people in most other badly governed countries did not show in the noblest colours. There were petitions, letters, memorials, as to which Mr. Gladstone mildly notes that he has to 'lament a spirit of exaggeration and obvious errors of fact.' There was a stream of demands from hosts of Spiridiones, Christodulos, Euphrosunes, for government employ, and the memorial survives, attested by bishop and clergy, of a man with a daughter to marry, who being too poor to find a dowry 'had decided on reverting to your Excellency's well-known philhellenism, and with tears in his eyes besought that your Excellency,' et cetera.

One incident was much disliked at home, as having the fearsome flavour of the Puseyite. It had been customary at levees for the lord high commissioner to bow to everybody, but also to shake hands with the bishops and sundry other high persons. Mr. Gladstone stooped and actually kissed the bishop's hand. Sir Edward Lytton inquired if the story were true, as a question might be asked in parliament. It is true, said Mr. Gladstone (February 7), but 'I hope Sir E. L. will not in his consideration for me entangle himself in such a matter, but as he knows nothing now, will continue to know nothing, and will say that the subject did not enter into his instructions, and that he presumes I shall be at home in two or three more weeks to answer for all my misdeeds.'<sup>1</sup>

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The secretary of state and his potent emissary—the radical who had turned tory and the tory who was on the verge of formally turning liberal—got on excellently together. Though he was not exact in business, the minister's despatches and letters show shrewdness, good sense, and right feeling, with a copious garnish of flummery. Demagogy, he says to Mr. Gladstone, will continue to be a trade and the most fascinating of all trades, because animated by personal vanity, and its venality disguised even to the demagogue himself by the love of country, by which it may be really accompanied. The Ionian constitution should certainly be mended, for 'my convictions tell me that there is nothing so impracticable as the Unreal.' He comforts his commissioner by the reminder that a population after all has one great human heart, and a great human heart is that which chiefly exalts the Man of Genius over the mere Man of Talent, so that when a Man of Genius with practical experience of the principles of sound government comes face to face with a people whose interest it is to be governed well, the chances are that they will understand each other.

<sup>1</sup> This and his alleged attendance at mass, and compliance with sundry other rites, were often heard of in later times, and even so late as 1879 Mr. Gladstone was subjected to some rude baiting from doctors of divinity and others.

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## IV

Mr. Gladstone applied himself with the utmost gravity to the affairs of a pygmy state with a total population under 250,000. His imagination did its work. While you seem, he said most truly, to be dealing only with a few specks scarcely visible on the map of Europe, you are engaged in solving a problem as delicate and difficult as if it arose on a far more conspicuous stage. The people he found to be eminently gifted by nature with that subtlety which is apt to degenerate into sophistry, and prone to be both rather light-minded and extremely suspicious. The permanent officials in Downing Street, with less polite analysis, had been accustomed to regard the islanders more bluntly as a 'pack of scamps.' This was what had done the mischief. The material condition of the cultivators was in some respects not bad, but Mr. Gladstone laid down a profound and solid principle when he said that 'no method of dealing with a civilised community can be satisfactory which does not make provision for its political action as well as its social state.'<sup>1</sup> The idea of political reform had for a time made head against the idea of union with the Greek kingdom, but for some years past the whole stream of popular tendency and feeling set strongly towards union, and disdained contentment with anything else. Mankind turn naturally to the solutions that seem the simplest. Mr. Gladstone condemned the existing system as bad for us and bad for them. Circumstances made it impossible for him to suggest amendment by throwing the burden bodily off our shoulders, and at that time he undoubtedly regarded union with Greece as in itself undesirable for the Ionians. Circumstances and his own love of freedom made it equally impossible to recommend the violent suppression of the constitution. The only course

<sup>1</sup> Finlay, *History of Greece*, vii. p. 306, blames both Bulwer and Mr. Gladstone because they 'directed their attention to the means of applying sound theories of government to a state of things where a change in the social relations of the inhabitants and modifications in the tenure

and rights of property were the real evils that required remedy, and over these the British government could exercise very little influence if opposed by the Ionian representatives.' But is not this to say that the real remedy was unattainable without political reform?

left open was to turn the mockery of free government into a reality, and this operation he proposed to carry out with a bold hand. The details of this enlargement of popular rights and privileges, and the accompanying financial purgation, do not now concern us. Whether the case either demanded or permitted originality in the way of construction I need not discuss. The manufacture of a constitution is always the easiest thing in the world. The question is whether the people concerned will work it, and in spite of that buoyant optimism which never in any circumstances deserted him in respect of whatever business he might have in hand, Mr. Gladstone must have doubted whether his islanders would ever pretend to accept what they did not seek, as a substitute for what they did seek but were not allowed to have. Before anybody knew the scope of his plan, the six newspapers flew to arms with a vivacity that, whether it was Italian or was Greek, was in either case a fatal sign of the public temper. What, they cried, did the treaty of 1815 mean by describing the Ionian state as free and independent? What was a protectorate, and what the rights of the protector? Was there no difference between a protector and a sovereign? What could be more arrogant and absurd than that the protector, who was not sovereign, should talk about 'conceding' reforms to a free and independent state? All these questions were in themselves not very easy to answer, but what was a more serious obstacle than the argumentative puzzles of partisans was a want of moral and political courage; was the sycophancy of one class, and the greediness of others.<sup>1</sup>

Closely connected with the recommendations of constitutional reform was the question by whom the necessary communications with the assembly were to be conducted. Sir John Young was obviously impossible, though he was not at once brought to face the fact. Mr. Gladstone upon this made to the colonial secretary (December 27) an offer that

<sup>1</sup> May 7, 1861. *Hans.* 3rd Ser. 162, p. 1687. The salaries of the deputies struck him as especially excessive, and on the same occasion he let fall the *obiter dictum*; 'For my part I trust that of all the changes

that may in the course of generations be made in the constitution of this country, the very last and latest will be the payment of members of this House.'

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if he had already determined on Young's recall, and if he thought reform would stand a better chance if introduced by Mr. Gladstone himself, he was willing to serve as lord high commissioner for the very limited time that might be necessary. We may be sure that the government lost not an hour in making up their minds on a plan that went still further both in the way of bringing Mr. Gladstone into still closer connection with them, and towards relieving themselves of a responsibility which they never from the first had any business to devolve upon Mr. Gladstone or anybody else. The answer came by telegraph (January 11), 'The Queen accepts. Your commission is being made out.'

All other embarrassments were now infinitely aggravated by the sudden discovery from the lawyers that acceptance of the new office not only vacated the seat in parliament, but also rendered Mr. Gladstone incapable of election until he had ceased to hold the office. 'This, I must confess,' he told Sir Edward, 'is a great blow. The difficulty and the detriment are serious' (January 17). If some enemy on the meeting of the House in February should choose to move the writ for the vacant seat at Oxford, the election would necessarily take place at a date too early for the completion of the business at Corfu, and Mr. Gladstone still at work as high commissioner would still therefore be ineligible. Nobody was ever by constitution more averse than Mr. Gladstone to turning backward, and in this case he felt himself especially bound to go forward not only by the logic of the Ionian situation at the moment, but for the reason which was also characteristic of him, that the Queen in approving his appointment (January 7) had described his conduct as both patriotic and most opportune, and therefore he thought there would be unspeakable shabbiness in turning round upon her by a hurried withdrawal. The Oxford entanglement thus became almost desperate. Resolved not to disturb the settled order of proceeding with his assembly, Mr. Gladstone with a thoroughly characteristic union of ingenuity and tenacity tried various ways of extrication. To complete the mortifications of the position, the telegraph broke down.

The scrape was nearly as harassing to his friends at



home as to himself. Politicians above all men can never safely count on the charity that thinketh no evil. Lord John Russell told Lord Aberdeen that it was clear that Gladstone was staying away to avoid a discussion on the coming Reform bill. There was a violent attack upon him in the *Times* (January 13) as having supplanted Young. The writers of leading articles looked up Greek history from the days of the visit of Ulysses to Alcinous downwards, and they mocked his respect for the countrymen of Miltiades, and his reverence for the church of Chrysostom and Athanasius. The satirists of the cleverest journal of the day admitted his greatness, the brilliance and originality of his finance, the incomparable splendour of his eloquence, and a courage equal to any undertaking, that quailed before no opposition and suffered no abatement in defeat, and they only marvelled the more that a statesman of the first rank should accept at the hands of an insidious rival a fifth-rate mission—insidious rival not named but easy to identify. The fact that Mr. Gladstone had hired a house at Corfu was the foundation of a transcendent story that Mr. Disraeli wished to make him the king of the Ionian islands. ‘I hardly think it needful to assure you,’ Mr. Gladstone told Lytton, ‘that I have never attached the smallest weight to any of the insinuations which it seems people have thought worth while to launch at some member or members of your government with respect to my mission.’ Though Mr. Gladstone was never by any means unconscious of the hum and buzz of paltriness and malice that often surrounds conspicuous public men, nobody was ever more regally indifferent. Graham predicted that though Gladstone would always be the first man in the House of Commons, he would not again be what he was before the Ionian business. They all thought that he would be attacked on his return. ‘Ah,’ said Aberdeen, ‘*but he is terrible in the rebound.*’

After much perplexity and running to and fro in London, it was arranged between the secretary of state and Mr. Gladstone’s friends, including Phillimore principally, and then Northcote and M. Bernard, that a course of proceeding should be followed, which Mr. Gladstone when he knew it

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thought unfortunate. A new commission naming a successor was issued, and Mr. Gladstone then became *ipso facto* liberated. Sir Henry Storks was the officer chosen, and as soon as his commission was formally received by him, he was to execute a warrant under which he deputed all powers to Mr. Gladstone until his arrival. Whether Mr. Gladstone was lord high commissioner when he came to propose his reform, is a moot point. So intricate was the puzzle that the under-secretary addressed a letter to Mr. Gladstone by his name and not by the style of his official dignity, because he could not be at all sure what that official dignity really was. What is certain is that Mr. Gladstone, though it was never his way to quarrel with other people's action taken in good faith on his behalf, did not perceive the necessity for proceeding so rapidly to the appointment of his successor, and thought it decidedly injurious to such chances as his reforms might have possessed.<sup>1</sup>

The assembly that had been convoked by Sir John Young for an extraordinary session (January 25), at once showed that its labours would bear no fruit. Mr. Gladstone as lord high commissioner opened the session with a message that they had met to consider proposals for reform which he desired to lay before them as soon as possible. The game began with the passing of a resolution that it was the single and unanimous *will* (*θέλησις*) of the Ionian people that the seven islands should be united to Greece. Mr. Gladstone fought like a lion for scholar's authority to treat the word as only meaning wish or disposition, and he took for touchstone the question whether men could speak of the *θέλησις* of the Almighty; the word in the Lord's Prayer was found to be *θέλημα*. As Finlay truly says, it would have been much more to the point to accept the word as it was meant by those who used it. As to that no mistake was possible. Some say that he ought plainly to have told them they had violated the

<sup>1</sup> On Feb. 7, the secretary of the treasury moved the writ, and the next day the vice-chancellor notified that there would be an election, Mr. Gladstone having vacated his seat by accepting the office of lord high commissioner of the Ionian Islands, which he no longer holds. He was re-elected (Feb. 12) without opposition.

constitution, to have dissolved them, and above all to have stopped their pay. Instead of this he informed them that they must put their wishes into the shape of a petition to the Queen. The idea was seized with alacrity (January 29). Oligarchs and demagogues were equally pleased to fall in with it, the former because they hoped it would throw their rivals into deeper discredit with their common master, the latter because they knew it would endear them to their constituents.

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The Corfiotes received the declaration of the assembly and the address to the Queen with enthusiasm. Great crowds followed the members to their homes with joyous acclamations, all the bells of the town were set ringing, there was a grand illumination for two nights, and the archbishop ordered a *Te Deum*. Neither *te-deums* nor prayers melted the heart of the British cabinet, aware of the truth impressed at the time on Mr. Gladstone by Lytton, that neither the English public nor the English parliament likes any policy that '*gives anything up*.' The Queen was advised to reply that she could neither consent to abandon the obligations she had undertaken, nor could permit any application from the islands to other Powers in furtherance of any similar design.

Then at last came the grand plan for constitutional reconstruction. Mr. Gladstone after first stating the reply of the Queen, read an eloquent address to the assembly (February 4) in Italian, adjuring them to reject all attempts to evade by any indirect devices the duty of pronouncing a clear and intelligible judgment on the propositions now laid before them. His appeal was useless, and it was received exactly as plans for assimilating Irish administration to English used to be. The nationalists knew that reform would be a difficulty the more in the way of separation, the retrogrades knew it would be a spoke in the wheel of their own jobbery. Mr. Gladstone professed extreme and truly characteristic astonishment in respect of the address to the Queen, that they should regard the permission to ask as identical with the promise to grant, and the right to petition as equivalent to the right to demand.

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If the affair had been less practically vexatious, we can imagine the Socratic satisfaction with which Mr. Gladstone would have revelled in pressing all these and many other distinctions on those who boasted of being Socrates' fellow-countrymen.

From day to day anxiously did Mr. Gladstone watch what he called the dodges of the assembly. Abundant reason as there was to complain of the conduct of the Ionians in all these proceedings, it is well to record the existence of a number of sincere patriots and enlightened men like the two brothers Themistocles, Napoleon Zambelli, and Sir Peter Braila, afterwards Greek minister in London. This small band of loyal adherents gave Mr. Gladstone all the help they could in preparing his scheme of reform, and after the scheme was launched, they strained every nerve to induce the assembly to assent to it in spite of the pressure from the people. Their efforts were necessarily unavailing. The great majority, composed as usual of the friends of England who trembled for their own jobs, joining hands with the demagogues, was hostile to the changes proposed, and only flinched from a peremptory vote from doubt as to its reception among the people. Promptitude and force were not to be expected in either way from men in such a frame of mind. 'On a preliminary debate,' Mr. Gladstone wrote mournfully to Phillimore, 'without any motion whatever, one man has spoken for nearly the whole of two days.' Strong language about the proposals as cheating and fraudulent was freely used, but nothing that in Mr. Gladstone's view justified one of those high-handed prorogations after the manner of the Stuarts, that had been the usual expedient in quarrels between the high commissioner and a recalcitrant assembly. These doings had brought English rule over the islands to a level in the opinion of Southern Europe with Austrian rule at Venice and the reign of the cardinals in the pontifical states.

Sir Henry Storks arrived on the 16th of February, and the same day the assembly which before had been working for delay, in a great hurry gave a vote against the proposals, which, though in form preliminary, was in substance decisive;

there were only seven dissentients. Mr. Gladstone sums up the case in a private letter to Sidney Herbert.

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*Corfu, 17th Feb. 1859.*—This decision is not convenient for me personally, nor for the government at home; but as a whole I cannot regret it so far as England is concerned. I think the proposals give here almost for the first time a perfectly honourable and tenable position in the face of the islands. The first set of manœuvres was directed to preventing them from being made; and that made me really uneasy. The only point of real importance was to get them out. . . . Do not hamper yourself in this affair with me. Let me sink or swim. I have been labouring for truth and justice, and am sufficiently happy in the consciousness of it, to be little distressed either with the prospect of blame, or with the more serious question whether I acted rightly or wrongly in putting myself in the place of L.H.C. to propose these reforms, —a step which has of course been much damaged by the early nomination of Sir H. Storks, done out of mere consideration for me in another point of view. Lytton's conduct throughout has been such that I could have expected no more from the oldest and most confiding friend.

To Lytton himself he writes (Feb. 7, 1859):—

I sincerely wish that I could have repaid your generous confidence and admirable support with recommendations suited to the immediate convenience of your government. But in sending me, you grappled with a difficulty which you might have postponed, and I could not but do the same. Whether it was right that I should come, I do not feel very certain. Yet (stolen dispatch and all) I do not regret it. For my feelings are those you have so admirably described; and I really do not know for what it is that political life is worth the living, if it be not for an opportunity of endeavouring to redeem in the face of the world the character of our country wherever, it matters not on how small a scale, that character has been compromised.

Language like this, as sincere as it was lofty, supplies the true test by which to judge Mr. Gladstone's conduct both in the Ionian transaction and many another. From the point of personal and selfish interest any simpleton might see that

BOOK IV. he made a mistake, but measured by his own standard of public virtue, how is he to be blamed, how is he not to be applauded, for undertaking a mission that, but for an unforeseen accident, might have redounded to the honour and the credit of the British power?

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On February 19 he quitted the scene of so many anxieties and such strenuous effort as we have seen. The *Terrible* fell into a strong north-easter in the Adriatic, and took thirty-six hours to Pola. There they sought shelter and got across with a smooth sea to Venice on the 23rd. He saw the Austrian archduke whom he found kind, intelligent, earnest, pleasing. At Turin a few days later (March 3), he had an interview with Cavour, for whom at that moment the crowning scenes of his great career were just opening. 'At Vicenza,' the diary records (Feb. 28), 'we had cavalry and artillery at the station about to march; more cavalry on the road with a van and pickets, some with drawn swords; at Verona regiments in review; at Milan pickets in the streets; as I write I hear the tread of horse patrolling the streets. Dark omens!' The war with Austria was close at hand.

I may as well in a few sentences finally close the Ionian chapter, though the consummation was not immediate. Mr. Gladstone, while he was for the moment bitten by the notion of ceding the southern islands to Greece, was no more touched by the nationalist aspirations of the Ionians than he had been by nationalism and unification in Italy in 1851. Just as in Italy he clung to constitutional reforms in the particular provinces and states as the key to regeneration, so here he leaned upon the moderates who, while professing strong nationalist feeling, did not believe that the time for its realisation had arrived. A debate was raised in the House of Commons in the spring of 1861, by an Irish member. The Irish catholics twitted Mr. Gladstone with flying the flag of nationality in Italy, and trampling on it in the Ionian islands. He in reply twitted them with crying up nationality for the Greeks, and running it down when it told against the pope. In the Italian case Lord John Russell had (1860) set

up the broad doctrine that a people are the only true judges who should be their rulers—a proposition that was at once seized and much used by the Dandolo, Lombardos, Cavalieratos and the rest at Corfu. Scarcely anybody pretended that England had any separate or selfish interest of her own. 'It is in my view,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'entirely a matter of that kind of interest only, which is in one sense the highest interest of all—namely the interest which is inherent in her character and duty, and her exact and regular fulfilment of obligations which she has contracted with Europe.'<sup>1</sup>

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But he held the opinion that it would be nothing less than a crime against the safety of Europe, as connected with the state and course of the Eastern question, if England were at this moment to surrender the protectorate; for if you should surrender the protectorate, what were you to say to Candia, Thessaly, Albania, and other communities of Greek stock still under Turkish rule? Then there was a military question. Large sums of British money had been flung away on fortifications,<sup>2</sup> and people talked of Corfu as they talked in later years about Cyprus, as a needed supplement to the strength of Gibraltar and Malta, and indispensable to our Mediterranean power. People listened agape to demonstrations that the Ionian islands were midway between England and the Persian Gulf; that they were two-thirds of the way to the Red Sea; that they blocked up the mouth of the Adriatic; Constantinople, Smyrna, Alexandria, Naples, formed a belt of great towns around them; they were central to Asia, Europe and Africa. And so forth in the alarmist's well-worn currency.

Lord Palmerston in 1850 had declared in his highest style that Corfu was a very important position for Mediterranean interests in the event of a war, and it would be great folly to give it up. A year later he repeated that though he should

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone, May 7, 1861.—*Hans.* Third Ser. 162, p. 1687.

<sup>2</sup> Napier in his *Memoir on the Roads of Cephalonia* (p. 45) tells how Maitland had a notion of building a fort on that island, and on his boat one day asked the commanding

engineer how much it would cost. The engineer talked about £100,000.

'Upon this Sir Thomas turned round in the boat, with a long and loud whistle. After this whistle I thought it best to let at least a year pass without again mentioning the subject.'

BOOK IV. not object to the annexation of the southern islands to Greece, Corfu was too important a military and naval post ever to be abandoned by us.<sup>1</sup> As Lord Palmerston changed, so did Mr. Gladstone change. 'Without a good head for Greece, I should not like to see the Ionian protectorate surrendered; with it, I should be well pleased for one to be responsible for giving it up.' Among many other wonderful suggestions was one that he should himself become that 'good head.' 'The first mention,' he wrote to a correspondent in parliament (Jan. 21, 1863), 'of my candidature in Greece some time ago made me laugh very heartily, for though I do love the country and never laughed at anything else in connection with it before, yet the seeing my own name, which in my person was never meant to carry a title of any kind, placed in juxtaposition with that particular idea, made me give way.'

Meanwhile it is safe to conjecture, for the period with which in this chapter we are immediately concerned, that in conceiving and drawing up his Ionian scheme, close contact with liberal doctrines as to free institutions and popular government must have quickened Mr. Gladstone's progress in liberal doctrines in our own affairs at home. In 1863<sup>2</sup> Lord Palmerston himself, in spite of that national aversion to anything like giving up, of which he was himself the most formidable representative, cheerfully handed the Ionians over to their kinsfolk, if kinsfolk they truly were, upon the mainland.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ashley, ii. pp. 184, 186.

<sup>2</sup> Dec. 8, 1862.—Cabinet. Resolution to surrender the Ionian protectorate. Only Lord W[estbury] opposing.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Gladstone sent home and revised afterwards three elaborate reports on the mischiefs of Ionian government and the constitutional remedies proper for them. They were printed for the use of the cabinet, though whether these fifty large pages, amounting to about a quarter of this volume, received much attention from that body, may without *scandalum*

*magnatum* be doubted, nor do the reports appear to have been laid before parliament. The Italian war was then creating an agitation in Europe upon nationality, as to which the people of the Ionian islands were sensitively alive, and the reports would have supplied a good deal of fuel. There was a separate fourth report upon the suppression of disorder in Cephalonia in 1848, which everybody afterwards agreed that it was not expedient to publish. It still exists in the archives of the colonial office.



## CHAPTER XI

### JUNCTION WITH THE LIBERALS

(1859)

CONVICTION, in spite of early associations and long-cherished prepossessions—strong conviction, and an overpowering sense of the public interests operating for many, many years before full effect was given to it, placed me in the ranks of the liberal party.—  
GLADSTONE (Ormskirk, 1867).

WHEN Mr. Gladstone returned to England in March 1859, he found the conservatives with much ineffectual industry, some misplaced ingenuity, and many misgivings and divisions, trying their hands at parliamentary reform. Their infringement of what passed for a liberal patent was not turning out well. Convulsions in the cabinet, murmurs in the lobbies, resistance from the opposite benches, all showed that a ministry existing on sufferance would not at that stage be allowed to settle the question. In this contest Mr. Gladstone did not actively join. Speaking from the ministerial side of the House, he made a fervid defence of nomination boroughs as the nurseries of statesmen, but he voted with ministers against a whig amendment. His desire, he said, was to settle the question as soon as possible, always, however, on the foundation of trust in the people, that 'sound and satisfactory basis on which for several years past legislation had been proceeding.' The hostile amendment was carried against ministers by statesmen irreconcilably at variance with one another, alike in principle and object. The majority of thirty-nine was very large for those days, and it was decisive. Though the parliament was little more than a couple of years old, yet in face of the desperate confusion among leaders, parties, and groups, and

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upon the plea that reform had not been formally submitted as an issue to the country, Lord Derby felt justified in dissolving. Mr. Gladstone held the Oxford seat without opposition. The constituencies displayed an extension of the same essentially conservative feeling that had given Lord Palmerston the victory two years before. Once more the real question lay not so much between measures as men; not so much between democratic change and conservative moderation, as between Palmerston and Russell on the one hand, and Derby and Disraeli on the other. The government at the election improved their position by some thirty votes. This was not enough to outnumber the phalanx of their various opponents combined, but was it possible that the phalanx should combine? Mr. Gladstone, who spoke of the dissolution as being a most improper as well as a most important measure, alike in domestic and in foreign bearings, told Acland that he would not be surprised if the government were to attempt some reconstruction on a broad basis before the new parliament met. This course was not adopted.

The chances of turning out the government were matters of infinite computation among the leaders. The liberal whip after the election gave his own party a majority of fifteen, but the treasury whip, on the other hand, was equally confident of a majority of ten. Still all was admittedly uncertain. The prime perplexity was whether if a new administration could be formed, Lord Palmerston or Lord John should be at its head. Everybody agreed that it would be both impossible and wrong to depose the Tories until it was certain that the liberals were united enough to mount into their seat, and no government could last unless it comprehended both the old prime ministers. Could not one of them carry the prize of the premiership into the Lords, and leave to the other the consolation stake of leadership in the Commons? Lord Palmerston, who took the crisis with a veteran's good-humoured coolness, told his intimates that he at any rate would not go up to the Lords, for he could not trust John Russell in the other House. With a view, however, to ministerial efficiency, he was anxious to keep Russell in the Commons, as with him and

Gladstone they would make a strong treasury bench. But was it certain that Gladstone would join? On this there was endless gossip. One story ran that Mrs. Gladstone had told somebody that her husband wished by-gones to be by-gones, was all for a strong government, and was ready to join in forming one. Then the personage to whom this was said upset the inference by declaring there was nothing in the conversation incompatible with a Derby junction. Sir Charles Wood says in his journal:—

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*May 22.*—Saw Mrs. Gladstone, who did not seem to contemplate a junction with Palmerston but rather that he should join Derby. I stated the impossibility of that, and that the strongest government possible under present circumstances would be by such a union as took place under Aberdeen. To effect this, all people must pull the same and not different ways as of late years. I said that I blamed her husband for quitting, and ever since he quitted, Palmerston's government in 1855, as well as Lord John; that in the quarrel between Lord John and Gladstone the former had behaved ill, and the latter well.

*May 27.*—Gladstone dined here. . . . He would vote a condemnation of the dissolution, and is afraid of the foreign affairs at so critical a moment being left in the hands of Malmesbury; says that we, the opposition, are not only justified but called upon by the challenge in the Queen's speech on the dissolution, to test the strength of parties; but that he is himself in a different position, that he would vote a condemnation of the dissolution, but hesitates as to no confidence.

Sir Robert Phillimore<sup>1</sup> gives us other glimpses during this month:—

*May 18.*—Long interview with Gladstone. He entered most fully and without any reserve into his views on the state of political parties and on the duties of a statesman at this juncture. Thought the only chance of a strong government was an engrafting of Palmerston upon Lord Derby, dethroning Disraeli from the leadership of the House of Commons, arranging for a moderate Reform bill, placing the foreign office in other hands, but not in

<sup>1</sup> Not, however, Sir Robert until coming Queen's advocate. He was 1862, when he was knighted on be- created baronet in 1881.

BOOK IV. Disraeli's. He dwelt much upon this. Foreign politics seemed to have the chief place in his mind.

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*May 31.*—Gladstone has seen Palmerston, and said he will not vote against Lord Derby in support of Lord John's supposed motion. The government Gladstone thinks desirable is a fusion of Palmerston and his followers with Lord Derby, which implies, of course, weeding out half at least of the present cabinet. Gladstone will have to vote with government and speak against the cabinet, and violently he will be abused.

*June 1.*—Dined with Gladstone. He is much harassed and distressed at his position relative to the government and opposition. Spoke strongly against Lord Malmesbury. Said if the proposal is to censure the dissolution, he must agree with it, but he will vote against a want of confidence.

One important personage was quite confident that Gladstone would vote the government out. Another thought that he would be sure to join a liberal administration. Palmerston believed this too, even though he might not vote for a motion of want of confidence. Clarendon expected Gladstone to join, though he would rather see him at the foreign office than at the exchequer. At a dinner party at Lord Carlisle's where Palmerston, Lord John, Granville, Clarendon, Lewis, Argyll, and Delane were present, Sir Charles Wood in a conversation with Mrs. Gladstone found her much less inclined to keep the Derby government in. In the last week of May a party feast was planned by Lord Palmerston and the whip, but Lord John Russell declined to join the dinner. It was decided to call a meeting of the party. A confidential visitor was talking of it at Cambridge House, when the brougham came to the door to take Palmerston down to Pembroke Lodge. He was going, he said, to ask Lord John what they should say if they were asked at the meeting whether they had come to an agreement. The interview was not unsatisfactory. Four days later (June 6) a well-attended meeting of the party was held at Willis's Rooms. The two protagonists declared themselves ready to aid in forming a government on a broad basis, and it was understood that either would serve under the other.

It would be for the sovereign to decide. Mr. Bright spoke in what the whigs pronounced to be a highly reasonable vein, and they all broke up in great spirits. The whip pored over his lists, and made out that they could not beat the government by less than seven. This was but a slender margin for a vote of no confidence, but it was felt that mere numbers, though a majority might be an indispensable incident, were in this case not the only test of the conditions required for a solid government. Lord Hartington, the representative of the great house of Cavendish, was put up to move a vote of no confidence.<sup>1</sup>

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After three days' debate, ministers were defeated (June 11) by the narrow figure of thirteen in a House of six hundred and thirty-seven. Mr. Gladstone did not speak, but he answered the riddle that had for long so much harassed the wirepullers, by going into the lobby with Disraeli and his flock. The general sense of the majority was probably best expressed by Mr. Bright. Since the fall of the government of Sir Robert Peel, he said, there had been no good handling of the liberal party in the House: the cabinet had been exclusive, the policy had been sometimes wholly wrong, and generally feeble and paltering: if in the new government there should be found men adequately representing these reconciled sections, acting with some measure of boldness and power, grappling with the abuses that were admitted to exist, and relying upon the moral sense and honest feeling of the House, and the general sympathy of the people of England for improvement in our legislation, he was bold to hope that the new government would have a longer tenure of office than any government that had existed for many years past.

The Queen, in the embarrassment of a choice between the two whig veterans, induced Lord Granville, whose cabinet life as yet was only some five years, to try to form a government.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Hartington's motion was— possess the confidence of this House and of the country; and we deem it our duty respectfully to submit to your Majesty that such confidence is not reposed in the present advisers of your Majesty.

BOOK IV. This step Palmerston explained by her German sympathies, which made her adverse alike to Lord John and himself. 1859. Lord Granville first applied to Palmerston, who said that the Queen ought to have sent for himself first; still he agreed to serve. Lord John would only serve under Granville on condition of being leader in the House of Commons; if he joined—so he argued—and if Palmerston were leader in the Commons, this would make himself third instead of second: on that point his answer was final. So Lord Granville threw up a commission that never had life in it; the Queen handed the task over to Palmerston, and in a few days the new administration was installed. (June 17, 1859).

## II

Mr. Gladstone went back to the office that he had quitted four years and a half before, and undertook the department of finance. The appointment did not pass without considerable remark. 'The real scandal,' he wrote to his Oxford chairman, 'is among the extreme men on the liberal side; they naturally say, "This man has done all he could on behalf of Lord Derby; why is he here to keep out one of us?"' Even some among Mr. Gladstone's private friends wondered how he could bring himself to join a minister of whom he had for three or four years used such unsparing language as had been common on his lips about Lord Palmerston. The plain man was puzzled by a vote in favour of keeping a tory government in, followed by a junction with the men who had thrown that government out. Cobden, as we know, declined to join.<sup>1</sup> 'I am exceedingly sorry,' wrote Mr. Gladstone to his brother Robertson (July 2), 'to find that Cobden does not take office. It was in his person that there seemed to be the best chance of a favourable trial of the experiment of connecting his friends with the practical administration of the government of this country. I am very glad we have Gibson; but Cobden would, especially as an addition to the former, have made a great difference in point of weight.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Cobden*, ii. pp. 229-233.      visiting Lord Aberdeen, and displaying much ill humour.

<sup>2</sup> There is a strange story in the *Halifax Papers* of Bright at this time      reconciling himself to not being con-

Mr. Gladstone, with no special anxiety to defend himself, was clear about his own course. 'Never,' he says, 'had I an easier question to determine than when I was asked to join the government. I can hardly now think how I could have looked any one in the face, had I refused my aid (such as it is) at such a time and under such circumstances.' 'At a moment,' he wrote to the warden of All Souls, 'when war is raging in Europe, when the English government is the only instrument through which there is any hope, humanly speaking, of any safe and early settlement, and when all parties agree that the government of the Queen ought to be strengthened, I have joined the only administration that could be formed, in concert with all the friends (setting aside those whom age excludes) with whom I joined and acted in the government of Lord Aberdeen.'

To the provost of Oriel he addressed a rather elaborate explanation,<sup>1</sup> but it only expands what he says more briefly in a letter (June 16) to Sir William Heathcote, an excellent and honourable man, his colleague in the representation of Oxford:—

I am so little sensible of having had any very doubtful point to consider, that I feel confident that, given the antecedents of the problem as they clearly stood before me, you would have decided in the way that I have done. For thirteen years, the middle space of life, I have been cast out of party connection, severed from my old party, and loath irrecoverably to join a new one. So long have I adhered to the vague hope of a reconstruction, that I have been left alone by every political friend in association with whom I had grown up. My votes too, and such support as I could give, have practically been given to Lord Derby's government, in such a manner as undoubtedly to divest me of all claims whatever on the liberal party and the incoming government. Under these circumstances I am asked to take office. The two leading points which must determine

considered capable of taking office. Lord John broached a scheme for sending him as governor-general to Canada. I rather doubted the expediency of this, but Mr. Gladstone seemed to think it not a bad scheme' (June 15, 1859). Many curious things sprang up in men's minds at that moment.  
<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in Mr. Russell's book on Mr. Gladstone, pp. 144-5.

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immediate action are those of reform and foreign policy. On the first I think that Lord Derby had by dissolution lost all chance of settling it; and, as I desire to see it settled, it seems my duty to assist those who perhaps may settle it. Upon the second I am in real and close harmony of sentiment with the new premier, and the new foreign secretary. How could I, under these circumstances, say, I will have nothing to do with you, and be the one remaining Ishmael in the House of Commons?

Writing to Sir John Acton in 1864, Mr. Gladstone said:—

When I took my present office in 1859, I had several negative and several positive reasons for accepting it. Of the first, there were these. There had been differences and collisions, but there were no resentments. I felt myself to be mischievous in an isolated position, outside the regular party organization of parliament. And I was aware of no differences of opinion or tendency likely to disturb the new government. Then on the positive side. I felt sure that in finance there was still much useful work to be done. I was desirous to co-operate in settling the question of the franchise, and failed to anticipate the disaster that it was to undergo. My friends were enlisted, or I knew would enlist: Sir James Graham indeed declining office, but taking his position in the party. And the overwhelming interest and weight of the Italian question, and of our foreign policy in connection with it, joined to my entire mistrust of the former government in relation to it, led me to decide without one moment's hesitation. . . .

On the day on which Mr. Gladstone kissed hands (June 18) disturbing news came from Oxford. Not only was his re-election to be opposed, but the enemy had secured the most formidable candidate that he had yet encountered, in the person of Lord Chandos, the eldest son of the Duke of Buckingham. His London chairman became chairman for his new antagonist, and Stafford Northcote, who with Phillimore and Bernard had hitherto fought every election on his behalf, now refused to serve on his committee, while even Sir John Coleridge was alarmed at some reported waverings on the question of a deceased wife's sister.



'Gladstone, angry, harassed, sore,' Phillimore records, 'as well he might be.' The provost of Oriel explains to him that men asked whether his very last vote had not been a vote of confidence in a Derby government, and of want of confidence in a Palmerston government, yet he had joined the government in which he declared by anticipation that he had no confidence. After all, the root of the anger against him was simply that the tories were out and the liberals in, with himself as their strongest confederate. A question was raised whether he ought not to go down and address convocation in person. The dean of Christ Church, however, thought it very doubtful whether he would get a hearing. 'Those,' he told Mr. Gladstone, 'who remember Sir Robert Peel's election testify that there never was a more unreasonable and ferocious mob than convocation was at that time. If you were heard, it is doubtful whether you would gain any votes at that last moment, while it is believed you would lose some. You would be questioned as to the ecclesiastical policy of the cabinet. Either you would not be able to answer fully, or you would answer in such terms as to alienate one or other of the two numerous classes who will now give you many votes.'

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The usual waterspout began to pour. The newspapers asserted that Mr. Gladstone meant to cut down naval estimates, and this moved the country clergy to angry apprehension that he was for peace at any price. The candidate was obliged to spend thankless hours on letters to re-assure them. 'The two assertions of fact respecting me are wholly unfounded. I mean these two:—

1. That as chancellor of the exchequer I "starved" the Crimean war: that is to say limited the expenditure upon it. There is not a shadow of truth in this statement.
2. That as soon as the war was over I caused the government to reduce their estimates, diminish the army, disband two fleets, and break faith with our seamen. When the war was over, that is in the year 1856, I did not take objection at all to the establishment or expenditure of the year. In the next year, 1857, I considered that they ought to have been further reduced: but neither a man nor a shilling

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was taken from them in consequence of my endeavours.' Other correspondents were uneasy about his soundness on rifle corps and rifle clubs. 'How,' he replied, 'can any uncertainty exist as to the intentions in regard to defence in a government with Lord Palmerston at its head?' He was warned that Cobden, Bright, and Gibson were odious in Oxford, and he was suspected of being their accomplice. The clamour against Puseyism had died down, and the hostility of the evangelicals was no longer keen; otherwise it was the old story. Goldwin Smith tells him, 'Win or lose, you will have the vote of every one of heart and brain in the university and really connected with it. Young Oxford is all with you. Every year more men obtain the reward of their industry through your legislation. But old Oxford takes a long time in dying.' In the end (July 1), he won the battle by a majority of 191—Gladstone, 1050, Chandos, 859.

'My conscience is light and clear,' he wrote to Heathcote in the course of the contest. 'The interests that have weighed with me are in some degree peculiar, and I daresay it is a fault in me, especially as member for Oxford, that I cannot merge the man in the representative. While they have had much reason to complain, I have not had an over-good bargain. In the estimate of mere pleasure and pain, the representation of the university is not worth my having; for though the account is long on both sides, the latter is the heavier, and sharper. In the true estimates of good and evil, I can look back upon the last twelve years with some satisfaction, first, because I feel that as far as I am capable of labouring for anything, I have laboured for Oxford; and secondly, because in this respect at least I have been happy, that the times afforded me in various ways a field. And even as to the contemptible summing up between suffering and enjoyment, my belief is that the latter will endure, while the former will pass away.' The balance struck in this last sentence is a characteristic fragment of Mr. Gladstone's philosophy of public life. It lightened and dispelled the inevitable hours of disappointment and chagrin that, in natures of less lofty fortitude than his, are apt to slacken the nerve and rust the sword.

## III

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It seems a mistake to treat the acceptance of office under Lord Palmerston as a chief landmark in Mr. Gladstone's protracted journey from tory to liberal. The dilemma between joining Derby and joining Palmerston was no vital choice between two political creeds. The new prime minister and his chancellor of the exchequer had both of them started with Canning for their common master; but there was a generation between them, and Mr. Gladstone had travelled along a road of his own, perhaps not even now perceiving its goal. As we have seen, he told Mr. Walpole in May 1858 (p. 584), that there were 'no broad and palpable differences of opinion on public questions of principle,' that separated himself from the Derbyite tories.<sup>1</sup> Palmerston on the other hand was so much of a Derbyite tory, that his government, which Mr. Gladstone was now entering, owed its long spell of office and power to the countenance of Derby and his men. Mr. Bright had contemplated (p. 579) the possibility of a reverse process—a Derbyite government favoured by Palmerston's men. In either case, the political identity of the two leaders was recognised. To join the new administration, then, marked a party severance but no changed principles. I am far from denying the enormous significance of the party wrench, but it was not a conversion. Mr. Gladstone was at this time in his politics a liberal reformer of Turgot's type, a born lover of good government, of just practical laws, of wise improvement, of public business well handled, of a state that should emancipate and serve the individual. The necessity of summoning new driving force, and amending the machinery of the constitution, had not yet disclosed itself to him. This was soon discovered by events. Meanwhile he may well have thought that he saw as good a chance of great work with Palmerston as with Disraeli; or far better, for the election had shown

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noticing that he sat on the ministerial side of the House without breach of continuity from 1853 to 1866. During the first Derby government, as we have already seen (p. 423), he sat below the gangway on the opposition side; during the Palmerston administration of 1855 he sat below the gangway on the government side; and he remained there after the second Derby accession to office in 1858.

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that Bright was not wrong when he warned him that a Derby government could only exist upon forbearance.

Bright's own words already referred to (p. 625) sufficiently describe Mr. Gladstone's point of view; the need for a ministry with men in it 'acting with some measure of boldness and power, grappling with abuses, and relying upon the moral sense and honest feeling of the House, and the general sympathy of the people of England for improvement.' With such purposes an alliance with liberals of Lord Palmerston's temper implied no wonderful dislodgment. The really great dislodgment in his life had occurred long before. It was the fates that befell his book, it was the Maynooth grant, and the Gorham case, that swept away the foundations on which he had first built. In writing to Manning in 1845 (April 25) after his retirement on the question of Maynooth, Mr. Gladstone says to him, 'Newman sent me a letter giving his own explanation of my position. It was admirably done.' Newman in this letter told him that various persons had asked how he understood Mr. Gladstone's present position, so he put down what he conceived it to be, and he expresses the great interest that he feels in the tone of thought then engaging the statesman's mind:—

I say then [writes Newman, addressing an imaginary interlocutor]:—'Mr. Gladstone has said the state *ought* to have a conscience, but it has not a conscience. Can *he* give it a conscience? Is he to impose his own conscience on the state? He would be very glad to do so, if it thereby would become the state's conscience. But that is absurd. He must deal with facts. It has a thousand consciences, as being in its legislative and executive capacities the aggregate of a hundred minds; that is, it has no conscience.

'You will say, "Well the obvious thing would be, if the state has not a conscience, that he shall cease to be answerable for it." So he has—he has retired from the ministry. While he thought he could believe it had a conscience—till he was forced to give up, what it was his duty to cherish as long as ever he could, the notion that the British empire was a subject and servant of the kingdom of Christ—he served the state. Now that he finds this to be a

mere dream, much as it ought to be otherwise, and as it once was otherwise, he has said, I cannot serve such a mistress.

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'But really,' I continue, 'do you in your heart mean to say that he should absolutely and for ever give up the state and country? I hope not. I do not think he has so committed himself. That the conclusion he has come to is a very grave one, and not consistent with his going on blindly in the din and hurry of business, without having principles to guide him, I admit; and this, I conceive, is his reason for at once retiring from the ministry, that he may contemplate the state of things calmly and from without. But I really cannot pronounce, nor can you, nor can he perhaps at once, what is a Christian's duty under these new circumstances, whether to remain in retirement from public affairs or not. Retirement, however, could not be done by halves. If he is absolutely to give up all management of public affairs, he must retire not only from the ministry but from parliament.

'I see another reason for his retiring from the ministry. The public thought they had in his book a pledge that the government would not take such a step with regard to Maynooth as is now before the country. Had he continued in the ministry he would to a certain extent have been misleading the country.

'You say, "He made some show of seeing his way in future, for he gave advice; he said it would be well for all parties to yield something. To see his way and to give advice is as if he had found some principle to go on." I do not so understand him. I thought he distinctly stated he had not yet found a principle. But he gave that advice which facts, or what he called circumstances, made necessary, and which if followed out, will, it is to be hoped, lead to some basis of principle which we do not see at present.'

Compared to the supreme case of conscience indicated here, and it haunted Mr. Gladstone for nearly all his life, the perplexities of party could be but secondary. Those perplexities were never sharper than in the four years from 1854 to 1859; and with his living sense of responsibility for the right use of transcendent powers of national service, it was practically inevitable that he should at last quit the barren position of 'the one remaining Ishmael in the House of Commons.'

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Later in this year Mr. Gladstone was chosen to be the first lord rector of the university of Edinburgh under powers conferred by a recent law. His unsuccessful rival was Lord Neaves, excellent as lawyer, humourist, and scholar. In April the following year, in the midst of the most trying session of his life, he went down from the battle-ground at Westminster, and delivered his rectorial address<sup>1</sup>—not particularly pregnant, original, or pithy, but marked by incomparable buoyancy; enforcing a conception of the proper functions of a university that can never be enforced too strongly or too often; and impressing in melodious period and glowing image those ever-needed commonplaces about thrift of time and thirst for fame and the glory of knowledge, that kindle sacred fire in young hearts. It was his own career, intellectual as well as political, that gave to his discourse momentum. It was his own example that, to youthful hearers gave new depth to a trite lesson, when he exclaimed: 'Believe me when I tell you that the thrift of time will repay you in after life with an usury of profit beyond your most sanguine dreams, and that the waste of it will make you dwindle, alike in intellectual and in moral stature, beneath your darkest reckonings.' So too, we who have it all before us know that it was a maxim of his own inner life, when he told them: 'The thirst for an enduring fame is near akin to the love of true excellence; but the fame of the moment is a dangerous possession and a bastard motive; and he who does his acts in order that the echo of them may come back as a soft music in his ears, plays false to his noble destiny as a Christian man, places himself in continual danger of dallying with wrong, and taints even his virtuous actions at their source.'

<sup>1</sup> The Address is in *Gleanings*, vii.

## Book V

1859-1868

### CHAPTER I

#### THE ITALIAN REVOLUTION

(1859-1860)

RARELY, if ever, in the course of our history has there been such a mixture of high considerations, legislative, military, commercial, foreign, and constitutional, each for the most part traversing the rest, and all capable of exercising a vital influence on public policy, as in the long and complicated session of 1860. The commercial treaty first struck the keynote of the year; and the most deeply marked and peculiar feature of the year was the silent conflict between the motives and provisions of the treaty on the one hand, and the excitement and exasperation of military sentiment on the other.—GLADSTONE.<sup>1</sup>

THIS description extends in truth much beyond the session of a given year to the whole existence of the new cabinet, and through a highly important period in Mr. Gladstone's career. More than that, it directly links our biographic story to a series of events that created kingdoms, awoke nations, and re-made the map of Europe. The opening of this long and complex episode was the Italian revolution. Writing to Sir John Acton in 1864 Mr. Gladstone said to him of the budget of 1860, 'When viewed as a whole, it is one of the few cases in which my fortunes as an individual have been closely associated with matters of a public and even an historic interest.' I will venture to recall in outline to the reader's memory the ampler background of this striking epoch in Mr. Gladstone's public life. The old principles

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<sup>1</sup> *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, April 1887, p. 296.

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of the European state-system, and the old principles that inspired the vast contentions of ages, lingered but they seemed to have grown decrepit. Divine right of kings, providential pre-eminence of dynasties, balance of power, sovereign independence of the papacy,—these and the other accredited catchwords of history were giving place to the vague, indefinable, shifting, but most potent and inspiring doctrine of Nationality. On no statesman of this time did that fiery doctrine with all its tributaries gain more commanding hold than on Mr. Gladstone. ‘Of the various and important incidents,’ he writes in a memorandum, dated Braemar, July 16, 1892, ‘which associated me almost un-awares with foreign affairs in Greece (1850), in the Neapolitan kingdom (1851), and in the Balkan peninsula and the Turkish empire (1853), I will only say that they all contributed to forward the action of those home causes more continuous in their operation, which, without in any way effacing my old sense of reverence for the past, determined for me my place in the present and my direction towards the future.’

I

At the opening of the seventh decade of the century—ten years of such moment for our western world—the relations of the European states with one another had fallen into chaos. The perilous distractions of 1859-62 were the prelude to conflicts that after strange and mighty events at Sadowa, Venice, Rome, Sedan, Versailles, came to their close in 1871. The first breach in the ramparts of European order set up by the kings after Waterloo, was the independence of Greece in 1829. Then followed the transformation of the power of the Turk over Roumanians and Serbs from despotism to suzerainty. In 1830 Paris overthrew monarchy by divine right; Belgium cut herself asunder from the supremacy of the Dutch; then Italians and Poles strove hard but in vain to shake off the yoke of Austria and of Russia. In 1848 revolts of race against alien dominion broke out afresh in Italy and Hungary. The rise of the French empire, bringing with it the principle or idiosyncrasy of its new ruler,



carried this movement of race into its full ascendant. Treaties were confronted by the doctrine of Nationality. What called itself Order quaked before something that for lack of a better name was called the Revolution. Reason of State was eclipsed by the Rights of Peoples. Such was the spirit of the new time.

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The end of the Crimean war and the peace of Paris brought a temporary and superficial repose. The French ruler, by strange irony at once the sabre of Revolution and the trumpet of Order, made a beginning in urging the constitution of a Roumanian nationality, by uniting the two Danubian principalities in a single quasi-independent state. This was obviously a further step towards that partition of Turkey which the Crimean war had been waged to prevent. Austria for reasons of her own objected, and England, still in her Turcophil humour, went with Austria against France for keeping the two provinces, although in fiscal and military union, politically divided. According to the fashion of that time—called a comedy by some, a homage to the democratic evangel by others—a popular vote was taken. Its result was ingeniously falsified by the sultan (whose ability to speak French was one of the odd reasons why Lord Palmerston was sanguine about Turkish civilisation); western diplomacy insisted that the question of union should be put afresh. Mr. Gladstone, not then in office, wrote to Lord Aberdeen (Sept. 10, 1857):—

The course taken about the Principalities has grieved me. I do not mean so much this or that measure, as the principle on which it is to rest. I thought we made war in order to keep Russia out, and then suffer life, if it would, to take the place of death. But it now seems to be all but avowed, that the fear of danger, not to Europe, but to Islam—and Islam not from Russia, but from the Christians of Turkey,—is to be a ground for stinting their liberties.

In 1858 (May 4) he urged the Derby government to support the declared wish of the people of Wallachia and Moldavia, and to fulfil the pledges made at Paris in 1856. 'Surely the best resistance to be offered to Russia,' he said, 'is by the strength and freedom of those countries that will

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have to resist her. You want to place a living barrier between Russia and Turkey. *There is no barrier like the breast of freemen.* The union of the Principalities would raise up antagonists to the ambitions of Russia more powerful than any that could be bought with money. The motion was supported by Lord John Russell and Lord Robert Cecil, but Disraeli and Palmerston joined in opposing it, and it was rejected by a large majority. Mr. Gladstone wrote in his diary:—'May 4.—H. of C.—Made my motion on the Principalities. Lost by 292 : 114; and with it goes another broken promise to a people.' So soon did the illusions and deceptions of the Crimean war creep forth.

In no long time (1858) Roumania was created into a virtually independent state. Meanwhile, much against Napoleon's wish and policy, these proceedings chilled the alliance between France and England. Other powers grew more and more uneasy, turning restlessly from side to side, like sick men on their beds. The object of Russia ever since the peace had been, first to break down the intimacy between England and France, by flattering the ambition and enthusiasm of the French Emperor; next to wreak her vengeance on Austria for offences during the Crimean war, still pronounced unpardonable. Austria, in turn, was far too slow for a moving age; she entrenched herself behind forms with too little heed to substance; and neighbours mistook her dulness for dishonesty. For the diplomatic air was thick and dark with suspicion. The rivalry of France and Austria in Italy was the oldest of European stories, and for that matter the Lombardo-Venetian province was a possession of material value to Austria, for while only containing one-eighth of her population, it contributed one-fourth of her revenue.

The central figure upon the European stage throughout the time on which we are now about to enter was the ruler of France. The Crimean war appeared to have strengthened his dynasty at home, while faith in the depth of his political designs and in the grandeur of his military power had secured him predominance abroad. Europe hung upon his words; a sentence to an ambassador at a public audience on

new year's day, a paragraph in a speech at the opening of his parliament of puppets, a pamphlet supposed to be inspired, was enough to shake Vienna, Turin, London, the Vatican, with emotions pitched in every key. Yet the mind of this imposing and mysterious potentate was the shadowy home of vagrant ideals and fugitive chimeras. It was said by one who knew him well, *Scratch the emperor and you will find the political refugee*. You will find, that is to say, the man of fluctuating hope without firm calculation of fact, the man of half-shaped end with no sure eye to means. The sphinx in our modern politics is usually something of a charlatan, and in time the spite of fortune brought this mock Napoleon into fatal conflict with the supple, positive, practical genius of Italy in the person of one of the hardest representatives of this genius that Italy ever had; just as ten years later the same nemesis brought him into collision with the stern, rough genius of the north in the person of Count Bismarck. Meanwhile the sovereigns of central and northern Europe had interviews at Stuttgart, at Teplitz, at Warsaw. It was at Warsaw that the rulers of Austria and Prussia met the Czar at the end of 1860,—Poland quivering as she saw the three crowned pirates choose the capital city of their victim for a rendezvous. Russia declined to join what would have been a coalition against France, and the pope described the conference of Warsaw as three sovereigns assembling to hear one of them communicate to the other two the orders of the Emperor of the French. The French empire was at its zenith. Thiers said that the greatest compensation to a Frenchman for being nothing in his own country, was the sight of that country filling its right place in the world.

The reader will remember that at Turin on his way home from the Ionian Islands in the spring of 1859, Mr. Gladstone saw the statesman who was destined to make Italy. Sir James Hudson, our ambassador at the court of Piedmont, had sounded Cavour as to his disposition to receive the returning traveller. Cavour replied, 'I hope you will do all you can to bring such a proceeding about. I set the highest value on the visit of a statesman so distinguished and such a friend of Italy as Mr. Gladstone.' In conveying this

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message to Mr. Gladstone (Feb. 7, 1859), Hudson adds, 'I can only say I think your counsels may be very useful to this government, and that I look to your coming here as a means possibly of composing differences, which may, if not handled by some such calm unprejudiced statesman as yourself, lead to very serious disturbances in the European body politic.' Mr. Gladstone dined at Cavour's table at the foreign office, where, among other things, he had the satisfaction of hearing his host speak of Hudson as *quel uomo italianissimo*. Ministers, the president of the chamber, and other distinguished persons were present, and Cavour was well pleased to have the chance of freely opening his position and policy to 'one of the sincerest and most important friends that Italy had.'<sup>1</sup>

Among Cavour's difficulties at this most critical moment was the attitude of England. The government of Lord Derby, true to the Austrian sympathies of his party, and the German sympathies of the court, accused Italy of endangering the peace of Europe. 'No,' said Cavour, 'it is the statesmen, the diplomatists, the writers of England, who are responsible for the troubled situation of Italy; for is it not they who have worked for years to kindle political passion in our peninsula, and is it not England that has encouraged Sardinia to oppose the propaganda of moral influences to the illegitimate predominance of Austria in Italy?' To Mr. Gladstone, who had seen the Austrian forces in Venetia and in Lombardy, he said, 'You behold for yourself, that it is Austria who menaces us; here we are tranquil; the country is calm; we will do our duty; England is wrong in identifying peace with the continuance of Austrian domination.' Two or three days later the Piedmontese minister made one of those momentous visits to Paris that forced a will less steadfast than his own.

The French Emperor in his dealings with Cavour had entangled himself, in Mr. Gladstone's phrase, with 'a stronger and better informed intellect than his own.' 'Two men,' said Guizot, 'at this moment divide the attention of Europe, the

<sup>1</sup> *Il Conte di Cavour. Ricordi biografici.* Per G. Massari (Turin, 1875), p. 204.

Emperor Napoleon and Count Cavour. The match has begun. I back Count Cavour.' The game was long and subtly played. It was difficult for the ruler who had risen to power by bloodstained usurpation and the perfidious ruin of a constitution, to keep in step with a statesman, the inspiring purpose of whose life was the deliverance of his country by the magic of freedom. Yet Napoleon was an organ of European revolution in a double sense. He proclaimed the doctrine of nationality, and paid decorous homage to the principle of appeal to the popular voice. In time England appeared upon the scene, and by his flexible management of the two western powers, England and France, Cavour executed the most striking political transformation in the history of contemporary Europe. It brought, however, as Mr. Gladstone speedily found, much trouble into the relations of the two western powers with one another.

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The overthrow of the Derby government and the accession of the whigs exactly coincided in time with the struggle between Austria and the Franco-Sardinian allies on the bloody fields of Magenta and Solferino. A few days after Mr. Gladstone took office, the French and Austrian emperors and King Victor Emmanuel signed those preliminaries of Villafranca (July 11, 1859), which summarily ended an inconclusive war by the union of Lombardy to the Piedmontese kingdom, and the proposed erection of an Italian federation over which it was hoped that the pope might preside, and of which Venetia, still remaining Austrian, should be a member. The scheme was intrinsically futile, but it served its turn. The Emperor of the French was driven to peace by mixed motives. The carnage of Solferino appalled or unnerved him; he had revealed to his soldiers and to France that their ruler had none of the genius of a great commander; the clerical party at home fiercely assailed the prolongation of a war that must put the pope in peril; the case of Poland, the case of Hungary, might almost any day be kindled into general conflagration by the freshly lighted torch of Nationality; above all, Germany might stride forward to the Rhine to avenge the repulse of Austria on the Po and the Mincio.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *L'Empire Libéral*, by Émile Ollivier, iv. p. 217.

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Whatever the motive, Villafranca was a rude check to Italian aspirations. Cavour in poignant rage peremptorily quitted office, rather than share responsibility for this abortive end of all the astute and deep-laid combinations for ten years past, that had brought the hated Austrian from the triumph of Novara down to the defeat of Solferino. Before many months he once more grasped the helm. In the interval the movement went forward as if all his political tact, his prudence, his suppleness, his patience, and his daring, had passed into the whole population of central Italy. For eight months after Villafranca, it seemed as if the deep and politic temper that built up the old Roman Commonwealth, were again alive in Bologna, Parma, Modena, Florence. When we think of the pitfalls that lay on every side, how easily France might have been irritated or estranged, what unseasonable questions might not unnaturally have been forced forward, what mischief the voice and spirit of the demagogue might have stirred up, there can surely be no more wonderful case in history of strong and sagacious leaders, Cavour, Farini, Ricasoli, the Piedmontese king, guiding a people through the ferments of revolt, with discipline, energy, legality, order, self-control, to the achievement of a constructive revolution. Without the sword of France the work could not have been begun; but it was the people and statesmen of northern and central Italy who in these eight months made the consummation possible. And England, too, had no inconsiderable share; for it was she who secured the principle of non-intervention by foreign powers in Italian affairs; it was she who strongly favoured the annexation of central Italy to the new kingdom in the north. Here it was that England directly and unconsciously opened the way to a certain proceeding that when it came to pass she passionately resented. In the first three weeks of March (1860) Victor Emmanuel legalised in due form the annexation of the four central states to Piedmont and Lombardy, and in the latter half of April he made his entry into Florence. Cavour attended him, and strange as it sounds, he now for the first time in his life beheld the famed city,—centre of undying beauty and so many glories in the

history of his country and the genius of mankind. In one spot at least his musings might well have been profound—the tomb of Machiavelli, the champion of principles three centuries before, to guide that armed reformer, part fox part lion, who should one day come to raise up an Italy one and independent. The Florentine secretary's orb never quite sets, and it was now rising to a lurid ascendant in the politics of Europe for a long generation to come, lighting up the unblest gospel that whatever policy may demand justice will allow.<sup>1</sup>

CHAP.

I.

ÆT. 51.

On March 24 Cavour paid Napoleon a bitter price for his assent to annexation, by acquiescing in the cession to France of Savoy and Nice, provinces that were, one of them the cradle of the royal race, the other the birthplace of Garibaldi, the hero of the people. In this transaction the theory of the *plébiscite*, or direct popular vote upon a given question, for the first time found a place among the clauses of a diplomatic act. The *plébiscite*, though stigmatized as a hypocritical farce, and often no better than a formal homage paid by violence or intrigue to public right, was a derivative from the doctrines of nationality and the sovereignty of the people then ruling in Europe. The issue of the operation in Savoy and Nice was what had been anticipated. Italy bore the stroke with wise fortitude, but England when she saw the bargain closed for which she had herself prepared the way, took fierce umbrage at the aggrandisement of France, and heavy clouds floated into the European sky. As we have seen, the first act of the extraordinary drama closed at Villafranca. The curtain fell next at Florence upon the fusion of central with upper Italy. Piedmont, a secondary state, had now grown to be a kingdom with eleven or twelve millions of inhabitants. Greater things were yet to follow. Ten millions still remained in the south under the yoke of Bourbons and the Vatican. The third act, most romantic, most picturesque of all, an incomparable union of heroism with policy at double play with all the shifts of circumstance, opened a few weeks later.

<sup>1</sup> It is a notable thing that in 1859 the provisional government of Tuscany made a decree for the publication of a complete edition of Machiavelli's works at the cost of the state.

BOOK  
V.  
1860.

The great unsolved problem was the pope. The French ambassador at the Vatican in those days chanced to have had diplomatic experience in Turkey. He wrote to his government in Paris that the pope and his cardinals reminded him of nothing so much as the sultan and his ulemas—the same vacillation, the same shifty helplessness, the same stubborn impenetrability. The Cross seemed in truth as grave a danger in one quarter of Europe as was the Crescent in another, and the pope was now to undergo the same course of territorial partition as had befallen the head of a rival faith. For ten years the priests had been maintained in their evilly abused authority by twenty thousand French bayonets—the bayonets of the empire that the cardinals with undisguised ingratitude distrusted and hated.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor was eager to withdraw his force, if only he were sure that no catastrophe would result to outrage the catholic world and bring down his own throne.

Unluckily for this design, Garibaldi interposed. One night in May (1860), soon after the annexation to Piedmont of the four central states, the hero whom an admirer described as ‘a summary of the lives of Plutarch,’ sailed forth from Genoa for the deliverance of the Sicilian insurgents. In the eyes of Garibaldi and his Thousand, Sicily and Naples marked the path that led to Rome. The share of Cavour as accomplice in the adventure is still obscure. Whether he even really desired the acquisition of the Neapolitan kingdom, or would have preferred, as indeed he attempted, a federation between a northern kingdom and a southern, is not established. How far he had made certain of the abstinence of Louis Napoleon, how far he had realised the weakness of Austria, we do not authentically know. He was at least alive to all the risks to which Garibaldi’s enterprise must instantly expose him in every quarter of the horizon—from Austria, deeming her hold upon Venetia at stake; from the French Emperor, with hostile clericals in France to face; from the whole army of catholics all over the world; and

<sup>1</sup> One of the pope’s chamberlains gravely assured the English resident in Rome that he knew from a sure and trustworthy source that the French Emperor had made a bargain with the Devil, and frequently consulted him.



not least from triumphant Mazzinians, his personal foes, in whose inspirations he had no faith, whose success might easily roll him and his policy into mire and ruin. Now as always with consummate suppleness he confronted the necessities of a situation that he had not sought, and assuredly had neither invented nor hurried. The politician, he used to tell his friends, must above all things have the tact of the Possible. Well did Manzoni say of him, 'Cavour has all the prudence and all the imprudence of the true statesman.' Stained and turbid are the whirlpools of revolution. Yet the case of Italy was overwhelming. Sir James Hudson wrote to Mr. Gladstone from Turin (April 3, 1859)—'Piedmont cannot separate the question of national independence from the accidental existence of constitutional liberty (in Piedmont) if she would. Misgovernment in central Italy, heavy taxation and dearth in Lombardy, misgovernment in Modena, vacillation in Tuscany, cruelty in Naples, constitute the famous *grido di dolore*. The congress of Paris wedded Piedmont to the redress of grievances.'

CHAP.

I.

A.T. 51.

In August (1860) Garibaldi crossed from Sicily to the mainland and speedily made his triumphant entry into Naples. The young king Francis withdrew before him at the head of a small force of faithful adherents to Capua, afterwards to Gaeta. At the Volturno the Garibaldians, meeting a vigorous resistance, drove back a force of the royal troops enormously superior in numbers. On the height of this agitated tide, and just in time to forestall a fatal movement of Garibaldi upon Rome, the Sardinian army had entered the territories of the pope (September 11).

## II

In the series of transactions that I have sketched, the sympathies of Mr. Gladstone never wavered. From the appearance of his Neapolitan letters in 1851, he lost no opportunity of calling attention to Italian affairs. In 1854 he brought before Lord Clarendon the miserable condition of Poerio, Settembrini, and the rest. He took great personal trouble in helping to raise and invest a fund for the Settem-

BOOK  
V.  
1860.

brini family, and elaborate accounts in his own handwriting remain. In 1855 he wrote to Lord John Russell, then starting for Vienna, as to a rumour of the adhesion of Naples to the alliance of the western powers:—‘In any case I can conceive it possible that the Vienna conferences may touch upon Italian questions; and I sincerely rely upon your humanity as well as your love of freedom, indeed the latter is but little in question, to plead for the prisoners in the kingdom of the two Sicilies detained for political offences, real or pretended. I do not ask you to leave any greater duty undone, but to bear in mind the singular claims on your commiseration of these most unhappy persons, if occasion offers.’

As we have already seen, it was long before he advanced to the view of the thoroughgoing school. Like nearly all his countrymen, he was at first a reformer, not a revolutionary. To the Marquis Dragonetti, Mr. Gladstone wrote from Broadstairs in 1854:—

Naples has a government as bad as anarchy; Rome unites the evils of the worst government and the most entire anarchy. In those countries I can hardly imagine any change that would not be for the better. But in the wild opinions of some of your political sectaries, I see the best and most available defence of the existing system with its hideous mischiefs. Almost every Italian who heartily desires the removal from Italy and from the face of the earth of the immeasurable evils which your country now suffers through some of its governments, adopts Italian union and national independence for his watchwords. . . . Do not think it presumption, for it is the mere description of a fact, if I say, we in England cannot bring our minds to this mode of looking at the Italian question. All our habits, all our instincts, all our history lead us in another direction. In our view this is not building from the bottom upwards, but from the top downwards. . . . All our experience has been to the effect that the champion of liberty should take his ground, not upon any remote or abstract proposition, but upon the right of man, under every law divine and human, first to good government, and next to the institutions which are the necessary guarantees

of it. . . . We sympathise strongly, I believe, with the victims of misgovernment, but the English mind is not shocked *in limine* at the notion of people belonging to one race and language, yet politically incorporated or associated with another; and of Italian unity, I think the language of this nation would be, We shall be glad if it proves to be feasible, but the condition of it must be gradually matured by a course of improvement in the several states, and by the political education of the people; if it cannot be reached by these means, it hardly will be by any others; and certainly not by opinions which closely link Italian reconstruction with European disorganization and general war.

CHAP.

I

Æt. 61.

So far removed at this date was Mr. Gladstone from the glorified democracy of the Mazzinian propaganda. He told Cobden that when he returned from Corfu in the spring of 1859, he found in England not only a government with strong Austrian leanings, but to his great disappointment not even the House of Commons so alive as he could have wished upon the Italian question. 'It was in my opinion the authority and zeal of Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell in this question, that kindled the country.'

While Europe was anxiously watching the prospects of war between France and Austria, Mr. Gladstone spoke in debate (April 18, 1859) upon the situation, to express his firm conviction that no plan of peace could be durable which failed to effect some mitigation of the sore evils afflicting the Italian peninsula. The course of events after the peace speedily ripened both his opinions and the sentiment of the country, and he was as angry as his neighbours at the unexpected preliminaries of Villafranca. 'I little thought,' he wrote to Poerio (July 15, 1859), 'to have lived to see the day when the conclusion of a peace should in my own mind cause disgust rather than impart relief. But that day has come. I appreciate all the difficulties of the position both of the King of Sardinia and of Count Cavour. It is hardly possible for me to pass a judgment upon his resignation as a political step: but I think few will doubt that the moral character of the act is high. The duties of England in respect to the Italian question are limited by her powers, and these are greatly

BOOK  
V.  
1860.

confined. But her sentiments cannot change, because they are founded upon a regard to the deepest among those principles which regulate the intercourse of men and their formation into political societies.' By the end of the year, he softened his judgment of the proceedings of the French Emperor.

The heavy load of his other concerns did not absolve him in his conscience from duty to the Italian cause:—

Jan. 3, 1860.—I sat up till 2 A.M. with my letter to Ld. J. Russell about Italy, and had an almost sleepless night for it. 4.—2½ hours with the Prince Consort, *à deux reprises*, about the Italian question, which was largely stated on both sides. I thought he admitted so much as to leave him no standing ground. 5.—Went down to Pembroke Lodge and passed the evening with Lord John and his family. Lord John and I had much conversation on Italy.

In a cabinet memorandum (Jan. 3, 1860), he declared himself bound in candour to admit that the Emperor had shown, 'though partial and inconsistent, indications of a genuine feeling for the Italians—and far beyond this he has committed himself very considerably to the Italian cause in the face of the world. When in reply to all that, we fling in his face the truce of Villafranca, he may reply—and the answer is not without force—that he stood single-handed in a cause when any moment Europe might have stood combined against him. We gave him verbal sympathy and encouragement, or at least criticism; no one else gave him anything at all. No doubt he showed then that he had undertaken a work to which his powers were unequal; but I do not think that, when fairly judged, he can be said to have given proof by that measure of insincerity or indifference.' This was no more than justice, it is even less; and both Italians and Englishmen have perhaps been too ready to forget that the freedom of Italy would have remained an empty hope if Napoleon III. had not unsheathed his sword.

After discussing details, Mr. Gladstone laid down in his memorandum a general maxim for the times, that 'the

alliance with France is the true basis of peace in Europe, for England and France never will unite in any European purpose which is radically unjust.' He put the same view in a letter to Lacaita a few months later (Sept. 16);—'A close alliance between England and France cannot be used for mischief, and cannot provoke any dangerous counter combination; but a close alliance between England and other powers would provoke a dangerous counter combination immediately, besides that it could not in itself be trusted. My own leaning, therefore, is not indeed to place reliance on the French Emperor, but to interpret him candidly, and in Italian matters especially to recollect the great difficulties in which he is placed, (1) because, whether by his own fault, or not, he cannot reckon upon strong support from England when he takes a right course. (2) Because he has his own ultramontane party in France to deal with, whom, especially if not well supported abroad, he cannot afford to defy.'

CHAP.

I.

Æt. 51.

As everybody soon saw, it was the relation of Louis Napoleon to the French ultramontanes that constituted the tremendous hazard of the Piedmontese invasion of the territories of the pope. This critical proceeding committed Cavour to a startling change, and henceforth he was constrained to advance to Italian unity. A storm of extreme violence broke upon him. Gortchakoff said that if geography had permitted, the Czar would betake himself to arms in defence of the Bourbon king. Prussia talked of reviving the holy alliance in defence of the law of nations against the overweening ambition of Piedmont. The French ambassador was recalled from Turin. Still no active intervention followed.

One great power alone stood firm, and Lord John Russell wrote one of the most famous despatches in the history of our diplomacy (October 27, 1860). The governments of the pope and the king of the Two Sicilies, he said, provided so ill for the welfare of their people, that their subjects looked to their overthrow as a necessary preliminary to any improvement. Her Majesty's government were bound to admit that the Italians themselves are the best judges of their own

BOOK interests. Vattel, that eminent jurist, had well said that  
 V. when a people for good reasons take up arms against an  
 1860. oppressor, it is but an act of justice and generosity to assist  
 brave men in the defence of their liberties. Did the people  
 of Naples and the Roman States take up arms against their  
 government for good reasons? Upon this grave matter, her  
 Majesty's government held that the people in question are  
 themselves the best judges of their own affairs. Her Majesty's  
 government did not feel justified in declaring that the  
 people of Southern Italy had not good reasons for throw-  
 ing off their allegiance to their former governments. Her  
 Majesty's government, therefore, could not pretend to blame  
 the King of Sardinia for assisting them. So downright was  
 the language of Lord John. We cannot wonder that such  
 words as these spread in Italy like flame, that people copied  
 the translation from each other, weeping over it for joy and  
 gratitude in their homes, and that it was hailed as worth  
 more than a force of a hundred thousand men.<sup>1</sup>

The sensation elsewhere was no less profound, though  
 very different. The three potentates at Warsaw viewed the  
 despatch with an emotion that was diplomatically called  
 regret, but more resembled horror. The Prince Regent of  
 Prussia, afterwards the Emperor William, told Prince Albert  
 that it was a tough morsel, a disruption of the law of nations  
 and of the holy ties that bind peoples to their sovereigns.<sup>2</sup>  
 Many in England were equally shocked. Even Sir James  
 Graham, for instance, said that he would never have believed  
 that such a document could have passed through a British  
 cabinet or received the approval of a British sovereign; India,  
 Ireland, Canada would await the application of the fatal  
 doctrine that it contained; it was a great public wrong, a  
 grave error; and even Garibaldi and Mazzini would come out  
 of the Italian affair with cleaner hands. Yet to-day we may  
 ask ourselves, was it not a little idle to talk of the holy ties  
 that bind nations to their sovereigns, in respect of a system  
 under which in Naples thousands of the most respectable  
 of the subjects of the king were in prison or in exile; in the  
 papal states ordinary justice was administered by rough-

<sup>1</sup> Walpole's *Russell*, ii. pp. 335-339. <sup>2</sup> Martin's *Prince Consort*, v. p. 226.

handed German soldiers, and young offenders shot by court-martial at the drumhead; and in the Lombardo-Venetian provinces press offences were judged by martial law, with chains, shooting, and flogging for punishment.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may be thought of Lord John and his doctrine, only those who hold to the converse doctrine, that subjects may never rise against a king, nor ever under any circumstances seek succour from foreign power, will deny that the cruelties of Naples and the iniquities connected with the temporal authority of the clergy in the states of the church, constituted an irrefragable case for revolt.

CHAP.

I.

Æt. 51.

Within a few weeks after the troops of Victor Emmanuel had crossed the frontier (Sept. 1860), the papal forces had been routed, and a popular vote in the Neapolitan kingdom supported annexation to Piedmont. The papal states, with the exception of the patrimony of St. Peter in the immediate neighbourhood of Rome itself, fell into the hands of the king. Victor Emmanuel and Garibaldi rode into Naples side by side (Nov. 7). The Bourbon flag after a long stand was at last lowered at the stronghold of Gaeta (Feb. 14, 1861); the young Bourbon king became an exile for the rest of his life; and on February 18 the first parliament of united Italy assembled at Turin—Venice and Rome for a short season still outside. A few months before, Mr. Gladstone had written a long letter to d'Azeglio. It was an earnest exposition of the economic and political ideals that seemed to shine in the firmament above a nation now emerging from the tomb. The letter was to be shown to Cavour. 'Tell that good friend of ours,' he replied, 'that our trade laws are the most liberal of the continent; that for ten years we have been practising the maxims that he exhorts us to adopt; tell him that he preaches to the converted.'<sup>2</sup> Then one of those disasters happened that seem to shake the planetary nations out of their pre-appointed orbits. Cavour died.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A *General Review of the Different States of Italy*; prepared for the Foreign Office by Sir Henry Bulwer, January 1853.

Dec. 9, 1860. *La Politique du Comte Camille de Cavour de 1852 à 1861*, p. 392.

<sup>2</sup> June 6, 1861.

<sup>3</sup> Cavour to Marquis d'Azeglio,

## CHAPTER II

### THE GREAT BUDGET

(1860-1861)

It was said that by this treaty the British nation was about blindly to throw herself into the arms of this constant and uniform foe . . . Did it not much rather, by opening new sources of wealth, speak this forcible language—that the interval of peace, as it would enrich the nation, would also prove the means of enabling her to combat her enemy with more effect when the day of hostility should come? It did more than this; by promoting habits of friendly intercourse and of mutual benefit, while it invigorated the resources of Britain, it made it less likely that she should have occasion to call forth these resources.—PITT (February 12, 1787).

BOOK  
V.  
1859.

As we survey the panorama of a great man's life, conspicuous peaks of time and act stand out to fix the eye, and in our statesman's long career the budget of 1860 with its spurs of appendant circumstance, is one of these commanding points. In the letter to Acton already quoted (p. 1), Mr. Gladstone says:—

Before parliament met in 1860, the 'situation' was very greatly *tightened* and *enhanced* by three circumstances. First, the disaster in China.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, a visit of Mr. Cobden's to Hawarden, when he proposed to me in a garden stroll, the French treaty, and I, for myself and my share, adopted it (nor have I ever for a moment repented or had a doubt) as rapidly as the tender of office two months before. Thirdly, and the gravest of all, the Savoy affair. If, as is supposed, I have Quixotism in my nature, I can assure you that I was at this juncture much more than satiated,

<sup>1</sup> The disaster was the outcome of the Chinese refusal to receive Mr. Bruce, the British minister at Peking. Admiral Hope in endeavouring to force an entrance to the Peiho river was repulsed by the fire of the Chinese forts (June 25, 1859). In the following year a joint Anglo-French expedition captured the Taku forts and occupied Peking (Oct. 12, 1860).



and could have wished with Penelope that the whirlwind would take me up, and carry me to the shore of the great stream of Ocean.<sup>1</sup> And the wish would in this point not have been extravagant: the whirlwind was there ready to hand. In and from the midst of it was born the budget of 1860.

CHAP.  
II.  
Æt. 50.

The financial arrangements of 1859 were avowedly provisional and temporary, and need not detain us. The only feature was a rise in the income tax from fivepence to ninepence—its highest figure so far in a time of peace. ‘My budget,’ he wrote to Mrs. Gladstone (July 16), ‘is just through the cabinet, very kindly and well received, no one making objection but Lewis, who preached low doctrine. It confirms me in the belief I have long had, that he was fitter for most other offices than for that I now hold.’ ‘July 21 or rather 22, one a.m.—Just come back from a long night and stiff contention at the House of Commons. . . . It has been rather nice and close fighting. Disraeli made a popular motion to trip me up, but had to withdraw it, at any rate for the time. This I can say, it was not so that I used him. I am afraid that the truce between us is over, and that we shall have to pitch in as before.’

The only important speech was one on Italy (August 8),<sup>2</sup> of which Disraeli said that though they were always charmed by the speaker’s eloquence, this was a burst of even unusual brilliance, and it gave pleasure in all quarters. ‘Spoke for an *oretta* [short hour],’ says the orator, ‘on Italian affairs; my best offhand speech.’ ‘The fish dinner,’ Mr. Gladstone writes, ‘went off very well, and I think my proposing Lord Palmerston’s health (without speech) was decidedly approved. I have had a warm message from Lord Lansdowne about my speech; and Lord P. told me that on Tuesday night as he went upstairs on getting home he heard Lady P. spouting as she read by candle-light; it turned out to be the same effusion.’

Another incident briefly related to Mrs. Gladstone, brings us on to more serious ground:—‘*Hawarden, Sept. 12.*—

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey*, xx. 63.

<sup>2</sup> On a motion by Lord Elcho against any participation in a conference to settle the details of the peace between Austria and France.

BOOK

V.

1859.

Cobden came early. Nothing could be better than the luncheon, but I am afraid the dinner will be rather strong with local clergy. I have had a walk and long talk with Cobden who, I think, pleases and is pleased.' This was the garden walk of which we have just heard, where Cobden, the ardent hopeful sower, scattered the good seed into rich ground. The idea of a commercial treaty with France was in the air. Bright had opened it, Chevalier had followed it up, Persigny agreed, Cobden made an opportunity, Gladstone seized it. Cobden's first suggestion had been that as he was about to spend a part of the winter in Paris, he might perhaps be of use to Mr. Gladstone in the way of inquiry. Conversation expanded this into something more definite and more energetic. Why should he not, with the informal sanction of the British government, put himself into communication with the Emperor and his ministers, and work out with them the scheme of a treaty that should at once open the way to a great fiscal reform in both countries, and in both countries produce a solid and sterling pacification of feeling. Cobden saw Palmerston and tried to see Lord John Russell, and though he hardly received encouragement, at least he was not forbidden to proceed upon his volunteered mission.<sup>1</sup> 'Gladstone,' wrote Cobden to Mr. Bright, 'is really almost the only cabinet minister of five years' standing who is not afraid to let his heart guide his head a little at times.' The Emperor had played with the idea of a more open trade for five or six years, and Cobden, with his union of economic, moral, and social elements, and his incomparable gifts of argumentative persuasion, was the very man to strike Napoleon's impressionable mind. Although, having alienated the clericals by his Italian policy, the ruler of France might well have hesitated before proceeding to alienate the protectionists also, he became a convert and did not shrink.

Both Cobden and I, says Mr. Gladstone, were keenly in favour of such a treaty (I myself certainly), without intending thereby

<sup>1</sup> I may be forgiven for referring to see an interesting chapter in De La my *Life of Cobden*, ii. chap. xi. For Gorce, *Hist. du Second Empire*, iii. the French side of the transaction, pp. 213-32.

to signify the smallest disposition to the promotion of tariff treaties in general. I had been an active party to the various attempts under Sir Robert Peel's government to conclude such treaties, and was as far as possible removed from any disposition to the renewal of labour which was in itself so profitless, and which was dangerously near to a practical assertion of a false principle, namely that the reductions of indirect taxation, permitted by fiscal considerations, are in themselves injurious to the country that makes them, and are only to be entertained when a compensation can be had for them.<sup>1</sup> . . . The correspondence which would in the ordinary course have been exchanged between the foreign offices of the two countries, was carried through in a series of personal letters between Mr. Cobden and myself. I remember indeed that the Emperor or his government were desirous to conceal from their own foreign minister (Walewski) the fact that such a measure was in contemplation. On our side, the method pursued was only recommended by practical considerations. I contemplated including the conditions of the French treaty in a new and sweeping revision of the tariff, the particulars of which it was of course important to keep from the public eye until they were ready to be submitted to parliament.

CHAP.  
II.  
Æt. 50

At the end of 1859 the question of the treaty was brought into the cabinet, and there met with no general opposition, though some objection was taken by Lewis and Wood, based on the ground that they ought not to commit themselves by treaty engagements to a sacrifice of revenue, until they had before them the income and the charges of the year. Writing to his wife about some invitation to a country house, Mr. Gladstone says (Jan. 11, 1860):—

I cannot go without a clear sacrifice of public duty. For the measure is of immense importance and of no less nicety, and here

<sup>1</sup> 'I will undertake that there is not a syllable on our side of the treaty that is inconsistent with the soundest principles of free trade. We do not propose to reduce a duty which, on its merits, ought not to have been dealt with long ago. We give no concessions to France which do not apply to all other nations. We leave ourselves free to lay on any

amount of internal duties and to put on an equal tax on foreign articles of the same kind at the custom-house. It is true we bind ourselves for ten years not otherwise to raise such of our customs as affect the French trade, or put on fresh ones; and this, I think, no true free trader will regret.'—*Cobden to Bright*.

BOOK

V.

1860.

it all depends on me. Lord John backs me most cordially and well, but it is no small thing to get a cabinet to give up one and a half or two millions of revenue at a time when all the public passion is for enormous expenditure, and in a case beset with great difficulties. In *fact*, a majority of the cabinet is indifferent or averse, but they have behaved very well. I almost always agree with Lewis on other matters, but in trade and finance I do not find his opinions satisfactory. Till it is through, this vital question will need my closest and most anxious attention. [Two days later he writes:—] The cabinet has been again on the French treaty. There are four or five zealous, perhaps as many who would rather be without it. It has required pressure, but we have got sufficient power now, if the French will do what is reasonable. Lord John has been excellent, Palmerston rather neutral. It is really a great European operation. [A fortnight later (*Jan. 28*):—] A word to say I have opened the fundamental parts of my budget in the cabinet, and that I could not have hoped a better reception. Nothing decided, for I did not ask it, and indeed the case was not complete, but there was no general [resistance], no decided objection; the tone of questioning was favourable, Granville and Argyll delighted, Newcastle, I think, ditto. Thank God.

*To Cobden, Jan. 28.*—Criticism is busy; but the only thing really formidable is the unavowed but strong conflict with that passionate expectation of war, which no more bears disappointment than if it were hope or love. *Feb. 6.*—Cobbett once compared an insignificant public man in an important situation to the linch-pin in the carriage, and my position recalls his very apt figure to my mind.

Of course in his zeal for the treaty and its connection with tariff reform, Mr. Gladstone believed that the operation would open a great volume of trade and largely enrich the country. But in one sense this was the least of it:—

I had a reason of a higher order. The French Emperor had launched his project as to Savoy and Nice. It should have been plain to all those who desired an united Italy, that such an Italy ought not to draw Savoy in its wake; a country severed from it by the mountains, by language, by climate, and I suppose by pursuits. But it does not follow that Savoy should have been tacked on to France, while for the annexation of Nice it was

difficult to find a word of apology. But it could scarcely be said to concern our interests, while there was not the shadow of a case of honour. The susceptibilities of England were, however, violently aroused. Even Lord Russell used imprudent language in parliament about looking for other allies. A French panic prevailed as strong as any of the other panics that have done so much discredit to this country. For this panic, the treaty of commerce with France was the only sedative. It was in fact a counter-irritant; and it aroused the sense of commercial interest to counteract the war passion. It was and is my opinion, that the choice lay between the Cobden treaty and not the certainty, but the high probability, of a war with France. (*Undated memo.*)

CHAP.  
II.  
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## II

Out of the commercial treaty grew the whole of the great financial scheme of 1860. By his first budget Mr. Gladstone had marked out this year for a notable epoch in finance. Happily it found him at the exchequer. The expiry of certain annuities payable to the public creditor removed a charge of some two millions, and Mr. Gladstone was vehemently resolved that this amount should not 'pass into the great gulf of expenditure there to be swallowed up.' If the year, in such circumstances, is to pass, he said to Cobden, 'without anything done for trade and the masses, it will be a great discredit and a great calamity.' The alterations of duty required for the French treaty were made possible by the lapse of the annuities, and laid the foundation of a plan that averted the discredit and calamity of doing nothing for trade, and nothing for the masses of the population. France engaged to reduce duties and remove prohibitions on a long list of articles of British production and export, iron the most important,—'the daily bread of all industries,' as Cobden called it. England engaged immediately to abolish all duties upon all manufactured articles at her ports, and to reduce the duties on wine and brandy. The English reductions and abolitions extended beyond France to the commodities of all countries alike. Mr. Gladstone called 1860 the last of the cardinal and organic years of emancipatory fiscal legislation; it ended

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a series of which the four earlier terms had been reached in 1842, in 1845, in 1846, and 1853. With the French treaty, he used to say, the movement in favour of free trade reached its zenith.

The financial fabric that rose from the treaty was one of the boldest of all his achievements, and the reader who seeks to take the measure of Mr. Gladstone as financier, in comparison with any of his contemporaries in the western world, will find in this fabric ample material.<sup>1</sup> Various circumstances had led to an immense increase in national expenditure. The structure of warships was revolutionised by the use of iron in place of wood. It was a remarkable era in artillery, and guns were urgently demanded of new type. In the far East a quarrel had broken out with the Chinese. The threats of French officers after the plot of Orsini had bred a sense of insecurity in our own borders. Thus more money than ever was required; more than ever economy was both unpopular and difficult. The annual estimates stood at seventy millions; when Mr. Gladstone framed his famous budget seven years before, that charge stood at fifty-two millions. If the sole object of a chancellor of the exchequer be to balance his account, Mr. Gladstone might have contented himself with keeping the income-tax and duties on tea and sugar as they were, meeting the remissions needed by the French treaty out of the sum released by the expiry of the long annuities. Or he might have reduced tea and sugar to a peace rate, and raised the income-tax from ninepence to a shilling. Instead of taking this easy course, Mr. Gladstone after having relinquished upwards of a million for the sake of the French treaty, now further relinquished nearly a million more for the sake of releasing 371 articles from duties of customs, and a third million in order to abolish the vexatious excise duty upon the manufacture of paper. Nearly one million of all this loss he recouped by the imposition of certain small charges and minor

<sup>1</sup> The reader who wishes to follow these proceedings in close detail will, of course, read the volume of *The Financial Statements* of 1853, 1860-63,

containing also the speech on tax-bills, 1861, and on charities, 1863. (Murray, 1863).

taxes, and by one or two ingenious expedients of collection and account, and the other two millions he made good out of the lapsed annuities. Tea and sugar he left as they were, and the income-tax he raised from ninepence to tenpence. Severe economists, not quite unjustly called these small charges a blot on his escutcheon. Time soon wiped it off, for in fact they were a failure.

The removal of the excise duty upon paper proved to be the chief stumbling-block, and ultimately it raised more excitement than any other portion of the scheme. The fiscal project became by and by associated with a constitutional struggle between Lords and Commons. In the Commons the majority in favour of abolishing the duty sank from fifty-three to nine; troubles with China caused a demand for new expenditure; the yield from the paper duty was wanted; and the Lords finding in all this a plausible starting-point for a stroke of party business, or for the assertion of the principle that to reject a repealing money bill was not the same thing as to meddle with a bill putting on a tax, threw it out. Then when the Lords had rejected the bill, many who had been entirely cool about taking off the 'taxes upon knowledge'—for this unfavourable name was given to the paper duty by its foes—rose to exasperation at the thought of the peers meddling with votes of money. All this we shall see as we proceed.

This was the broad outline of an operation that completed the great process of reducing articles liable to customs duties from 1052, as they stood in 1842 when Peel opened the attack upon them; from 466 as Mr. Gladstone found them in 1853; and from 419 as he found them now, down to 48, at which he now left them.<sup>1</sup> Simplification had little further to go. 'Why did you not wait,' he was asked, 'till the surplus came, which notwithstanding all drawbacks

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, in 1845 the figure had risen from 1052 to 1163 articles, for the first operation of tariff reform was to multiply the number in consequence of the transition from *ad valorem* to specific duties, and this increased the headings under which they were described.

In 1860 Mr. Gladstone removed the duties from 371 articles, reducing the number to 48, of which only 15 were of importance—spirits, sugar, tea, tobacco, wine, coffee, corn, currants, timber, chicory, figs, hops, pepper, raisins, and rice.

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1860. you got in 1863, and then operate in a quiet way, without disturbing anybody?'<sup>1</sup> His answer was that the surplus would not have come at all, because it was created by his legislation. 'The principle adopted,' he said, 'was this. We are now (1860) on a high table-land of expenditure. This being so, it is not as if we were merely meeting an occasional and momentary charge. We must consider how best to keep ourselves going during a *period* of high charge. In order to do that, we will aggravate a momentary deficiency that we may thereby make a *great and permanent addition to productive power*.' This was his ceaseless refrain—the steadfast pursuit of the durable enlargement of productive power as the commanding aim of high finance.

## III

At the beginning of the year the public expectation was fixed upon Lord John Russell as the protagonist in the approaching battle of parliamentary reform, and the eager partisans at the Carlton Club were confident that on reform they would pull down the ministry. The partisans of another sort assure us that 'the whole character of the session was changed by Mr. Gladstone's invincible resolution to come forward in spite of his friends, and in defiance of his foes, for his own *aristeia* or innings.' The explanation is not good-natured, and we know that it is not true; but what is true is that when February opened, the interest of the country had become centred at its highest pitch in the budget and the commercial treaty. As the day for lifting the veil was close at hand, Mr. Gladstone fell ill, and here again political benevolence surmised that his disorder was diplomatic. An entry or two from Phillimore's journal will bring him before us as he was:—

Jan. 29.—Gladstone's emaciation in the past fortnight alarms me, as it has, I find, many other persons. Feb. 5.—Gladstone seriously ill; all the afternoon in Downing Street; a slight congestion of the lungs. Great treaty and financial speech put off

<sup>1</sup> See an interesting letter to Sir W. Heathcote in reply to other criticisms, in Appendix.



till Thursday. Was to have been to-morrow. Gladstone wished to see me, but I would only stay a minute by his bedside. He looked very pale. He must not speak for ten days, or Ferguson (his doctor) said, he will meet Canning's fate. *Feb. 6.*—With Gladstone in the evening. He is still in bed, but visibly better. *Feb. 7.*—With Gladstone a long time in the morning. Found him much better though still in bed. Annoyed at the publication of the new treaty with France in the Belgian papers, it being part of the scheme of his finance measure. *Feb. 8.*—Gladstone drove out to-day; bent on speaking the day after to-morrow. Ferguson allows him. I again protested. *Feb. 9.*—Saw Gladstone; he is better. But I am frightened at the proposed exertion of Friday. *Feb. 10.*—Saw Gladstone in the morning, radiant with expected success, and again at night at 10 o'clock in Downing Street still more radiant with triumph. Spoke for three hours and fifty minutes without suffering. Thinks that the House will accept all that is material in his finance scheme. *Feb. 13.*—Dined with Gladstone; ordered not to leave the house this week. *Feb. 25.*—Called on the Gladstones at breakfast time. Found them both exceedingly happy at the immense majority of 116 which affirmed last night the principle of his grand budget.<sup>1</sup> His hard dry cough distresses me. Gladstone thinks he has done what Pitt would have done but for the French Revolution. With characteristic modesty he said, 'I am a dwarf on the shoulders of a giant.'

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Mr. Gladstone's own entries are these:—

*Feb. 10, '60.*—Spoke 5-9 without great exhaustion; aided by a great stock of egg and wine. Thank God! Home at 11. This was the most arduous operation I have ever had in parliament. *March 9.*—Spoke on various matters in the Treaty debate; voted in 282:56; a most prosperous ending to a great transaction in which I heartily thank God for having given me a share. *March 23.*—A long day of 16½ hours' work.

Of the speech in which the budget was presented everybody agreed that it was one of the most extraordinary triumphs ever witnessed in the House of Commons. The

<sup>1</sup> On Mr. Duncan's resolution and against re-imposing the income-tax at an unnecessarily high rate, against adding to an existing deficiency by diminishing ordinary revenue *Moved Feb. 21.*

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casual delay of a week had raised expectation still higher; hints dropped by friends in the secret had added to the general excitement; and as was truly said by contemporaries, suspense that would have been fatal to mediocrity actually served Mr. Gladstone. Even the censorious critics of the leading journal found in the largeness and variety of the scheme its greatest recommendation, as suggesting an accord between the occasion, the man, and the measure, so marvellous that it would be a waste of all three not to accept them. Among other hearers was Lord Brougham, who for the first time since he had quitted the scene of his triumphs a generation before, came to the House of Commons, and for four hours listened intently to the orator who had now acquired the supremacy that was once his own. 'The speech,' said Bulwer, 'will remain among the monuments of English eloquence as long as the language lasts.' Napoleon begged Lord Cowley to convey his thanks to Mr. Gladstone for the copy of his budget speech he had sent him, which he said he would preserve 'as a precious souvenir of a man who has my thorough esteem, and whose eloquence is of a lofty character commensurate with the grandeur of his views.' Prince Albert wrote to Stockmar (March 17), 'Gladstone is now the real leader of the House, and works with an energy and vigour almost incredible.'<sup>1</sup>

Almost every section of the trading and political community looked with favour upon the budget as a whole, though it was true that each section touched by it found fault with its own part. Mr. Gladstone said that they were without exception free traders, but not free traders without exception. The magnitude and comprehensiveness of the enterprise seized the imagination of the country. At the same time it multiplied sullen or uneasy interests. The scheme was no sooner launched, than the chancellor of the exchequer was overwhelmed by deputations. Within a couple of days he was besieged by delegates from the paper makers; distillers came down upon him; merchants interested in the bonding system, wholesale stationers, linen manufacturers, maltsters, licensed victuallers, all in turn

<sup>1</sup> Martin's *Life of Prince Consort*, v. pp. 35, 37, 51.

thronged his ante-room. He was now, says Greville (Feb. 15), 'the great man of the day!' The reduction of duties on currants created lively excitement in Greece, and Mr. Gladstone was told that if he were to appear there he could divide honours with Bacchus and Triptolemus, the latest benefactors of that neighbourhood.

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Political onlookers with whom the wish was not alien to their thought, soon perceived that in spite of admiration for splendid eloquence and incomparable dexterity, it would not be all sunshine and plain sailing. At a very early moment the great editor of the *Times* went about saying that Gladstone would find it hard work to get his budget through; if Peel with a majority of ninety needed it all to carry his budget, what would happen to a government that could but command a majority of nine?<sup>1</sup> Both the commercial treaty and the finance speedily proved to have many enemies. Before the end of March Phillimore met a parliamentary friend who like everybody else talked of Gladstone, and confirmed the apprehension that the whigs obeyed and trembled and were frightened to death. 'We don't know where he is leading us,' said Hayter, who had been whipper-in. On the last day of the month Phillimore enters: 'March 30—Gladstone has taken his name off the Carlton, which I regret. It is a marked and significant act of entire separation from the *whole* party and will strengthen Disraeli's hands. The whigs hate Gladstone. The moderate conservatives and the radicals incline to him. The old Tories hate him.' For reasons not easy to trace, a general atmosphere of doubt and unpopularity seemed suddenly to surround his name.

The fortunes of the budget have been succinctly described by its author:—

They were chequered, and they were peculiar in this, that the first blow struck was delivered by one of the best among its friends. Lord John Russell, keenly alive to the discredit of any tampering as in former years with the question of the franchise, insisted on introducing his Reform bill on March 1, when the

<sup>1</sup> Greville, III. ii. p. 291.

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treaty and the financial proposals of the year, numerous and complex as they were, had not proceeded beyond their early stages. This was in flat violation of a rule of Lord Bacon's, even more weighty now than in his time, which Sir James Graham was fond of quoting: 'Never overlap business.' The enemies of the treaty were thus invited to obstruct it through prolonged debating on reform, and the enemies of reform to discharge a corresponding office by prolonged debating on the finance. A large majority of the House were in disguised hostility to the extension of the franchise. The discussions on it were at once protracted, intermittent, and languid. No division was taken against it. It was defeated by the pure *vis inertiae* of the House skilfully applied: and it was withdrawn on June 11. But it had done its work, by delaying the *tail* of the financial measures until a time when the marriage effected by the treaty between England and France had outlived its parliamentary honeymoon. There had intervened the Savoy and Nice explosion; settlement with China was uncertain; the prospects of the harvest were bad; French invasion was apprehended by many men usually rational. The Paper Duty bill, which would have passed the Commons by a large majority in the beginning of March, only escaped defeat on May 8 by a majority of nine.<sup>1</sup>

When Lord John had asked the cabinet to stop the budget in order to fix a day for his second reading, Mr. Gladstone enters in an autobiographic memorandum of his latest years<sup>2</sup>:—

I said to him, 'Lord John, I will go down on my knees to you, to entreat you not to press that request.' But he persevered; and this although he was both a loyal colleague and a sincere friend to the budget and to the French treaty. When reform was at last got rid of, in order to prosecute finance we had much to do, and in the midst of it there came upon us the news of hostilities in China, which demanded at once an increase of outlay . . . sufficient to destroy my accruing balance, and thus to disorganize the finance of the year. The opposition to the Paper bill

<sup>1</sup> *Eng. Hist. Rev.* April 1887, p. 301. The majority in the Lords was 193 to 104.

<sup>2</sup> Aug. 31, 1897.

now assumed most formidable dimensions. . . . During a long course of years there had grown up in the House of Commons a practice of finally disposing of the several parts of the budget each by itself. And the House of Lords had shown so much self-control in confining itself to criticism on matters of finance, that the freedom of the House of Commons was in no degree impaired. But there was the opportunity of mischief; and round the carcass the vultures now gathered in overwhelming force. It at once became clear that the Lords would avail themselves of the opportunity afforded them by the single presentation of financial bills, and would prolong, and virtually re-enact a tax, which the representatives of the people had repealed.

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On May 5 the diary reports:—'Cabinet. Lord Palmerston spoke  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour against Paper Duties bill! I had to reply. Cabinet against him, except a few, Wood and Cardwell in particular. Three wild schemes of foreign alliance are afloat! Our old men (2) are unhappily our youngest.' Palmerston not only spoke against the bill, as he had a right in cabinet to do, but actually wrote to the Queen that he was bound in duty to say that if the Lords threw out the bill—the bill of his own cabinet—'they would perform a good public service.'<sup>1</sup>

Phillimore's notes show that the intense strain was telling on his hero's physical condition, though it only worked his resolution to a more undaunted pitch:—

*May 9.*—Found Gladstone in good spirits in spite of the narrow majority on the paper duty last night, but ill with a cough. *May 15.*—The whigs out of office, and perhaps in, abusing Gladstone and lauding G. Lewis. I had much conversation with Walpole. Told me he, Henley, and those who went with them would have followed Gladstone if he had not joined this government, but added he was justified in doing so. *May 18.*—Gladstone is *ill*; vexed and *indignant* at the possible and probable conduct of the peers on Monday. Nothing will prevent him from denouncing them in the Commons, if they throw out the paper bill, as having violated in substance and practically the constitution. Meanwhile his unpopularity flows on.

<sup>1</sup> Martin, v. p. 100.

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## IV

The rejection of the bill affecting the paper duty by the Lords was followed by proceedings set out by Mr. Gladstone in one of his political memoranda, dated May 26, 1860:—

Though I seldom have time to note the hairbreadth 'scapes of which so many occur in these strange times and with our strangely constructed cabinet, yet I must put down a few words with respect to the great question now depending between the Lords and the English nation. On Sunday, when it was well known that the Paper Duties bill would be rejected, I received from Lord John Russell a letter which enclosed one to him from Lord Palmerston. Lord Palmerston's came in sum to this: that the vote of the Lords would not be a party vote, that as to the *thing done* it was right, that we could not help ourselves, that we should simply acquiesce, and no minister ought to resign. Lord John in his reply to this, stated that he took a much more serious view of the question and gave reasons. Then he went on to say that though he did not agree in the grounds stated by Lord Palmerston, he would endeavour to arrive at the same conclusion. His letter accordingly ended with practical acquiescence. And he stated to me his concurrence in Lord Palmerston's closing proposition.

Thereupon I wrote an immediate reply. We met in cabinet to consider the case. Lord Palmerston started on the line he had marked out. I think he proposed to use some meaningless words in the House of Commons as to the value we set on our privileges, and our determination to defend them if attacked, by way of garniture to the act of their abandonment. Upon this I stated my opinions, coming to the point that this proceeding of the House of Lords amounted to the establishment of a revising power over the House of Commons in its most vital function long declared exclusively its own, and to a divided responsibility in fixing the revenue and charge of the country for the year; besides aggravating circumstances upon which it was needless to dwell. In this proceeding nothing would induce me to acquiesce, though I earnestly desired that the mildest means of correction should be adopted. This was strongly backed in principle by Lord John; who thought that as public affairs would not admit of our at once confining ourselves to this subject, we should take

it up the first thing next session, and send up a new bill. Practical, as well as other, objections were taken to this mode of proceeding, and opposition was continued on the merits; Lord Palmerston keen and persevering. He was supported by the Chancellor, Wood, Granville (in substance), Lewis, and Cardwell, who thought nothing could be done, but were ready to join in resigning if thought fit. Lord John, Gibson, and I were for decided action. Argyll leaned the same way. Newcastle was for inquiry to end in a declaratory resolution. Villiers thought some step necessary. Grey argued mildly, inclined I think to inaction. Herbert advised resignation, opposed any other course. Somerset was silent, which I conceive meant inaction. At last Palmerston gave in, and adopted with but middling grace the proposition to set out with inquiries, and with the intention to make as little of the matter as he could.

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His language in giving notice, on Tuesday, of the committee went near the verge of saying, We mean nothing. An unsatisfactory impression was left on the House. Not a syllable was said in recognition of the gravity of the occasion. Lord John had unfortunately gone away to the foreign office. I thought I should do mischief at that stage by appearing to catch at a part in the transaction. Yesterday all was changed by the dignified declaration of Lord John. I suggested to him that he should get up, and Lord Palmerston, who had intended to keep the matter in his own hands, gave way. But Lord Palmerston was uneasy and said, 'You won't pitch it into the Lords,' and other things of the same kind. On the whole, I hope that in this grave matter at least we have turned the corner.

As we know, even the fighting party in the cabinet was forced to content itself for the moment with three protesting resolutions. Lord Palmerston and his chancellor of the exchequer both spoke in parliament. 'The tone of the two remonstrances,' says Mr. Gladstone euphemistically, 'could not be in exact accord; but by careful steering on my part, and I presume on his, all occasion of scandal was avoided.' Not altogether, perhaps. Phillimore says:—

*July 6.* A strange and memorable debate. Palmerston moving resolution condemnatory of the Lords, and yet speaking in defence

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of their conduct. Gladstone most earnestly and eloquently condemning them, and declaring that action and not resolutions became the House of Commons, and that though he agreed to the language and spirit of the resolutions, if action were proposed he would support the proposal, and taunted the conservatives with silently abetting 'a gigantic innovation on the constitution.' Loudly and tempestuously cheered by the radicals, and no one else. Yet he was the true conservative at this moment. But ought he to have spoken this as chancellor of the exchequer, and from the treasury bench, after the first lord of the treasury had spoken in almost totally opposite sense? The answer may be that it was a House of Commons, and not a government question. I fear he is very unwell, and I greatly fear killing himself. 17.—'I have lived,' he said, speaking of the debate on the Lords and the paper duty, 'to hear a radical read a long passage from Mr. Burke amid the jeers and scoffs of the so-called conservatives.'

The struggle still went on:—

*July 20.*—H. of C. Lost my Savings Bank Monies bill; my *first* defeat in a measure of finance in the H. of C. This ought to be very good for me; and I earnestly wish to make it so.

*Aug. 6.*—H. of C. Spoke 1½ hour on the Paper duty; a favourable House. Voted in 266-233. A most kind and indeed notable reception afterwards.

*Aug. 7.*—This was a day of congratulations from many kind M.P.'s.

The occasion of the notable reception was the moving of his resolutions reducing the customs duty on imported paper to the level of the excise duty. This proceeding was made necessary by the treaty, and was taken to be, as Mr. Gladstone intended that it should be, a clear indication of further determination to abolish customs duty and excise duty alike. The first resolution was carried by 33, and when he rose to move the second the cheering from the liberal benches kept him standing for four or five minutes—cheering intended to be heard the whole length of the corridor that led to another place.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bright wrote to Mr. Gladstone true course for Lord John, yourself, that he was inclined 'to think that the and Mr Gibson, and for any others



The great result, as Greville says in a sentence that always amused the chief person concerned, is 'to give some life to half-dead, broken-down, and tempest-tossed Gladstone.' In this rather tame fashion the battle ended for the session, but the blaze in the bosom of the chancellor of the exchequer was inextinguishable, as the Lords in good time found out. Their rejection of the Paper Duties bill must have had no inconsiderable share in propelling him along the paths of liberalism. The same proceeding helped to make him more than ever the centre of popular hopes. He had taken the unpopular side in resisting the inquiry into the miscarriages of the Crimea, in pressing peace with Russia, in opposing the panic on papal aggression, on the bill for divorce, and on the bill against church rates; and he represented with fidelity the constituency that was least of all in England in accord with the prepossessions of democracy. Yet this made no difference when the time came to seek a leader. 'There is not,' Mr. Bright said, in the course of this quarrel with the Lords, 'a man who labours and sweats for his daily bread, there is not a woman living in a cottage who strives to make her home happy for husband and children, to whom the words of the chancellor of the exchequer have not brought hope, and to whom his measures, which have been defended with an eloquence few can equal and with a logic none can contest, have not administered consolation.'

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At the end of the session Phillimore reports:—

*Aug. 12.*—Gladstone is physically weak, requires rest, air, and generous living. He discoursed without the smallest reserve upon political affairs, the feebleness of the government, mainly attributable to the absence of any effective head; Palmerston's weakness in the cabinet, and his low standard for all public conduct. He said in Peel's cabinet, a cabinet minister if he had a measure to bring forward consulted Peel and then the cabinet. Nobody thought of consulting Palmerston first, but brought his measure at once to the cabinet. Gladstone said his work in the cabinet

who agreed with you, was to have great a sin against the representative assigned rather than continue a branch of our constitution.'  
 government which could commit so

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had been so constant and severe that his work in the House of Commons was refreshing by comparison. I never heard him speak so strongly of the timidity and vacillation of his comrades. The last victory, which alone preserved the government from dropping to pieces, was won in spite of them.

V

In a contemporary memorandum (May 30, 1860) on the opinions of the cabinet at this date Mr. Gladstone sets out the principal trains of business with which he and his colleagues were called upon to deal. It is a lively picture of the vast and diverse interests of a minister disposed to take his cabinet duties seriously. It is, too, a curious chart of the currents and cross-currents of the time. Here are the seven heads as he sets them down :—

(1.) The Italian question—Austrian or anti-Austrian; (2.) Foreign policy in general—leaning towards calm and peace, or brusqueness and war; (3.) Defences and expenditure—alarm and money charges on the one side, modest and timid retrenchment with confidence in our position on the other; (4) Finance, as adapted to the one or the other of these groups of ideas and feelings respectively; (5) Reform—ultra-conservative on the one side, on the other, no fear of the working class and the belief that something *real* though limited, should be done towards their enfranchisement; (6) Church matters may perhaps be also mentioned, though there has been no collision in regard to them, whatever difference there may be—they have indeed held a very secondary place amidst the rude and constant shocks of the last twelve months; (7) Lastly, the *coup d'état* on the paper duties draws a new line of division.

'In the many passages of argument and opinion,' Mr. Gladstone adds, 'the only person from whom I have never to my recollection differed on a serious matter during this anxious twelvemonth is Milner Gibson.' The reader will find elsewhere the enumeration of the various parts in this complex dramatic piece.<sup>1</sup> Some of the most Italian members of the cabinet were also the most combative in foreign policy, the most martial in respect

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

of defence, the most stationary in finance. In the matter of reform, some who were liberal as to the franchise were conservative as to redistribution. In matters ecclesiastical, those who like Mr. Gladstone were most liberal elsewhere, were (with sympathy from Argyll) 'most conservative and church-like.'

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On the paper duties there are, I think, only three members of the cabinet who have a strong feeling of the need of a remedy for the late aggression—Lord John Russell, Gibson, W. E. G.—and Lord John Russell leans so much upon Palmerston in regard to foreign affairs that he is weaker in other subjects when opposed to him, than might be desired. With us in feeling are, more or less, Newcastle, Argyll, Villiers. On the other side, and pretty decidedly—first and foremost, Lord Palmerston; after him, the Chancellor, Granville, Lewis, Wood, Cardwell, Herbert. It is easy to judge what an odd shifting of parts takes place in our discussions. We are not Mr. Burke's famous mosaic, but we are a mosaic in solution, that is to say, a kaleidoscope.<sup>1</sup> When the instrument turns, the separate pieces readjust themselves, and all come out in perfectly novel combinations. Such a cabinet ought not to be acephalous.

Before he had been a year and a half in office, Mr. Gladstone wrote to Graham (Nov. 27, '60):—'We live in anti-reforming times. All improvements have to be urged in apologetic, almost in supplicatory tones. I sometimes reflect how much less liberal as to domestic policy in any true sense of the word, is this government than was Sir Robert Peel's; and how much the tone of ultra-toryism prevails among a large portion of the liberal party.' 'I speak a literal truth,' he wrote to Cobden, 'when I say that in these days it is more difficult to save a shilling than to spend a million.' 'The men,' he said, 'who ought to have been breasting and stemming the tide have become captains general of the alarmists,' and he deplored Cobden's refusal

<sup>1</sup> 'He made an administration so checkered and speckled, he put together a piece of joinery so crossly indented and whimsically dovetailed, a cabinet so variously inlaid, such a piece of diversified mosaic, such a tessellated pavement without cement . . . that it was indeed a very curious show, but utterly unsafe to touch and unsure to stand upon.'—*Speech on American Taxation.*

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## VI

After the 'gigantic innovation' perpetrated by the Lords, Mr. Gladstone read to the cabinet (June 30, 1860) an elaborate memorandum on the paper duty and the taxing powers of the two Houses. He dealt fully alike with the fiscal and the constitutional aspects of a situation from which he was 'certain that nothing could extricate them with credit, except the united, determined, and even authoritative action of the government.' He wound up with a broad declaration that, to any who knew his tenacity of purpose when once roused, made it certain that he would never acquiesce in the pretensions of the other House. The fiscal consideration, he concluded, 'is nothing compared with the vital importance of maintaining the exclusive rights of the House of Commons in matter of supply. There is hardly any conceivable interference of the Lords hereafter, except sending down a tax imposed by themselves, which would not be covered by this precedent. It may be said they are wise and will not do it. Assuming that they will be wise, yet I for one am not willing that the House of Commons should hold on sufferance in the nineteenth century what it won in the seventeenth and confirmed and enlarged in the eighteenth.'

The intervening months did not relax this valiant and patriotic resolution. He wrote down a short version of the story in the last year of his life:—

The hostilities in China reached a rather early termination, and in the early part of the session of 1861 it appeared almost certain that there would be a surplus for 1861-2 such as I thought would make it possible again to operate on the paper duties. Unfortunately, the income tax was at so high a rate that we could not reasonably hope to carry paper duty repeal without taking a penny off the tax. The double plan strained the probable means afforded by the budget. In this dilemma I received most valuable aid from the shrewd ingenuity of Milner Gibson, who said: Why

not fix the repeal of the paper duty at a later date than had been intended, say on the 10th of October, which will reduce the loss for the year? I gladly adopted the proposition, and proposed a budget reducing the income tax by one penny, and repealing the paper duties from October 10, 1861. With this was combined what was more essential than either—the adoption of a new practice with respect to finance, which would combine all the financial measures of the year in a single bill. We had separate discussions in the cabinet on the constitutional proposal [the single bill]. It was not extensively resisted there, though quietly a good deal disliked. I rather think the chancellor, Campbell, took strong objection to it; and I well remember that the Duke of Newcastle gave valuable and telling aid. So it was adopted. The budget was the subject of a fierce discussion, in which Lord Palmerston appeared to me to lose his temper for the first and only time. The plan, however, to my great delight, was adopted. It was followed by a strange and painful incident. I received with astonishment from Lord Palmerston, immediately after the adoption of the budget, a distinct notice that he should not consider it a cabinet question in the House of Commons, where it was known that the opposition and the paper makers would use every effort to destroy the plan. I wrote an uncontroversial reply (with some self-repression) and showed it to Granville, who warmly approved, and was silent on the letter of Lord Palmerston. The battle in parliament was hard, but was as nothing to the internal fighting; and we won it. We likewise succeeded in the plan of uniting the financial proposals in one bill. To this Spencer Walpole gave honourable support; and it became a standing rule. The House of Lords, for its misconduct, was deservedly extinguished, in effect, as to all matters of finance.

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Of the 'internal fighting' we have a glimpse in the diary:—

*April 10, '61.*—Saw Lord Palmerston and explained to him my plans, which did not meet his views. A laborious and anxious day. 11.—Cabinet. Explained my case 1-3. Chaos! 12.—Cabinet 1-3. Very stiff. We 'broke up' in our sense and all but in another. 13.—Cabinet 3½-6. My plan as now framed was accepted, Lord Palmerston yielding gracefully; Stanley of

BOOK Alderley almost the only kicker. The plan of one bill was  
 V. accepted after fighting. 15.—H. of C., financial statement for three  
 1861. hours. The figures rather made my head ache. It was the discharge of a long pent-up excitement. *May 13.*—Lord J. R. again sustained me most handsomely in debate. Lord P. after hearing Graham amended his speech, but said we must not use any words tending to make this a vote of confidence. 30.—H. of C. Spoke one hour on omission of clause IV. [that repealing the paper duty], and voted in 296-281. One of the greatest nights in the whole of my recollection. *June 1.*—Yesterday was a day of subsiding excitement. To-day is the same. Habit enables me to expel exciting thought, but not the subtler nervous action which ever comes with a crisis. 7. To-day's debate in the H. of L. was a great event for me.

The abiding feature of constitutional interest in the budget of 1861 was this inclusion of the various financial proposals in a single bill, so that the Lords must either accept the whole of them, or try the impossible performance of rejecting the whole of them. This was the affirmation in practical shape of the resolution of the House of Commons in the previous year, that it possessed in its own hands the power to remit and impose taxes, and that the right to frame bills of supply in its own measure, manner, time, and matter, is a right to be kept inviolable. Until now the practice had been to make the different taxes the subject of as many different bills, thus placing it in the power of the Lords to reject a given tax bill without throwing the financial machinery wholly out of gear. By including all the taxes in a single finance bill the power of the Lords to override the other House was effectually arrested.

In language of that time, he had carried every stitch of free-trade canvas in the teeth of a tempest that might have made the boldest financial pilot shorten sail. Many even of his friends were sorry that he did not reduce the war duty on tea and sugar, instead of releasing paper from its duty of excise. Neither friends nor foes daunted him. He possessed his soul in patience until the hour struck, and then came forth in full panoply. Enthusiastic journalists with the gift of a poetic pen told their millions of readers how, after weeks

of malign prophecy that the great trickster in Downing Street would be proved to have beggared the exchequer, that years of gloom and insolvency awaited us,—suddenly, the moment the magician chose to draw aside the veil, the darkness rolled away; he had fluttered out of sight the whole race of sombre Volsicians; and where the gazers dreaded to see a gulf they beheld a golden monument of glorious finance; like the traveller in the Arabian fable who was pursued in the Valley of Shadows by unearthly imprecations, he never glanced to right or left until he could disperse the shadows by a single stroke. ‘He is,’ says another onlooker, ‘in his ministerial capacity, probably the best abused and the best hated man in the House; nevertheless the House is honestly proud of him, and even the country party feels a glow of pride in exhibiting to the diplomatic gallery such a transcendent mouthpiece of a nation of shopkeepers. The audacious shrewdness of Lancashire married to the polished grace of Oxford is a felicitous union of the strength and culture of liberal and conservative England; and no party in the House, whatever may be its likings or antipathies, can sit under the spell of Mr. Gladstone’s rounded and shining eloquence without a conviction that the man who can talk “shop” like a tenth Muse is, after all, a true representative man of the market of the world.’

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In describing the result of the repeal of the paper duty a little after this,<sup>1</sup> he used glowing words. ‘Never was there a measure so conservative as that which called into vivid, energetic, permanent, and successful action the cheap press of this country.’ It was also a common radical opinion of that hour that if the most numerous classes acquired the franchise as well as cheap newspapers, the reign of peace would thenceforth be unbroken. In a people of bold and martial temper such as are the people of our island, this proved to be a miscalculation. Meanwhile there is little doubt that Mr. Gladstone’s share in thus fostering the growth of the cheap press was one of the secrets of his rapid rise in popularity.

<sup>1</sup> At Manchester, Oct. 14, 1862.

## CHAPTER III

### BATTLE FOR ECONOMY

(1860-1862)

THE session of 1860, with its complement in the principal part of 1861, was, I think, the most trying part of my whole political life.—GLADSTONE (1897).

In reading history, we are almost tempted to believe that the chief end of government in promoting internal quiet has been to accumulate greater resources for foreign hostilities.—CHANNING.

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ALL this time the battle for thrifty husbandry went on, and the bark of the watch-dog at the exchequer sounded a hoarse refrain. 'We need not maunder in ante-chambers,' as Mr. Disraeli put it, 'to discover differences in the cabinet, when we have a patriotic prime minister appealing to the spirit of the country; and when at the same time we find his chancellor of the exchequer, whose duty it is to supply the ways and means by which those exertions are to be supported, proposing votes with innuendo, and recommending expenditure in a whispered invective.'

Severer than any battle in parliament is a long struggle inside a cabinet. Opponents contend at closer quarters, the weapons are shorter, it is easier to make mischief. Mr. Gladstone was the least quarrelsome of the human race; he was no wrestler intent only on being a winner in Olympic games; nor was he one of those who need an adversary to bring out all their strength. But in a cause that he had at heart he was untiring, unfaltering, and indomitable. Parallel with his contention about budget and treaty in 1860 was persistent contention for economy. The financial crisis went on with the fortifications crisis. The battle was incessant. He had not been many months in office before



those deep differences came prominently forward in temperament, tradition, views of national policy, that continued to make themselves felt between himself and Lord Palmerston so long as the government endured. Perhaps I should put it more widely, and say between himself and that vast body of excited opinion in the country, of which Lord Palmerston was the cheerful mouthpiece. The struggle soon began.

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Sidney Herbert, then at the war office, after circulating a memorandum, wrote privately to Mr. Gladstone (Nov. 23, 1859), that he was convinced that a great calamity was impending in the shape of a war provoked by France. Officers who had visited that country told him that all thinking men in France were against war with England, all noisy men for it, the army for it, and above all, the government for it. Inspired pamphlets were scattered broadcast. Everything was determined except time and occasion. The general expectation was for next summer. French tradesmen at St. Malo were sending in their bills to the English, thinking war coming. 'We have to do with a godless people who look on war as a game open to all without responsibility or sin; and there is a man at the head of them who combines the qualities of a gambler and a fatalist.'

Mr. Gladstone replied in two letters, one of them (Nov. 27) of the stamp usual from a chancellor of the exchequer criticising a swollen estimate, with controversial doubts, pungent interrogatories, caustic asides, hints for saving here and paring there. On the following day he fired what he called his second barrel, in the shape of a letter, which states with admirable force and fulness the sceptic's case against the scare. This time it was no ordinary exchequer wrestle. He combats the inference of an English from an Italian war, by the historic reminder that a struggle between France and Austria for supremacy or influence in Italy had been going on for four whole centuries, so that its renewal was nothing strange. If France, now unable to secure our co-operation, still thought the Italian danger grave enough to warrant single-handed intervention, how does that support the inference that she must certainly be ready to invade England next? He ridicules the conclusion that the in-

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vasion was at our doors, from such contested allegations as that the Châlons farmers refused the loan of horses from the government, because they would soon be wanted back again for the approaching war with England. What extraordinary farmers to refuse the loan of horses for their ploughing and seed time, because they might be reclaimed for purposes of war before winter! Then why could we not see a single copy of the incendiary and anti-English pamphlets, said to be disseminated broadcast among the troops? What was the value of all this contested and unsifted statement? Why, if he were bent on a rupture, did the Emperor not stir at the moment of the great Mutiny, when every available man we had was sent to India, and when he had what might have passed for a plausible excuse in the Orsini conspiracy, and in the deliberate and pointed refusal of parliament to deal with it? With emphasis, he insists that we have no adequate idea of the predisposing power which an immense series of measures of preparation for war on our own part, have in actually begetting war. They familiarise ideas which when familiar lose their horror, and they light an inward flame of excitement of which, when it is habitually fed, we lose the consciousness.

This application of cool and reasoned common sense to actual probabilities seldom avails against imaginations excited by random possibilities; and he made little way. Lord Palmerston advanced into the field, in high anxiety that the cabinet should promptly adopt Herbert's proposal.<sup>1</sup> They soon came to a smart encounter, and Mr. Gladstone writes to the prime minister (Feb. 7, 1860):—'There are, I fear, the most serious differences among us with respect to a loan for fortifications. . . . My mind is made up, and to propose any loan for fortifications would be, on my part, with the views I entertain, a betrayal of my public duty.' A vigorous correspondence between Mr. Gladstone and Herbert upon military charges followed, and the tension seemed likely to snap the cord.

If I may judge from the minutes of the members of the cabinet on the papers circulated, most of them stood

<sup>1</sup> For his letter to Mr. Gladstone, Dec. 15, 1859, see Ashley, ii. p. 375.

with their chief, and not one of them, not even Milner Gibson nor Villiers, was ready to proceed onward from a sort of general leaning towards Mr. Gladstone's view to the further stage of making a strong stand-up fight for it. The controversy between him and his colleagues still raged at red heat over the whole ground of military estimates, the handling of the militia, and the construction of fortifications. He wrote memorandum upon memorandum with untiring energy, pressing the cabinet with the enormous rate in the increase of charge; with the slight grounds on which increase of charge was now ordinarily proposed and entertained; and, most of all, with the absence of all attempt to compensate for new and necessary expenditure by retrenchment in quarters where the scale of outlay had either always been, or had become unnecessary. He was too sound a master of the conditions of public business to pretend to take away from the ministers at the head of the great departments of expenditure their duty of devising plans of reduction, but he boldly urged the reconsideration of such large general items of charge as the military expenditure in the colonies, then standing at an annual burden of over two millions on the taxpayers of this country. He was keen from the lessons of experience, to expose the ever indestructible fallacy that mighty armaments make for peace.

Still the cabinet was not moved, and in Palmerston he found a will and purpose as tenacious as his own. 'The interview with Lord Palmerston came off to-day,' he writes to the Duke of Argyll (June 6, 1860). 'Nothing could be more kind and frank than his manner. The *matter* was first to warn me of the evils and hazards attending, for me, the operation of resigning. Secondly, to express his own strong sense of the obligation to persevere. Both of these I told him I could fully understand. He said he had had two great objects always before him in life—one the suppression of the slave trade, the other to put England in a state of defence. In short, it appears that he now sees, as he considers, the opportunity of attaining a long cherished object; and it is not unnatural that he should repel any

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proposal which should defraud him of a glory, in and by absolving him from a duty. . . . I am now sure that Lord Palmerston entertained this purpose when he formed the government; but had I been in the slightest degree aware of it, I should certainly, but very reluctantly, have abstained from joining it, and helped, as I could, from another bench its Italian purposes. Still, I am far indeed from regretting to have joined it, which is quite another matter.'

Now labouring hard in Paris month after month at the tariff, Cobden plied Mr. Gladstone with exhortations to challenge the alarmists on the facts; to compare the outlay by France for a dozen years past on docks, fortifications, arsenals, with the corresponding outlay by England; to show that our steam navy, building and afloat, to say nothing of our vast mercantile marine, was at least double the strength of France; and above all, to make his colleagues consider whether the French Emperor had not, as a matter of self-interest, made the friendship of England, from the first, the hinge of his whole policy. Cobden, as always, knew thoroughly and in detail what he was talking about, for he had sat for three successive sessions on a select committee upon army, navy, and ordnance expenditure. In another letter he turned personally to Mr. Gladstone himself: 'Unconsciously,' he says, 'you have administered to the support of a system which has no better foundation than a gigantic delusion.' (June 11, 1860). 'You say unconsciously,' Mr. Gladstone replies (June 13), 'I am afraid that in one respect this is too favourable a description. I have consciously, as a member of parliament and as a member of the government, concurred in measures that provide for an expenditure beyond what were it in my power I would fix. . . . But I suppose that the duty of choosing the lesser evil binds me; *the difficulty is to determine what the lesser evil is.*'

My story grows long, and it ends as such stories in our politics usually end. A compromise was arranged on the initiative of the Duke of Somerset, keeping clear, as Mr. Gladstone supposed, of the fortification scheme as a whole,

and not pledging future years.<sup>1</sup> 'Never at any time in my life,' Mr. Gladstone told Graham, 'have I had such a sense of mental and moral exhaustion.' The strain was not ended by the compromise, for in moving the resolution for a vote of two millions for fortifications (July 23), Lord Palmerston not only declared that he held it to be absolutely necessary to carry the whole scheme into effect—the very proposition which the compromise put aside—but defended it by a series of stringent criticisms particularly fitted to offend and irritate France. Mr. Gladstone was not present,<sup>2</sup> but he felt strongly that he had good grounds of complaint, and that faith had not been strictly kept. 'Much dismayed,' he wrote in his diary (*July 24*), 'at the terms of Lord Palmerston's resolution.' It was now, however, too late to draw back.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Bright made a weighty and masterly attack (Aug. 2), hinting plainly that the thing was 'a compromise to enable the government to avoid the rock, or get over the quicksand, which this question has interjected into their midst,' and quoting with excellent effect a pregnant passage from Peel:—'If you adopt the opinion of military men, naturally anxious for the complete security of every available point; naturally anxious to throw upon you the whole responsibility for the loss, in the event of war suddenly breaking out, of some of our valuable possessions,—you would overwhelm this country with taxes in time of peace.' But this was a Palmerstonian parliament. The year before, a remark-

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix. 'This account, Mr. Gladstone writes, 'contains probably the only reply I shall ever make to an account given or printed by Sir Theodore Martin in his *Life of the Prince Consort*, which is most injurious to me without a shadow of foundation: owing, I have no doubt, to defective acquaintance with the subject.' The passage is in vol. v. p. 148. Lord Palmerston's words to the Queen about Mr. Gladstone are a curiously unedifying specimen of loyalty to a colleague.

<sup>2</sup> It appears that he wrote his final opinion on the subject to the cabinet on Saturday, left them to deliberate, and went to the Crystal Palace. The Duke of Argyll joined him there and said it was all right.

The Gladstones then went to Cliveden and he purposely did not return till late, twelve o'clock on Monday night, in order that Palmerston might make his speech as he pleased. I doubt the policy of his absence. It of course excited much remark, and does not in any way protect Gladstone. M. Gibson was also absent.' —*Phillimore Diary*, July 23. In his diary Mr. Gladstone records: '*July 21*. Cabinet 3½-5½. I left it that the discussion might be free and went to Stafford House and Sydenham. There I saw, later, Argyll and S. Herbert, who seemed to bring good news. At night we went off to Cliveden.'

<sup>3</sup> For an interesting letter on all this to the Duke of Argyll, see Appendix.

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able debate (July 21, 1859) had promised better things. Disraeli had opened it with emphatic declarations:—'There is 'no country,' he said, 'that can go on raising seventy millions in time of peace with impunity. England cannot, and if England cannot, no country can.' Bright followed with the assurance that Cobden and he might now consider Mr. Disraeli a convert to their views. Lord John Russell came next, agreeing with Bright; and even Palmerston himself was constrained to make a peace speech.

## II

In May 1861 Mr. Gladstone notes 'a day of over fourteen hours: thank God for the strength.' The atmosphere around him would have depressed a weaker man. 'At Brooks's,' says Phillimore, 'they hate Gladstone worse than at the Carlton.' In the summer the strife upon expenditure was renewed. Eventually Mr. Gladstone was able to write to Graham from the cabinet room (July 20, 1861) that Castor and Pollux appeared aloft at the right moment, and the clouds had disappeared. In a letter to his close friend, Sir Walter James, in 1871 Mr. Gladstone says:—'The storm of criticism and rebuke does not surprise nor discourage me. Doubtless much must be just; and what is not, is what we call in logic an "inseparable accident" of politics. Time and reflection will, please God, enable us to distinguish between them. For my own part I *never* was so abused as in 1860; but it was one of the most useful or least useless years of my life.' The battle was as severe in 1861 as it had been the year before. In the middle of the session (May 9) Phillimore reports: 'found Gladstone in good spirits; he spoke with real greatness of mind of the attacks made on him.'

The next year Lord Palmerston wrote to express his concern at something that he came upon in a railway journey. 'I read with much interest,' he wrote to his chancellor of the exchequer (April 29, 1862), 'your able and eloquent speeches at Manchester, but I wish to submit to you some observations upon the financial part of the second speech.' He did not agree with Mr. Gladstone that the

nation had forced the cabinet and parliament into high expenditure, but if it were so, he regarded it not as matter of reproach, but as a proof of the nation's superior sagacity. Panic there had been none; governors and governed had for a long time been blind and apathetic; then they awoke. There was on the other side of the channel a people who, say what they may, hate us and would make any sacrifice to humiliate us, and they had now at their head an able, active, wary, counsel-keeping, but ever-planning sovereign [Napoleon III.] 'Have the parliament and the nation been wrong, and have Bright and Cobden and yourself been right?' All this being so, he could not but regret that Mr. Gladstone should by speeches in and out of parliament invite agitation to force the government of which he was a member, to retrace its steps taken deliberately and with full sense of responsibility.<sup>1</sup> To Palmerston's eight quarto pages, written in one of the finest hands of the time, Mr. Gladstone replied in twelve.

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In all good humour, he said, I prefer not being classed with Mr. Bright, or even Mr. Cobden; first, because I do not know their opinions with any precision; and secondly, because as far as I do know or can grasp them, they seem to contemplate fundamental changes in taxation which I disapprove in principle, and believe also to be unattainable in practice, and reductions of establishment and expenditure for which I am not prepared to be responsible. . . . I think it a mean and guilty course to hold out vague and indefinite promises of vast retrenchment, but I think it will be a healthful day, both for the country and for the party over which you so ably preside, when the word retrenchment, of course with a due regard to altered circumstances, shall again take its place among their battle cries.<sup>4</sup>

A spirited correspondence followed, for Lord Palmerston knew his business, and had abundant faculty of application; while Mr. Gladstone, for his part, was too much in earnest to forego rejoinder and even surrejoinder. 'No claptrap reductions,' cried the prime minister. 'You are feeding not only expenditure,' rejoined the chancellor of the exchequer, 'but

<sup>1</sup> This letter is printed in full by Mr. Ashley, ii. p. 413.

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what is worse, the spirit of expenditure.' 'You disclaim political community of opinion with Bright and Cobden, and justly,' said Lord Palmerston, 'but you cannot but be aware that owing to various accidental circumstances many people at home and abroad connect you unjustly with them, and this false impression is certainly not advantageous.'

'My dear Gladstone,' he wrote good-humouredly on another occasion, 'You may not have seen how your name is taken in vain by people with whom I conceive you do not sympathise,—Yours sincerely,

PALMERSTON.'

Enclosed was a placard with many large capital letters, notes of exclamation, italics, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of political emphasis:—

**TAX PAYERS!** Read Mr. Cobden's new pamphlet, the 'THREE PANICS,' and judge for yourselves. How long will you suffer Yourself to be Humbugged by PALMERSTONIANISM, and Robbed by the 'Services,' and others interested in a War Expenditure, even in times of Peace? . . . **THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER APPEALS TO YOU TO HELP HIM.** You have the power in your own hands if you will only exert it. Reform the House of Commons, AND DO IT THOROUGHLY THIS TIME.

Of the continuance of the struggle in 1862, a few items from the diary give an adequate picture:—

*Jan.* 30, 1862.—A heavy blow in the announcement of increased military estimates from Sir George Lewis gave me a disturbed evening. 31.—Worked on the formidable subject of the estimates, and made known to the cabinet my difficulties. *Feb.* 1.—Cabinet 3½-6. It went well; the tenth penny [on the income-tax] proved to be a strong physis; £750,000 of reductions ordered. 12.—Wrote mem. on possible reductions, etc., to dispense with income-tax. The whole question, I think, is, can we be satisfied (I think we ought and will) with 21 millions for army and navy instead of 27? *March* 1.—Cabinet 3¼-6¼, very stiff, on the Belgian negotiations I had to go to the ultima ratio. 31.—H. of C. The fortifications got their first blow.

By midsummer public feeling veered a little:—'The tide has turned. Lord Palmerston is now "the strong swimmer in his agony"'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Diary.



A candid and friendly observer has told us the situation:—  
 ‘When I was private secretary to Lord Palmerston,’ he says, CHAP.  
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 ‘and Mr. Gladstone was his chancellor of the exchequer, } Exr. 53.  
 it was a constant source of sorrow to me, and a perpetual  
 cause of mystery, to note how they misunderstood one  
 another, and how evidently each mistrusted the other,  
 though perfectly cordial and most friendly in their mutual  
 intercourse. . . . If the proposal was adhered to, Mr. Glad-  
 stone gave way. This seemed to Lord Palmerston a case of  
 gratuitous difficulties put in his way, and attempts to thwart  
 without the courage to resist.’<sup>1</sup>

In closing this chapter, let us note that in spite of Lord Palmerston, he won no inconsiderable success. When 1866 came, and his financial administration ended, he had managed, with the aid of the reduction of debt charge after the lapse of the long annuities, to carry expenditure back to the level of 1857. Naval expenditure rose until 1861, and then began to fall; army expenditure rose until 1863, and then began to fall. In 1859, when he went to the exchequer, the total under these two heads was nearly twenty-six millions; when he quitted office in 1866 the total was twenty-four millions. In the middle years it had swelled to twenty-eight. After half a dozen years of panic and extravagance, all sedulously fostered by a strong prime minister, that he should still have left the cost of government little higher than he found it was no defeat, but an extremely satisfactory performance. ‘We must follow the nature of our affairs,’ Burke says, ‘and conform ourselves to our situation. Why should we resolve to do nothing because what I propose to you may not be the exact demand of the petition? If we cry, like children, for the moon, like children we must cry on.’<sup>2</sup>

### III

Ruminating in the late evening of life over his legislative work, Mr. Gladstone wrote:—‘Selecting the larger measures

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Evelyn Ashley in *National Review*, June 1898, pp. 536-40.

<sup>2</sup> Plan for Economical Reform.

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and looking only to achieved results, I should take the following heads: 1. The Tariffs, 1842-60. 2. Oxford University Act. 3. Post Office Savings Banks. 4. Irish Church Disestablishment. 5. Irish Land Acts. 6. Franchise Act. Although this excludes the last of all the efforts, viz., the Irish Government bill' The third item in the list belongs to the period (1861) at which we have now arrived.

The points to be noted are three. 1. The whole of my action in 1859-65 was viewed with the utmost jealousy by a large minority and a section of the very limited majority. It was an object to me to get this bill passed *sub silentio*, a full statement of my expectations from it would have been absolutely fatal. I admit they have been more than realised. 2. The Trustee Savings Banks were doubly defective, nay trebly, for they sometimes oroke. (1) Their principle was left in doubt—were the general funds in trust, or cash at a banker's? This was vital. (2) They never got or could get within the doors of the masses, for they smelt of class. It was necessary to provide for the savings of the people with (a) safety, (b) cheapness, (c) convenience. The banks *cost* money to the State. The Post Office Savings Banks bring in a revenue. 3. Behind all this I had an object of first-rate importance, which has been attained: to provide the minister of finance with a strong financial arm, and to secure his independence of the City by giving him a large and certain command of money.

A sequel to this salutary measure was a bill three years later with the apparently unheroic but really beneficent object of facilitating the acquisition of small annuities, without the risk of fraud or bankruptcy.<sup>1</sup> An eyewitness tells how (March 7, 1864) 'Mr. Gladstone held the house for two hours enchained by his defence of a measure which avowedly will not benefit the class from which members are selected; which involves not only a "wilderness of figures," but calculations of a kind as intelligible to most men as equations to London cabdrivers; and which, though it might and would interest the nation, would never in the nature of things be made a hustings cry. The riveted attention of the House was in itself a triumph; the deep impression

<sup>1</sup> 27 and 28 Vict., chap. 43.

received by the nation on the following day was a greater one. It was felt that here was a man who really could lead, instead of merely reflecting the conclusions of the popular mind.' The measure encountered a pretty stiff opposition. The insurance companies were vexed that they had neglected their proper business, others feared that it might undermine the poor law, others again took the pessimist's favourite line that it would be inoperative. But the case was good, Mr. Gladstone's hand was firm, and in due time the bill became law amid a loud chorus of approval.

Thus he encouraged, stimulated, and facilitated private and personal thrift, at the same time and in the same spirit in which he laboured his fervid exhortations to national economy. He was deeply convinced, he said and kept saying, 'that all excess in the public expenditure beyond the legitimate wants of the country is not only a pecuniary waste, but a great political, and above all, a great moral evil. It is a characteristic of the mischiefs that arise from financial prodigality that they creep onwards with a noiseless and a stealthy step; that they commonly remain unseen and un-felt, until they have reached a magnitude absolutely overwhelming.' He referred to the case of Austria, where these mischiefs seemed to threaten the very foundations of empire.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SPIRIT OF GLADSTONIAN FINANCE

(1859-1866)

NATIONS seldom realise till too late how prominent a place a sound system of finance holds among the vital elements of national stability and well-being; how few political changes are worth purchasing by its sacrifice; how widely and seriously human happiness is affected by the downfall or the perturbation of national credit, or by excessive, injudicious, and unjust taxation.—LECKY.

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1859-66. IN finance, the most important of all the many fields of his activity, Mr. Gladstone had the signal distinction of creating the public opinion by which he worked, and warming the climate in which his projects throve. In other matters he followed, as it was his business and necessity to follow, the governing forces of the public mind; in finance he was a strenuous leader. He not only led with a boldness sometimes verging on improvidence; apart from the merits of this or that proposal, he raised finance to the high place that belongs to it in the interest, curiosity, and imperious concern of every sound self-governing community. Even its narrowest technicalities by his supple and resplendent power as orator were suffused with life and colour. When ephemeral critics disparaged him as mere rhetorician—and nobody denies that he was often declamatory and discursive, that he often over-argued and over-refined—they forgot that he nowhere exerted greater influence than in that department of affairs where words out of relation to fact are most surely exposed. If he often carried the proper rhetorical arts of amplification and development to excess, yet the basis of fact was both sound and clear, and his digressions, as when, for example, he introduced an account of the

changes in the English taste for wine,<sup>1</sup> were found, and still remain, both relevant and extremely interesting.

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One recorder who had listened to all the financiers from Peel downwards, said that Peel's statements were ingenious and able, but dry; Disraeli was clever but out of his element; Wood was like a cart without springs on a heavy road; Gladstone was the only man who could lead his hearers over the arid desert, and yet keep them cheerful and lively and interested without flagging. Another is reminded of Sir Joshua's picture of Garrick between tragedy and comedy, such was his duality of attitude and expression; such the skill with which he varied his moods in a single speech, his fervid eloquence and passion, his lightness and buoyancy of humour, his lambent and spontaneous sarcasm. Just as Macaulay made thousands read history who before had turned from it as dry and repulsive, so Mr. Gladstone made thousands eager to follow the public balance-sheet, and the whole nation became his audience, interested in him and his themes and in the House where his dazzling wonders were performed. All this made a magnificent contribution to the national spirit of his time. Such extraordinary power over others had its mainspring in the depths and zeal of his own conviction and concern. 'For nine or ten months of the year,' he told Sir Henry Taylor in 1864, 'I am always willing to go out of office, but in the two or three that precede the budget I begin to feel an itch to have the handling of it. Last summer I should have been delighted to go out; now [December] I am indifferent; in February, if I live as long, I shall, I have no doubt, be loath; but in April quite ready again. Such are my signs of the zodiac.' The eagerness of his own mind transmitted itself like an electric current through his audience.

Interest abroad was almost as much alive as the interest felt in England itself. We have already seen how keenly Cavour followed Mr. Gladstone's performances. His budget speeches were circulated by foreign ministers among deputies and editors. Fould, one of the best of Napoleon's finance ministers, kept up a pretty steady correspondence with the

<sup>1</sup> *Financial Statements*, p. 151.

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1859-66. English chancellor: appeals to him as to the sound doctrine on sugar drawbacks; is much struck by his proposals on Scotch banks; says mournfully to him (April 28, 1863), in a sentence that is a whole chapter in the history of the empire:—'You are very fortunate in being able to give such relief to the taxpayers; if it had not been for the war in Mexico, I should perhaps have been able to do something of the same sort, and that would have been, especially in view of the elections, very favourable to the government of the Emperor.'

When Mr. Gladstone came to leave office in 1866, he said to Fould (July 11):—'The statesmen of to-day have a new mission opened to them: the mission of substituting the concert of nations for their conflicts, and of teaching them to grow great in common, and to give to others by giving to themselves. Of this beneficent work a good share has fallen to the departments with which we have respectively been connected.' Fould had already deplored his loss. 'I counted,' he says, 'on the influence of your wise doctrines in finance, to help me in maintaining our country in that system of order and economy, of which you were setting the example.' Alas, in France and in continental Europe generally at that time, selfish material interests and their class representatives were very strong, popular power was weak; in most of them the soldier was the master. Happily for our famous chancellor of the exchequer, England was different.

\ It has often been said that he ignored the social question; did not even seem to know there was one. The truth is, that what marks him from other chancellors is exactly the dominating hold gained by the social question in all its depth and breadth upon his most susceptible imagination. Tariff reform, adjustment of burdens, invincible repugnance to waste or profusion, accurate keeping and continuous scrutiny of accounts, substitution of a few good taxes for many bad ones,—all these were not merely the love of a methodical and thrifty man for habits of business; they were directly associated in him with the amelioration of the hard lot of the toiling mass, and sprang from an ardent concern in improving human well-being, and raising the moral ideals of mankind. In his 'musings for the good of man,' Liberation of Inter-

course, to borrow his own larger name for free trade, figured in his mind's eye as one of the promoting conditions of abundant employment. 'If you want,' he said in a pregnant proposition, 'to benefit the labouring classes and to do the maximum of good, it is not enough, to operate upon the articles consumed by them; you should rather operate on the articles that give them the maximum of employment.' In other words, you should extend the area of trade by steadily removing restrictions. He recalled the days when our predecessors thought it must be for man's good to have 'most of the avenues by which the mind, and also the hand of man conveyed and exchanged their respective products,' blocked or narrowed by regulation and taxation. Dissemination of news, travelling, letters, transit of goods, were all made as costly and difficult as the legislator could make them. 'I rank,' he said, 'the introduction of cheap postage for letters, documents, patterns, and printed matter, and the abolition of all taxes on printed matter, in the catalogue of free trade legislation. These great measures may well take their place beside the abolition of prohibitions and protective duties, the simplifying of revenue laws, and the repeal of the Navigation Act, as forming together the great code of industrial emancipation.'<sup>1</sup>

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It was not unnatural that fault should be found with him for not making a more resolute effort to lighten the burden of that heavy mortgage which, under the name of the National Debt, we have laid upon the industry and property of the nation. In 1866 he was keenly excited by Jevons's argument from the ultimate shrinkage of our coal supply, and he accepted the inference that we should vigorously apply ourselves by reduction of the debt to preparation for the arrival of the evil day. But, as he wrote to Jevons (March 16, 1866), 'Until the great work of the liberation of industry was in the main effected, it would have been premature or even wrong to give too much prominence to

<sup>1</sup> See his elaborate article in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1880, on *Free Trade, Railways, and Commerce*, in which he endeavours fairly to divide the credit of our material progress between its two great factors, the Liberation of Inter-course, and the Improvement of Locomotion. Under the head of new locomotive forces he counts the Suez canal.

BOOK V. 1859-66. this view of the subject. Nor do I regard that liberation as yet having reached the point at which we might say, we will now cease to make remission of taxes a principal element and aim in finance. But we are in my judgment near it. And I am most anxious that the public should begin to take a closer and more practical view of the topics which you have done so much to bring into prominence.'

He was always thinking of the emancipation of commerce, like Peel and Cobden. His general policy was simple. When great expenditure demanded large revenue, he raised his money by high income-tax, and high rates of duty on a few articles, neither absolute necessities of life nor raw materials of manufacture. He left the income-tax at fourpence. In 1866, he told the House that the new parliament then about to be elected might dispense with the tax. 'If,' he said, 'parliament and the country preferred to retain the tax, then the rate of fourpence is the rate at which in time of peace and in the absence of any special emergency, we believe it may be most justly and wisely so retained.' While cordially embracing Cobden's policy of combining free trade with retrenchment, he could not withstand a carnal satisfaction at abundant revenue. Deploring expenditure with all his soul, he still rubs his hands in professional pride at the elasticity of the revenue under his management.

## II

When it is asked, with no particular relevancy, what original contribution of the first order was made by Mr. Gladstone to the science of national finance, we may return the same answer as if it were asked of Walpole, Pitt, or Peel. It was for Adam Smith from his retreat upon the sea-beach of distant Kirkcaldy to introduce new and fruitful ideas, though he too owed a debt to French economists. The statesman's business is not to invent ideas in finance, but to create occasions and contrive expedients for applying them. 'What an extraordinary man Pitt is,' said Adam Smith; 'he understands my ideas better than I understand them myself.' Originality may lie as much in perception of oppor-



tunity as in invention. Cobden discovered no new economic truths that I know of, but his perception of the bearings of abstract economic truths upon the actual and prospective circumstances of his country and the world, made him the most original economic statesman of his day. The glory of Mr. Gladstone was different. It rested on the practical power and tenacity with which he opened new paths, and forced the application of sound doctrine over long successions of countless obstacles.

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If we probe his fame as financier to the core and marrow, it was not his power as orator, it was not his ingenuity in device and expedient, it was his unswerving faith in certain fixed aims, and his steadfast and insistent zeal in pursuing them, that built up the splendid edifice. Pitt performed striking financial feats, especially in the consolidation of duties, in reformed administration, and in the French treaty of 1786. But ill-fortune dragged him into the vortex of European war, and finance sank into the place of a secondary instrument, an art for devising aliments, some of them desperate enough, for feeding the war-chest of the nation. Sir Robert Walpole, Mr. Gladstone wrote, 'had not to contend with like difficulties, and I think his administration should be compared with the early years of Pitt, in which way of judging he would come off second, though a man of cool and sagacious judgment, while morally he stood low.'<sup>1</sup>

In the happier conditions of his time, Mr. Gladstone was able to use wise and bold finance as the lever for enlarging all the facilities of life, and diffusing them over the widest area. If men sometimes smile at his extraordinary zeal for cheap wines and cheap books and low railway fares, if they are sometimes provoked by his rather harsh views on privileges for patents and copyrights for authors, restrictive of the common enjoyment, it is well to remember that all this and the like came from what was at once clear financial vision and true social feeling. 'A financial experience,' he once said, 'which is long and wide, has profoundly convinced me that, as a rule, the state or individual or

<sup>1</sup> From a letter to his son Herbert, interesting remarks on Pitt's finance. March 10, 1878, containing some in- See Appendix.

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company thrives best which dives deepest down into the mass of the community, and adapts its arrangements to the wants of the greatest number.' His exultation in the stimulus given by fiscal freedom to extended trade, and therefore to more abundant employment at higher wages, was less the exultation of the economist watching the intoxicating growth of wealth, than of the social moralist surveying multiplied access to fuller life and more felicity. I always remember, in a roving talk with him in 1891, when he was a very old man and ill, how he gradually took fire at the notion—I forget how it arose—of the iniquities under which the poor man suffered a generation ago. 'See—the sons and daughters went forth from their homes; the cost of postage was so high that correspondence was practically prohibited; yet the rich all the time, by the privilege of franking, carried on a really immense amount of letter-writing absolutely free. Think what a softening of domestic exile; what an aid in keeping warm the feel of family affection, in mitigating the rude breach in the circle of the hearth.' This vigorous sympathy was with Mr. Gladstone a living part of his Christian enthusiasm. 'If you would gain mankind,' said old Jeremy Bentham, 'the best way is to appear to love them, and the best way of appearing to love them, is to love them in reality.' When he thought of the effect of his work at the exchequer, he derived 'profound and inestimable consolation from the reflection that while the rich have been growing richer, the poor have become less poor.' Yet, as my readers have by this time found out, there never was a man less in need of Aristotle's warning, that to be for ever hunting after the useful befits not those of free and lofty soul.<sup>1</sup> As was noted by contemporaries, like all the followers of Sir Robert Peel he never thought without an eye to utilitarian results, but mixed with that attitude of mind he had 'a certain refinement and subtlety of religiousness that redeemed it from the coldness, if it sometimes overshadowed the clearness, of mere statesmanlike prudence.' On the other hand, he had 'the Lancashire temperament.'

<sup>1</sup> Τὸ ζῆτεῖν πανταχοῦ τὸ χρησίμων ἥμισυ ἀρμόττει τοῖς ἐλευθεροῖς.

—*Politics*, viii. 3.

## III

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This thought and feeling for the taxpayer was at the root of another achievement, no less original than the peculiar interest that he was able to excite by his manner of stating a financial case. Peel was only prime minister for five years, and only four months chancellor. Mr. Gladstone was prime minister for twelve—ten years short of Sir Robert Walpole in that office, seven years short of Pitt. But he was also chancellor of the exchequer under three other prime ministers for ten years. Thus his connection with the treasury covered a longer period than was attained by the greatest of his predecessors. His long reign at the treasury, and his personal predominance in parliament and the country, enabled him to stamp on the public departments administrative principles of the utmost breadth and strength. Thrift of public money, resolute resistance to waste, rigid exactitude in time, and all the other aspects of official duty, conviction that in the working of the vast machinery of state nothing is a trifle—through the firm establishment of maxims and principles of this sort, Mr. Gladstone built up a strong and efficacious system of administrative unity that must be counted a conspicuous part of his very greatest work. ‘No chancellor of the exchequer,’ he once said, ‘is worth his salt who makes his own popularity either his first consideration, or any consideration at all, in administering the public purse. In my opinion, the chancellor of the exchequer is the trusted and confidential steward of the public. He is under a sacred obligation with regard to all that he consents to spend.’<sup>1</sup> This tone of thinking and feeling about the service of the state spread under his magisterial influence from chancellors and the permanent officers that bear unobtrusive but effective sway in Whitehall, down to tidewaiters and distributors of stamps. As Burke put the old Latin saw, he endeavoured to ‘give us a system of economy, which is itself a great revenue.’ The Exchequer and Audit Act of 1866 is a monument of his zeal and power in this direction. It converted the nominal control by parlia-

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh, Nov. 29, 1879.

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ment into a real control, and has borne the strain of nearly forty years.

He was more alive than any man at the exchequer had ever been before, to the mischiefs of the spirit of expenditure. As he told the House of Commons in 1863 (April 16):— ‘I mean this, that together with the so-called increase of expenditure there grows up what may be termed a spirit of expenditure, a desire, a tendency prevailing in the country, which, insensibly and unconsciously perhaps, but really, affects the spirit of the people, the spirit of parliament, the spirit of the public departments, and perhaps even the spirit of those whose duty it is to submit the estimates to parliament.’ ‘But how,’ he wrote to Cobden (Jan. 5, 1864), ‘is the spirit of expenditure to be exorcised? Not by my preaching; I doubt if even by yours. I seriously doubt whether it will ever give place to the old spirit of economy, as long as we have the income-tax. There, or hard by, lie questions of deep practical moment.’ This last pregnant reference to the income-tax, makes it worth while to insert here a word or two from letters of 1859 to his brother Robertson, an even more ardent financial reformer than himself:—

Economy is the first and great article (economy such as I understand it) in my financial creed. The controversy between direct and indirect taxation holds a minor though important place. I have not the smallest doubt we should at this moment have had a smaller expenditure if financial reformers had not directed their chief attention, not to the question how much of expenditure and taxes we shall have, but to the question how it should be raised. . . . I agree with you that if you had only direct taxes, you would have economical government. But in my opinion the indirect taxes will last as long as the monarchy; and while we have them, I am deeply convinced that the facility of recurring to, and of maintaining, income-tax has been a main source of that extravagance in government, which I date from the Russian war (for before that a good spirit had prevailed for some twenty-five years).

Bagehot, that economist who united such experience and sense with so much subtlety and humour, wrote to Mr.

Gladstone in 1863:—"Indirect taxation so cramps trade and heavy direct taxation so impairs morality that a large expenditure becomes a great evil. I have often said so to Sir G. Lewis, but he always answered, "Government is a very rough business. You must be content with very unsatisfactory results." This was a content that Mr. Gladstone never learned.

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It was not only in the finance of millions that he showed himself a hero. 'The chancellor of the exchequer,' he said, 'should boldly uphold economy in detail; and it is the mark of a chicken-hearted chancellor when he shrinks from upholding economy in detail, when because it is a question of only two or three thousand pounds, he says that is no matter. He is ridiculed, no doubt, for what is called candle-ends and cheese-parings, but he is not worth his salt if he is not ready to save what are meant by candle-ends and cheese-parings in the cause of the country.'<sup>1</sup> He held it to be his special duty in his office not simply to abolish sinecures, but to watch for every opportunity of cutting down all unnecessary appointments. He hears that a clerk at the national debt office is at death's door, and on the instant writes to Lord Palmerston that there is no necessity to appoint a successor. During the last twenty years, he said in 1863, 'since I began to deal with these subjects, every financial change beneficial to the country at large has been met with a threat that somebody would be dismissed.' All such discouragements he treated with the half scornful scepticism without which no administrative reformer will go far.

He did not think it beneath his dignity to appeal to the foreign office for a retrenchment in fly-leaves and thick folio sheets used for docketing only, and the same for mere covering despatches without description; for all these had to be bound, and the bound books wanted bookcases, and the bookcases wanted buildings, and the libraries wanted librarians. 'My idea is that it would be quite worth while to appoint an official committee from various departments to go over the "contingencies" and minor charges of the different departments into which abuse must always be creeping,

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh, Nov. 29, 1879.

BOOK V. 1859-66. from the nature of the case and without much blame to any one.' Sir R. Bethell as attorney-general insisted on the duty incumbent on certain high officials, including secretaries of state, of taking out patents for their offices, and paying the stamp duties of two hundred pounds apiece thereon 'I shall deal with these eminent persons,' he wrote to the chancellor of the exchequer, 'exactly as I should and do daily deal with John Smith accused of fraud as a distiller, or John Brown reported as guilty of smuggling tobacco.' Mr. Gladstone replies (1859):—

I rejoice to see that neither the heat, the stench, nor service in the courts can exhaust even your superfluous vigour; and it is most ennobling to see such energies devoted to the highest of all purposes—that of replenishing her Majesty's exchequer. I hope, however, that in one point the case stands better than I had supposed. The proof of absolute contumacy is not yet complete, though, alas, the *animus furandi* stands forth in all its hideous colours. I spoke yesterday to Lord Palmerston on the painful theme; and he confessed to me with much emotion that he has not yet resorted to those mild means of exhortation—what the presbyterians call dealing with an erring brother—from which we had hoped much. The unhappy men may therefore yet come to their senses; in any case I rejoice to think that you, in the new capacity of mad doctor, are sure to cure them and abate the mischief, if the which do not happen (I quote the new Tennyson):—

'some evil chance

Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze  
Before the people and our Lord the King.'<sup>1</sup>

After a due amount of amusing correspondence, the regusant confederacy struck their colours and paid their money.

When he went to Corfu in the *Terrible* in 1858, some two or three sleeping cabins were made by wooden partitions put up round spaces taken off the deck. Thirteen years after, his unslumbering memory made this an illustrating point in an exhortation to a first lord of the admiralty not to disregard small outgoings. 'I never in my life was more astonished than upon being told the sum this had cost;

<sup>1</sup> *Guinevere*, 90-92.

I think it was in hundreds of pounds, where I should have expected tens.' Sometimes, no doubt, this thrift descended to the ludicrous. On this same expedition to Corfu, among the small pieces of economy enjoined by Mr. Gladstone on the members of his mission, one was to scratch out the address on the parchment label of the despatch bags and to use the same label in returning the bag to the colonial office in London. One day while the secretary was busily engaged in thus saving a few halfpence, an officer came into the room, having arrived by a special steamer from Trieste at a cost of between seven and eight hundred pounds. The ordinary mail-boat would have brought him a very few hours later. We can hardly wonder that the heroic economist denounced such pranks as 'profligate' and much else. Though an individual case may often enough seem ludicrous, yet the system and the spirit engendered by it were to the taxpayer, that is to the nation, priceless.

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## IV

One of the few failures of this active and fruitful period was the proposal (1863) that charities should pay income-tax upon the returns from their endowments. What is their exemption but the equivalent of a gift to them from the general taxpayer? He has to make good the sum that ought in reason and equity to have been paid by them, as by other people, to the government that protects them. Why should this burden be compulsorily laid upon him? What is the quality of an endowment for a charitable purpose that constitutes a valid claim for such a boon? Into this case Mr. Gladstone threw himself with full force. The opposition to him was as heated and as vigorous as he ever provoked; and the violence of the resistance roused an answering vehemence in him. He speaks in his diary of his 'deadly encounter with the so-called charities.' 'I was endeavouring,' he says, 'to uphold the reality of truth and justice against their superficial and flimsy appearances.' 'Spoke from 5.10 to 8.20, with all my might, such as it was.' This speech, with its fierce cogency and trenchant reasoning, was counted by good judges who heard it, to be among the

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two or three most powerful that he ever made, and even to-day it may be read with the same sort of interest as we give to Turgot's famous disquisition on Foundations. It turns a rude searchlight upon illusions about charity that are all the more painful to dispel, because they often spring from pity and from sympathy, not the commonest of human elements. It affects the jurist, the economist, the moralist, the politician. The House was profoundly impressed by both the argument and the performance, but the clamour was too loud, all the idols of market-place and tribe were marched out in high parade, and the proposal at last was dropped.

Though the idea of putting a tax on the income of charitable endowments was rejected, the budget of 1863 was the record of a triumph that was complete. The American civil war by arresting the supply of cotton had half ruined Lancashire. The same cause had diminished the export trade to America by six millions sterling. Three bad seasons spoiled the crops. There was distress in Ireland. Yet the chancellor had a revenue in excess of expenditure by the noble figure of three millions and three quarters. Mr. Gladstone naturally took the opportunity of surveying the effects of four years of his financial policy. He admitted that they had been four years of tension, and this tension had been enhanced by his large remissions of duty, and by taking in hand the completion of the great work of commercial legislation. The end of it all was a growth of wealth, as he called it, almost intoxicating. The value of British goods sent to France had risen from four millions and three quarters to nearly nine millions and one quarter, in other words had about doubled under the operations of the treaty of commerce.<sup>1</sup> If to this were added foreign and colonial produce sent through us, and acquired by us in exchange for our own produce, the value had risen from nine and a half in 1859 to twenty-one and three quarters in 1862. In Mr. Gladstone's own description later, the export trade of 1860, in spite of a bad harvest, was so stimulated by the liberating customs act, that it

<sup>1</sup> For his later views on the French 1861, an extract from which is given treaty, see his speech at Leeds in Appendix.



rose at once from a hundred and thirty millions to a hundred and thirty-five. The next year it fell to a hundred and twenty-five, and in 1862 it fell by another million owing to the withdrawal, by reason of the American war, of the material of our greatest manufacture. In 1866 it rose to a hundred and eighty-eight millions.<sup>1</sup> Then under the head of income-tax, and comparing 1842 with 1862, over the same area, and with the same limitations, the aggregate amount of assessed income had risen from one hundred and fifty-six millions to two hundred and twenty-one. Other tests and figures need not detain us.

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*April 16, 1863.*—My statement lasted three hours, and this with a good deal of compression. It wound up, I hope, a chapter in finance and in my life. Thanks to God. 17.—The usual sense of relaxation after an effort. I am oppressed too with a feeling of deep unworthiness, inability to answer my vocation, and the desire of rest. 18.—To Windsor, had an audience of the Queen; so warm about Sir G. Lewis, and she warned me not to overwork.

Lewis had died five days before (April 13), and this is Mr. Gladstone's entry:—

*April 14.*—Reached C. H. T. at 11½, and was met by the sad news of the death of Sir George Lewis. I am pained to think of my differences with him at one time on finance; however, he took benefit by them rather than otherwise. A most able, most learned, most unselfish, and most genial man.

To Sir Gilbert Lewis, he wrote (April 18):—

Like several eminent public men of our time, he had many qualities for which the outer world did not perhaps, though it may not have denied them, ever give him full positive credit: For example, his singular courtesy and careful attention to others in all transactions great and small; his thoroughly warm and most forthcoming and genial disposition; his almost unconsciousness of the vast stores of his mind, and of the great facility and marvellous precision with which he used them; and, if I may so say, the noble and antique simplicity of character which he united with such knowledge of men and of affairs.

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, Feb. 1880, p. 381.

BOOK V. 1859-66. The final budget of this most remarkable series was that of 1866, when he swept away the last of the old vexatious duties on timber. It contained another element as to which, as I have said, some thought he had not been keen enough. In the budget of 1866 he first started the scheme of a sinking fund, which, when amplified, and particularly when simplified by his successors, did so much to reduce the dead weight of debt.<sup>1</sup> The complication of his scheme was due to his desire to make sure of its stability, and undoubtedly he would have carried it if he had remained in office through the session. He is, however, entitled to credit for laying the foundation of an effective sinking fund.

One word more may be added on Mr. Gladstone as financier. He was far too comprehensive in his outlook to suppose that the great outburst of material prosperity during the years in which he controlled the exchequer and guided parliament in affairs of money, was wholly and without qualification due to budgets alone. To insist on ascribing complex results to single causes is the well-known vice of narrow and untrained minds. He was quite alive to the effects of 'the enormous, constant, rapid and diversified development of mechanical power, and the consequent saving of labour by the extension of machinery.' He was well aware of the share of new means of locomotion in the growth of industrial enterprise. But the special cause of what was most peculiar to England in the experience of this period he considered to be the wise legislation of parliament, in seeking every opportunity for abolishing restrictions upon the application of capital and the exercise of industry and skill. In this wise legislation his own energetic and beneficent genius played the master part.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Courtney contributes a good account of this measure to the chapter on Finance in Ward's *Reign of Queen Victoria*, i. pp. 345-7.

## CHAPTER V

### AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

(1861-1865)

Then came the outbreak which had been so often foretold, so often menaced; and the ground reeled under the nation during four years of agony, until at last, after the smoke of the battlefield had cleared away, the horrid shape which had cast its shadow over a whole continent had vanished, and was gone for ever.—JOHN BRIGHT.

SIR CORNEWALL LEWIS in a memorandum printed for the use of his colleagues both truly and impressively described the momentous struggle that at this time broke upon the family of civilised nations in both hemispheres. 'It may be fairly asserted,' says the particularly competent writer of it, 'that the war in America is the greatest event that has occurred in the political world since the definitive fall of Napoleon in 1815. The expulsion of the elder branch of the Bourbons in 1830; the expulsion of Louis Philippe in 1848; the re-establishment of a republic, and the subsequent restoration of a Bonaparte to the imperial throne—were all important events, both to France and to the rest of Europe; but (with the exception of the recent annexation of Savoy and Nice) they have not altered the boundaries of France; and Europe still, in spite of minor changes, substantially retains the form impressed upon it by the treaty of Vienna.<sup>1</sup> With respect to the internal consequences of these changes, a French revolution has become a fight in the streets of Paris, in order to determine who shall be the occupant of the Tuileries. The administrative body and the army—the two great governing powers of France—remain substantially unaffected; whereas the American civil war threatens a

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—ET. 52.

<sup>1</sup> On this sentence in his copy of pencils in the margin as was his way, the memorandum Mr. Gladstone his favourite Italian corrective, *ma!*

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complete territorial re-arrangement of the Union; it also portends a fundamental change in the constitution, by which both its federal and state elements will be recast.'

Of this immense conflict Mr. Gladstone, like most of the leading statesmen of the time, and like the majority of his countrymen, failed to take the true measure. The error that lay at the root of our English misconception of the American struggle is now clear. We applied ordinary political maxims to what was not merely a political contest, but a social revolution. Without scrutiny of the cardinal realities beneath, we discussed it like some superficial conflict in our old world about boundaries, successions, territorial partitions, dynastic preponderance. The significance of the American war was its relation to slavery. That war arose from the economic, social, and political consequences that flowed from slavery—its wasteful cultivation, the consequent need for extension of slave territory, the probable revival of the accursed African trade, the constitution of slave-holders as the sole depositaries of social prestige and political power. Secession was undertaken for the purpose of erecting into an independent state a community whose whole structure was moulded on a system that held labour in contempt, that kept the labourer in ignorance and cruel bondage, that demanded a vigilant censorship of the press and an army of watchmen and spies. And this barbaric state was to set itself up on the border of a great nation, founded on free industry, political equality, diffused knowledge, energetic progress. Such was the meaning of secession. 'The rebellion,' as Charles Sumner well said to Mr. Gladstone in 1864, 'is slavery in arms, revolting, indecent, imperious.' Therefore those who fought against secession fought against slavery and all that was involved in that dark burden, and whatever their motives may at different times have been, they rendered an immortal service to humanity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of course the literature of this great theme is enormous, but an English reader with not too much time will find it well worked out in the masterly political study, *The Slave Power*, by J. E. Cairnes (1861), that vigorous thinker and sincere lover of truth, if ever there was one. Besides Cairnes, the reader who cares to understand the American civil war

At a very early period Mr. Gladstone formed the opinion that the attempt to restore the Union by force would and must fail. 'As far as the *controversy* between North and South,' he wrote to the Duchess of Sutherland (May 29, 1861) 'is a controversy on the principle announced by the vice-president of the South, viz. that which asserts the superiority of the white man, and therewith founds on it his right to hold the black in slavery, I think that principle detestable, and I am wholly with the opponents of it . . . No distinction can in my eyes be broader than the distinction between the question whether the Southern ideas of slavery are right, and the question whether they can justifiably be put down by war from the North.' To Cyrus Field he wrote (Nov. 27, 1862):— 'Your frightful conflict may be regarded from many points of view. The competency of the Southern states to secede; the rightfulness of their conduct in seceding (two matters wholly distinct and a great deal too much confounded); the natural reluctance of Northern Americans to acquiesce in the severance of the union, and the apparent loss of strength and glory to their country; the bearing of the separation on the real interests and on the moral character of the North; again, for an Englishman, its bearing with respect to British interests;—all these are texts of which any one affords ample matter for reflection, but I will only state as regards the last of them, that I for one have never hesitated to maintain that, in my opinion, the separate and special interests of England were all on the side of the maintenance of the old union, and if I were to look at those interests alone, and had the power of choosing in what way the war should end, I would choose for its ending by the restoration of the old union this very day.'

In a letter to the Duchess of Sutherland (Nov. 7, 1862), he says:— 'A friendly correspondent writes to say he is sorry the South has my sympathies. But the South has not my sympathies, except in the sense in which the North has them also. I wish them both cordially well, which I

should turn to F. L. Olmsted's *Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom* (1861), and *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (1856)—as

interesting a picture of the South on the eve of its catastrophe, as Arthur Young's picture of France on the eve of the revolution.

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believe is more than most Englishmen can at present say with truth. In both I see the elements of future power and good; in both I see also the elements of danger and mischief.' To another correspondent:—'I have never to my knowledge expressed any sympathy with the Southern cause in any speech at Newcastle or elsewhere, nor have I passed any eulogium upon President Davis. In dealing whether with South or North I have thought it out of my province to touch in any way the complicated question of praise and blame.'

At a very early stage the Duke of Argyll sent him some letter of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's, and Mr. Gladstone in acknowledging it from Penmaënmawr (Aug. 26, 1861) writes expressing all possible respect for her character and talents, but thinks that she has lost intellectual integrity:—

It seems to me that the South has two objects in view: firstly the liberation of its trade and people from the law of tribute to the North; secondly and perhaps mainly, the maintenance of the slave system without fear or risk of Northern interference. That on the other hand it is very difficult to analyse that movement of the North which Mrs. Stowe finds sublime, but which in my eyes is tumultuous. There is the anti-slavery motive impelling with great vehemence a small section, which she rather offensively calls the Christian people of the union; there is the spirit of protection and monopoly, unwilling to surrender future booty; there is the unquietness in the great towns, found in America as in all countries, and ever ready for a row; there is the fear which Mr. Motley described, that unless a firm front were shown against secession it would not stop where it had begun; there is last and (relatively to this subject matter) best of all, the strong instinct of national life, and the abhorrence of nature itself towards all severance of an organized body. This last sentiment, as well as the first, deserve to be treated by us with great tenderness and respect. . . . As to the authority and title of the North it must be granted *primâ facie*, but on examination it is subject to a good deal of doubt, and I think it seems to have been the intention of the framers of the constitution not to lay down a rule for the solution of a great question of this kind, but to leave it open.

And if so, I think they were wise; for such a question could only arise for any practical purpose at a time when the foundations of the great social deep are broken up, and when the forces brought into unrestrained play are by far too gigantic to be controlled by paper conventions.

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So much for his view of the case in its general aspect.

## II

At one dangerous moment in the conflict it seemed possible that Great Britain might be forced to take a part. The commander of an American man-of-war boarded the *Trent* (Nov. 8, 1861), a British mail-boat, seized two emissaries from the Southern confederacy on their way to Europe, and carried them off to his own ship, whence they were afterwards landed and thrown into prison. This act was in direct violation of those rights of neutrals of which the United States hitherto had been the strictest champion against Great Britain; and nothing was to be gained by it, for the presence of the two commissioners was not in the least likely to effect any change in the policy of either England or France. Violent explosions of public feeling broke out on both sides of the Atlantic; of anger in England, of exultation in America. Mr. Gladstone's movements at this critical hour are interesting. On Nov. 27, says Phillimore, 'Gladstones dined here. Gladstone, with the account in his pocket from the evening papers of the capture of the Southern envoys out of the English mail-ship.' The next two nights he was at court.

*Nov. 28.*—Off at 6.30 to Windsor. The Queen and Prince spoke much of the American news.

*Nov. 29 (Friday).*—Came up to town for the cabinet on American news. Returned to Windsor for dinner, and reported to Queen and Prince.

Of this important cabinet, Mr. Gladstone wrote an account to the Duke of Argyll, then absent from London:—

*Dec. 3, '61.*—The cabinet determined on Friday to ask reparation, and on Saturday they agreed to two despatches to Lord Lyons of which the one recited the facts, stated we could not but

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suppose the American government would of itself be desirous to afford us reparation, and said that in any case we must have (1) the commissioners returned to British protection; and (2) an apology or expression of regret. The second of these despatches desired Lyons to come away within seven days if the demands are not complied with. *I thought and urged that we should hear what the Americans had to say before withdrawing Lyons, for I could not feel sure that we were at the bottom of the law of the case, or could judge here and now what form it would assume. But this view did not prevail.*

We may assume that Mr. Gladstone, in reporting these proceedings at Windsor, did not conceal his own arguments for moderation which had been overruled. On the following day the cabinet again met. 'Nov. 30 (Sat.) Left Windsor at 11.25. Cabinet 3-5½. Lord Russell's draft softened and abridged.' That is to say the draft was brought nearer, though not near enough, to the temper urged upon the cabinet and represented at court by Mr. Gladstone the day before.

The story of the first of these two critical despatches is pretty well known; how the draft initialled by Lord Russell was sent down the same night to Windsor; how the Prince Consort—then as it proved rapidly sinking down into his fatal illness—found it somewhat meagre, and suggested modifications and simplifications; how the Queen returned the draft with the suggestions in a letter to the prime minister; how Palmerston thought them excellent, and after remodelling the draft in the more temperate spirit recommended by the Prince, though dropping at least one irritating phrase in the Queen's memorandum,<sup>1</sup> sent it back to the foreign office, whence it was duly sent on (Dec. 1) to Lord Lyons at Washington. It seems, moreover, that a day's reflection had brought his colleagues round to Mr. Gladstone's mind, for Lord Russell wrote to Lord Lyons a private note (Dec. 1) in effect instructing him to say nothing about withdrawing in seven days.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, v. p. 28. Also Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort*, v. p. 421.

<sup>2</sup> See Walpole's *Russell*, ii. p. 358.



The British despatches were delivered to Lord Lyons at Washington at midnight on December 18; the reparation despatch was formally read to Mr. Seward on the 23rd; and on Christmas Day Lincoln had a meeting of his cabinet. Sumner was invited to attend, and he read long letters from Cobden and Bright. 'At all hazards,' said Bright, 'you must not let this matter grow to a war with England. Even if you are right and we are wrong, war will be fatal to your idea of restoring the union . . . I implore you not, on any feeling that nothing can be conceded, and that England is arrogant and seeking a quarrel, to play the game of every enemy of your country.'<sup>1</sup> A French despatch in the English sense was also read. Seward and Sumner were in favour of giving up the men. The president, thinking of popular excitement, hesitated. In the end, partly because the case was bad on the merits, partly because they could not afford to have a second great war upon their hands, all came round to Seward's view.<sup>2</sup>

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## III

By the autumn of 1862 the war had lasted a year and a half. It was already entailing a cost heavier than our war with Napoleon at its most expensive period. The North had still failed to execute its declared purpose of reducing the South to submission. The blockade of the southern ports, by stopping the export of cotton, was declared to have produced worse privations, loss, and suffering to England and France than were ever produced to neutral nations by a war. It was not in Mr. Gladstone's nature to sit with folded hands in sight of what he took to be hideous and unavailing carnage and havoc. Lord Palmerston, he tells Mrs. Gladstone (July 29, 1862), 'has come exactly to my mind about some early representation of a friendly kind to America, if we can get France *and* Russia to join.' A day or two later

<sup>1</sup> War with England, or the probability of it, would have meant the raising of the blockade, the withdrawal of a large part of the troops from the Southern frontier, and substantially the leaving of the Confederates to a *de facto* in-

dependence. — Dana's *Wheaton*, p. 648.

<sup>2</sup> Rhodes, *History of the United States since 1850*, iii. p. 538. See also *Life of C. F. Adams*, by his son C. F. A., Boston, 1900, chapter xii., especially pp. 223-4.

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(Aug. 3) he writes to the Duke of Argyll:—‘My *opinion* is that it is vain, and wholly unsustainable by precedent, to say nothing shall be done until both parties are desirous of it; that, however, we ought to avoid sole action, or anything except acting in such a combination as would morally represent the weight of impartial Europe; that with this view we ought to communicate with France and Russia; to make with them a friendly representation (if they are ready to do it) of the mischief and the hopelessness of prolonging the contest in which both sides have made extraordinary and heroic efforts; but if they are not ready, then to wait for some opportunity when they may be disposed to move with us. The adhesion of other powers would be desirable if it does not encumber the movement.’

‘In the year 1862,’ says Mr. Gladstone in a fragment of autobiography, ‘I had emerged from very grave financial [budget] difficulties, which in 1860 and 1861 went near to breaking me down. A blue sky was now above me, and some of the Northern liberals devised for me a triumphant visit to the Tyne, which of course entailed as one of its incidents a public dinner.’ Seeing a visit to Newcastle announced, Lord Palmerston wrote (Sept. 24) to Mr. Gladstone, begging him on no account to let the chancellor of the exchequer be too sympathetic with the tax-payer, or to tell the country that it was spending more money than it could afford. A more important part of the letter was to inform Mr. Gladstone that he himself and Lord Russell thought the time was fast approaching when an offer of mediation ought to be made by England, France, and Russia, and that Russell was going privately to instruct the ambassador at Paris to sound the French government. ‘Of course,’ Lord Palmerston said, ‘no actual step would be taken without the sanction of the cabinet. But if I am not mistaken, you would be inclined to approve such a course.’ The proposal would be made to both North and South. If both should accept, an armistice would follow, and negotiations on the basis of separation. If both should decline, then Lord Palmerston assumed that they would acknowledge the independence of the South. The next day Mr. Gladstone replied. He was glad to learn

what the prime minister had told him, and for two reasons especially he desired that the proceedings should be prompt. The first was the rapid progress of the Southern arms and the extension of the area of Southern feeling. The second was the risk of violent impatience in the cotton-towns of Lancashire, such as would prejudice the dignity and disinterestedness of the proffered mediation.<sup>1</sup> On September 17 Russell had replied to a letter from Palmerston three days earlier, saying explicitly, 'I agree with you that the time is come for offering mediation to the United States government, with a view to the recognition of the independence of the Confederates. I agree further, that in case of failure, we ought ourselves to recognise the Southern states as an independent state.'<sup>2</sup> So far, then, had the two heads of the government advanced, when Mr. Gladstone went to Newcastle.

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The people of the Tyne gave him the reception of a king. The prints of the time tell how the bells rang, guns thundered, a great procession of steamers followed him to the mouth of the river, ships flew their gayest bunting, the banks were thronged with hosts of the black-handed toilers of the forges, the furnaces, the coal-staiths, chemical works, glass factories, shipyards, eager to catch a glimpse of the great man; and all this not because he had tripled the exports to France, but because a sure instinct had revealed an accent in his eloquence that spoke of feeling for the common people.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1862 he took an active part in schemes for finding employment at Hawarden for Lancashire operatives thrown out of work by the cotton-famine. One of the winding-paths leading through some of the most beautiful spots of the park at Hawarden was made at this time by factory workers from Lancashire employed by Mr. Gladstone for purposes of relief.

<sup>2</sup> Walpole's *Life of Russell*, ii. p. 361.

<sup>3</sup> In a jingle composed for the occasion, the refrain is—

'Honour give to sterling worth,  
Genus better is than birth,  
So here's success to Gladstone.'

In thanking a Newcastle correspondent for his reception, Mr. Gladstone writes (Oct. 20, 1862):—'To treat these occurrences as matter of personal obligation to those who have taken a part in them would be to mistake the ground on which they rest. But I must say with unfeigned sincerity that I can now perceive I have been appropriating no small share of honour that is really due to the labour of others: of Mr. Cobden as to the French treaty, and of the distinguished men who have in our day by their upright and enlightened public conduct made law and government names so dear to the people of England.' 'Indeed,' says a contem-

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Oct. 7, 1862.—Reflected further on what I should say about Lancashire and America, for both these subjects are critical. . . .

At two we went to Newcastle and saw the principal objects, including especially the fine church and lantern, the gem of an old castle, and Grey Street—I think our best modern street. The photographer also laid hands on me. At six we went to a crowded and enthusiastic dinner of near 500. I was obliged to make a long oration which was admirably borne. The hall is not very easy to fill with the voice, but quite practicable. 8.—Reached Gateshead at 12, and after an address and reply, embarked in the midst of a most striking scene which was prolonged and heightened as we went down the river at the head of a fleet of some 25 steamers, amidst the roar of guns and the banks lined or dotted above and below with multitudes of people. The expedition lasted six hours, and I had as many speeches as hours. Such a pomp I shall probably never again witness; circumstances have brought upon me what I do not in any way deserve. . . . The spectacle was really one for Turner, no one else. 9.—Off to Sunderland. Here we had a similar reception and a progress through the town and over the docks and harbour works. I had to address the naval men, and then came a large meeting in the hall. Thence by rail to Middlesborough. At Darlington we were met by Lord Zetland, the mayor, and others. Middlesborough was as warm or even warmer. Another progress and steamboat procession and incessant flood of information respecting this curious place. The labour, however, is too much; giddiness came over me for a moment while I spoke at Sunderland, and I had to take hold of the table. At Middlesborough we had an address and reply in the town hall, then a public dinner, and we ended a day of over fifteen hours at Upleatham before midnight. C. again holding out, and indeed she is a great part of the whole business with the people everywhere. I ought to be thankful, still more ought I to be ashamed. It was vain to think of reading, writing, or much reflecting on such a day. I was most happy to lie down for

porary journalist, 'if Middlesborough did not do honour to Mr. Gladstone, we don't know who should, for the French treaty has been a greater boon to the iron manufacturers of that

young but rising seaport, than to any other class of commercial men in the north of England.'—*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, Oct. 11, 1862.

fifteen minutes at Mr. Vaughan's in Middlesborough. 11.—Off at 8 A.M. to take the rail at Guisbro'. At Middlesborough many friends had gathered at the station to give us a parting cheer. We came on to York, went at once to the mansion-house, and then visited the minster. At two came the 'luncheon,' and I had to address another kind of audience.

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Unhappily, the slave must still go in the triumphal car to remind us of the fallibilities of men, and here the conqueror made a grave mistake. At the banquet in the town hall of Newcastle (Oct. 7), with which all these joyous proceedings had begun, Mr. Gladstone let fall a sentence about the American war of which he was destined never to hear the last:—'We know quite well that the people of the Northern states have not yet drunk of the cup—they are still trying to hold it far from their lips—which all the rest of the world see they nevertheless must drink of. We may have our own opinions about slavery; we may be for or against the South; but there is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation.'

Here the speaker was forgetful of a wholesome saying of his own, that 'a man who speaks in public ought to know, besides his own meaning, the meaning which others will attach to his words.' The sensation was immediate and profound. All the world took so pointed an utterance to mean that the government were about to recognise the independence of the South. The cotton men were thrown into a position of doubt and uncertainty that still further disturbed their trade. Orders for cotton were countermanded, and the supply of the precious material for a moment threatened to become worse than ever. Cobden and Bright were twitted with the lapse of their favourite from a central article of their own creed and commandments. Louis Blanc, then in exile here, describing the feeling of the country, compares the sympathy for the North to a dam and the sympathy for the South to a torrent, and says he fears that Gladstone at Newcastle had yielded to the

BOOK temptation of courting popularity.<sup>1</sup> The American minister  
V. dropped a hint about passports.<sup>2</sup>

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To the numerous correspondents who complained of his language Mr. Gladstone framed a form of reply, disclaiming responsibility for all the various inferences that people chose to draw from his language. 'And generally,' his secretary concluded, in phrases that justly provoked plain men to wrath, 'Mr. Gladstone desires me to remark that to form opinions upon questions of policy, to announce them to the world, and to take or to be a party to taking any of the steps necessary for giving them effect, are matters which, though connected together, are in themselves distinct, and which may be separated by intervals of time longer or shorter according to the particular circumstances of the case.'<sup>3</sup> Mr. Gladstone sent a copy of this enigmatical response to the foreign secretary, who was far too acute not to perceive all the mischief and the peril, but had his full share of that generosity of our public life that prevents a minister from bearing too hardly on a colleague who has got the boat and its crew into a scrape. Lord Russell replied from Walmer (Oct. 20):—'I have forwarded to your private secretary your very proper answer to your very impertinent correspondent. Still, you must allow me to say that I think you went beyond the latitude which all speakers must be allowed, when you said that Jeff. Davis had made a nation. Recognition would seem to follow, and for that step I think the cabinet is not prepared. However, we shall soon meet to discuss this very topic.' A week after the deliverance at Newcastle, Lewis, at Lord Palmerston's request as I have heard, put things right in a speech at Hereford. The Southern states, he said, had not *de facto* established their independence and

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on England*, pp. 146-78.

<sup>2</sup> Adams wrote in his diary:—'Oct. 8. If Gladstone be any exponent at all of the views of the cabinet, then is my term likely to be very short. The animus, as it respects Mr. Davis and the recognition of the rebel cause, is very apparent. Oct. 9:—We are now passing through the very crisis of our fate. I have had

thoughts of seeking a conference with Lord Russell, to ask an explanation of Gladstone's position; but, on reflection, I think I shall let a few days at least pass, and then perhaps sound matters incidentally.'  
—Rhodes, iv. p. 340. *Life of Adams*, pp. 286-7.

<sup>3</sup> Oct. 18, 1862.

were not entitled to recognition on any accepted principles of public law.

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It is superfluous for any of us at this day to pass judgment. Mr. Gladstone has left on record in a fragmentary note of late date his own estimate of an error that was in truth serious enough, and that has since been most of all exaggerated by those sections of society and opinion who at the time most eagerly and freely shared the very same delusion.

I have yet to record, he writes (July 1896) in the fragment already more than once mentioned, an undoubted error, the most singular and palpable, I may add the least excusable of them all, especially since it was committed so late as in the year 1862, when I had outlived half a century. In the autumn of that year, and in a speech delivered after a public dinner at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, I declared in the heat of the American struggle that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, that is to say, that the division of the American Republic by the establishment of a Southern or secession state was an accomplished fact. Strange to say, this declaration, most unwarrantable to be made by a minister of the crown with no authority other than his own, was not due to any feeling of partizanship for the South or hostility to the North. The fortunes of the South were at their zenith. Many who wished well to the Northern cause despaired of its success. The friends of the North in England were beginning to advise that it should give way, for the avoidance of further bloodshed and greater calamity. I weakly supposed that the time had come when respectful suggestions of this kind, founded on the necessity of the case, were required by a spirit of that friendship which, in so many contingencies of life, has to offer sound recommendations with a knowledge that they will not be popular. Not only was this a misjudgment of the case, but even if it had been otherwise, I was not the person to make the declaration. I really, though most strangely, believed that it was an act of friendliness to all America to recognise that the struggle was virtually at an end. I was not one of those who on the ground of British interests desired a division of the American Union. My view was distinctly opposite. I thought

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that while the Union continued it never could exercise any dangerous pressure upon Canada to estrange it from the empire—our honour, as I thought, rather than our interest forbidding its surrender. But were the Union split, the North, no longer checked by the jealousies of slave-power, would seek a partial compensation for its loss in annexing, or trying to annex, British North America. Lord Palmerston desired the severance as a diminution of a dangerous power, but prudently held his tongue.

That my opinion was founded upon a false estimate of the facts was the very least part of my fault. I did not perceive the gross impropriety of such an utterance from a cabinet minister, of a power allied in blood and language, and bound to loyal neutrality; the case being further exaggerated by the fact that we were already, so to speak, under indictment before the world for not (as was alleged) having strictly enforced the laws of neutrality in the matter of the cruisers. My offence was indeed only a mistake, but one of incredible grossness, and with such consequences of offence and alarm attached to it, that my failing to perceive them justly exposed me to very severe blame. It illustrates vividly that incapacity which my mind so long retained, and perhaps still exhibits, an incapacity of viewing subjects all round, in their extraneous as well as in their internal properties, and thereby of knowing when to be silent and when to speak.

I am the more pained and grieved, because I have for the last five-and-twenty years received from the government and people of America tokens of goodwill which could not fail to arouse my undying gratitude. When we came to the arbitration at Geneva, my words were cited as part of the proof of hostile *animus*. Meantime I had prepared a lengthened statement to show from my abundant declarations on other occasions that there was and could be on my part no such *animus*. I was desirous to present this statement to the arbitrators. My colleagues objected so largely to the proceeding that I desisted. In this I think they probably were wrong. I addressed my paper to the American minister for the information of his government, and Mr. Secretary Fish gave me, so far as intention was concerned, a very handsome acquittal.



And strange to say, *post hoc* though perhaps not *propter hoc*, the United States have been that country of the world in which the most signal marks of public honour have been paid me, and in which my name has been the most popular, the only parallels being Italy, Greece, and the Balkan Peninsula.

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Among the many calumnies poured upon him in this connection was the charge that he had been a subscriber to the Confederate Loan. 'The statement,' he wrote to a correspondent (Oct. 17, 1865), 'is not only untrue, but it is so entirely void of the slightest shadow of support in any imaginable incident of the case, that I am hardly able to ascribe it to mere error, and am painfully perplexed as to the motives which could have prompted so mischievous a forgery.'

## IV

As I have already said, the American minister had hinted at passports. Ten days after Mr. Gladstone's speech Mr. Adams saw Lord Russell. Having mentioned some minor matters he came to the real object of the interview. 'If I had trusted,' he said, 'to the construction given by the public to a late speech, I should have begun to think of packing my carpet bag and trunks. His lordship at once embraced the allusion, and whilst endeavouring to excuse Mr. Gladstone, in fact admitted that his act had been regretted by Lord Palmerston and the other cabinet officers. Still he could not disavow the sentiments of Mr. Gladstone; so far as he understood them (his meaning) was not that ascribed to him by the public. Mr. Gladstone was himself willing to disclaim that. He had written to that effect to Lord Palmerston. . . . His lordship said that the policy of the government was to adhere to a strict neutrality, and to leave this struggle to settle itself. . . . I asked him if I was to understand, that policy as not now to be changed. He said, Yes.'<sup>1</sup>

If this relation be accurate, then the foreign secretary did not construe strict neutrality as excluding what diplomatists call good offices. On October 13, Lord Russell circulated a

<sup>1</sup> Rhodes, iv. p. 340. Also *Life of C. F. Adams*, p. 287.

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memorandum to the cabinet setting out in an argumentative tone all the adverse and confused aspects of the situation and outlook in America, and ending in the emphatic conclusion that it had now become a question for the great Powers of Europe whether it was not their duty to ask both parties to agree to a suspension of arms for the purpose of weighing calmly the advantages of peace. Cornwall Lewis (Oct. 17), while expressing an opinion that a peaceful separation between North and South would in the end have been best for the North, and while apparently believing that the war must one day end in Southern independence, met Russell's suggestion by cogent arguments against action on our part.<sup>1</sup> A week later (Oct. 24), Mr. Gladstone circulated a rejoinder to Lewis, arguing for representation to the two combatants from England, France, and Russia—a representation with moral authority and force, of the opinion of the civilised world upon the conditions of the case.

This pretty nearly concludes all that need be said upon the attitude taken by Mr. Gladstone in that mighty struggle. We may at least add that if, and where, it differed from that of the majority of his countrymen, it did not differ for the worse. In November (1862) the French Emperor renewed proposals of joint mediation. The Emperor had objects of his own to serve. He was entangled in the coils of the Mexican adventure that was to give the first shock to his throne and to add another to the long scroll of tragedies in the house of Hapsburg. From the first the government of the American Union had scowled upon the intervention of Europe in the affairs of Mexico, just as the same government had refused to intervene in a European protest on behalf of Poland. The civil war between North and South kept American hands tied, and Napoleon well

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, throughout 1861, used language of characteristic coolness about the war: 'It is the most singular action for the restitution of conjugal rights that the world ever heard of.' 'You may conquer an insurgent province, but you cannot conquer a seceding state' (Jan. 21, '61). 'The Northern states have been drifted, or rather plunged into war

without having any intelligible aim or policy. The South fight for independence; but what do the North fight for, except to gratify passion or pride?'—*Letters*, p. 395, etc. See also preface to his *Administration of Great Britain* (p. xi), where he says, in 1856, he sees no solution but separation.

knew that the success of the North and the consolidation of the Union would overthrow his designs in Mexico. He cast restlessly about for any combination that promised aid to the Southern confederates, who, whether they should emerge strong or weak from the struggle, would be a useful instrument for his future purposes. So now he pressed England and Russia to join him in a project of mediation. Russia declined. The London cabinet was divided.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone writes home in these important days.—*Nov. 11.* We have had our cabinet to-day and meet again to-morrow. I am afraid we shall do little or nothing in the business of America. But I will send you definite intelligence. Both Lords Palmerston and Russell are *right*.—*Nov. 12.* The United States affair has ended and not well. Lord Russell rather turned tail. He gave way without resolutely fighting out his battle. However, though we decline for the moment, the answer is put upon grounds and in terms which leave the matter very open for the future.—*Nov. 13.* I think the French will make our answer about America public; at least it is very possible. But I hope they may not take it as a positive refusal, or at any rate that they may themselves act in the matter. It will be clear that we concur with them, that the war should cease. Palmerston gave to Russell's proposal a feeble and half-hearted support. As to the state of matters generally in the cabinet, I have never seen it smoother; and they look pretty well, I think, as regards my department, though the distress tells upon me.

The only speech, I believe, delivered by Mr. Gladstone upon the war in parliament, while resisting the motion for the recognition of the confederacy, was curiously balanced.<sup>2</sup> As to the South, he said, not a few must sympathise with a resistance as heroic as ever was offered in the history of the world

<sup>1</sup> There is a story, not very accurate, I should suppose, about Mr. Disraeli's concurrence in the Emperor's view, told from Slidell's despatches in an article by O. F. Aldus, in *North American Review*, October 1879.

<sup>2</sup> June 30, 1863. *Hansard*, vol. 171, p. 1800. On four other occasions Mr. Gladstone gave public utterance to

his opinion 'on the subject of the war and the disruption'—at Leith, Jan. 11, 1862, at Manchester, April 24, 1862, at Newcastle, Oct. 7, 1862, and once in parliament when a member spoke of the bursting of the American bubble, he says, 'I commented on the expressions with a reproof as sharp as I could venture to make it' (May 27, 1861).

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on the part of a weaker body against the overpowering forces of a stronger. On the other hand, the cause of the South was so connected with slavery that a strong counter-current of feeling must arise in the mind. Then again, it is impossible for any Englishman not to have a very strong feeling of sympathy with those in the North who saw exalted visions of the great future of their country, now threatened with destruction. He had never agreed with those who thought it a matter of high British interest that the old American union should be torn in pieces. He had always thought that, involved as England was both in interest and in duty and honour with Canada, the balanced state of the American union which caused the whole of American politics to turn on the relative strength of the slavery and Northern interests, was more favourable to our colonial relations in North America, than if the said union were to be divided into a cluster of Northern and a cluster of Southern states. The North would endeavour to re-establish their territorial grandeur by seeking union with the British possessions in North America. He dwelt upon the horrid incidents of war. He insisted once more that the public opinion of this country was unanimous that the restoration of the American union by force was unattainable. Some cries of 'No' greeted this declaration about unanimity, but he would not qualify it further than to say that at any rate it was almost unanimous. The other chief speakers that night were Mr. Forster (who played a brave and clear-sighted part throughout), Lord Robert Cecil, who attacked the 'vague and loose' arguments of the chancellor of the exchequer, and Mr. Bright, who made perhaps the most powerful and the noblest speech of his life.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEATH OF FRIENDS—DAYS AT BALMORAL

(1861-1864)

ITAQVE veræ amicitiaë difficillime reperiuntur in his qui in honoribus reque publica versantur.—CICERO.

True friendships are hard to find among men who busy themselves about politics and office.

WITHIN a few months of one another, three of Mr. Gladstone's closest friends and allies were lost to him. Lord Aberdeen died at the end of 1860. The letter written by Mr. Gladstone to the son of his veteran chief is long, but it deserves reproduction.<sup>1</sup> As a writer, though an alert and most strenuous disputant, he was apt to be diffuse and abstract. Partly, these defects were due to the subjects with which, in his literary performances, he mostly chose to deal. Perhaps one secret was that he forgot the famous word of Quintilian, that the way to write well is not to write quickly, but if you take trouble to write well, in time you can write as quickly as you like.<sup>2</sup> His character of Lord Aberdeen, like his beautiful letter in a similar vein about Hope-Scott,<sup>3</sup> where also his feelings were deeply moved, is very different from his more formal manner, and may claim high place among our literary portraits. It is penetrating in analysis, admirable in diction, rich in experience of life and human nature, and truly inspiring in those noble moralities that are the lifeblood of style, and of greater things than mere style can ever be.

Then, in the autumn of 1861, both Graham and Sidney

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> x. iii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs of J. R. Hope-Scott*, ii. pp. 284-293.

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1861. Herbert died; the former the most esteemed and valued of all his counsellors; the latter, so prematurely cut off, 'that beautiful and sunny spirit,' as he called him, perhaps the best beloved of all his friends. 'Called on Gladstone,' says Phillimore on this last occasion (Aug. 3); 'found him at breakfast alone; very glad to see me. His eyes filled with tears all the time he spoke to me in a broken voice about his departed friend. The effect upon him has been very striking, increased no doubt by recent political differences of opinion.' 'It is difficult to speak of Herbert,' Mr. Gladstone said later, 'because with that singular harmony and singular variety of gifts—every gift of person, every gift of position, every gift of character with which it pleased Providence to bless him—he was one of whom we may well recite words that the great poet of this country has applied to a prince of our early history, cut off by death earlier than his countrymen would have desired:—

'A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,  
Framed in the prodigality of nature,  
The spacious world cannot again afford.'<sup>1</sup>

The void thus left was never filled. Of Graham he wrote to the Duchess of Sutherland:—

*Oct. 26.*—This most sad and unexpected news from Netherby rises up between me and your letter. I have lost a friend whom I seem to appreciate the more because the world appreciated him so inadequately; his intellectual force could not be denied, but I have never known a person who had such signal virtues that were so little understood. The remainder of my political career be it what it may (and I trust not over long) will be passed in the House of Commons without one old friend who is *both* political and personal. This is the gradual withdrawal of the props preparing for what is to follow. Let me not, however, seem to complain, for never, I believe, was any one blessed so entirely beyond his deserts in the especial and capital article of friendships.

Not many months later (June, 1862) he had to write to Mr. Gordon, 'We are all sorely smitten by Canning's death,'

<sup>1</sup> *Richard III.* i. sc. ii. At Salisbury, Sept. 7, 1866.

whose fame, he said, would 'bear the scrutinizing judgment of posterity, under whose keen eye so many illusions are doomed to fade away.'<sup>1</sup>

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In the December of 1861 died the Prince Consort. His last communication to Mr. Gladstone was a letter (Nov. 19) proposing to recommend him as an elder brother of the Trinity House in place of Graham. Of Mr. Gladstone's first interview with the Queen after her bereavement, Dean Wellesley wrote to him that she was greatly touched by his evidence of sympathy. 'She saw how much you felt for her, and the mind of a person in such deep affliction is keenly sensitive and observant. Of all her ministers, she seemed to me to think that you had most entered into her sorrows, and she dwelt especially upon the manner in which you had parted from her.' To the Duchess of Sutherland Mr. Gladstone writes:—

*March 20, 1862.*—I find I must go out at four exactly. In any case I do not like to trust to chance your knowing or not knowing what befell me yesterday. Your advice was excellent. I was really bewildered, but that all vanished when the Queen came in and kept my hand a moment. All was beautiful, simple, noble, touching to the very last degree. It was a meeting, for me, to be remembered. I need only report the first and last words of the personal part of the conversation. The first (after a quarter of an hour upon affairs) was (putting down her head and struggling) 'the nation has been very good to me in my time of sorrow'; and the last, 'I earnestly pray it may be long before you are parted from one another.'<sup>2</sup>

In the spring he took occasion at Manchester to pronounce a fine panegyric on the Prince,<sup>3</sup> for which the Queen thanked him in a letter of passionate desolation, too sacred in the anguish of its emotion to be printed here. 'Every source of interest or pleasure,' she concludes, 'causes now the acutest pain. Mrs. Gladstone, who, the Queen knows, is a

<sup>1</sup> His school friend, and later, governor-general of India.

<sup>2</sup> *March 19.*—Reading, conversation and survey in the house filled the morning at Cliveden. At four we went to Windsor . . . I had an

audience of the Queen . . . I had the gratification of hearing, through Lady A. Bruce, that it was agreeable to H.M.—(*Diary.*)

<sup>3</sup> *Gleanings, i.*

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most tender wife, may in a faint manner picture to herself what the Queen suffers.' Mr. Gladstone replies:—

It may not be impertinent in him to assure your Majesty that all the words to which your Majesty refers were received with deep emotion by the whole of a very large assembly, who appeared to feel both your Majesty's too conspicuous affliction, and the solemnity of its relation to the severe and, alas! darkening circumstances of the district.<sup>1</sup>

In presuming to touch upon that relation, and in following the direction which his subject gave him towards very sacred ground, he was especially desirous to avoid using even a phrase or a word of exaggeration, and likewise to speak only as one who had seen your Majesty's great sorrow in no other way than as all your Majesty's subjects beheld it.

In speaking thus he knew that he must fall short of the truth; and indeed, even were it becoming to make the attempt, he would in vain labour to convey the impression made upon his mind by the interview to which he was admitted at Windsor, and by the letter now in his hands.

More follows in the vein and on the topics that are usual in letters of mourning sympathy, and the effect was what the writer sought. From Balmoral came a note (May 6, 1862):—'The Queen wishes Princess Alice to thank Mr. Gladstone in her name for the kind letter he wrote to her the other day, which did her aching heart good. Kind words soothe, but nothing can lessen or alleviate the weight of sorrow she has to bear.'

Many years later he sat down to place on record his thoughts about the Prince Consort, but did not proceed beyond a scanty fragment, which I will here transcribe:—

My praise will be impartial: for he did not fascinate, or command, or attract me through any medium but that of judgment and conscience. There was, I think, a want of freedom, nature, and movement in his demeanour, due partly to a faculty and habit of reflection that never intermitted, partly to an inexorable watchfulness over all he did and said, which produced something that was related to stillness and chillness in a manner which was not-

<sup>1</sup> The Lancashire cotton famine.



withstanding, invariably modest, frank, and kind, even to one who had no claims upon him for the particular exhibition of such qualities. Perhaps I had better first disburden myself of what I have to set down against him. I do not think he was a man without prejudices, and this particularly in religion. His views of the church of Rome must, I think, have been illiberal. At any rate, I well remember a conversation with him at Windsor respecting the papal decree imposing the belief in the immaculate conception, somewhere about the time when it came forth. He said he was glad of it, as it would tend to expose and explode the whole system. I contended, with a freedom which he always seemed to encourage, that we all had an interest in the well being and well doing, absolute or relative, of that great Christian communion, and that whatever indicated or increased the predominance of the worse influences within her pale over the better was a thing we ought much to deplore. No assent, even qualified, was to be got.<sup>1</sup>

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The death of the Prince Consort was a greater personal calamity to Mr. Gladstone than he could then foresee. Perhaps the disadvantage was almost as real as the death of the consort of King George II. to Sir Robert Walpole. Much as they might differ in political and religious opinion, yet in seriousness, conscience, and laborious temperament, the Prince and he were in exact accord, and it is impossible to doubt that if the Prince had survived at the Queen's right hand, certain jars might have been avoided that made many difficulties for the minister in later times.

## II

I may as well here gather into a chapter some short pieces, mainly from letters to Mrs. Gladstone during the period covered by this fifth book. The most interesting of them, perhaps, are the little pictures of his life as minister in attendance at Balmoral; but there are, besides, two or three hints of a simplicity in his faculty of enjoyment in regions outside of graver things, that may shock critics of more complex or fastidious judgment. Readers will benevolently

<sup>1</sup> See the three articles on the Life of the Prince Consort in *Gleanings*, i. pp. 23-130.

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take them all as they come. He made a curious entry in his diary upon his birthday at the end of 1860:—'Dec. 29. Began my fifty-second year. I cannot believe it. I feel within me the rebellious unspoken word, I will not be old. The horizon enlarges, the sky shifts, around me. It is an age of shocks; a discipline so strong, so manifold, so rapid and whirling that only when it is at an end, if then, can I hope to comprehend it.' Yet nearly all the most conspicuous scenes still lay before him.

October 18, 1860.—I did not get to the play last night from finding *The Woman in White* so very interesting. It has no dull parts, and is far better sustained than *Adam Bede*, though I do not know if it rises quite as high. The character drawing is excellent.

*Downing Street, Dec. 15.*—The chancellor says (keep this from view) that Prince Albert said to him at Windsor: 'We Germans have no boundaries; our only boundary is the Quadrilateral,' *i.e.* fortress in the heart of Italy. This, I fear, must be true, and, if so, is sad enough, because he evidently spoke his mind out unsuspectingly.

Dec. 18.—I actually went last night five mortal miles to Hoxton to see 'Eily O'Connor,' the Colleen Bawn in another shape! It was not without interest, though very inferior, and imitated in some cases with a ludicrous closeness. The theatre is a poor working man's theatre. I paid 1s. for a very aristocratic place. To-night I am going with Phillimore to the Westminster play, a Latin one, which I am afraid is rather long.

Jan. 18, 1861.—I write a few lines to you in the train, near Harrow. We shall not be in till four; all safe; and immense care evidently taken on account of the frost, though I do not feel it much in the air. I have had other matters to keep me warm. Among the letters given me this morning at Hawarden was one from Lord John, in which he quietly informs me that since the cabinet separated *he* has agreed to guarantee a loan, and for Morocco! This I mean to resist, and have managed to write a letter in the carriage to tell him so. What will come of it, I do not know. It is a very serious affair. I am afraid he has

committed himself egregiously. I am very bad now; but what *shall* I be at sixty-eight!

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*Jan. 19.*—Indeed, this is a strange world. Yesterday it seemed Lord J. Russell might go out, or more likely I might, or even the cabinet might go to pieces. To-day he writes to me that he supposes he must find a way out of his proposal! So that is over.

*Jan. 23.*—You seem to have taken great pains about stable affairs, and I am quite satisfied. The truth indeed, alas, is, I am not fit at this critical time to give any thought to such matters. The embarrassment of our vast public expenditure, together with the ill effects of the bad harvest, are so thick upon me, together with the arrangements for next year and the preparation of my own bills for improvements, which, though a laborious, are a healthy and delightful part of my work.

*Jan. 24.*—I expect Argyll to share my mutton to-night, and we shall, I dare say, have a comfortable talk. Last night I saw Herbert. I think he looks much better. He did not open the subject of estimates, nor did I, before *her*, but I told him what I am sorry to say is true, that the prospects of revenue grow much worse. Up to a certain point, I must certainly make a stand. But I think he is rather frightened about expenditure, and not so panic-stricken about France; so that we may come together.

*Jan. 25.*—I write from the cabinet. I am in the midst of a deadly struggle about the estimates; the only comfort this year is, that I think the conflict will be more with the navy than the army. Herbert has told me to-day, with a simplicity and absence of egotism, which one could not but remark in his graceful character, the nature of his complaint. You will quickly guess. As to cabinets, Lord John says we had better meet frequently, and it will be on Tuesday *if* I am able to come down next week, but this is full of uncertainty. I hear that the Prince is *wild* about the Danish question.

*Jan. 26.*—Another cabinet on Monday. It is just possible they may relax after that day. I have had two long days of hard fighting. By dint of what, after all, might be called threat of resignation, I have got the navy estimates a little down, and I am now *in* the battle about the army. About the reduction

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in the navy, Palmerston criticised, Lord John protested, and Cardwell! I think went farther than either. Never on any single occasion since this government was formed has his voice been raised in the cabinet for economy. What a misfortune it is that Herbert has no nerve to speak out even in a private conversation. He told me yesterday of his reduction, but did not tell me that more than half of it was purely nominal! The article in the *Quarterly* is clever; and what it says, moreover, on the merits of the income tax is true. I suspect, I might say I fear, it is written by Northcote.

*Feb. 5.*—Yesterday, in the carriage from Kidderminster, I heard in part a dialogue, of which I gathered so much. *First worthy*, 'I suppose we shall have to pay twopence or threepence more income-tax.' *Second worthy*, 'Gladstone seems to be a totally incompetent man.' *Third*, 'Then he always wraps himself in such mystery. But now I do not see what else he can do; he has cut away the ground from under his feet'—with a growl about the conservative party. Such is the public opinion of Worcestershire beyond all doubt.

*Hawarden, May 24.*—The house looks cleanliness itself, and altogether being down here in the fresh air, and seeing nature all round me so busy with her work so beneficent and beautiful, makes me very sick of London and its wrathful politics, and wish that we were all here or hereabouts once more.

*July 20.*—The political storm has blown over, but I do not think it seems an evening for riding to Holly House, nor can I honestly say that a party there would be a relaxation for my weary bones, and wearier nerves and brain.

*Aug. 4.*—I have been at All Saints this morning. Though London is empty, as they say, it was absolutely crammed. Richards preached an excellent sermon. But I certainly should not wish to be an habitual attendant there. The intention of the service is most devout, but I am far from liking wholly the mode of execution. My neighbour in church whispered to me, 'Is the Bishop of London's jurisdiction acknowledged here?' I think he seemed to wish it should not be.

*Oct. 22.*—Tell Harry [his son] he is right, Latin is difficult, and

it is in great part because it is difficult that it is useful. Suppose he wanted to make himself a good jumper; how would he do it? By trying *first*, indeed, what was easy, but after that always what was difficult enough to make him exert himself to the uttermost. If he kept to the easy jumps, he would never improve. But the jumps that are at first difficult by and bye become easy. So the Latin lessons, which he now finds difficult, he will find easy when once his mind has been improved and strengthened by those very lessons. See if he understands this.

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*Dec. 29.*—The strangest feeling of all in me is a rebellion (I know not what else to call it) against growing old.

*Cliveden, Maidenhead, Jan. 14, 1862.*—I have written to John [his brother], and if he is in town I shall go up and see him to-morrow. Meantime I have mentioned Locock, as recommended by you. I fear the dark cloud is slowly gathering over him [his wife's illness], as we have seen it lately gather over so many and then break. I am amazed at the mercy of God towards us, and towards me in particular. I think of all the children, and of their health in body and in mind. It seems as if it could not last; but this is all in God's hand.

Here are the Argylls, Lady Blantyre and a heap of young. We have been busy reading translations of Homer this morning, including some of mine, which are approved. Tennyson has written most noble lines on the Prince. Lord Palmerston is reported well.

*Jan. 18.*—I lifted Hayward last night back from dinner. He is full of the doctrine that Lord Palmerston is not to last another year. Johnny is then to succeed, and I to lead (as he says by the universal admission of the whigs) in the H. of C. It is rather hard before the death thus to divide the inheritance. But that we may not be too vain, it is attended with this further announcement, that when that event occurs, the government is shortly to break down.

*Cabinet Room, Feb. 1.*—The cabinet has gone well.<sup>1</sup> It is rather amusing. I am driving the screw; Lewis yields point by point. I think in substance the question is ruled in my favour. Thank God for the prospect of peace; but it will not positively be settled

<sup>1</sup> On the estimates for 1862-63.

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*Bowden, Wilts., Feb. 19.*—The funeral is over [the wife of his brother]. Nothing could be better ordered in point of taste and feeling. It was one of the most touching, I think the most touching, scene I ever witnessed, when the six daughters weeping profusely knelt around the grave, and amidst their sobs and tears just faltered out the petitions of the Lord's Prayer in the service. John, sensible of his duty of supporting others, went through it all with great fortitude. On the whole, I must say I can wish no more for any family, than that when the stroke of bereavement comes, they meet it as it has been met here.

*Nov. 18.*—I have sat an hour with Lord Lyndhurst. He is much *older* than when I saw him last, but still has pith and life in him, as well as that astonishing freshness of mind which gives him a charm in its way quite unrivalled. He was very kind, and what is more, he showed, I think, a seriousness of tone which has been missed before.

Last night I saw 'Lord Dundreary.' I think it—the part and the player, not the play—quite admirable. It is a thoroughly refined piece of acting, such as we hardly ever see in England; and it combines with refinement intense fun. My face became with laughing like what Falstaff says he will make Prince Henry's face, 'like a wet cloak ill laid up'<sup>1</sup> (*Phillimore*).

*Windsor Castle, Dec. 10.*—Here I am with six candles blazing! of which I shall put out a larger proportion when no longer afraid of a visit from the great people about the passages. I got your letter this morning, but I am amazed at your thinking I have the pluck to ask the Princess of Wales! or the Queen!!! about photographs promised or not promised.

In came the Dean; after that, a summons to the Queen, with whom I have been an hour. She is well in health and in spirits, and when she speaks of the Prince does it with a free, natural, and healthy tone, that is most pleasing. I am to see the Prince of Wales after dinner. I now therefore make sure of leaving to-morrow. The Queen asked kindly about you, and I saw little Princess Beatrice.

<sup>1</sup> *2 Henry IV.*, v. sc. i.

## III

Aug. 31, 1863.—Walked 24½ miles. Found it rather too much for my stiffening limbs. My day of long stretches is, I think, gone by.

*Balmoral, Sept. 26.*—This place is on the whole very beautiful and satisfactory; and Deeside at large has lost for me none of its charms, with its black-green fir and grey rock, and its boundless ranges of heather still almost in full bloom. The Queen spends a good many hours out, and looks well, but older. I had a long conversation or audience to-day, but as regards the form and mode of life here, so far as I see, it does not differ for visitors from Windsor. All meals and rooms are separate, but sometimes, it appears, some are invited to dine with the Queen. The household circle is smaller here than at Windsor, and so less formal and dull. I doubt your doctrine about your message, but I will give it if a good opportunity occurs. She talked very pleasantly and well upon many matters public and other—(Do not go on reading this aloud or give it to others). As to politics, she talked most of America and Germany; also some Lancashire distress. She feels an immense interest in Germany, her recollections of the Prince's sentiments being in that, as in other matters, a barometer to govern her sympathies and affections. She said (when I hoped she had received benefit from the air here) that she thought she had been better in Germany than anywhere, though it was excessively hot. She asked where I had been, and about our living at Hawarden, and where it was. I told her I thought she had been there, at least driving through from Eaton (was it not so?) when she was Princess, and at last she seemed to remember it, and said it was thirty-one years ago. Princess Alice has got a black boy here who was given to her, and he produces a great sensation on the Deeside, where the people never saw anything of the kind and cannot conceive it. A woman, and an intelligent one, cried out in amazement on seeing him, and said she would certainly have fallen down but for the Queen's presence. She said nothing would induce her to wash his clothes *as the black would come off!* This story the Queen told me in good spirits.

She said that some people after heavy bereavement disliked

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seeing those whom they had known well before, and who reminded them of what had been, but with her it was exactly the opposite; it was the greatest effort and pain to her to see any one who had [not] known *them* before, and their mode of living. As an instance, she said it cost her much to see the Emperor of Austria, whom the Prince had never known. Evidently this clinging to things old will form itself into a habit, but I am afraid it may hereafter, when more have died off, be a matter of difficulty to her. It is impossible to help seeing that she mistrusts Lord Russell's judgment in foreign affairs, indeed I have already had clear proof of this. She likes Lord Palmerston's better; thinks he looks very old, and will not allow that it is all owing to an accident. But dinner is drawing near, so good-bye. We have had a good day, and have been up to the pyramid put on a hill-top as a memorial to the Prince, with the beautiful inscription.

*Sept. 27.*—I do not think Sunday is the best of days here. I in vain inquired with care about episcopal services; there did not seem to be one within fifteen miles, if indeed so near. We had something between family prayer and a service in the dining-room at ten; it lasted about forty minutes. Dr. Caird gave a short discourse, good in material, though over florid in style for my taste. The rest of the day I have had to myself. The Prince and Princess of Hesse I think went to the parish church. You are better off at Penmaenmawr. . . . I saw the two princes last night. They were playing billiards. The Prince of Wales asked particularly, as always, about you and Willy.

*Sept. 28.*—I must be brief as I have been out riding with Sir C. and Miss Phipps to Alt-na-Guisach (the Queen's cottage), and came in *late*. Be assured all is very comfortable and restful here. I think too that I feel the air very invigorating, my room is pleasant and cheerful on the ground floor, with a turret dressing-room. . . . I am pretty much master of my time. To-day I have heard nothing of the Queen. Last evening I was summoned to dine, as was Lady Churchill. It was extremely interesting. We were but seven in all, and anything more beautifully domestic than the Queen and her family it was impossible to conceive. The five were her Majesty, Prince and Princess Louis, Prince Alfred, and Princess Helena. Princess Louis (whom the Queen in speaking



of still calls Princess Alice) asked about you all. I had the pleasure of hearing the good report of Lucy altogether confirmed from her lips and *the Queen's*. The Queen thinks her like her dear mother. She talked about many things and persons; among others the Lyttelton family, and asked about the boys *seriatim*, but pulled me up at once when, in a fit of momentary oblivion, I said the New Zealander was the third. She spoke of the chancellor and of Roundell Palmer; I had a good opportunity of speaking him *up*, and found she had his book of hymns. She spoke very freely about the chancellor; and I heard from her that the attorney-general resigns on the score of health—of course Palmer succeeds. Prince Alfred is going to Edinburgh to study; he is a smart fellow, and has plenty of go in him.

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*Sept. 29.*—I have just come in at 6½ from a fine hill walk of over three hours, quite ready for another were there light and opportunity.

*Sept. 30.*—I am come in from a nineteen mile walk to the Lake of Lochnagar with Dr. Bekker, as fresh as a lark! Very wet. The Queen sent me a message not to go up Lochnagar (top) if there was mist; and mist there was, with rain to boot. I find the resemblance to Snowdon rather striking. It is 3800 feet; we went up about 3300. You forgot to tell me for what pious object you picked Lord P.'s pocket. Nor do you distinctly tell me where to address, but as you say three nights I suppose it should be Penmaenmawr. Last night we went down to Abergeldie to the gillies' ball. There was a dance called the perpetual jig, nearly the best fun I ever witnessed. The princes danced with great activity after deer-stalking, and very well; Prince Alfred I thought beautifully. They were immensely amused at having passed me on the way home and offered me a lift, to which I replied (it was dark) thinking they were General Grey and a household party. The Princess did not dance—asked about you—is taking great care, and the Prince very strict about it also. She does not ride or fatigue herself. The event, according to Dr. Jenner, should take place in March or early in April. You see his authority and yours are at variance. The Queen was (according to Mrs. Bruce, who dined with her) very low last night, on account of the ball, which naturally recalled so much.

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Oct. 3.—It happened oddly yesterday I was sent for while out. I had had a message from the Queen in the morning which made me think there would be no more, so I went out at a quarter past three. I am very sorry this happened. I am to see her, I believe, this evening.

Oct. 4.—The service at Ballater has made a great difference in favour of this Sunday. It was celebrated in the Free Kirk school-room for girls! and with a congregation under twenty, most attentive though very small, and no one left the room when we came to the Holy Communion. The Knollys family and people were one half or so. I gave Mrs. Knollys and one daughter a lift in *my* drag back to Birkhall (2½ miles which they all loyally walk to and fro) and had luncheon there. I had Thomas with me. The sermon was *extremely* good; but the priest had a *few* antics. I believe this is about the first expedition ever made from Balmoral to an episcopal service. Perhaps encouraged by my example, Captain W. got a drag to Castleton this morning, being a Roman. There was *no* chaplain here to-day, and so no dining-room service, which for many I fear means no service at all.

I dined with the Queen again last night; also Lady Augusta Bruce—seven, again, in all. The Crown Princess had a headache, as well she might, so they were not there. The same royalties as before, and everything quite as pleasing. The Queen talked Shakespeare, Scott, the use of the German language in England (and there I could not speak out *all* my mind), Guizot's translation of the Prince's speeches, and his preface (which the Queen has since sent me to look at), the children's play at Windsor (when Princess Alice acted a high priest, with great success—in 'Athalie,' I think), the Prussian children (the Queen says the baby is not pretty—the little boy on coming yesterday called them all stumpfnase, pugnose), handwritings, Lord Palmerston's to wit, Mr. Disraeli's style in his letters to the Queen, the proper mode of writing, on what paper, etc., and *great* laudation of Lady Lyttelton's letters. Princess Alice declares her baby is pretty, and says she shall show it me. The Queen was very cheerful, and seemed for the time happy. A statue of the Prince is about to be set up at Aberdeen, and she is then to attend and receive an address, with Sir G. Grey present in due form. The household life is really very agreeable

when one comes to know them. One way and another they have a great deal in them.

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Oct. 5.—I have been riding to Invercauld House and up above it. The beauty there even surpassed my high expectations, and made everything here look quite pale in comparison. They were very kind, and offered me deer-stalking; we drank tea and ate scones.

I have only time to tell you two things. First, the Queen is on Friday to do her first public act, to attend at the 'inauguration' of the statue of the Prince, and to receive an address. I am to be there officially. I have telegraphed for my uniform. I go on to Aberdeen and Trinity College at night, and on Saturday evening to Edinburgh. There was fear that it might be on Saturday, and that I should be kept, but this could not be, as Saturday is a 'fast' for the periodical sacrament on Sunday. I told you the Queen talked about German on Saturday at dinner, among other things Schiller's and Coleridge's *Wallenstein*. Next morning she sent me, through Lady A. Bruce, the book, with a passage of which I have hastily translated the most important part. It is easy to conceive how it answers to her feelings.

'Too well I know the treasure I have lost.  
From off my life the bloom is swept away;  
It lies before me cold and colourless;  
For he, that stood beside me like my youth,  
He charmed reality into a dream,  
And over all the common face of things  
He shed the golden glow of morning's blush;  
And in the fire of his affection  
Dull forms, that throng the life of every day,  
Yea to mine own amazement, tow'rd aloft,  
Win what I may henceforth, the Beautiful  
Is gone, and gone without return.'<sup>1</sup>

You will say this was an opening. In reading another part of the book I found lines which I have turned as follows, no better than the others:—

'For nothing other than a noble aim  
Up from its depths can stir humanity;  
The narrow circle narrows, too, the mind,  
And man grows greater as his ends are great.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Death of Wallenstein*, Act. v., Sc. 3. In Coleridge, v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Denn nur der grosse Gegenstand vermag  
Den tiefen Grund der Menschheit aufzuregen,  
Im engen Kreis verengert sich der Sinn,  
Es wächst der Mensch mit seinen grössern Zwecken.

*Prologue to Wallenstein*, stanza 5.

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Now, I thought, can I in reply call the Queen's attention to these significant words, a noble sermon? I asked Lady Augusta (of course I mean the German words) and she would not venture it. Had I a *viva voce* chance, I would try.

Oct. 6.—I am sorry you quitted Penmaenmawr in the sulks—I mean him in the sulks, not you. Your exploit was great; was it not rather over-great? I have been out to-day for a real good seven hours in the open air, going up Lochnagar. The day was glorious. We went five gentlemen, at least men. E. H. was keen to go, but the Queen would not let her. Thomas also went up with a party from here, and his *raptures* are such as would do you good. He says there is nothing it was not worth, and he has no words to describe his pleasure. Our party drove to Loch Muich, and then went up, some of us on ponies, some riding. I walked it all, and am not in the least tired, but quite ready, if there were need, to set out for it again. We saw toward's the north as far as Caithness. I could not do all that the others did in looking down the precipices, but I managed a little. We had a very steep side to come down, covered with snow and very slippery; I was put to it, and had to come very slow, but Lord C. Fitzroy, like a good Samaritan, kept me company. The day was as lovely (after frost and snow in the night) as anything could be, and the whole is voted a great success. Well, there is a cabinet fixed for Tuesday; on the whole, this may be better than having it hang over one's head.

Oct. 7.—The Queen's talk last night (only think, she wants to read the French Jesuit—don't know this) was about Guizot's comparison of the Prince and King William, about Macaulay, America and the ironclads, where she was very national and high-spirited; and Schleswig-Holstein, in which she is intensely interested, because the Prince thought it a great case of justice on the side rather opposite to that of Lord Palmerston and the government policy. She spoke about this with intense earnestness, and said she considered it a legacy from him.

Princess Alice's baby lives above me, and I believe never cries. I never hear it. We have been out riding to Birkhall to-day, and I had much talk with Lady Churchill about the Queen. She (Lady C.) feels and speaks most properly about her. I told Lady

Augusta last night, *à propos* to the lines I wanted to mention, that I had been a great coward, *and she too*. She was very submissive at dinner in her manner to the Queen, and I told her it made me feel I had been so impudent. Only think of this: both through her and through General Grey it has come round to me that the Queen thinks she was too cheerful on the night I last dined. This she feels a kind of sin. She said, however, to Lady Augusta she was sure I should understand it. . . . I am very glad and a little surprised that Mrs. Bruce should say I have a good name here. The people are, one and all, very easy to get on with, and Windsor, I suppose, stiffens them a little.

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*Oct. 8.*—The Queen has had a most providential escape. The carriage, a sociable, very low and safe, was overturned last night after dark, on her way back from an expedition of seven or eight hours. Princesses Louis of Hesse and Helena were with her. They were undermost, and not at all hurt. The Queen was shot out of the carriage, and received a contusion on the temple and sprained a thumb. When she got in, I think near ten o'clock, Dr. Jenner wished her to go to bed, but she said it was of no use, and she would not. She was very confident, however, about performing the duties of the ceremonial in Aberdeen to-morrow. But now this evening it is given up, and I do not doubt this is wise, but much inconvenience will be caused by so late a postponement. I have been up to the place to-day. . . . The Queen should give up these drives after dark; it is impossible to guarantee them. But she says she feels the hours from her drive to dinner such weary hours.

Little Princess Victoria paid me a visit in my bedroom, which is also sitting-room, to-day. She is of sweet temper, decidedly pretty, very like both the Queen and her mother. Then I went to see the three Prussian children, and the two elder ones played with my rusty old stick of twenty or twenty-five years' standing.

*Holyrood, Oct. 11.*—On Friday morning, as I expected, I talked to the Queen until the last moment. She did give me opportunities which might have led on to anything, but want of time hustled me, and though I spoke abruptly enough, and did not find myself timid, yet I could [not] manage it at all to my satisfaction. She said the one purpose of her life was gone, and she could not help

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wishing the accident had ended it. This is hardly qualified by another thing which she said to Lady Churchill, that she should not like to have died in that way. She went on to speak of her life as likely to be short. I told her that she would not give way, that duty would sustain her (this she quite recognised), that her burden was altogether peculiar, but the honour was in proportion, that no one could wonder at her feeling the present, which is near, but that the reward is *there*, though distant. . . . Then about politics, which will keep. She rowed me for writing to Lord Palmerston about her accident, and said, 'But, dear Mr. Gladstone, that was quite wrong.' The secret is kept wonderfully, and you must keep it. I hinted that it would be a very bad thing to have G. Grey away from such a cabinet on Tuesday, but all I could get was that I might arrange for any other minister (some one there certainly ought to be). I lectured her a little for driving after dark in such a country, but she said all her habits were formed on the Prince's wishes and directions, and she could not alter them.

*Hawarden, Dec. 29.*—I am well *past half* a century. My life has not been inactive. But of what kind has been its activity? Inwardly I feel it to be open to this general observation: it seems to have been and to be a series of efforts to be and to do what is beyond my natural force. This of itself is not condemnation, though it is a spectacle effectually humbling when I see that I have not according to Schiller's figure enlarged with the circle in which I live and move. [*Diary.*]

## IV

*Jan. 2, 1864.*—The cabinet was on matters of great importance connected with Denmark, and has decided rightly to seek the co-operation of France and other powers before talking about the use, in any event, of force.<sup>1</sup> Lord Palmerston has gout sharply in the hand. The Queen wrote a letter, which I think did her great credit. Her love of truth and wish to do right prevent all prejudices from effectually warping her.

The Queen talked much about the Danish question, and is very desirous of a more staid and quiet foreign policy. For the first

<sup>1</sup> See Walpole's *Life of Russell*, ii. p. 402.

time I think she takes a just credit to herself for having influenced beneficially the course of policy and of affairs in the late controversy.

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*Balmoral, Sept. 28.*—I thought the Queen's state of health and spirits last night very satisfactory. She looks better, more like what she used to look, and the spirits were very even; with the little references to the Prince just as usual. Whenever she quotes an opinion of the Prince, she looks upon the question as completely shut up by it, for herself and all the world. Prince Alfred is going to Germany for nine weeks—to study at Bonn, and to be more or less at Coburg. The Queen asked for you, of course. She has not said a syllable about public affairs to me since I came, but talked pleasantly of all manner of things.

*Sept. 29.*—The Queen sent to offer a day's deer-stalking, but I am loth to trust my long eyesight.

*Oct. 2.*—At dinner last night there was a great deal of conversation, and to-day I have been near an hour with the Queen after coming back from Ballater. She was as good and as gracious as possible. I can hardly tell you all the things talked about—Prince Humbert, Garibaldi, Lady Lyttelton, the Hagley boys, Lucy, smoking, dress, fashion, Prince Alfred, his establishment and future plans, Prince of Wales's visit to Denmark, revenue, Lancashire, foreign policy, the newspaper press, the habits of the present generation, young men, young married ladies, clubs, Clarendon's journey, the Prince Consort on dress and fashion, Prince of Wales on ditto, Sir R. Peel, F. Peel, Mrs. Stonor, the rest of that family, misreading foreign names and words, repute of English people abroad, happy absence of foreign office disputes and quarrels.

*Oct. 3.*—I am just in from a sixteen mile walk, quite fresh, and pleased with myself! for having in my old age walked a measured mile in twelve minutes by the side of this beautiful Dee.

*Oct. 7.*—I have just come in from a delightful twenty-five miles ride with General Grey and another companion. I had another long interview with the Queen to-day. She talked most, and

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very freely and confidentially, about the Prince of Wales; also about Lord Russell and Lord Palmerston, and about Granville and Clarendon, the latter perhaps to an effect that will a little surprise you. Also the Dean of Windsor. It was a kind of farewell audience.



## CHAPTER VII

### GARIBALDI—DENMARK

(1864)

THERE are in Europe two great questions : the question called social and the question of nationalities. . . . The map of Europe has to be re-made. . . . I affirm with profound conviction that this movement of nationalities has attained in Italy, in Hungary, in Vienna, in a great part of Germany, and in some of the Slavonian populations, a degree of importance that must at no distant period produce decisive results. . . . The first war-cry that arises will carry with it a whole zone of Europe.—MAZZINI, 1852.

'My confidence in the Italian parliament and people,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lacaita at the end of 1862, 'increases from day to day. Their self-command, moderation, patience, firmness, and forethought reaching far into the future, are really beyond all praise.' And a few days later, again to Lacaita—'Your letter proves that the king has not merely got the constitutional lesson by rote—though even this for an Italian king would be much; but that the doctrine has sunk into the marrow and the bone.' The cause was won, and the work of construction went forward, but not on such lines as Cavour's master-hand was likely to have traced. Very early Mr. Gladstone began to be uneasy about Italian finance. 'I am sure,' he wrote to Lacaita in April 1863, 'that Italian freedom has no greater enemy in the Triple Crown or elsewhere, than large continuing deficits.'

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As events marched forward, the French occupation of Rome became an ever greater scandal in Mr. Gladstone's eyes. He writes to Panizzi (October 28, 1862):—

My course about the Emperor has been a very simple one. It is not for me to pass gratuitous opinions upon his character or

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that of French institutions, or on his dealings with them. I believe him to be firmly attached to the English alliance, and I think his course towards us has been, on almost every occasion, marked by a friendliness perhaps greater and more conspicuous than we have always deserved at his hands. It is most painful to me to witness his conduct with regard to Italy. . . . He conferred upon her in 1859 an immense, an inestimable boon. He marred this boon in a way which to me seemed little worthy of France by the paltry but unkind appropriation of Nice in particular. But in the matter of Rome he inflicts upon Italy a fearful injury. And I do not know by what law of ethics any one is entitled to plead the having conferred an unexpected boon, as giving a right to inflict a gross and enduring wrong.<sup>1</sup>

It was in 1862 that Mr. Gladstone made his greatest speech on Italian affairs.<sup>2</sup> 'I am ashamed to say,' he told the House, 'that for a long time, I, like many, withheld my assent and approval from Italian yearnings.' He amply atoned for his tardiness, and his exposure of Naples, where perjury was the tradition of its kings; of the government of the pope in the Romagna, where the common administration of law and justice was handed over to Austrian soldiery; of the stupid and execrable lawlessness of the Duke of Modena; of the attitude of Austria as a dominant and conquering nation over a subject and conquered race;—all this stamped a decisive impression on the minds of his hearers. Along with his speech on Reform in 1864, and that on the Irish church in the spring of 1865, it secured Mr. Gladstone's hold upon all of the rising generation of liberals who cared for the influence and the good name of Great Britain in Europe, and who were capable of sympathising with popular feeling and the claims of national justice.

## II

The Italian sentiment of England reached its climax in the reception accorded to Garibaldi by the metropolis in

<sup>1</sup> A memorandum of Mr. Gladstone's of March 1863 on the Roman Question is republished in Minnetti's posthumous volume, *La*

*Convenzione di Settembre*, Bologna, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> April 11, 1862. That of March 7, 1861, is also worth turning over.

April 1864. 'I do not know what persons in office are to do with him,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord Palmerston (March 26), 'but you will lead, and we shall follow suit.' The populace took the thing into their own hands. London has seldom beheld a spectacle more extraordinary or more moving. The hero in the red shirt and blue-grey cloak long associated in the popular mind with so many thrilling stories of which they had been told, drove from the railway at Vauxhall to Stafford House, the noblest of the private palaces of the capital, amid vast continuous multitudes, blocking roadways, filling windows, lining every parapet and roof with eager gazers. For five hours Garibaldi passed on amid tumultuous waves of passionate curiosity, delight, enthusiasm. And this more than regal entry was the arrival not of some loved prince or triumphant captain of our own, but of a foreigner and the deliverer of a foreign people. Some were drawn by his daring as a fighter, and by the picturesque figure as of a hero of antique mould; many by sight of the sworn foe of Giant Pope; but what fired the hearts of most was the thought of him as the soldier who bore the sword for human freedom. The western world was in one of its generous moments. In those days there were idealists; democracy was conscious of common interests and common brotherhood; a liberal Europe was then a force and not a dream.

'We who then saw Garibaldi for the first time,' Mr. Gladstone said nearly twenty years after, 'can many of us never forget the marvellous effect produced upon all minds by the simple nobility of his demeanour, by his manners and his acts. . . . Besides his splendid integrity, and his wide and universal sympathies, besides that seductive simplicity of manner which never departed from him, and that inborn and native grace which seemed to attend all his actions, I would almost select from every other quality this, which was in apparent contrast but real harmony in Garibaldi—the union of the most profound and tender humanity with his fiery valour.'<sup>1</sup> He once described the Italian chief to me as 'one of the finest combinations of profound and unalter-

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Stafford House. June 2, 1883.

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able simplicity with self-consciousness and self-possession. I shall never forget an occasion at Chiswick; Palmerston, John Russell, and all the leaders were awaiting him on the *perron*; he advanced with perfect simplicity and naturalness, yet with perfect consciousness of his position; very striking and very fine.' Garibaldi dined with Mr. Gladstone, and they met elsewhere. At a dinner at Panizzi's, they sat by one another. 'I remember,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'he told a story in these words:—"When I was a boy," he said, "I was at school in Genoa. It was towards the close of the great French Revolution. Genoa was a great military post—a large garrison always in the town, constant parades and military display, with bands and flags that were beyond everything attractive to schoolboys. All my schoolfellows used to run here and there all over the town to see if they could get sight of, one of these military parades and exhibitions. I never went to one. It struck me then as a matter of pain and horror, that it should be necessary that one portion of mankind should be set aside to have for their profession the business of destroying others."'

Another side of Garibaldi was less congenial. A great lady wrote to Mr. Gladstone of a conversation with him. 'I talked to Garibaldi with regret that Renan was so much read in Italy. He said "*Perchè?*" and showed that he did not dislike it, and that he has also in leaving Rome left very much else. I know that woman's words are useless: the more men disbelieve, the more they think it well that women should be "superstitious." You are not likely to have *arguments* with him, but I would give much that he should take away with him some few words that would bring home to him the fact that the statesman he cares for most would think life a miserable thing without faith in God our Saviour.' To another correspondent on this point Mr. Gladstone wrote:—

The honour paid him was I think his due as a most singularly simple, disinterested, and heroic character, who had achieved great things for Italy, for liberty well-understood, and even for mankind. His insurrection we knew and lamented, and treated as exceptional. No Mazzinian leanings of his were known. I read

the speech at the luncheon with surprise and concern.<sup>1</sup> As to his attenuated belief, I view it with the deepest sorrow and concern. I need not repeat an opinion, always painful to me to pronounce, as to the principal causes to which it is referable, and as to the chief seat of the responsibility for it. As to his Goddess Reason, I understand by it simply an adoption of what are called on the continent the principles of the French Revolution. These we neither want nor warmly relish in England, but they are different from its excesses, and the words will bear an innocent and even in some respects a beneficial meaning.

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The diary records:—

*April 12.*—To Chiswick and met Garibaldi. We were quite satisfied with him. He did me much more than justice. 14.—Went by a desperate push to see Garibaldi welcomed at the opera. It was good, but not like the *people*. 17.—At Stafford House 5½-6½ and 9¼-12½ on Garibaldi's movements. In a conversation he agreed to give up the provincial tour. 20.—In the evening the great entertainment to Garibaldi came off. Before the door at night say a thousand people all in the best of humour, the hall and stair full before dinner. A hostile demonstration invaded us at ten, but we ejected them. I settled about to-morrow with Garibaldi, the Duke of Sutherland, Lord Palmerston, and Lord Shaftesbury. My nerves would not let me—hardened as I am—sleep till after five.

Suddenly one morning the country was surprised to learn that Garibaldi was at once departing. Dark suspicions rose instantly in the minds of his more democratic friends. It had always been rather bitter to them that he should be the guest of a duke. They now insisted that the whig aristocrats were in a panic lest he should compromise himself with the radicals, and that he was being hustled out of the country against his will. This suspicion next grew into something blacker still. A story spread that the Emperor of the French had taken umbrage, and signified to the government that the reception of Garibaldi was distasteful to France. Lord Clarendon promptly denied the fable. He told the House of Lords that the Emperor (of whom he had recently had an audience) had even expressed his admiration

<sup>1</sup> Speech not discoverable by me.

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for the feeling of which the reception was a sign. Lord Palmerston in the other House explained that Garibaldi was going away earlier than had been expected, because at home he went to bed at eight and rose at five, and to a person of these habits to dine at half past eight and to remain in a throng of admirers until midnight must necessarily be injurious. Still the fog hung heavy on the public mind. A rider was now added to the tale, that it was the chancellor of the exchequer who out of deference to the Emperor, or to please the whigs, or out of complaisance to the court, had induced the hero to take his hurried leave. Mr. Gladstone was forced to explain to the House of Commons, seldom reluctant to lighten its graver deliberations with a personal incident, that the Duke of Sutherland had carried him to Stafford House; there he found that Garibaldi had accepted invitations to thirty provincial towns and that the list was growing longer every day; the doctors declared that the general's strength would never stand the exhaustion of a progress on such a scale; and the friends there present begged him to express his own opinion to Garibaldi. This Mr. Gladstone accordingly did, to the effect that the hero's life and health were objects of value to the whole world, and that even apart from health the repetition all over England of the national reception in London would do something to impair a unique historical event.<sup>1</sup> The general was taken to show excellent sense by accepting advice not to allow himself to be killed by kindness. At any rate he firmly declared that if he could not go to all the places that invited him, it was impossible for him to draw a line of preference, and therefore he would go to none. His radical friends, however, seem to have instilled some of their own suspicions into his mind, for two days later (April 23) Mr. Gladstone writes to Lord Clarendon:—'I am to see Garibaldi at Cliveden this evening, and it is possible that some occasion may offer there for obtaining from him a further declaration. But since I received your note the following circumstance has occurred. Clarence Paget has been to me, and reports that Mrs. —, a well-known and

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, April 19, 1864, pp. 1277, 1290. April 21, p. 1423.

zealous but anti-Mazzinian liberal in Italian matters, who is also a friend of Garibaldi's, has acquainted him that Garibaldi himself has made known to her that according to his own painful impression the English government do consider the prolongation of his stay in England very embarrassing, and are very anxious that he should go. What a pity, if this be so, that this simple and heroic man could not speak his mind plainly out to me, but wrapped himself in the depths of diplomatic reserve, instead of acting like Lord Aberdeen, who used to say, "I have a habit of believing people."<sup>1</sup> After three or four days at Cliveden the general still held to his purpose. 'April 24.—Cliveden. Conversation with Garibaldi. The utmost I could get from him was that it would be sad if the Italian people should lose its faith.' So Garibaldi forthwith sailed away from our shores.<sup>2</sup>

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When all was over, an Italian statesman wrote to Panizzi that though he thought Garibaldi one of the choicest natures ever created,—enterprising, humane, disinterested, eminent in national service, yet neither he nor any other citizen was entitled to set himself above the laws of his country, and that such a man should be officially received by the heir to the throne and by secretaries of state, was a thing to be bitterly deplored by every sensible man.<sup>3</sup> Still history

<sup>1</sup> This was in reply to a letter from Lord Clarendon to Mr. Gladstone, April 23, '64, asking him: 'Do not you think that he ought in a letter to some personal friends to state frankly the reasons which have induced him to go? He alone can put a stop to all these mischievous reports. . . . He ought to say that no government, English or foreign, has to do with his departure, and that he goes solely because the state of his health does not permit him to fulfil his engagements.'

<sup>2</sup> The story has been told from the radical point of view by Sir James Stansfeld in *Review of Reviews*, June 1895, p. 512. Another account by Mr. Seely, M.P. was furnished to the *Times* (April 21, 1864). Lord Shaftesbury, who was a staunch Garibaldian, presumably on high protestant grounds, also wrote to the *Times* (April 24):—'The solid, recovering and hearty attachment of

Mr. Gladstone to the cause of Italy and General Garibaldi is as notorious as it is generous and true, and I declare in the most solemn manner and on the word of a gentleman, my firm belief that we were all of us animated by the same ardent desire (without reference to anything and anybody but the General himself) to urge that and that only, which was indispensable to his personal welfare. It was, I assert, the General's own and unsuggested decision to give up the provincial journey altogether.'

<sup>3</sup> Fagan's *Panizzi*, ii. p. 252. The same view was reported to be taken at the English Court, and a story got abroad that the Queen had said that for the first time she felt half ashamed of being the head of a nation capable of such follies. Mérimée, *Lettres à Panizzi*, ii. p. 25. On the other hand, the diary has this entry:—Oct. 1, 1864. Dined with H.M. She spoke good-humouredly of Garibaldi.

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can afford to agree with Mr. Gladstone when he said of Garibaldi—'His name is indeed illustrious, it remains inseparably connected with the not less illustrious name of the great Cavour, and these two names are again associated with the name of Victor Emmanuel. These three together form for Italians a tricolour as brilliant, as ever fresh, and I hope as enduring for many and many generations, as the national flag that now waves over united Italy.'

### III

The tide of vast events in this momentous period now rolled heavily away from the Danube and the Bosphorus, from Tiber and Po and Adriatic sea, to the shores of the Baltic and the mouths of the Elbe. None of the fascination of old-world history lends its magic to the new chapter that opened in 1863. Cavour had gone. Bismarck with sterner genius, fiercer purpose, more implacable designs, and with a hand as of hammered iron, strode into the field. The Italian statesman was the author of a singular prediction. In 1861 when Cavour was deprecating angry protests from the European powers against his invasion of the Marches, he used words of extraordinary foresight to the representative of Prussia. 'I am sorry,' he said, 'that the cabinet of Berlin judges so severely the conduct of the King of Italy and his government. I console myself by thinking that on this occasion I am setting an example that probably in no long time, Prussia will be very glad to imitate.'<sup>1</sup> So the world speedily found out.

The torch of nationality reached material for a flame long smouldering in two duchies of the remote north, that had been incorporated in Denmark by solemn European engagements in 1852, but were inhabited by a population, one of them wholly and the other mainly, not Scandinavian but German. Thus the same question of race, history, language, sentiment, that had worked in Italy, Poland, the Balkan states, rose up in this miniature case. The circumstances that brought that case into such fatal prominence do not concern us here. The alleged wrongs of her brethren in

<sup>1</sup> *Le Comte de Cavour* : par Charles de Mazade (1877), p. 389.



Schleswig-Holstein unchained such a tempest of excitement in central Germany, that the German courts could hardly have resisted if they would. Just as powerless was the Danish government in face of the Scandinavian sentiment of its subjects and their neighbours of the race. Even the liberals, then a power in Germany and Bismarck's bitter foes, were vehemently on the national side against the Danish claim; and one of the most striking of all Bismarck's feats was the skill with which he now used his domestic enemies to further his own designs of national aggrandisement. How war broke out between the small power and the two great powers of Austria and Prussia, and how the small power was ruthlessly crushed; by what infinite and complex machinations the diplomacy of Europe found itself paralysed; how Prussia audaciously possessed herself of territory that would give her a deep-water port, and the head of a channel that would unite two great seas; how all this ended in Prussia, 'the Piedmont of the north,' doing what Cavour in his Piedmont of the south had foretold that she would be glad to do; how at Sadowa (July 3, 1866) Austria was driven out of her long hegemony, and Hanover incorporated; and to what a train of amazing conflicts in western Europe, to what unexpected victories, territorial change, dynastic ruin, this so resistlessly led up—here is a narrative that belongs to the province of history. Yet it has a place in any political biography of the Palmerston administration.

In such an era of general confusion, the English cabinet found no powerful or noble part to play. Still they went far—almost too far to recede—towards embarking in a continental war on behalf of Denmark, that would have been full of mischief to herself, of little profit to her client, and could hardly have ended otherwise than in widespread disaster. Here is one of the very few instances in which the public opinion of the country at the eleventh hour reined back a warlike minister. Lord Palmerston told the House of Commons in the summer of 1863 that, if any violent attempt were made to overthrow the rights of Denmark or to interfere with its independence and integrity, he was convinced that those who made the attempt would find in

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the result that 'it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend.'<sup>1</sup> This did indeed sound like a compromising declaration of quite sufficient emphasis.

It seems, says Mr. Gladstone,<sup>2</sup> that this statement was generally and not unnaturally interpreted as a promise of support from England. Lord Palmerston does not seem to have added any condition or reservation. Strange as it may appear, he had spoken entirely of his own motion and without the authority or knowledge of his cabinet, in which indeed, so far as my memory serves, nothing had happened to render likely any declaration of any kind on the subject. I have no means of knowing whether he spoke in concert with the foreign secretary, Earl Russell, with whom his communications, agreeably to policy and to established usage, were, I believe, large and constant. When the question was eventually disposed of by the war which Prussia and Austria waged against Denmark, there was much indignation felt against England for the breach of her engagement to give support in the case of war, to the small power so egregiously in need of it. And there was no one to raise a voice in our favour.

As the year advanced (1863) and the prospect of war came nearer, the subject was very properly brought before the cabinet. I believe that at the time I was not even aware of Lord Palmerston's declaration, which, owing to the exhausted period of the session, had I believe attracted no great amount of attention in England. Whether my colleagues generally were as little aware of what happened as myself I do not know, but unquestionably we could not all have missed learning it. However we did not as a body recognise in any way the title of the prime minister to bind us to go to war. We were, however, indignant at the conduct of the German powers who, as we thought, were scheming piracy under cover of pacific correspondence. And we agreed upon a very important measure, in which Lord Palmerston acquiesced, when he had failed, if I remember right, in inducing the cabinet to go farther. We knew that France took the same view of the question as we did, and we framed a communication to her to the following effect. We were jointly to insist that the claim of the Duke of Augustenburg should be peacefully settled on juridical grounds; and

<sup>1</sup> July 23, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum of 1897.

to announce to Prussia and Austria that if they proceeded to prosecute it by the use of force against Denmark, we would jointly resist them with all our might.<sup>1</sup>

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This communication was accordingly made to Louis Napoleon. He declined the proposal. He said that the question was one of immense importance to us, who had such vast interests involved, and that the plan was reasonable from our point of view; but that the matter was one of small moment for France, whom accordingly we could not ask to join in it. The explanation of this answer, so foolish in its terms, and so pregnant with consequences in this matter, was, I believe, to be found in the pique of Louis Napoleon at a reply we had then recently given to a proposal of his for an European conference or congress.<sup>2</sup> We all thought that his plan was wholly needless and would in all likelihood lead to mischief. So we declined it in perfect good faith and without implying by our refusal any difference of policy in the particular matter.

Throughout the session of 1864 the attention of the country was fixed upon this question whether England should or should not take part in the war between Germany and Denmark. The week before the time arrived for the minister to announce the decision of the cabinet, it became clear that public opinion in the great English centres would run decisively for non-intervention. Some of the steadiest supporters of government in parliament boldly told the party whips that if war against Germany were proposed, they would vote against it. The cabinet met. Palmerston and Lord Russell were for war, even though it would be war single-handed. Little support came to them. The Queen was strongly against them. They bemoaned to one another the timidity of their colleagues, and half-mournfully contrasted the convenient cyphers that filled the cabinets of Pitt and Peel, with the number of able men with independent opinions in their own administration. The prime minister, as I have heard from one who was present, held his head down while the talk proceeded, and then at last

<sup>1</sup> See Walpole's *Russell*, ii. pp. 402-404. Vienna. See Ashley's *Palmerston*, ii. p. 424.

<sup>2</sup> For the revision of the Treaty of

BOOK V. looking up said in a neutral voice, 'I think the cabinet is against war.' Here is Mr. Gladstone's record:—

1864.

*May 7, '64.*—Cabinet. The war 'party' as it might be called—Lord Palmerston, Lord Russell, Lord Stanley of Alderley, and the chancellor (Lord Westbury). All went well. *June 11.*—Cabinet. Very stiff on the Danish question, but went well. *June 24.*—Cabinet. A grave issue well discussed. *June 25.*—Cabinet. We divided, and came to a tolerable, not the best, conclusion.

It seems almost incredible that a cabinet of rational men could have debated for ten minutes the question of going to war with Prussia and Austria, when they knew that twenty thousand men were the largest force that we could have put into the field when war began, though moderate additions might have been made as time went on—not, however, without hazardous denudation of India, where the memories of the mutiny were still fresh. The Emperor of the French in fact had good reason for fearing that he would be left in the lurch again, as he thought that he had been left before in his attempts for Poland. Your intervention, he said to England, will be naval; but we may have to fight a people of forty millions on land, and we will not intervene unless you engage to send troops.<sup>1</sup> The dismemberment of Denmark was thought an odious feat, but the localisation of the war was at least a restriction of the evils attending it.

A high parliamentary debate followed (July 4) on a motion made by Mr. Disraeli, 'to express to Her Majesty our great regret that while the course pursued by the government had failed to maintain their avowed policy of upholding the independence and integrity of Denmark, it has lowered the just influence of this country in the councils of Europe, and thereby diminished the securities for peace.'<sup>2</sup> Cobden taunted both front benches pretty impartially with the equivocal and most dishonourable position into which their policy had brought the country, by encouraging a small power to fight two great ones and then straightway leaving her to get out as best she might. The government

<sup>1</sup> See Ollivier's *Empire Libéral*,   <sup>2</sup> July 4, 1864.  
vii. 71; De la Gorce, iv. 512.

was only saved by Palmerston's appeal to its financial triumphs—the very triumphs that he had himself made most difficult to achieve. The appeal was irrelevant, but it was decisive, and ministers escaped a condemnation by no means unmerited on the special issue, by a majority of eighteen. The Manchester men agreed to help in the result, because in Cobden's words they were convinced that a revolution had been at last wrought in the mischievous policy of incessant intervention. Mr. Disraeli's case was easy, but to propound an easy case when its exposition demands much selection from voluminous blue-books is often hard, and the orator was long and over-elaborate. The excitement of an audience, aware all the time that actual danger hovered over the ministry, revived afresh when Disraeli sat down and Gladstone rose. The personal emulation of powerful rivals lends dramatic elements to disputation. Lord Palmerston had written to Mr. Gladstone beforehand—'We shall want a great gun to follow Disraeli. Would you be ready to follow him?'

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*July 3.*—I was happy enough, aided by force of habit, to drive bodily out of my head for the whole day everything Danogerman. But not out of my nerves. I delivered during the night a speech in parliament on the Roman question.

*July 4.*—H. of C. Replied to Disraeli. It took an hour and thirty-five minutes. I threw overboard all my heavy armament and fought light.

Nobody who is not historian or biographer is likely to read this speech of Mr. Gladstone's to-day, but we may believe contemporary witnesses who record that the orator's weight of fact, his force of argument, his sarcastic play of personal impulse and motive, his bold and energetic refutation of hostile criticism, his defiant statement of the ministerial case, so impressed even a sceptical and doubting House that, though his string of special pleas did not amount to a justification, 'they almost reached the height of an excuse,' and they crushed the debate. The basis was the familiar refrain upon Mr. Gladstone's lips,—'The steps taken by the government, what were they but endeavours to bind to-

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gether the powers of Europe for fulfilment and maintenance of an important European engagement?' Still history, even of that sane and tempered school that is content to take politics as often an affair of second-best, will probably judge that Mr. Disraeli was not wrong when he said of the policy of this era that, whether we looked to Russia, to Greece, to France, there had been exhibited by ministers a confusion, an inconsistency of conduct, a contrariety of courses with regard to the same powers and a total want of system in their diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> It is true, however, that just the same confusion, inconsistency, and contrariety marked Russia, France, and Austria themselves. Another speaker of the same party, as mordant as Disraeli, and destined like him to rise to the chief place in the councils of the nation, went further, and said, in following Cobden in the debate, 'If Mr. Cobden had been foreign secretary, instead of Lord Russell, I fully believe this country would occupy a position proud and noble compared to that which she occupies at this moment. She would at least have been entitled to the credit of holding out in the name of England no hopes which she did not intend to fulfil, of entering into no engagements from which she was ready to recede.'<sup>2</sup> Well might Mr. Gladstone enter in his diary:—

*July 8.*—This debate ought to be an epoch in foreign policy. We have all much to learn. Lord Palmerston's speech was unequivocally weak in the mental and the bodily sense. I think it was to-day that the Prince of Wales rode with Granville and me; he showed a little Danism.

<sup>1</sup> Feb. 4, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Robert Cecil, July 4, 1864.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ADVANCE IN PUBLIC POSITION AND OTHERWISE

(1864)

The best form of government is that which doth actuate and dispose every part and member of a state to the common good. If, instead of concord and interchange of support, one part seeks to uphold an old form of government, and the other part introduce a new, they will miserably consume one and other. Histories are full of the calamities of entire states and nations in such cases. It is, nevertheless, equally true that time must needs bring about some alterations. . . . Therefore have those commonwealths been ever the most durable and perpetual which have often formed and recomposed themselves according to their first institution and ordinance.—Pym.

A RAPID and extraordinary change began to take place in Mr. Gladstone's position after the year 1863. With this was associated an internal development of his political ideas and an expansion of social feeling, still more remarkable and interesting. As we have seen, he reckoned that a little earlier than this he had reached his lowest point in public estimation. He had now been more than thirty years in parliament. He had sat in three cabinets, each of a different colour and different connections from the other two. It was not until he had seen half a century of life on our planet, and more than quarter of a century of life in the House of Commons, that it was at all certain whether he would be conservative or liberal, to what species of either genus he would attach himself, or whether there might not from his progressive transmutations be evolved some variety wholly new.

I have already given his picture of the Palmerston cabinet as a kaleidoscope, and the same simile would be no bad account of his own relation to the political groups

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and parties around him. The Manchester men and the young radicals from the West Riding of Yorkshire were his ardent adherents when he preached economy and peace, but they were chilled to the core by his neutrality or worse upon the life and death struggle across the Atlantic. His bold and confident finance was doubted by the whigs, and disliked by the Tories. But then the Tories, apart from their wiser leader, were delighted by his friendly words about the Confederates, and the whigs were delighted with his unflagging zeal for the deliverance of Italy. Only zeal for the deliverance of Italy lost him the friendship of those children of the Holy Father who came from Ireland. Then again the City was not easy at the flash of activity and enterprise at the exchequer, and the money-changers did not know what disturbance this intrepid genius might bring into the traffic of their tables. On the other hand, the manufacturers and the merchants of the midlands and the north adored a chancellor whose budgets were associated with expanding trade and a prosperity that advanced by leaps and bounds. The nonconformists were attracted by his personal piety, though repelled by its ecclesiastical apparel. The high churchmen doubtless knew him for their own, yet even they resented his confederacy with an Erastian and a latitudinarian like John Russell, or a Gallio like Lord Palmerston, who distributed mitres and crown benefices at the ultra-evangelical bidding of Lord Shaftesbury. To borrow a figure from a fine observer of those days,—the political molecules were incessantly forming and re-forming themselves into shifting aggregates, now attracted, now repelled by his central force; now the nucleus of an organized party, then resolved again in loose and distant satellites.

The great families still held ostensibly the predominance in the liberal party which they had earned by their stout and persistent fidelity to parliamentary reform. Their days of leadership, however, were drawing towards an end, though the process has not been rapid. They produced some good administrators, but nobody with the gifts of freshness and political genius. The three originating statesmen of that era, after all, were Cobden, Gladstone, Disraeli, none of them



born in the purple of the directing class. A Yorkshire member, destined to a position of prominence, entered the House in 1861, and after he had been there a couple of years he wrote to his wife, that 'the want of the liberal party of a new man was great, and felt to be great; the old whig leaders were worn out; there were no new whigs; Cobden and Bright were impracticable and un-English, and there were hardly any hopeful radicals. There was a great prize of power and influence to be aimed at.'<sup>1</sup>

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This parliamentary situation was the least part of it. No man could guide the new advance, now so evidently approaching, unless he clearly united fervour and capacity for practical improvements in government to broad and glowing sympathies, alike with the needs and the elemental instincts of the labouring mass. Mr. Gladstone offered that wonderful combination. 'If ever there was a statesman,' said Mill, about this time, 'in whom the spirit of improvement is incarnate, and in whose career as a minister the characteristic feature has been to seek out things that require or admit of improvement, instead of waiting to be pressed or driven to do them, Mr. Gladstone deserves that signal honour.' Then his point of view was lofty; he was keenly alive to the moving forces of the hour; his horizons were wide; he was always amply founded in facts; he had generous hopes for mankind; his oratory seized vast popular audiences, because it was the expression of a glowing heart and a powerful brain. All this made him a demagogue in the same high sense in which Pericles, Demosthenes, John Pym, Patrick Henry were demagogues.

It is easy to see some at any rate of the influences that were bringing Mr. Gladstone decisively into harmony with the movement of liberal opinions, now gradually spreading over Great Britain. The resurrection of Italy could only be vindicated on principles of liberty and the right of a nation to choose its own rulers. The peers and the ten-pound householders who held power in England were no Bourbon tyrants; but just as in 1830 the overthrow of the Bourbon line in France was followed by the Reform bill here, so the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of W. E. Forster*, i. p. 362.

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Italian revolution of 1860 gave new vitality to the popular side in England. Another convulsion, far away from our own shores, was still more directly potent alike in quickening popular feeling, and by a strange paradox in creating as a great popular leader the very statesman who had failed to understand it. It was impossible that a man so vigilant and so impressionable as Mr. Gladstone was, should escape the influence of the American war. Though too late to affect his judgment on the issues of the war, he discerned after the event how, in his own language, the wide participation of the people in the choice of their governors, by giving force and expression to the national will in the United States, enabled the governors thus freely chosen to marshal a power and develop an amount of energy in the execution of that will, such as probably have never been displayed in an equal time and among an equal number of men since the race of mankind sprang into existence.<sup>1</sup> In this judgment of the American civil war, he only shared in a general result of the salvation of the Union; it reversed the fashionable habit of making American institutions English bugbears, and gave a sweeping impulse to that steady but resistless tide of liberal and popular sentiment that ended in the parliamentary reform of 1867.

The lesson from the active resolution of America was confirmed by the passive fortitude of Lancashire. 'What are the qualities,' Mr. Gladstone asked in 1864, 'that fit a man for the exercise of a privilege such as the franchise? Self-command, self-control, respect for order, patience under suffering, confidence in the law, regard for superiors; and when, I should like to ask, were all these great qualities exhibited in a manner more signal, even more illustrious, than in the conduct of the general body of the operatives of Lancashire under the profound affliction of the winter of 1862?' So on two sides the liberal channel was widened and deepened and the speed of its currents accelerated.

Besides large common influences like these, Mr. Gladstone's special activities as a reformer brought him into contact with the conditions of life and feeling among the workmen,

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Liverpool, April 6, 1866.

and the closer he came to them, the more did his humane and sympathetic temper draw him towards their politics and the ranks of their party. Looking back, he said, upon the years immediately succeeding the fall of Napoleon in 1815, he saw the reign of ideas that did not at all belong to the old currents of English history, but were a reaction against the excesses of the French revolution. This reaction seemed to set up the doctrine that the masses must be in standing antagonism to the law, and it resulted in severities that well justified antagonism. 'To-day the scene was transformed; the fixed traditional sentiment of the working man had become one of confidence in the law, in parliament, even in the executive government.' In 1863 he was busy in the erection of the post office savings banks. A deputation of a powerful trades union asked him to modify his rules so as to enable them to place their funds in the hands of the government. A generation before, such confidence would have been inconceivable. In connection with the Government Annuities bill a deputation of workmen came to him, and said, 'If there had been any suspicion or disinclination towards it on the part of the working classes, it was due to the dissatisfaction with parliament as to suffrage.' When he replied with something about the alleged indifference and apparent inaction of the working classes as to suffrage, they said, 'Since the abolition of the corn laws we have given up political agitation; we felt we might place confidence in parliament; instead of political action, we tried to spend our evenings in the improvement of our minds.' This convinced him that it was not either want of faith in parliament, or indifference to a vote, that explained the absence of agitation.

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The outcome of this stream of new perceptions and new feeling in his mind was a declaration that suddenly electrified the political world. A Yorkshire liberal one afternoon (May 11, 1864) brought in a bill for lowering the franchise, and Mr. Gladstone spoke for the government. He dwelt upon the facts, historic and political. The parliamentary history

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of reform for the thirteen years, since Locke King's motion in 1851 upset a government, had been most unsatisfactory, and to set aside all the solemn and formal declarations from 1851 down to the abortive Reform bill of 1860 would be a scandal. Then, was not the state of the actual case something of a scandal, with less than one-tenth of the constituencies composed of working men, and with less than one-fiftieth of the working men in possession of the franchise? How could you defend a system that let in the lower stratum of the middle class and shut out the upper stratum of the working class? In face of such dispositions as the workmen manifested towards law, parliament, and government, was it right that the present system of almost entire exclusion should prevail? Then came the sentence that, in that stagnant or floundering hour of parliamentary opinion, marked a crisis. 'I call upon the adversary to show cause, and *I venture to say that every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness or of political danger, is morally entitled to come within the pale of the constitution.* Of course, in giving utterance to such a proposition, I do not recede from the protest I have previously made against sudden, or violent, or excessive, or intoxicating change.'

He concluded in words that covered much ground, though when closely scrutinised they left large loopholes. 'It is well,' he said, 'that we should be suitably provided with armies and fleets and fortifications; it is well, too, that all these should rest upon and be sustained, as they ought to be, by a sound system of finance, and out of a revenue not wasted by a careless parliament or by a profligate administration. But that which is better and more weighty still is that hearts should be bound together by a reasonable extension, at fitting times and among *selected* portions of the people, of every benefit and every privilege that can be justly conferred upon them.'

The thunderbolt of a sentence about every man's moral title to a vote startled the House with an amazement, half delight and half consternation, that broke forth in loud volleys of cheering and counter-cheering. It was to little

purpose that the orator in the next breath interposed his qualifications. One of the fated words had been spoken that gather up wandering forces of time and occasion, and precipitate new eras. A conservative speaker instantly deplored the absence of the prime minister, and the substitution in his stead of his 'intractable chancellor of the exchequer.' An important liberal speaker, with equal promptitude, pointed out that one effect of the speech would be, in the first place, loss of conservative support to the government, and, in the second place, a very great gain to the health and vigour of the liberal party. Two whigs ran off to tell Phillimore that Gladstone had said something that would make his hair stand on end. Speculations began to hum and buzz whether the oracular deliverance would not upset the government. In the press a tremendous storm broke. Mr Gladstone was accused of ministering aliments to popular turbulence and vanity, of preaching the divine right of multitudes, and of encouraging, minister of the crown though he was, a sweeping and levelling democracy. They charged him with surveying mankind in the abstract and suffrage in the abstract, and in that kingdom of shadows discovering or constructing vast universal propositions about man's moral rights. Mr. Disraeli told him that he had revived the doctrine of Tom Paine. The radicals were as jubilant as whigs and tories were furious. They declared that the banner he had raised aloft was not what the tories denounced as the standard of domestic revolution, but the long lost flag of the liberal party. 'There is not a statesman in England of the very first rank,' said one newspaper, 'who has dared to say as much, and Mr. Gladstone, in saying it, has placed himself at the head of the party that will succeed the present administration.' This was true, but in the meantime the head of the existing administration was still a marvel of physical vigour, and though at the moment he was disabled by gout, somebody must have hurried to Cambridge House and told him the desperate tidings. On the very instant he sent down a note of inquiry to Mr. Gladstone, asking what he had really said. A brisk correspondence followed, neither heated nor unfriendly.

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In the morning Lord Palmerston had written him a premonitory note, not to commit himself or the government to any particular figure of borough franchise; that a six pound franchise had gone to the bottom; that if they should ever have to bring in a reform bill, they ought to be free from fresh pledges; that the workmen would swamp the classes above them; that their influx would discourage the classes above from voting at all; and that the workmen were under the control of trade unions directed by a small number of agitators. All this was the good conservative common form of the time. The speech itself, when the prime minister came to see it, proved no sedative.

*Lord Palmerston to Mr Gladstone.*

May 12, 1864.—I have read your speech, and I must frankly say, with much regret; as there is little in it that I can agree with, and much from which I differ. You lay down broadly the doctrine of universal suffrage which I can never accept. I entirely deny that every sane and not disqualified man has a moral right to a vote. I use that expression instead of 'the pale of the constitution,' because I hold that all who enjoy the security and civil rights which the constitution provides are within its pale. What every man and woman too has a right to, is to be well governed and under just laws, and they who propose a change ought to show that the present organization does not accomplish those objects. . . .

You did not pronounce an opinion in favour of a specified franchise; but is there any essential difference between naming a six pound franchise and naming the additional numbers which a six pound franchise was calculated to admit? I am not going to perform the duty which Whiteside assigned to me of answering your speech, but, if you will not take it amiss, I would say, that it was more like the sort of speech with which Bright would have introduced the Reform bill which he would like to propose, than the sort of speech which might have been expected from the treasury bench in the present state of things. Your speech may win Lancashire for you, though that is doubtful, but I fear it will tend to lose England for you.

*Mr. Gladstone to Lord Palmerston.*

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11 *Carlton House Terrace*, May 13, 1864.—It is not easy to take ill anything that proceeds from you; and, moreover, frankness between all men, and especially between those who are politically associated, removes, as I believe, many more difficulties than it causes. In this spirit I will endeavour to write. I agree in your denial 'that every sane and not disqualified man has a moral right to vote.' But I am at a loss to know how, as you have read my speech, you can ascribe this opinion to me. My declaration was, taken generally, that all persons ought to be admitted to the franchise, who can be admitted to it with safety. . . . I hold by this proposition. It seems to me neither strange, nor new, nor extreme. It requires, I admit, to be construed; but I contend that the interpretation is amply given in the speech, where I have declared (for example) that the admission I desire is of the same character or rather extent as was proposed in 1860. . . . I have never exhorted the working man to agitate for the franchise, and I am at a loss to conceive what report of my speech can have been construed by you in such a sense.

Having said this much to bring down to its true limits the difference between us, I do not deny that difference. I regret it, and I should regret it much more if it were likely to have (at least as far as I can see) an early bearing upon practice. In the cabinet I argued as strongly as I could against the withdrawal of the bill in 1860, and in favour of taking the opinion of the House of Commons upon that bill. I think the party which supports your government has suffered, and is suffering, and will much more seriously suffer, from the part which as a party it has played within these recent years, in regard to the franchise. I have no desire to press the question forward. I hope no government will ever again take it up except with the full knowledge of its own mind and a reasonable probability of carrying it. But such influence as argument and statement without profession of political intentions, can exercise upon the public mind, I heartily desire to see exercised in favour of extension of the franchise. . . .

On the following day Lord Palmerston wrote to him, 'I have no doubt that you have yourself heard a great deal

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about the bad effect of your speech, but I can assure you that I hear from many quarters the unfavourable impression it has produced even upon many of the liberal party, and upon all persons who value the maintenance of our institutions.'

To others, Mr. Gladstone wrote in less formal style, for instance to an eminent nonconformist minister: 'May 14. I have unwarily, it seems, set the Thames on fire. But I have great hopes that the Thames will, on reflection perceive that he had no business or title to catch the flame, and will revert to his ordinary temperature accordingly.' And to his brother Robertson, he writes from Brighton, three days later:—

Many thanks for all you say respecting my speech on the franchise bill. I have been astounded to find it the cause or occasion of such a row. It would have been quite as intelligible to me had people said, 'Under the exceptions of personal unfitnes and political danger you exclude or may exclude almost everybody, and you reduce your declaration to a shadow.'

In the diary he says:—'May 11.—Spoke on the franchise bill. Some sensation. It appears to me that it was due less to me, than to the change in the hearers and in the public mind from the professions at least if not the principles of 1859.' Much against Lord Palmerston's wish, the speech was published, with a short preface that even staunch friends like Phillimore found obscure and not well written.

An address, significant of the general feeling in the unfranchised classes, was presented to him from the workmen of York a month after his speech in parliament. They recalled his services to free trade when he stood by the side of Peel; his budget of 1860; his conspicuous and honourable share in abolishing the taxes on knowledge. 'We have marked,' they said, 'your manifestations of sympathy with the down-trodden and oppressed of every clime. You have advanced the cause of freedom in foreign lands by the power and courage with which you have assailed and exposed the misdeeds and cruelties of continental tyrants. To the provident operative you have by your Post Office



Savings Bank bill given security for his small savings, and your Government Annuities bill of this session is a measure which will stimulate the people to greater thrift and forethought. These acts, together with your speeches on the last named, and on the Borough Franchise bill, make up a life that commands our lasting gratitude.' Such was the new popular estimate of him. In framing his reply to this address Mr. Gladstone did his best to discourage the repetition of like performances from other places; he submitted the draft to Lord Palmerston, and followed his advice in omitting certain portions of it. It was reduced to the conventional type of such acknowledgment.

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### III

In the autumn of 1864 Mr. Gladstone made a series of speeches in his native county, which again showed the sincerity and the simplicity of his solicitude for the masses of his countrymen. The sentiment is common. Mr. Disraeli and the Young Englanders had tried to inscribe it upon a party banner twenty years before. But Mr. Gladstone had given proof that he knew how to embody sentiment in acts of parliament, and he associated it with the broadest ideas of citizenship and policy. These speeches were not a manifesto or a programme; they were a survey of the principles of the statesmanship that befitted the period.

At Bolton (Oct. 11) he discoursed to audiences of the working class upon the progress of thirty years, with such freshness of spirit as awoke energetic hopes of the progress for the thirty years that were to follow. The next day he opened a park with words from the heart about the modern sense of the beauties of nature. The Greeks, he said, however much beauty they might have discerned in nature, had no sympathy with the delight in detached natural objects—a tree, or a stream, or a hill—which was so often part of the common life of the poorest Englishman. Even a century or less ago 'communion with nature' would have sounded an affected and unnatural phrase. Now it was a sensible part of the life of the working classes. Then came moralising, at that date less trite than it has since become, about the

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social ties that ought to mark the relations between master and workman.

The same night at a banquet in Liverpool, and two days later at Manchester, he advanced to high imperial ground. He told them how, after an experience now becoming long, the one standing pain to the political man in England is a sense of the inequality of his best exertions to the arduous duty of government and legislation. England had undertaken responsibilities of empire such as never before lay on the shoulders or the minds of men. We governed distant millions many times outnumbering ourselves. We were responsible for the welfare of forty or forty-five separate states. Again, what other nation was charged with the same responsibility in the exercise of its moral influence abroad, in the example it is called upon to set, in the sympathy it must feel with the cause of right and justice and constitutional freedom wherever that cause is at issue? As for our fellow subjects abroad, we had given them practical freedom. It was our duty to abstain as far as may be from interference with their affairs, to afford them the shelter and protection of the empire, and at the same time to impress upon them that there is no grosser mistake in politics than to suppose you can separate the blessings and benefits of freedom from its burdens. In other words, the colonies should pay their own way, and if the old dream of making their interests subservient to those of the mother country had passed away, it was just as little reasonable that the mother country should bear charges that in equity belonged to them, and all the more if the colonies set up against the industry and productions of England the mischiefs and obstructions of an exploded protective system. On foreign policy he enforced the principles that, after all, had given to Europe forty years of peace, and to England forty years of diplomatic authority and pre-eminence. 'It is impossible that to a country like England the affairs of foreign nations can ever be indifferent. It is impossible that England, in my opinion, ever should forswear the interest she must naturally feel in the cause of truth, of justice, of order, and of good government.'

The final word was an admonition against 'political lethargy. For the first time, I think, he put into the forefront the tormenting question that was to haunt him to the end. 'They could not look at Ireland,' he told them, 'and say that the state of feeling there was for the honour and the advantage of the united kingdom.'

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*Oct. 14, '64.*—So ended in peace an exhausting, flattering, I hope not intoxicating circuit. God knows I have not courted them. I hope I do not rest on them. I pray I may turn them to account for good. It is, however, impossible not to love the people from whom such manifestations come, as meet me in every quarter. . . . Somewhat haunted by dreams of halls, and lines of people, and great assemblies.

It was observed of this Lancashire tour, by critics who hardly meant to praise him, that he paid his hearers the high compliment of assuming that they could both understand his arguments, and feel his appeal to their moral sympathies. His speeches, men said, were in fact lay sermons of a high order, as skilfully composed, as accurately expressed, as if they were meant for the House of Commons. This was singularly true, and what an eulogy it was for our modern British democracy that the man whom they made their first great hero was an orator of such a school. Lord Lyttelton, his brother-in-law, informed him of the alarm and odium that his new line of policy was raising. Mr. Gladstone (April, 1865) replied:—'After all, you are a peer, and Peel used to say, speaking of his peer colleagues, that they were beings of a different order. Please to recollect that we have got to govern millions of hard hands; that it must be done by force, fraud, or good will; that the latter has been tried and is answering; that none have profited more by this change of system since the corn law and the Six Acts, than those who complain of it. As to their misliking me, I have no fault to find with them for that. It is the common lot in similar circumstances, and the very things that I have done or omitted doing from my extreme and almost irrational reluctance to part company with them, become an aggravation when the parting is accomplished.' 'Gladstone, I think,'

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says Bishop Wilberforce (Dec. 7), 'is certainly gaining power. You hear now almost every one say he must be the future premier, and such sayings tend greatly to accomplish themselves.'

## IV

It was about this time that Mr. Gladstone first found himself drawing to relations with the protestant dissenters, that were destined to grow closer as years went on. These relations had no small share in the extension of his public power; perhaps, too, no small share in the more abiding work upon the dissenters themselves, of enlarging what was narrow, softening what was hard and bitter, and promoting a healing union where the existence of a church establishment turned ecclesiastical differences into lines of social division. He had alarmed his friends by his action on a measure (April 15, 1863) for remedying an old grievance about the burial of dissenters. Having served on a select committee appointed in the rather quixotic hope that a solution of the difficulty might be found by the somewhat unparliamentary means of 'friendly conversation among candid and impartial men,' he had convinced himself that there was a wrong to be set right, and he voted and spoke accordingly. 'It will most rudely shake his Oxford seat,' says Phillimore. The peril there was becoming daily more apparent. Then in 1864 and on later occasions he met leading nonconformist clergy at the house of Mr. Newman Hall—such men as Binney, Allon, Edward White, Baldwin Brown, Henry Reynolds, and that most admirable friend, citizen, and man, R. W. Dale, so well known as Dale of Birmingham. Their general attitude was described by Mr. Newman Hall as this: they hoped for the ultimate recognition of the free church theory, and meditated no political action to bring it about; they looked for it to come as the result of influence within the church of England, not of efforts from without. 'Many dissenters,' one of them told him (Nov. 20, 1864), 'would enter the church whatever their theory about establishment, if such slight modifications were made as would allow them to do so conscientiously—holding the essentials of the faith far more soundly than many within

the established church.' Another regretted, after one of these gatherings, that they never got to the core of the subject, 'namely that there run through the prayer-book from beginning to end ideas that are not accepted by numbers who subscribe, and which cannot *all* be admitted by any one.'

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All this once more brought Mr. Gladstone into a curious position. Just as at Oxford he had in 1847 been the common hope of ultra-clericals on one hand and ultra-liberals on the other, so now he was the common hope of the two antagonistic schools of religious comprehension—the right, who looked towards the formularies, system, discipline, and tradition either of the Orthodox church or the Latin, and the left, who sought reunion on the basis of puritanism with a leaven of modern criticism. Always the devoted friend of Dr. Pusey and his school, he was gradually welcomed as ally and political leader by men like Dale and Allon, the independents, and Spurgeon, the baptist, on the broad ground that it was possible for all good men to hold, amid their differences about church government, the more vital sympathies and charities of their common profession. They even sounded him on one occasion about laying the foundation stone of one of their chapels. The broad result of such intercourse of the nonconformist leaders with this powerful and generous mind, enriched by historic knowledge and tradition, strengthened by high political responsibility, deepened by meditations long, strenuous, and systematic, was indeed remarkable. Dr. Allon expressed it, with admirable point, in a letter to him some fourteen years after our present date (April 15, 1878):—

The kind of intercourse that you have kindly permitted with nonconformists, has helped more consciously to identify them with movements of national life, and to diminish the stern feeling of almost defiant witness-bearing that was strong a generation or two ago. It is something gained if ecclesiastical and political differences can be debated within a common circle of social confidence and identity. . . . Their confidence in you has made them amenable to your lead in respect of methods and movements needing the guidance of political insight and experience.

A man's mind seldom moves forward towards light and freedom on a single line, and in Mr. Gladstone's case the same impulses that made him tolerant of formal differences as to church government led slowly to a still wider liberality in respect of far deeper differences. Readers may remember the shock with which in his youth he found that one person or another was a unitarian. To Mr. Darbishire, a member of the unitarian body who was for many years his friend, he wrote about some address of James Martineau's (Dec. 21, 1862):—

From time to time I have read works of Mr. Martineau's, or works that I have taken for his, with great admiration, with warm respect for the writer, and moreover, with a great deal of sympathy. I should greatly like to make his acquaintance. But attached as I am to the old Christian dogma, and believing it as I do, or rather believing the Person whom it sets forth, to be the real fountain of all the gifts and graces that are largely strewn over society, and in which Mr. Martineau himself seems so amply to share, I fear I am separated from him in the order of ideas by an interval that must be called a gulf. My conviction is that the old creeds have been, and are to be, the channel by which the Christian religion is made a reality even for many who do not hold it, and I think that when we leave them we shall leave them not for something better, but something worse. Hence you will not be surprised that I regard some of Mr. Martineau's propositions as unhistorical and untrue.

And to the same gentleman a year or two later (Jan. 2, 1865):—

I am sorry to say I have not yet been able to read Mr. Martineau's sermon, which I mean to do with care. I am, as you know, one altogether attached to dogma, which I believe to be the skeleton that carries the flesh, the blood, the life of the blessed thing we call the Christian religion. But I do not believe that God's tender mercies are restricted to a small portion of the human family. I dare not be responsible for Dr. Newman, nor would he thank me; but I hope he does not so believe, and this

the more because I have lately been reading Dr. Manning's letter to Dr. Pusey; and, though Dr. Manning is far more exaggerated in his religion than Dr. Newman, and seems to me almost to caricature it, yet I think even he has by no means that limited view of the mercies of God.

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I have no mental difficulty in reconciling a belief in the Church, and what may be called the high Christian doctrine, with that comforting persuasion that those who do not receive the greatest blessings (and each man must believe his religion to be greatest), are notwithstanding the partakers, each in his measure, of other gifts, and will be treated according to their use of them. I admit there are schools of Christians who think otherwise. I was myself brought up to think otherwise, and to believe that salvation depended absolutely upon the reception of a particular and a very narrow creed. But long, long have I cast those weeds behind me. Unbelief may in given conditions be a moral offence; and only as such, only like other disobedience, and on like principles, can it be punishable.

To not a few the decisive change in Mr. Gladstone's mental history is the change from the 'very narrow creed' of his youth to the 'high Christian doctrine' of his after life. Still more will regard as the real transition the attainment of this 'comforting persuasion,' this last word of benignity and tolerance. Here we are on the foundations. Tolerance is far more than the abandonment of civil usurpations over conscience. It is a lesson often needed quite as much in the hearts of a minority as of a majority. Tolerance means reverence for all the possibilities of Truth; it means acknowledgment that she dwells in diverse mansions, and wears vesture of many colours, and speaks in strange tongues; it means frank respect for freedom of indwelling conscience against mechanic forms, official conventions, social force; it means the charity that is greater than even faith and hope. Marked is the day for a man when he can truly say, as Mr. Gladstone here said, 'Long, long, have I cast those weeds behind me.'

## CHAPTER IX

### DEFEAT AT OXFORD—DEATH OF LORD PALMERSTON— PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP

(1865)

IN public life a man of elevated mind does not make his own self tell upon others simply and entirely. He must act with other men; he cannot select his objects, or pursue them by means unadulterated by the methods and practices of minds less elevated than his own. He can only do what he feels to be second-best. He labours at a venture, prosecuting measures so large or so complicated that their ultimate issue is uncertain.—CARDINAL NEWMAN.

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THE faithful steward is a chartered bore alike of the mimic and the working stage; the rake and spendthrift carries all before him. Nobody knew better than Mr. Gladstone that of all the parts in public life, the teasing and economising drudge is the most thankless. The public only half apprehends, or refuses to apprehend at all; his spending colleagues naturally fight; colleagues who do not spend, have other business and prize a quiet life. All this made Mr. Gladstone's invincible tenacity as guardian of the national accounts the more genuinely heroic. In a long letter from Balmoral, in the October of 1864, he began what was destined to be the closing battle of the six years' war. To Mrs. Gladstone he wrote:—

I have fired off to-day my letter to Lord Palmerston about expenditure. For a long time, though I did not let myself worry by needlessly thinking about it, I have had it lying on me like a nightmare. I mean it to be moderate (I shall have the copy when we meet to show you), but unless he concurs it may lead to consequences between this time and February. What is really painful is to believe that he will not agree unless through appre-



hension, his own leanings and desires being in favour of a large and not a moderate expenditure. . . .

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Figures, details, points, were varied, but the issue was in essence the same, and the end was much the same. Lord Palmerston took his stand on the demands of public opinion. He insisted (Oct. 19) that anybody who looked carefully at the signs of the times must see that there were at present two strong feelings in the national mind—the one a disinclination to organic changes in our representative system, the other a steady determination that the country should be placed and kept in an efficient condition of defence. He pointed to the dead indifference of the workmen themselves to their own enfranchisement as evidence of the one, and to the volunteer movement as evidence of the other.

Mr. Gladstone rejoined that it was Lord Palmerston's personal popularity, and not the conviction or desire of the nation, that kept up estimates. Palmerston retorted that this was to mistake cause and effect. 'If I have in any degree been fortunate enough to have obtained some share of the goodwill and confidence of my fellow-countrymen, it has been because I have rightly understood the feelings and opinion of the nation. . . . You may depend upon it that any degree of popularity that is worth having can be obtained only by such means, and of that popularity I sincerely wish you the most ample share.' The strain was severe:—

*Oct. 1, 1864.*—I still feel much mental lassitude, and not only shrink from public business, but from hard books. It is uphill work. *Oct. 21.*—A pamphlet letter from Lord Palmerston about defence holds out a dark prospect. *Oct. 22.*—Wrote, late in the day my reply to Lord Palmerston in a rather decisive tone, for I feel conscious of right and of necessity.

*To Mrs. Gladstone.*

*Nov. 9.*—After more than a fortnight's delay, I received yesterday evening the enclosed very unfavourable letter from Lord Palmerston. I send with it the draft of my reply. Please to return them to-morrow by Willy—for they ought not to be

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even for that short time out of my custody, but I do not like to keep you in the dark. I suppose the matter may now stand over as far as debate is concerned until next month, or even till the middle of January. I fear you will not have much time for reading or writing to-morrow before you start for Chatsworth.

This *sort* of controversy keeps the nerves too highly strung. I am more afraid of running away than of holding my ground. But I do not quite forget how plentifully I am blessed and sustained, and how mercifully spared other and sorer trials.

To-morrow comes the supper of the St. Martin's Volunteers; and after that I hope to close my lips until February. The scene last night<sup>1</sup> was very different from that of Monday; but very remarkable, and even more enthusiastic. I was the only layman among five hundred lawyers; and it made me, wickedly, think of my position when locked alone in the Naples gaol.

Jan. 19, 1865.—The cabinet has been to-day almost as rough as any of the roughest times. In regard to the navy estimates, I have had no effective or broad support; platoon-firing more or less in my sense from Argyll and Gibson, four or five were silent, the rest hostile. Probably they will appoint a committee of cabinet, and we may work through, but on the other hand we may not. My *opinion* is manifestly in a minority; but there is an unwillingness to have a row. I am not well able to write about other things—these batterings are sore work, but I must go through. C. Paget and Childers hold their ground.

Jan. 28.—The morning went fast but wretchedly. Seldom, thank God, have I a day to which I could apply this epithet. Last night I could have done almost anything to shut out the thought of the coming battle. This is very weak, but it is the effects of the constant recurrence of these things. Estimates always settled at the dagger's point.—(*Diary*).

Osborne, Jan. 31.—I hope you got my note last night. The weather here is mild, and I sit with open window while writing. The Queen and Princess both ask about you abundantly. I have been most pertinacious about seeing the baby prince. I tried to make the request twice to the Princess, but I think she did not understand my words. Determined not to be beat, I applied to

<sup>1</sup> The dinner in honour of M. Berryer.

the Prince, who acceded with glee, but I don't know what will come of it. He talked with good sense last night about Greece, Ionian Islands, and Canada; and I was his partner at whist. We came off quits. I dined last night, and also saw the Queen before dinner, but only for a quarter of an hour or so. She talked about Japan and Lord Palmerston, but there was not time to get into swing, and nothing said of nearer matters.

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The sort of success that awaited his strenuous endeavour has been already indicated.<sup>1</sup>

## II

In the spring Mr. Gladstone made the first advance upon what was to be an important journey. All through February and March he worked with Phillimore and others upon the question of the Irish church. The thing was delicate, for his constituency would undoubtedly be adverse. His advisers resolved that he should speak on a certain motion from a radical below the gangway, to the effect that the present position of the Irish church establishment was unsatisfactory, and called for the early attention of the government. It is hard to imagine two propositions on the merits more indisputable, but a parliamentary resolution is not to be judged by its verbal contents only. Dillwyn's motion was known to mean disestablishment and nothing less. In that view, Mr. Gladstone wrote a short but pregnant letter to Phillimore—and this too meant disestablishment and nothing less. It was the first tolerably definite warning of what was to be one of the two or three greatest legislative acts of his career.

*To Robert Phillimore.*

Feb. 13, 1865.—I would treat the Irish church, as a religious body, with the same respect and consideration as the church of England, and would apply to it the same liberal policy as regards its freedom of action. But I am not loyal to it as an establishment. It exists, and is virtually almost unchallenged as to its existence in that capacity; it may long (I cannot quite say long may it) outlive me; I will never be a party, knowingly, to what I may call frivolous acts of disturbance, nor to the premature

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 686.

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production of schemes of change : but still comes back the refrain of my song : '*I am not loyal to it as an Establishment.*' I could not renew the votes and speeches of thirty years back. A quarter of a century of not only fair but exceptionally fair trial has wholly dispelled hopes to which they had relation ; and I am bound to say I look upon its present form of existence as no more favourable to religion, in any sense of the word, than it is to civil justice and to the contentment and loyalty of Ireland.

Lord Palmerston got wind of the forthcoming speech, and wrote a short admonitory note. He had heard that Mr. Gladstone was about to set forth his views as an individual, and not as a member of the government, and this was a distinction that he reckoned impracticable. Was it possible for a member of a government speaking from the treasury bench so to sever himself from the body corporate to which he belonged, as to be able to express decided opinions as an individual, and leave himself free to act upon different opinions, or abstain from acting on those opinions, when required to act as a member of the government taking part in the divisions of the body ? And again, if his opinions happened not to be accepted by a colleague on the same bench, would not the colleague have either to acquiesce, or else to state in what respect his own opinion differed ? In this case would not differences in a government be unnecessarily and prematurely forced upon the public ? All this was the sound doctrine of cabinet government. Mr. Gladstone, replying, felt that 'he could not as a minister, and as member for Oxford, allow the subject to be debated an indefinite number of times and remain silent.' His indictment of the Irish church was decisive. At the same time he was careful to explain in public correspondence that the question was out of all bearing on the practical politics of the day. Meanwhile, as spokesman for the government, Mr. Gladstone deprecated the responsibility of raising great questions at a time when they could not be seriously approached. One acute observer who knew him well, evidently took a different view of the practical politics of the day, or at any rate, of the morrow. Manning wrote to Mr. Gladstone two days

after the speech was made and begged to be allowed to see him:—'I read your speech on the Irish church, which set me musing and forecasting. It was a real grapple with the question.'

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## III

Not many days after this speech Cobden died. To his brother, Robertson, Mr. Gladstone wrote:—

*April 5.*—What a sad, sad loss is this death of Cobden. I feel in miniature the truth of what Bright well said yesterday—ever since I really came to know him, I have held him in high esteem and regard as well as admiration; but till he died I did not know how high it was. I do not know that I have ever seen in public life a character more truly simple, noble, and unselfish. His death will make an echo through the world, which in its entireness he has served so well.

*April 7.*—To Mr. Cobden's funeral at W. Lavington. Afterwards to his home, which I was anxious to know. Also I saw Mrs. Cobden. The day was lovely, the scenery most beautiful and soothing, the whole sad and impressive. Bright broke down at the grave. Cobden's name is great; it will be greater. (*Diary.*)

A few months before this Mr. Gladstone had lost a friend more intimate. The death of the Duke of Newcastle, he says (Oct. 19, 1864), 'severs the very last of those contemporaries who were also my political friends. How it speaks to me "Be doing, and be done."'

*To Mrs. Gladstone.*

*Oct. 19.*—Dr. Kingsley sent me a telegram to inform me of the sad event at Clumber; but it only arrived two hours before the papers, though the death happened last night. So that brave heart has at last ceased to beat. Certainly in him more than in any one I have known, was exhibited the character of our life as a dispensation of pain. This must ever be a mystery, for we cannot see the working-out of the purposes of God. Yet in his case I have always thought some glimpse of them seemed to be permitted. It is well to be permitted also to believe that he is now at rest for ever, and that the cloud is at length removed from his destiny.

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*Clumber, Oct. 26.*—It is a time and a place to feel, if one could feel. He died in the room where we have been sitting before and after dinner—where, thirty-two years ago, a stripling, I came over from Newark in fear and trembling to see the duke, his father; where a stiff horseshoe semi-circle then sat round the fire in evenings; where that rigour melted away in Lady Lincoln's time; where she and her mother sang so beautifully at the pianoforte, in the same place where it now stands. The house is full of local memories.

## IV

On July 6 (1865) parliament was dissolved. Four years before, Mr. Gladstone had considered the question of retaining or abandoning the seat for the university. It was in contemplation to give a third member to the southern division of Lancashire, and, in July 1861, he received a requisition begging his assent to nomination there, signed by nearly 8000 of the electors—a number that seemed to make success certain. His letters to Dr. Pusey and others show how strongly he inclined to comply. Flesh and blood shrank from perpetual strife, he thought, and after four contested elections in fourteen years at Oxford, he asked himself whether he should not escape the prolongation of the series. He saw, as he said, that they meant to make it a life-battle, like the old famous college war between Bentley and the fellows of Trinity. But he felt his deep obligation to his Oxford supporters, and was honourably constrained again to bear their flag. In the same month of 1861 he had declined absolutely to stand for London in the place of Lord John Russell.

At Oxford the tories this time had secured an excellent candidate in Mr. Gathorne Hardy, a man of sterling character, a bold and capable debater, a good man of business, one of the best of Lord Derby's lieutenants. The election was hard fought, like most of the four that had gone before it. The educated residents were for the chancellor of the exchequer, as they had always been, and he had both liberals and high churchmen on his side. One feature was novel, the power of sending votes by post. Mr. Gladstone had not been active

in the House against this change, but only bestowed upon it a parting malediction. It strengthened the clerical vote, and as sympathy with disestablishment was thrust prominently forward against Mr. Gladstone, the new privilege cost him his seat. From the first day things looked ill, and when on the last day (July 18) the battle ended, he was one hundred and eighty votes behind Mr. Hardy.<sup>1</sup>

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*July 16, '65.*—Always in straits the Bible in church supplies my needs. To-day it was in the 1st lesson, Jer. i. 19, 'And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.'

*July 17.*—Again came consolation to me in the Psalms—86 : 16 ; it did the same for me April 17, 1853. At night arrived the telegram announcing my defeat at Oxford as virtually accomplished. A dear dream is dispelled. God's will be done.

His valedictory address was both graceful and sincere :—  
'After an arduous connection of eighteen years, I bid you respectfully farewell. My earnest purpose to serve you, my many faults and shortcomings, the incidents of the political relation between the university and myself, established in 1847, so often questioned in vain, and now, at length, finally dissolved, I leave to the judgment of the future. It is one imperative duty, and one alone, which induces me to trouble you with these few parting words—the duty of expressing my profound and lasting gratitude for indulgence as generous, and for support as warm and enthusiastic in itself, and as honourable from the character and distinctions of those who have given it, as has in my belief ever been accorded by any constituency to any representative.'

He was no sooner assured of his repulse at Oxford, than he started for the Lancashire constituency, where a nomination had been reserved for him.

*July 18.*—Went off at eleven . . . to the Free Trade Hall which was said to have 6000 people. They were in unbounded enthusiasm. I spoke for 1½ hr., and when the meeting concluded went off to Liverpool . . . Another meeting of 5000

<sup>1</sup> Heathcote, 3236 ; Hardy, 1904 ; Gladstone, 1724.

BOOK at the Amphitheatre, if possible more enthusiastic than that at  
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In the fine hall that stands upon the site made historic by the militant free-traders, he used a memorable phrase. 'At last, my friends,' he began, 'I am come among you, and I am come among you "unmuzzled."' The audience quickly realised the whole strength of the phrase, and so did the people of the country when it reached them. Then he opened a high magnanimous exordium about the Oxford that had cast him out. The same evening at Liverpool, he again dwelt on the desperate fondness with which he had clung to the university seat, but rapidly passed to the contrast. 'I come into South Lancashire, and find here around me different phenomena. I find the development of industry. I find the growth of enterprise. I find the progress of social philanthropy. I find the prevalence of toleration. I find an ardent desire for freedom. If there be one duty more than another incumbent upon the public men of England, it is to establish and maintain harmony between the past of our glorious history and the future that is still in store for her.'

July 20.—Robertson and I went in early and polled. He was known, and I through him, and we had a scene of great popular enthusiasm. We then followed the polls as the returns came in, apparently triumphant, but about midday it appeared that the figures of both parties were wrong, ours the worst. Instead of being well and increasingly at the head I was struggling with Egerton at 1 P.M., and Turner gaining on me. . . . Off to Chester. In the evening the figures of the close came in and gave me the second place. The volunteers in the park cheered loudly, the church bells rung, the people came down with a band and I had to address them.

*To the Duchess of Sutherland.*

I am by far too sorry about Oxford to feel the slightest temptation to be angry, even were there cause. I only feel that I love her better than ever. There is great enthusiasm here, stimulated no doubt by the rejection. I have just been polling amid fervid demonstrations. The first return at nine o'clock—but you will



know all when this reaches you—is as follows. . . . This of course says little as to the final issue. Ten o'clock. My majority so far increases, the others diminish. But it is hard running. Eleven. My majority increases, the others diminish. Egerton is second. One of our men third. Twelve thousand four hundred have polled. My seat looks well.

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I interrupt here to say you would have been *pleased* had you heard Willy, at a moment's notice, on Tuesday night, address five thousand people no one of whom had ever seen him; he was (forgive me) so modest, so manly, *so ready*, so judicious.

Since writing thus far everything has been upset in a chaos of conflicting reports. They will all be cleared up for you before this comes. I hope I am not in a fool's paradise. All I yet know is an apparently hard fight between Egerton and me for the head of the poll, but my seat tolerably secure. I have had *such* letters!

When the votes were counted Mr. Gladstone was third upon the poll, and so secured the seat, with two tory colleagues above him.<sup>1</sup>

The spirit in which Mr. Gladstone took a defeat that was no mere electioneering accident, but the landmark of a great severance in his extraordinary career, is shown in his replies to multitudes of correspondents. On the side of his tenacious and affectionate attachment to Oxford, the wound was deep. On the other side, emancipation from fetters and from contests that he regarded as ungenerous, was a profound relief. But the relief touched him less than the sorrow.

Manning wrote:—

Few men have been watching you more than I have in these last days; and I do not know that I could wish you any other result. But you have entered upon a new and larger field as Sir R. Peel did, to whose history yours has many points of likeness. You say truly that Oxford has failed to enlarge itself to the progress of the country. I hope this will make you enlarge yourself to the facts of our age and state—and I believe it will. Only, as I said some months ago, I am anxious about you, lest you should entangle yourself with extremes.

<sup>1</sup> Egerton, 9171; Turner, 8806; Thompson (L.), 7703; Heywood (L.), Gladstone, 8786; Legh (C.), 8476; 7653.

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Mr. Gladstone replied:—

*Hawarden, July 21.*—I thank you very much for your kind letter, and I should have been very glad if it had contained all that it merely alludes to. From Oxford and her children I am overwhelmed with kindness. My feelings towards her are those of sorrow, leavened perhaps with pride. But I am for the moment a stunned man; the more so because without a moment of repose I had to plunge into the whirlpools of South Lancashire, and swim there for my life, which as you will see, has been given me.

I do not think I can admit the justice of the caution against extremes. The greatest or second greatest of what people call my extremes, is one which I believe you approve. I profess myself a disciple of Butler: the greatest of all enemies to extremes. This indeed speaks for my intention only. But in a cold or lukewarm period, and such is this in public affairs, everything which moves and lives is called extreme, and that by the very people (I do not mean or think that you are one of them) who in a period of excitement would far outstrip, under pressure, those whom they now rebuke. Your caution about self-control, however, I do accept—it is very valuable—I am sadly lacking in that great quality.

At both Liverpool and Manchester, he writes to Dr. Jacobson, I had to speak of Oxford, and I have endeavoured to make it unequivocally clear that I am here as the same man, and not another, and that throwing off the academic cap and gown makes no difference in the figure.

‘Vixi, et quem dederat cursum fortuna peregi.’<sup>1</sup>

And when I think of dear old Oxford, whose services to me I can never repay, there comes back to me that line of Wordsworth in his incomparable Ode, and I fervently address her with it—

‘Forbode not any severing of our loves.’

*To Sir Stafford Northcote, July 21.*—I cannot withhold myself from writing a line to assure you it is not my fault, but my

<sup>1</sup> *Aen.* iv. 653. I have lived my life, my fated course have run.

misfortune, that you are not my successor at Oxford. My desire or impulse has for a good while, not unnaturally, been to escape from the Oxford seat; not because I grudged the anxieties of it, but because I found the load, added to other loads, too great. Could I have seen my way to this proceeding, had the advice or had the conduct of my friends warranted it, you would have had such notice of it, as effectually to preclude your being anticipated. I mean no disrespect to Mr. Hardy; but it has been a great pain to me to see in all the circulars a name different from the name that should have stood there, and that would have stood there, but for your personal feelings.

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*Ibid.* July 22.—The separation from friends in politics is indeed very painful. . . . I have been instructed, perhaps been hardened, by a very wide experience in separation. No man has been blessed more out of proportion to his deserts than I have in friends: in *πολυφιλία*, in *χρηστοφιλία*;<sup>1</sup> but when with regard to those of old standing who were nearest to me, I ask where are they, I seem to see around me a little waste, that has been made by politics, by religion, and by death. All these modes of severance are sharp. But the first of them is the least so, when the happy conviction remains that the fulfilment of duty, such as conscience points to it, is the object on both sides. And I have suffered so sorely by the far sharper partings in death, and in religion after a fashion which practically almost comes to death, that there is something of relief in turning to the lighter visitation. It is, however, a visitation still.

*To the Bishop of Oxford, July 21.*— . . . Do not join with others in praising me, because I am not angry, only sorry, and that deeply. For my revenge—which I do not desire, but would baffle if I could—all lies in that little word ‘future’ in my address, which I wrote with a consciousness that it is deeply charged with meaning, and that that which shall come will come. There have been two great deaths or transmigrations of spirit in my political existence. One very slow, the breaking of ties with my original party. The other, very short and sharp, the breaking of the tie with Oxford. There will probably be a third, and no more. . . . Again, my dear Bishop, I thank you for

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Rhet.*, i. 5, 4.

BOOK bearing with my waywardness, and manifesting, in the day of need,  
V. your confidence and attachment.

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The bishop naturally hinted some curiosity as to the third transmigration. 'The oracular sentence,' Mr. Gladstone replied, 'has little bearing on present affairs or prospects, and may stand in its proper darkness.' In the same letter the bishop urged Mr. Gladstone to imitate Canning when he claimed the post of prime minister. 'I think,' was the reply (July 25) 'that if you had the same means of estimating my position, jointly with my faculties, as I have, you would be of a different opinion. It is my fixed determination never to take any step whatever to raise myself to a higher level in official life, and this not on grounds of Christian self-denial which would hardly apply, but on the double ground, first, of my total ignorance of my capacity, bodily or mental, to hold such a higher level, and, secondly—perhaps I might say especially—because I am certain that the fact of my seeking it would seal my doom in taking it.'<sup>1</sup>

Truly was it said of Mr. Gladstone that his rejection at Oxford, and his election in Lancashire, were regarded as matters of national importance, because he was felt to have the promise of the future in him, to have a living fire in him, a capacity for action, and a belief that moving on was a national necessity; because he was bold, earnest, impulsive; because he could sympathise with men of all classes, occupations, interests, opinions; because he thought nothing done so long as much remained for him to do. While liberals thus venerated him as if he had been a Moses beckoning from Sinai towards the promised land, Tories were described as dreading him, ever since his suffrage speech, as continental monarchs dreaded Mazzini—'a man whose name is at once an alarm, a menace, and a prediction.' They hated him partly as a deserter, partly as a disciple of Manchester. Throughout the struggle, the phrase 'I believe in Mr. Gladstone' served as the liberal *credo*, and 'I distrust Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Wilberforce*, iii. pp. 161-164. The transcriber has omitted from Mr. Gladstone's second letter a sentence about Archbishop Manning's letter—'To me it seemed meant in the kindest and most friendly sense; but that the man is gone out, φροῦδος, and has left nothing but the priest. No shirt collar ever took such a quantity of starch.'

Gladstone' as the condensed commination service of the tories upon all manner of change.<sup>1</sup>

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## V

On October 18, the prime minister died at Bocket. The news found Mr. Gladstone at Clumber, in performance of his duties as Newcastle trustee. For him the event opened many possibilities, and his action upon it is set out in two or three extracts from his letters:—

*To Lord Russell. Clumber, Oct. 18, 1865.*—I have received to-night by telegraph the appalling news of Lord Palmerston's decease. None of us, I suppose, were prepared for this event, in the sense of having communicated as to what should follow. The Queen must take the first step, but I cannot feel uncertain what it will be. Your former place as her minister, your powers, experience, services, and renown, do not leave reason for doubt that you will be sent for. Your hands will be entirely free—you are pledged probably to no one, certainly not to me. But any government now to be formed cannot be wholly a continuation, it must be in some degree a new commencement.

I am sore with conflicts about the public expenditure, which I feel that other men would have either escaped, or have conducted more gently and less fretfully. I am most willing to retire. On the other hand, I am bound by conviction even more than by credit to the principle of progressive reduction in our military and naval establishments and in the charges for them, under the favourable circumstances which we appear to enjoy. This I think is the moment to say thus much in subject matter which greatly appertains to my department. On the general field of politics, after having known your course in cabinet for eight and a half years, I am quite willing to take my chance under your banner, in the exact capacity I now fill, and I adopt the step, perhaps a little unusual, of saying so, because it may be convenient to you at a juncture when time is precious, while it can, I trust, after what I have said above, hardly be hurtful.

*To Mr Panizzi, Oct 18.*—*Ei fu!*<sup>2</sup> Death has indeed laid low the

<sup>1</sup> See *Saturday Review*, July 29; First line of Manzoni's ode on the death of Napoleon.

<sup>2</sup> *Ei fu!* siccome immobile, etc.

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most towering antlers in all the forest. No man in England will more sincerely mourn Lord Palmerston than you. Your warm heart, your long and close friendship with him, and your sense of all he had said and done for Italy, all so bound you to him that you will deeply feel this loss; as for myself I am stunned. It was plain that this would come; but sufficient unto the day is the burden thereof, and there is no surplus stock of energy in the mind to face, far less to anticipate, fresh contingencies. But I need not speak of this great event—to-morrow all England will be ringing of it, and the world will echo England. I cannot forecast the changes which will follow; but it is easy to see what the first step should be.

*To Mrs. Gladstone, Oct. 20.*—I received two letters from you to-day together. The first, very naturally full of plans, the second written when those plans had been blown into the air by the anticipation (even) of Lord Palmerston's death. This great event shakes me down to the foundation, by the reason of coming trouble. I think two things are clear. 1. The Queen should have come to London. 2. She should have sent for Lord Russell. I fear she has done neither. Willy telegraphs to me that a letter from Lord Russell had come to Downing Street. Now had he heard from the Queen, he would (so I reason) either have telegraphed to me to go up, or sent a letter hither by a messenger instead of leaving it to kick its heels in Downing Street for a day. And we hear nothing of the Queen's moving; she is getting into a groove, out of which some one ought to draw her.

*Oct. 21.*—As far as political matters are concerned, I am happier this morning. Lord Russell, pleased with my letter, writes to say he has been commissioned to carry on the present government as first lord, wishes me to co-operate 'in the capacity I now fill as a principal member of the administration.' I think that I have struck a stroke for economy which will diminish difficulty when we come to estimates for the year. I *hope* from his letter that he means to ask George Grey to lead, which would be very acceptable to me. Though he does not summon me to London, I think I ought to go, and shall do so accordingly to-day. I am sorry that this is again more vexation and uncertainty for you.

*Oct. 22.*—I came up last night and very glad I am of it. I

found that Lord Palmerston's funeral was almost to be private, not because the family wished it, but because nothing had been proposed to them. I at once sent — down to Richmond and Pembroke Lodge with a letter, and the result is that Evelyn Ashley has been written to by Lord Russell and authorised to telegraph to Balmoral to propose a funeral in Westminster Abbey. It is now very late, and all the preparations must have been made at Romsey. But in such a matter especially, better late than never.

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You will have been amused to see that on Friday the *Times* actually put me up for prime minister, and yesterday knocked me down again! There is a rumour that it was the old story, Delane out of town. I was surprised at the first article, not at the second. All, I am sorry to say, seem to take for granted that I am to lead the House of Commons. But this is not so simple a matter. First, it must be offered to Sir George Grey. If he refuses, then secondly, I do not think I can get on without a different arrangement of treasury and chancellor of exchequer business, which will not be easy. But the worst of all is the distribution of offices as between the two Houses. It has long been felt that the House of Commons was too weak and the House of Lords too strong, in the share of the important offices, and now the premiership is to be carried over, unavoidably. No such thing has ever been known as an administration with the first lord, foreign secretary, secretary for war, and the first lord of the admiralty, in the House of Lords.<sup>1</sup> This is really a stiff business.

*To Lord Russell. Carlton House Terrace, Oct. 23.*—You having thought fit to propose that I should lead the House of Commons, I felt it necessary first to be assured that Sir George Grey, who was in constructive possession of that office, and under whom I should have served with perfect satisfaction, could not be induced to accept the duty. Of this your letter seemed to contain sufficient proof. Next, I felt it to be necessary that some arrangement should be made for relieving me of a considerable and singularly disabling class of business, consisting of the cases of real or supposed grievance, at all times arising in connection with the collection of the

<sup>1</sup> First lord, Earl Russell; foreign secretary, Lord Clarendon; secretary for war, Earl de Grey; first lord of the admiralty, Duke of Somerset.

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public revenue under its several heads. . . . The third difficulty which I named to you in the way of my accepting your proposal, is what I venture to call the lop-sided condition of the government, with the strain and stress of administration in the House of Commons, and nearly all the offices about which the House of Commons cares, represented by heads in the House of Lords. It weighs very seriously on my mind, and I beg you to *consider* it. . . . I have rather particular engagements of a public nature next week; at Edinburgh on the 2nd and 3rd in connection with the university business, and at Glasgow on the 1st, to receive the freedom. I am anxious to know whether I may now finally confirm these engagements?

*To Mrs. Gladstone, Oct. 23.*—I think I see my way a little now. Lord Russell agrees that cabinets should be postponed after Saturday, for a good fortnight. I can therefore keep my engagements in Scotland, and write to-day to say so.

Lord Palmerston is to be buried in the Abbey on Friday; the family are pleased. I saw W. Cowper as well as Evelyn Ashley to-day. They give a good account of Lady Palmerston. . . . Lord Russell offers me the lead—I must probably settle it to-morrow. His physical strength is low, but I suppose in the Lords he may get on. The greatest difficulty is having almost all the important offices in the Lords.

*Oct. 24.*—Lord Russell now proposes to adjourn the cabinets till Nov. 14th, but I must be here for the Lord Mayor's dinner on the 9th. You will therefore see my programme as it now stands. I send you a batch of eight letters, which please keep carefully to yourself, and return in their bundle forthwith. There are divers proposals on foot, but I think little will be finally settled before Friday. Sir R. Peel will probably have a peerage offered him. I have not yet accepted the lead formally, but I suppose it must come to that. The main question is whether anything, and what, can be done to improve the structure of the government as between the two Houses.

*Oct. 25.*—Nothing more has yet been done. I consider my position virtually fixed. I am afraid of Lord Russell's rapidity, but we shall try to rein it in. There seems to be very little venom



in the atmosphere. I wish Sir G. Grey were here. The Queen's keeping so long at Balmoral is a sad mistake.

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He received, as was inevitable, plenty of letters from admirers regretting that he had not gone up higher. His answer was, of course, uniform. 'It was,' he told them, 'my own impartial and firm opinion that Lord Russell was the proper person to succeed Lord Palmerston. However flattered I may be, therefore, to hear of an opinion such as you report and express, I have felt it my duty to cooperate to the best of my power in such arrangements as might enable the government to be carried on by the present ministers, with Lord Russell at their head.'

On the other hand, doubts were abundant. To Sir George Grey, one important friend wrote (Oct. 30)—'I think you are right on the score of health, to give him [Gladstone] the lead of the House; but you will see, with all his talents, he will not perceive the difference between leading and driving.' Another correspondent, of special experience, confessed to 'great misgivings as to Gladstone's tact and judgment.' 'The heart of all Israel is towards him,' wrote his good friend Dean Church; 'he is very great and very noble. But he is hated as much as, or more than, he is loved. He is fierce sometimes and wrathful and easily irritated; he wants knowledge of men and speaks rashly. And I look on with some trembling to see what will come of this his first attempt to lead the Commons and prove himself fit to lead England.'<sup>1</sup> It was pointed out that Roundell Palmer was the only powerful auxiliary on whom he could rely in debate, and should the leader himself offend the House by an indiscretion, no colleague was competent to cover his retreat or baffle the triumph of the enemy. His first public appearance as leader of the House of Commons and associate premier was made at Glasgow, and his friends were relieved and exultant. The point on which they trembled was caution, and at Glasgow he was caution personified.

The changes in administration were not very difficult. Lowe's admission to the cabinet was made impossible by his

<sup>1</sup> Church's *Letters*, p. 171.

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declaration against any lowering of the borough franchise. The inclusion of Mr. Goschen, who had only been in parliament three years, was the subject of remark. People who asked what he had done to merit promotion so striking, did not know his book on foreign exchanges, and were perhaps in no case competent to judge it.<sup>1</sup> Something seems to have been said about Mr. Bright, for in a note to Lord Russell (Dec. 11) Mr. Gladstone writes—'With reference to your remark about Bright, he has for many years held language of a studious moderation about reform. And there is something odious in fighting shy of a man, so powerful in talent, of such undoubted integrity. Without feeling, however, that he is permanently proscribed, I am under the impression that in the present critical state of feeling on your own side with respect to the franchise, his name would sink the government and the bill together.' When Palmerston invited Cobden to join his cabinet in 1859, Cobden spoke of Bright, how he had avoided personalities in his recent speeches. 'It is not personalities that we complained of,' Palmerston replied; 'a public man is right in attacking persons. But it is his attacks on *classes* that have given offence to powerful bodies, who can make their resentment felt.'<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Gladstone's first few weeks as leader of the House were almost a surprise. 'At two' he says (Feb. 1, 1866), 'we went down to choose the Speaker, and I had to throw off in my new capacity. If mistrust of self be a qualification, God

<sup>1</sup> Once at Hawarden I dropped the idle triviality that Mr. Pitt, Mr. Goschen, and a third person, were the three men who had been put into cabinet after the shortest spell of parliamentary life. (They were likewise out again after the shortest recorded spell of cabinet life.) 'I don't believe any such thing,' said Mr. Gladstone. 'Well, who is your man?' 'What do you say,' he answered, 'to Sir George Murray? Wellington put him into his cabinet (1828); he had been with him in the Peninsula.' On returning to London, I found that Murray had been five years in parliament, and having written to tell Mr. Gladstone so, the

next day I received a summary post-card—'Then try Lord Henry Petty.' Here, as far as I make out, he was right.

'It is very unusual, I think,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to the prime minister (Jan. 6, 1866) 'to put men into the cabinet without a previous official training. Lord Derby could not help himself. Peel put Knatchbull, but that was on political grounds that seemed broad, but proved narrow enough. Argyll was put there in '52-3, but there is not the same opportunity for previous training in the case of peers.'

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Cobden*, ii. p. 232.

knows I have it.' All opened excellently. Not only was he mild and conciliatory, they found him even tiresome in his deference. Some onlookers still doubted. Everybody, they said, admired and respected him, some loved him, but there were few who understood him. 'So far,' said a conservative observer, 'Gladstone has led the House with great good temper, prosperity and success, but his rank and file and some of his colleagues, seem to like him none the better on that account.'<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, words of friendly encouragement came from Windsor. On Feb. 19:—'The Queen cannot conclude without expressing to Mr. Gladstone her gratification at the accounts she hears from all sides of the admirable manner in which he has commenced his leadership in the House of Commons.'

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He found the speech for a monument to Lord Palmerston in the Abbey 'a delicate and difficult duty' (Feb. 22). 'It would have worn me down beforehand had I not been able to exclude it from my thoughts till the last, and then I could only feel my impotence.' Yet he performed the duty with grace and truth. He commemorated Palmerston's share in the extension of freedom in Europe, and especially in Italy. where, he said, Palmerston's name might claim a place on a level with her most distinguished patriots. Nor had his interest ever failed in the rescue of the 'unhappy African race, whose history is for the most part written only in blood and tears.' He applauded his genial temper, his incomparable tact and ingenuity, his pluck in debate, his delight in a fair stand-up fight, his inclination to avoid whatever tended to exasperate, his incapacity of sustained anger.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Murray*, p. 300.

## CHAPTER X

### MATTERS ECCLESIASTICAL

(1864-1868)

\*

ὦ γῆς ὄχημα ἀπὶ γῆς ἔχων ἔδραν,  
ὅστις ποτ' εἰ σὺ, δυστόπωστος εἰδέναι,  
Zeus, εἰτ' ἀνάγκη φύσεος εἶτε νοῦς βροτῶν,  
προσηυξάμην σε· πάντα γὰρ δι' ἀψόφου  
βαίνων κελεύθου κατὰ δίκην τὰ θνητ' ἄγεις.

EUR., *Troades*, 884.

O thou, upholder of the earth, who upon earth hast an abiding place, whosoever thou art, inscrutable, thou Zeus, whether thou be necessity of nature, or intelligence of mortal men, on thee I call; for, treading a noiseless path, in righteousness dost thou direct all human things.

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THE reader will have surmised that amidst all the press and strain in affairs of state, Mr. Gladstone's intensity of interest in affairs of the church never for an instant slackened. Wide as the two spheres stood apart, his temper in respect of them was much the same. In church and state alike he prized institutions and the great organs of corporate life; but what he thought of most and cared for and sought after most, was not their mechanism, though on that too he set its value, but the living spirit within the institution. In church and state alike he moved cautiously and tentatively. In both alike he strove to unite order, whether temporal order in the state or spiritual order in the church, with his sovereign principle of freedom.\* Many are the difficulties in the way of applying Cavour's formula of a free church in a free state, as most countries and their governors have by now found out. Yet to have a vivid sense of the supreme importance of the line between temporal power and spiritual is the note of a statesman fit for modern

times. 'The whole of my public life,' he wrote to the Bishop of Oxford in 1863, 'with respect to matters ecclesiastical, for the last twenty years and more, has been a continuing effort, though a very weak one, to extricate the church in some degree from entangled relations without shock or violence.'

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The general temper of his churchmanship on its political side during these years is admirably described in a letter to his eldest son, and some extracts from it furnish a key to his most characteristic frame of mind in attempting to guide the movements of his time:—

*To W. H. Gladstone.*

*April 16, 1865.*—You appeared to speak with the supposition, a very natural one, that it was matter of duty to defend all the privileges and possessions of the church; that concession would lead to concession; and that the end of the series would be its destruction. . . . Now, in the first place, it is sometimes necessary in politics to make surrenders of what, if not surrendered, will be wrested from us. And it is very wise, when a necessity of this kind is approaching, to anticipate it while it is yet a good way off; for then concession begets gratitude, and often brings a return. The *kind* of concession which is really mischievous is just that which is made under terror and extreme pressure; and unhappily this has been the kind of concession which for more than two hundred years, it has been the fashion of men who call (and who really think) themselves 'friends of the church' to make. . . . I believe it would be a wise concession, upon grounds merely political, for the church of England to have the law of 'church rate abolished in all cases where it places her in fretting conflict with the dissenting bodies. . . . I say all this, however, not to form the groundwork of a conclusion, but only in illustration of a general maxim which is applicable to political questions.

But next, this surely is a political question. Were we asked to surrender an article of the creed in order to save the rest, or to consent to the abolition of the episcopal order, these things touch the faith of Christians and the life of the church, and cannot in any measure become the subject of compromise. But the external possessions of the church were given it for the more effectual promotion of its work, and may be lessened or aban-

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done with a view to the same end. . . . Now we have lived into a time when the great danger of the church is the sale of her faith for gold. . . . In demanding the money of dissenters for the worship of the church, we practically invest them with a title to demand that she should be adapted to their use in return, and we stimulate every kind of interference with her belief and discipline to that end. By judiciously waiving an undoubted legal claim, we not only do an act which the understood principles of modern liberty tend to favour and almost require, but we soothe ruffled minds and tempers, and what is more, we strengthen the case and claim of the church to be respected as a religious body. . . . I am convinced that the only hope of making it possible for her to discharge her high office as stewardess of divine truth, is to deal tenderly and gently with all the points at which her external privileges *grate* upon the feelings and interests of that unhappily large portion of the community who have almost ceased in any sense to care for her. This is a principle of broad application, broader far than the mere question of church rates. It is one not requiring precipitate or violent action, or the disturbance prematurely of anything established; but it supplies a rule of the first importance for dealing with the mixed questions of temporal and religious interest when they arise. I am very anxious to see it quietly but firmly rooted in your mind. It is connected with the dearest interests not only of my public life, but as I believe of our religion. . . . I am in no way anxious that you should take my opinions in politics as a model for your own. Your free concurrence will be a lively pleasure to me. But above all I wish you to be free. What I have now been dwelling upon is a matter higher and deeper than the region of mere opinion. It has fallen to my lot to take a share larger than that of many around me, though in itself slight, in bringing the principle I have described into use as a ground of action. I am convinced that if I have laboured to any purpose at all it has been in great part for this. It is part of that business of reconciling the past with the new time and order, which seems to belong particularly to our country and its rulers.

He then goes on to cite as cases where something had been done towards securing the action of the church as a

religious body, Canada, where clergy and people now appointed their own bishop; a recent judgment of the privy council leading to widespread emancipation of the colonial church; the revival of convocation; the licence to convocation to alter the thirty-sixth canon; the bestowal of self-government on Oxford. 'In these measures,' he says, 'I have been permitted to take my part; but had I adopted the rigid rule of others in regard to the temporal prerogatives, real or supposed, of the church, I should at once have lost all power to promote them.'

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'As to disruption,' he wrote in these days, 'that is the old cry by means of which in all times the temporal interests of the English church have been upheld in preference to the spiritual. The church of England is much more likely of the two, to part with her faith than with her funds. It is the old question, which is the greater, the *gold* or the altar that sanctifies the gold. Had this question been more boldly asked and more truly answered in other times, we should not have been where we now are. And by continually looking to the gold and not the altar, the dangers of the future will be not diminished but increased.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1866 Mr. Gladstone for the first time voted for the abolition of church rates. Later in the session he introduced his own plan, not in his capacity as minister, but with the approval of the Russell cabinet. After this cabinet had gone out, Mr. Gladstone in 1868 introduced a bill, abolishing all legal proceedings for the recovery of church rates, except in cases of rates already made, or where money had been borrowed on the security of the rates. But it permitted voluntary assessments to be made, and all agreements to make such payments on the faith of which any expense was incurred, remained enforceable in the same manner as contracts of a like character. Mr. Gladstone's bill became law in the course of the summer, and a struggle that had been long and bitter ended.

In another movement in the region of ecclesiastical machinery, from which much was hoped, though little is believed to have come, Mr. Gladstone was concerned, though

<sup>1</sup> To Sir W. Farquhar, April 4, 1864.

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I do not gather from the papers that he watched it with the zealous interest of some of his friends. Convocation, the ancient assembly or parliament of the clergy of the church of England, was permitted in 1852 to resume the active functions that had been suspended since 1717. To Mr. Gladstone some revival or institution of the corporate organization of the church, especially after the Gorham judgment, was ever a cherished object. Bishop Wilberforce, long one of the most intimate of his friends, was chief mover in proceedings that, as was hoped, were to rescue the church from the anarchy in which one branch of her sons regarded her as plunged. Some of Mr. Gladstone's correspondence on the question of convocation has already been made public.<sup>1</sup> Here it is enough to print a passage or two from a letter addressed by him to the bishop (Jan. 1, 1854) setting out his view of the real need of the time. After a generous exaltation of the zeal and devotion of the clergy, he goes on to the gains that might be expected from their effective organization :—

First as to her pastoral work, her warfare against sin, she would put forth a strength, not indeed equal to it, but at least so much less unequal than it now is, that the good fight would everywhere be maintained, and she would not be as she now is, either hated or unknown among the myriads who form the right arm of England's industry and skill. As to her doctrine and all that hangs upon it, such questions as might arise would be determined by the deliberate and permanent sense of the body. Some unity in belief is necessary to justify association in a Christian communion. Will that unity in belief be promoted or impaired by the free action of mind within her, subjected to order? If her case really were so desperate that her children had no common faith, then the sooner that imposture were detected the better; but if she has, then her being provided with legitimate, orderly, and authentic channels, for expressing and bringing to a head, as need arises, the sentiments of her people, will far more clearly manifest, and while manifesting will extend, deepen, and consolidate, that unity. It is all very well to sneer at councils: but who among us

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Wilberforce*, ii. pp. 136-46; *Life of Shaftesbury*, ii. p. 404.



will deny that the councils which we acknowledge as lawful representatives of the universal church, were great and to all appearance necessary providential instruments in the establishment of the Christian faith ?

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But, say some, we cannot admit the laity into convocation, as it would be in derogation of the rights of the clergy ; or as others say, it would separate the church from the state. And others, more numerous and stronger, in their fear of the exclusive constitution of the convocation, resist every attempt at organizing the church, and suffer, and even by suffering promote, the growth of all our evils. I will not touch the question of convocation except by saying that, in which I think you concur, that while the present use is unsatisfactory and even scandalous, no form of church government that does not distinctly and fully provide for the expression of the voice of the laity either can be had, or if it could would satisfy the needs of the church of England. But in my own mind as well as in this letter, I am utterly against all premature, all rapid conclusions. . . . It will be much in our day if, towards the cure of such evils, when we die we can leave to our children the precious knowledge that a beginning has been made—a beginning not only towards enabling the bishops and clergy to discharge their full duty, but also, and yet more, towards raising the real character of membership in those millions upon millions, the whole bulk of our community, who now have its name and its name alone.

## II

In 1860 a volume appeared containing seven 'essays' and reviews' by seven different writers, six of them clergymen of the church of England. The topics were miscellaneous, the treatment of them, with one exception,<sup>1</sup> was neither learned nor weighty, the tone was not absolutely uniform, but it was as a whole mildly rationalistic, and the negations, such as they were, exhibited none of the fierceness or aggression that had marked the old controversies about Hampden, or Tract Ninety, or Ward's *Ideal*. A storm broke upon the seven writers, that they little intended to provoke. To the apparent partnership among them was severely imputed a

<sup>1</sup> Pattison's *Tendencies of Religious Thought in England*, 1688-1750. Reprinted in his *Essays*, vol. ii.

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sinister design. They were styled 'the Septem contra Christum'—six ministers of religion combining to assail the faith they outwardly professed—seven authors of an immoral rationalistic conspiracy. Two of them were haled into the courts, one for casting doubt upon the inspiration of the Bible, the other for impugning the eternity of the future punishment of the wicked. The Queen in council upon appeal was advised to reverse a hostile judgment in the court below (1864), and Lord Chancellor Westbury delivered the decision in a tone described in the irreverent epigram of the day as 'dismissing eternal punishment with costs.' This carried further, or completed, the principle of the Gorham judgment fourteen years before, and just as that memorable case determined that neither the evangelical nor the high anglican school should drive out the other, so the judgment in the case of *Essays and Reviews* determined that neither should those two powerful sections drive out the new critical, rationalistic, liberal, or latitudinarian school. 'It appears to me,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to the Bishop of London (April 26, 1864), 'that the spirit of this judgment has but to be consistently and cautiously followed up, in order to establish, as far as the court can establish it, a complete indifference between the Christian faith and the denial of it. I do not believe it is in the power of human language to bind the understanding and conscience of man with any theological obligations, which the mode of argument used and the principles assumed [in the judgment] would not effectually unloose.' To Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury, who had taken part in one of the two cases, he wrote:—

*Feb. 8, 1864.*—This new and grave occurrence appertains to a transition state through which the Christian faith is passing. The ship is at sea far from the shore she left, far from the shore she is making for. This or that deflection from her course, from this or that wind of heaven, we cannot tell what it is, or whether favourable or adverse to her true work and destination, unless we know all the stages of the experience through which she has yet to pass. It seems to me that these judgments are most important in their character as illustrations of a system, or I should rather

say, of the failure of a system, parts of a vast scheme of forces and events in the midst of which we stand, which seem to govern us, but which are in reality governed by a hand above. It may be that this rude shock to the mere scripturism which has too much prevailed, is intended to be the instrument of restoring a greater harmony of belief, and of the agencies for maintaining belief. But be that as it may, the valiant soldier who has fought manfully should be, and I hope will be, of good cheer.

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In the same connection he wrote to Sir W. Farquhar, a friend from earliest days:—

Jan. 31, 1865.—I have never been much disposed to a great exaltation of clerical power, and I agree in the necessity of taking precautions against the establishment, especially of an insular and local though in its sphere legitimate authority, of new doctrines for that Christian faith which is not for England or France but for the world; further, I believe it has been a mistake in various instances to institute the coercive proceedings which have led to the present state of things. I remember telling the Archbishop of York at Penmaenmawr, when he was Bishop of Gloucester, that it seemed to me we had lived into a time when, speaking generally, penal proceedings for the maintenance of divine truth among the clergy would have to be abandoned, and moral means alone depended on. But, on the other hand, I feel that the most vital lay interests are at stake in the definite teaching and profession of the Christian faith, and the general tendency and effect of the judgments has been and is likely to be hostile to that definite teaching, and unfavourable also to the moral tone and truthfulness, of men who may naturally enough be tempted to shelter themselves under judicial glosses in opposition to the plain meaning of words. The judgments of the present tribunal continued in a series would, I fear, result in the final triumph (in a sense he did not desire) of Mr. Ward's non-natural sense; and the real question is whether our objection to non-natural senses is general, or is only felt when the sense favoured is the one opposed to our own inclinations.

### III

No theological book, wrote Mr. Gladstone in 1866, that has appeared since the *Vestiges of Creation* twenty years before

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(1844), had attracted anything like the amount of notice bestowed upon 'the remarkable volume entitled *Ecce Homo*,' published in 1865. It was an attempt, so Mr. Gladstone described it, to bring home to the reader the impression that there is something or other called the Gospel, 'which whatever it may be,' as was said by an old pagan poet of the Deity,<sup>1</sup> has formidable claims not merely on the intellectual condescension, but on the loyal allegiance and humble obedience of mankind. The book violently displeased both sides. It used language that could not be consistently employed in treating of Christianity from the orthodox point of view. On the other hand, it constituted 'a grave offence in the eyes of those to whom the chequered but yet imposing fabric of actual Christianity, still casting its majestic light and shadow over the whole civilized world, is a rank eyesore and an intolerable offence.' Between these two sets of assailants Mr. Gladstone interposed with a friendlier and more hopeful construction.<sup>2</sup> He told those who despised the book as resting on no evidence of the foundations on which it was built, and therefore as being shallow and uncritical, that we have a right to weigh the nature of the message, apart from the credentials of the messenger. Then he reassured the orthodox by the hope that 'the present tendency to treat the old belief of man with a precipitate, shallow, and unexamining disparagement' is only a passing distemper, and that to the process of its removal the author of the book would have the consolation and the praise of having furnished an earnest, powerful, and original contribution.<sup>3</sup> Dean Milman told him that he had brought to life again a book that after a sudden and brief yet brilliant existence seemed to be falling swiftly into oblivion. The mask of the anonymous had much to do, he thought, with its popularity, as had happened to the *Vestiges of Creation*. Undoubtedly when the mask fell off, interest dropped.

Dr. Pusey found the book intensely painful. 'I have seldom,' he told Mr. Gladstone, 'been able to read much at

<sup>1</sup> See the lines from *Euripides* at the head of the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> In a series of articles published in *Good Words* in January, February,

March 1868, and reprinted in volume form the same year. Reprinted again in *Gleanings*, vol. iii.

<sup>3</sup> *Gleanings*, iii. p. 41.

a time, but shut the book for pain, as I used to do with Renan's.' What revolted him was not the exhibition of the human nature of the central figure, but of a human nature apart from and inconsistent with its divinity; the writer's admiring or patronising tone was loathsome. 'What you have yourself written,' Pusey said, 'I like much. But its bearings on *Ecce Homo* I can hardly divine, except by way of contrast.' Dr. Newman thought that here was a case where *materiam superabat opus*, and that Mr. Gladstone's observations were more valuable for their own sake, than as a recommendation or defence of the book:—

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Jan. 9, 1868.—I hope I have followed you correctly, says Newman: your main proposition seems to be, that whereas both Jew and Gentile had his own notion of an heroic humanity, and neither of them a true notion, the one being political, the other even immoral, the first step necessary for bringing in the idea of an Emmanuel into the world, was to form the human mould into which it 'might drop,' and thus to supplant both the Judaic and the heathen misconception by the exhibition of the true idea. Next, passing from antecedent probabilities to history, the order of succession of the synoptical and the fourth gospels does in fact fulfil this reasonable anticipation. This seems to me a *very great* view, and I look forward eagerly to what you have still to say in illustration of it. The only objection which I see can be made to it is, that it is a clever controversial expedient after the event for accounting for a startling fact. This is an objection not peculiar to it, but to all explanations of the kind. Still, the question remains—whether it is a fact that the sacred writers recognise, however indirectly, the wise economy which you assert, or whether it is only an hypothesis?

As to the specific principles and particular opinions in Mr. Gladstone's criticism of what we now see to have been a not very effective or deeply influential book, we may think as we will. But the temper of his review, the breadth of its outlook, on Christian thought, tradition, and society, show no mean elements in the composition of his greatness. So, too, does the bare fact that under the pressure of office and all the cares of a party leader in a crisis, his mind

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should have been free and disengaged enough to turn with large and eager interest to such themes as these. This was indeed the freedom of judgment with which, in the most moving lines of the poem that he loved above all others, Virgil bidding farewell to Dante makes him crowned and mitred master of himself—*Perch' io te sopra te corono e mitrio*.<sup>1</sup>

## IV

Other strong gusts swept the high latitudes, when Dr. Colenso, Bishop of Natal, published certain destructive criticisms upon the canonical Scriptures. His metropolitan at Cape Town pronounced sentence of deprivation; Colenso appealed to the Queen in council; and the Queen in council was advised that the proceedings of the Bishop of Cape Town were null and void, for in law there was no established church in the colony, nor any ecclesiastical court with lawful jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup> This triumph of heresy was a heavy blow. In 1866 Bishop Colenso brought an action against Mr. Gladstone and the other trustees of the colonial bishoprics fund, calling upon them to set aside a sum of ten thousand pounds for the purpose of securing the income of the Bishop of Natal, and to pay him his salary, which they had withheld since his wrongful deprivation. 'We,' said Mr. Gladstone to Miss Burdett Coutts, 'founding ourselves on the judgment, say there is no see of Natal in the sense of the founders of the fund, and therefore, of course, no bishop of such a see.' Romilly, master of the rolls, gave judgment in favour of Colenso. These perplexities did not dismay Mr. Gladstone. 'Remembering what the churches in the colonies were some forty years back, when I first began (from my father's having a connection with the West Indies), to feel an interest in them, I must own that they present a cheering, a remarkable, indeed a wonderful spectacle.' 'I quite feel with you,' he says to Miss Burdett Coutts, 'a great uneasiness at what may follow from the exercise of judicial powers by synods

<sup>1</sup> *Purgatorio*, xxvii. 126-42.

*Family and Personal*, ii. pp. 481-7.

<sup>2</sup> A concise account of this transaction is in Lord Selborne's *Memorials*. See also Anson's *Law and Custom of the Constitution*, ii. p. 407.

merely ecclesiastical, especially if small, remote, and unchecked by an active public opinion. But in the American episcopal church it has been found practicable in a great degree to obviate any dangers from such a source.' Ten years after this, in one of the most remarkable articles he ever wrote, speaking of the protestant evangelical section of the adherents of the Christian system, he says that 'no portion of this entire group seems to be endowed with greater vigour than this in the United States and the British colonies, which has grown up in new soil, and far from the possibly chilling shadow of national establishments of religion.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Courses of Religious Thought' in *Gleanings*, iii. p. 115.

## CHAPTER XI

### POPULAR ESTIMATES

(1868)

DIE Mitlebenden werden an vorzüglichen Menschen gar leicht irre ; das Besondere der Person stört sie, das laufende bewegliche Leben verrückt ihre Standpunkte und hindert das Kennen und Anerkennen eines solchen Mannes.—GOETHE.

The contemporaries of superior men easily go wrong about them. Peculiarity discomposes people ; the swift current of life distorts their points of view, and prevents them from understanding and appreciating such men.

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It must obviously be interesting, as we approach a signal crisis in his advance, to know the kind of impression, right or wrong, made by a great man upon those who came nearest to him. Friends like Aberdeen and Graham had many years earlier foreseen the high destinies of their colleague. Aberdeen told Bishop Wilberforce in 1855 that Gladstone had 'some great qualifications but some serious defects. 'The chief, that when he has convinced himself, perhaps by abstract reasoning of some view, he thinks that every one else ought at once to see it as he does, and can make no allowance for difference of opinion.'<sup>1</sup> About the same time Graham said of him that he was 'in the highest sense of the word *Liberal*; of the greatest power; very much the first man in the House of Commons; detested by the aristocracy for his succession duty, the most truly conservative measure passed in my recollection. . . . He must rise to the head in such a government as ours, even in spite of all the hatred of him.' Three years later Aberdeen still thought him too obstinate and, if such a thing be possible, too honest. He does not enough think of what other men think. Does not enough look out of the window. 'Whom

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, ii. p. 286.



will he lead?' asked the bishop.<sup>1</sup> 'Oh! it is impossible to say! Time must show, and new combinations.' By 1863 Cardwell confidently anticipated that Mr. Gladstone must become prime minister, and Bishop Wilberforce finds all coming to the conclusion that he must be the next real chief.<sup>2</sup>

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On the other side Lord Shaftesbury, to whom things ecclesiastical were as cardinal as they were to Mr. Gladstone, ruefully reflected in 1864 that people must make ready for great and irrevocable changes. Palmerston was simply the peg driven through the island of Delos: unloose the peg, and all would soon be adrift. 'His successor, Gladstone, will bring with him the Manchester school for colleagues and supporters, a hot tractarian for chancellor, and the Bishop of Oxford for ecclesiastical adviser. He will succumb to every pressure, except the pressure of a constitutional and conservative policy.' 'He is a dangerous man,' was one of Lord Palmerston's latest utterances, 'keep him in Oxford and he is partially muzzled; but send him elsewhere and he will run wild.'<sup>3</sup> 'The long and short of our present position is,' said Shaftesbury, 'that the time has arrived (*novus sæclorum nascitur ordo*) for the triumph of the Manchester school, of which Gladstone is the disciple and the organ. And for the nonce they have a great advantage; for, though the majority of the country is against them, the country has no leaders in or out of parliament; whereas they are all well provided and are equally compact in purpose and action.'<sup>4</sup> Somewhat earlier cool observers 'out of hearing of the modulation of his voice or the torrent of his declamation' regarded him 'in spite of his eloquence unsurpassed in our day, perhaps in our century, in spite of his abilities and experience, as one most dangerous to that side to which he belongs. Like the elephant given by some eastern prince to the man he intends to ruin, he is an inmate too costly for any party to afford to keep long.'<sup>5</sup>

'One great weight that Gladstone has to carry in the political race,' wrote his friend Frederick Rogers (Dec. 13,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, ii. p. 412.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. pp. 201-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. pp. 92, 101.

<sup>5</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, April 1857,

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Lord Shaftesbury*, iii. pp. p. 567.  
171, 188.

BOOK 1868), 'is a *character* for want of judgment, and every addition to that is an impediment.' And indeed it is true in politics that it often takes more time to get rid of a spurious character, than to acquire the real one. According to a letter from Lord Granville to Mr. Gladstone (Feb. 11, 1867):—

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Lowé described as perfectly unjust and unfounded the criticisms which had been made of your leadership. You had always been courteous and conciliatory with the whole House and with individual members, including himself. He had seen Palmerston do and say more offensive things every week, than you have during the whole session.

Still people went on saying that he had yet to gain the same hold over his party in parliament that he had over the party in the nation; he had studied every branch of government except the House of Commons; he confounded the functions of leader with those of dictator; he took counsel with one or two individuals instead of conferring with the party; he proclaimed as edicts what he ought to have submitted as proposals; he lacked 'the little civilities and hypocrisies' of political society. Such was the common cant of the moment. He had at least one friend who dealt faithfully with him:—

*T. D. Acland to Mr. Gladstone.*

Jan. 24, 1868.—Now I am going to take a great liberty with you. I can hardly help myself. I have heard a lot of grumbling lately about you, and have several times asked myself whether it would be *tanti* to tease you by repeating it. Well, what is pressed on me is, that at the present time when every one is full of anxiety as to the future, and when your warmest supporters are longing for cohesion, there is an impression that you are absorbed in questions about Homer and Greek words, about *Ecce Homo*, that you are not reading the newspapers, or feeling the pulse of followers. One man personally complained that when you sought his opinion, you spent the whole interview in impressing your own view on him, and hardly heard anything he might have to say. It is with a painful feeling and (were it not for your

generous and truly modest nature it would be) with some anxiety as to how you would take it that I consented to be the funnel of all this grumbling. As far as I can make out, the feeling resolves itself into two main points:—1. Whatever your own tastes may be for literature, and however strengthening and refreshing to your own mind and heart it may be to dig into the old springs, still the people don't understand it; they consider you their own, as a husband claims a wife's devotion; and it gives a bad impression if you are supposed to be interested, except for an occasional slight recreation, about aught but the nation's welfare at this critical time, and that it riles them to see the walls placarded with your name and *Ecce Homo*. . . . 2. (a) The other point is (pray forgive me if I go too far, I am simply a funnel) a feeling that your entourage is too confined, and too much of second-rate men; that the strong men and the *rising* men are not gathered round you and known to be so; (b) and besides that there is so little easy contact with the small fry, as when Palmerston sat in the tea-room, and men were gratified by getting private speech with their leader. But this is a small matter compared with (a).

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*Mr. Gladstone to T. D. Acland.*

*Hawarden, Jan. 30, '68.*—Be assured I cannot feel otherwise than grateful to you for undertaking what in the main must always be a thankless office. It is new to me to have critics such as those whom you represent under the first head, and who complain that I do not attend to my business, while the complaint is illustrated by an instance in which, professing to seek a man's opinion, I poured forth instead the matter with which I was overflowing. Nor do I well know how to deal with those who take out of my hands the direction of my own conduct on such a question as the question whether I ought to have undertaken a mission to Sheffield to meet Roebuck on his own ground. I am afraid I can offer them little satisfaction. I have been for near thirty-six years at public business, and I must myself be the judge how best to husband what little energy of brain, and time for using it, may remain to me. If I am told I should go to Sheffield instead of writing on *Ecce Homo*, I answer that it was my Sunday's work, and change of

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work is the chief refreshment to my mind. It is true that literature is very attractive and indeed seductive to me, but I do not *knowingly* allow it to cause neglect of public business. Undoubtedly it may be said that the vacation should be given to reading up and preparing materials for the session. And of my nine last vacations *this one only* has in part been given to any literary work, if I except the preparation of an address for Edinburgh in 1865. But I am sincerely, though it may be erroneously, impressed with the belief that the quantity of my public work cannot be increased without its quality being yet further deteriorated. Perhaps my critics have not been troubled as I have with this plague of quantity, and are not as deeply impressed as I am with the belief that grinding down the mental powers by an infinity of detail, is what now principally dwarfs our public men, to the immense detriment of the country. This conviction I cannot yield; nor can I say more than that, with regard to the personal matters which you name, I will do the best I can. But what I have always supposed and understood is that my business in endeavouring to follow other and better men, is to be thoroughly open to all members of parliament who seek me, while my seeking them must of necessity be limited. . . . We have before us so much business that I fear a *jumble*. Reform, Education, and Ireland each in many branches will compete; any of these alone would be enough. The last is in my mind the imperious and overpowering subject . . . The aspect of this letter is, I think, rather combative. It would have been much less so but that I trust entirely to your indulgence.

In a second letter, after mentioning again some of these complaints, Acland says:—‘On the other hand I know you are held by some of the best men (that dear, noble George Grey I am thinking of) to have the great quality of leadership: such clear apprehension of the points in council, and such faithful exactness in conveying the result agreed on, truly a great power for one who has such a *copia verborum*, with its temptations.’ He still insists that a leader should drop into the tea-room and have afternoon chats with his adherents; and earnestly wishes him to belong to the Athenæum club, ‘a great centre of intellect and criticism,’ where he would be

sure to meet colleagues and the principal men in the public service.

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All this was good advice enough, and most loyally intended. But it was work of supererogation. The House of Commons, like all assemblies, is even less affected by immediate displays than by the standing impression of power. Mr. Gladstone might be playful, courteous, reserved, gracious, silent, but the House always knew that he had a sledge-hammer behind his back, ready for work on every anvil in that resounding forge. His sheer intellectual strength, his experience and power in affairs, the tremendous hold that he had now gained upon the general public out of doors, made the artful genialities of the tea-room pure superfluity. Of the secret of the rapidity with which his star was rising, and of the popular expectations thereby signified, an admirable contemporary account was traced by an excellent observer,<sup>1</sup> and it would be idle to transcribe the pith of it in words other than his own:—

Mr. Gladstone's policy is coming to be used as the concrete expression of a whole system of thought, to mean something for itself, and something widely different from either the policy pursued by whigs, or the policy attributed to Lord Palmerston. This is the more remarkable because Mr. Gladstone has done less to lay down any systematised course of action than almost any man of his political standing, has a cautiousness of speech which frequently puzzles his audience even while they are cheering his oratory, and perceives alternatives with a clearness which often leaves on his own advice an impression of indecision. . . . Those who are applauding the chancellor of the exchequer, in season and out of season, seem, however they may put their aspirations, to expect, should he lead the House of Commons, two very important changes. They think that he will realise two longings of which they are deeply conscious, even while they express their hopelessness of speedy realisation. They believe, with certain misgivings, that he can offer them a new and more satisfactory system of foreign policy; and, with no misgivings, that he will break up the torpor which has fallen upon internal affairs.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. M. Townsend in the *Spectator*.

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Mr. Gladstone, say his admirers, may be too much afraid of war, too zealous for economy, too certain of the status of England as a fact altogether independent of her action. But he is sure to abandon those traditional ideas to which we have adhered so long: the notion that we are a continental people, bound to maintain the continental system, interested in petty matters of boundary, concerned to dictate to Germany whether she shall be united or not, to the Christians of Servia whether they shall rebel against the Turk or obey him, to everybody whether they shall or shall not develop themselves as they can. He is sure to initiate that temporary policy of abstention which is needed to make a breach in the great chain of English traditions, and enable the nation to act as its interests or duties or dignity may require, without reference to the mode in which it has acted heretofore. Mr. Gladstone, for example, certainly would not support the Turk as if Turkish sway were a moral law, would not trouble himself to interfere with the project for cutting an Eider Canal, would not from very haughtiness of temperament protest in the face of Europe unless he intended his protests to be followed by some form of action. . . . That impression may be true or it may be false, but it exists; it is justified in part by Mr. Gladstone's recent speeches, and it indicates a very noteworthy change in the disposition of the public mind: a weariness of the line of action called 'a spirited foreign policy.' . . . The expectation as to internal affairs is far more definite and more strong. . . . All his speeches point to the inauguration of a new activity in all internal affairs, to a steady determination to improve, if possible, both the constitution and the condition of the millions who have to live under it. Most ministers have that idea in their heads, but Mr. Gladstone has more than the idea, he has plans, and the courage to propose and maintain them. He is not afraid of the suffrage, as he indicated in his celebrated speech; he is not alarmed at risking the treasury as his reductions have proved; does not hesitate to apply the full power of the state to ameliorate social anomalies, as he showed by creating state banks, state insurance offices, and state annuity funds for the very poor. He of all men alive could most easily reduce our anarchical ecclesiastical system into something like order; he, perhaps, alone

among statesmen would have the art and the energy to try as a deliberate plan to effect the final conciliation of Ireland. . . .<sup>1</sup>

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A letter from Francis Newman to Mr. Gladstone is a good illustration of the almost passionate going out of men's hearts to him in those days:—

Until a practical reason for addressing you arose out of . . . I did not dare to intrude on you sentiments which are happily shared by so many thousands of warm and simple hearts; sentiments of warm admiration, deep sympathy, fervent hope, longing expectation of lasting national blessing from your certain elevation to high responsibility. The rude, monstrous, shameful and shameless attacks which you have endured, do but endear you to the nation. In the moral power which you wield, go on to elevate and purify public life, and we shall all bless you, dear sir, as a regenerator of England. Keep the hearts of the people. *They will never envy you and never forsake you.*

Church, afterwards the dean of St. Paul's, a man who united in so wonderful a degree the best gifts that come of culture, sound and just sense, and unstained purity of spirit, said of Mr. Gladstone at the moment of accession to power, 'There never was a man so genuinely admired for the qualities which deserve admiration—his earnestness, his deep popular sympathies, his unflinching courage; and there never was a man more deeply hated both for his good points and for undeniable defects and failings. But they love him much less in the House than they do out of doors. A strong vein of sentiment is the spring of what is noblest about his impulses; but it is a perilous quality too.'<sup>2</sup> An accomplished woman with many public interests met Mr. Bright in Scotland sometime after this. 'He would not hear a word said against Mr. Gladstone. He said it was just because people were not good enough themselves to understand him that he met such abuse, and then he quoted the stanza in the third canto of *Childe Harold*:—

"He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find  
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;  
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,  
Must look down on the hate of those below."

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, October 29, 1864.<sup>2</sup> *Life of Dean Church*, pp. 179, 188.

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I asked if he did not think sometimes his temper carried Mr. Gladstone away. He said, "Think of the difference between a great cart horse, and the highest bred most sensitive horse you can imagine, and then, under lashing of a whip, think of the difference between them." After a stay with Mr. Gladstone in a country house, Jowett, the master of Balliol, said of him, 'It is the first time that any one of such great simplicity has been in so exalted a station.'<sup>1</sup>

In one of his Lancashire speeches, Mr. Gladstone described in interesting language how he stood:—

I have never swerved from what I conceive to be those truly conservative objects and desires with which I entered life. I am, if possible, more attached to the institutions of my country than I was when, as a boy, I wandered among the sandhills of Seaforth, or frequented the streets of Liverpool. But experience has brought with it its lessons. I have learnt that there is wisdom in a policy of trust, and folly in a policy of mistrust. I have not refused to acknowledge and accept the signs of the times. I have observed the effect that has been produced upon the country by what is generally known as liberal legislation. And if we are told, as we are now truly told, that all the feelings of the country are in the best and broadest sense conservative—that is to say, that the people value the country and the laws and institutions of the country—honesty compels me to admit that this happy result has been brought about by liberal legislation. Therefore, I may presume to say that since the year 1841, when Sir Robert Peel thought fit to place me in a position that brought me into direct, immediate, and responsible contact with the commercial interests of the country, from that time onward I have never swerved nor wavered, but have striven to the best of my ability to advance in the work of improving the laws, and to labour earnestly and fearlessly for the advantage of the people.<sup>2</sup>

Five-and-twenty years later, when his course was almost run, and the achievements of the long laborious day were over, he said:—

I have been a learner all my life, and I am a learner still; but

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Jowett*, i. 406.

<sup>2</sup> Liverpool, July 18, 1865.



I do wish to learn upon just principles. I have some ideas that may not be thought to furnish good materials for a liberal politician. I do not like changes for their own sake, I only like a change when it is needful to alter something bad into something good, or something which is good into something better. I have a great reverence for antiquity. I rejoice in the great deeds of our fathers in England and in Scotland. It may be said, however, that this does not go very far towards making a man a liberal. I find, however, that the tories when it suits their purpose have much less reverence for antiquity than I have. They make changes with great rapidity, provided they are suitable to the promotion of tory interests. But the basis of my liberalism is this. It is the lesson which I have been learning ever since I was young. I am a lover of liberty; and that liberty which I value for myself, I value for every human being in proportion to his means and opportunities. That is a basis on which I find it perfectly practicable to work in conjunction with a dislike to unreasoned change and a profound reverence for everything ancient, provided that reverence is deserved. There are those who have been so happy that they have been born with a creed that they can usefully maintain to the last. For my own part, as I have been a learner all my life, a learner I must continue to be.<sup>1</sup>

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Æt. 59.

<sup>1</sup> Norwich, May 16, 1890.

## CHAPTER XII

### LETTERS

(1859—1868)

THERE is no saying shocks me so much as that which I hear very often ; that a man does not know how to pass his time. 'TWOULD have been but ill spoken by Methusalem, in the nine hundred sixty-ninth year of his life ; so far it is from us, who have not time enough to attain to the utmost perfection of any part of any science, to have cause to complain that we are forced to be idle for want of work.—COWLEY.

BOOK As I said in our opening pages, Mr. Gladstone's letters are  
V. mostly concerned with points of business. They were not  
1859-68. with him a medium for conveying the slighter incidents, fugitive moods, fleeting thoughts, of life. . Perhaps of these fugitive moods he may have had too few. To me, says Crassus in Cicero, the man hardly seems to be free, who does not sometimes do nothing.<sup>1</sup> In table-talk he could be as disengaged, as marked in ease and charm, as any one ; he was as willing as any one to accept topics as they came, which is the first of all conditions for good conversation. When alone in his temple of peace it was not his practice to take up his pen in the same sauntering and devious humour. With him the pen was no instrument of diversion. His correspondence has an object, and a letter with an object is not of a piece with the effusions of Madame de Sévigné, Cowper, Scott, FitzGerald, and other men and women whose letters of genial satire and casual play and hints of depth below the surface, people will read as long as they read anything.

We have to remember a very intelligible fact mentioned

<sup>1</sup> 'Quid igitur ? quando ages negotium publicum ? quando amicorum ? quando tuum ? quando denique nihil agis ? Tum illud addidi, mihi enim liber esse non videtur qui non ali- quando nihil agit.'—CICERO, *Orat.* ii. 42.

by him to Lord Brougham, who had asked him to undertake some public address (April 25, 1860):—

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You have given me credit for your own activity and power of work: an estimate far beyond the truth. I am one of those who work very hard while they are at it, and are then left in much exhaustion. I have been for four months overdone, and though my general health, thank God, is good, yet my brain warns me so distinctly that it must not be too much pressed, as to leave me in prudence no course to take except that which I have reluctantly indicated.

We might be tempted to call good letter-writing one of 'the little handicraft of an idle man'; but then two of the most perfect masters of the art were Cicero and Voltaire, two of the most occupied personages that ever lived. Of course, sentences emerge in Mr. Gladstone's letters that are the fruits of his experience, well worthy of a note, as when he says to Dr. Pusey:—'I doubt from your letter whether you are aware of the virulence and intensity with which the poison of suspicion acts in public life. All that you say in your letter of yesterday I can readily believe, but I assure you it does not alter in the slightest degree the grounds on which my last letter was written.'

He thanks Bulwer Lytton for a volume of his republished poems, but chides him for not indicating dates:—

This I grant is not always easy for a conscientious man, for example when he has almost re-written. But I need not remind you how much the public, if I may judge from one of its number, would desire it when it can be done. For in the case of those whom it has learned to honour and admire, there is a biography of the mind that is thus signified, and that is matter of deep interest.

On external incidents, he never fails in a graceful, apt, or feeling word. When the author of *The Christian Year* dies (1866), he says:—'Mr. Liddon sent me very early information of Mr. Keble's death. The church of England has lost in him a poet, a scholar, a philosopher, and a saint. I must add that he always appeared to me, since I had the honour and pleasure of knowing him, a person of most liberal





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mind. I hope early steps will be taken to do honour to his pure and noble memory.'

To the relatives of a valued official in his financial department he writes in commemorative sentences that testify to his warm appreciation of zeal in public duty:—

The civil service of the crown has beyond all question lost in Mr. Arbuthnot one of the highest ornaments it ever possessed. His devotion to his duties, his identification at every point of his own feelings with the public interests, will, I trust, not die with him, but will stimulate others, and especially the inheritors of his name, to follow his bright example. . . . Nor is it with a thought of anything but thankfulness on his account, that I contemplate the close of his labours; but it will be long indeed before we cease to miss his great experience, his varied powers, his indefatigable energy, and that high-minded loyal tone which he carried into all the parts of business.

In another letter, by the way, he says (1866):—'I am far from thinking very highly of our rank as a nation of administrators, but perhaps if we could be judged by the post office alone, we might claim the very first place in this respect.' In time even this 'most wonderful establishment' was to give him trouble enough.

Among the letters in which Mr. Gladstone exhibits the easier and less strenuous side, and that have the indefinable attraction of intimacy, pleasantness, and the light hand, are those written in the ten years between 1858 and 1868 to the Duchess of Sutherland. She was the close and lifelong friend of the Queen. She is, said the Queen to Stockmar, 'so anxious to do good, so liberal-minded, so superior to prejudice, and so eager to learn, and to improve herself and others.'<sup>1</sup> The centre of a brilliant and powerful social circle, she was an ardent sympathiser with Italy, with Poland, with the Abolitionists and the North, and with humane causes at home. She was accomplished, a lover of books meritorious in aim though too often slight in work—in short, with emotions and sentiments sometimes a little in advance of definite ideas, yet a high representative of the virtue, purity, simplicity, and

<sup>1</sup> Martin's *Prince Consort*, ii. p. 245 n.

sympathetic spirit of the Tennysonian epoch. Tennyson himself was one of her idols, and Mr. Gladstone was another. Bishop Wilberforce too was often of the company, and the Duke of Argyll, who had married a daughter of the house. Her admiration for Gladstone, says the son of the duchess, was boundless, and the last years of her life were certainly made happier by this friendship. His visits to her were always an intense pleasure, and even when suffering too much to receive others, she would always make an effort to appear sufficiently well to receive him. I find in a letter from her written to me in 1863, after meeting Mr. Gladstone when on a visit to her sister, Lady Taunton, at Quantock, in Somersetshire, the following:—"The Gladstones were there; he was quite delightful, pouring out such floods of agreeable knowledge all day long, and singing admirably in the evening. Nobody makes me feel more the happiness of knowledge and the wish for it; one must not forget that he has the happiness of the peace which passeth all understanding."<sup>1</sup> The Gladstones were constant visitors at the duchess's various princely homes—Stafford House in the Green Park, Trentham, Cliveden, and Chiswick on the Thames, Dunrobin on the Dornoch Firth.

• A little sheaf of pieces from Mr. Gladstone's letters to her may serve to show him as he was, in the midst of his labours in the Palmerston government—how little his native kindness of heart and power of sympathy had been chilled or parched either by hard and ceaseless toil, or by the trying atmosphere of public strife.

1859

Aug. 30.—I am much concerned to lose at the last moment the pleasure of coming to see you at Trentham—but my wife, who was not quite well when I came away but hoped a day's rest would make her so, writes through Agnes to say she hopes I shall get back to-day. The gratification promised me must, therefore, I fear, stand over. I will write from Hawarden, and I now send this by a messenger lest (as you might be sure I should not fail through carelessness) you should think anything very bad had happened.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Ronald Gower, *Reminiscences*, pp. 114-5.

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Among other things, I wanted help from you through speech about Tennyson. I find *Maud* takes a good deal of trouble to understand, and is hardly worth understanding. It has many peculiar beauties, but against them one sets the strange and nearly frantic passages about war; which one can hardly tell whether he means to be taken for sense or ravings. Frank Doyle, who is essentially a poet though an unwrought one, declares *Guinevere* the finest poem of modern times.

1860

*Hawarden, Oct. 3.*—We are exceedingly happy at Penmaenmawr, between Italy, health, hill and sea all taken together. I do not know if you are acquainted with the Welsh coast and interior; but I am sure you would think it well worth knowing both for the solitary grandeur of the Snowdon group, and for the widely diffused and almost endless beauty of detail. It is a kind of landscape jewellery.

The Herberts send us an excellent account of Lord Aberdeen. I have a very interesting letter from Lacaita, fresh from Panizzi, who again was fresh from Italy, and sanguine about the Emperor. But what a calamity for a man to think, or find himself forced to be double faced even when he is not double minded; and this is the best supposition. But Warsaw is surely the point at which for the present we must look with suspicion and aversion. To-day's papers give good hope that Garibaldi has been misrepresented and does not mean to play into Mazzini's hands.

Thanks for your condolences about the *Times*. I have had it both ways, though more, perhaps, of the one than the other. Some of the penny press, which has now acquired an enormous expansion, go great lengths in my favour, and I read some eulogies quite as wide of fact as the interpretations.

*Oct. 19.*—I think Mr. or Sir something Burke (how ungrateful!) has been so kind as to discover the honours of my mother's descent in some book that he has published on royal descents. But the truth is that time plays strange tricks backwards as well as forwards, and it seems hardly fair to pick the results. The arithmetic of those questions is very curious: at the distance of a moderate number of centuries everybody has some hundred thousand ancestors, subject, however, to deduction.



*Nov. 1.*— . . . There is one proposition which the experience of life burns into my soul; it is this, that man should beware of letting his religion spoil his morality. In a thousand ways, some great some small, but all subtle, we are daily tempted to that great sin. To speak of such a thing seems dishonouring to God; but it is not religion as it comes from Him, it is religion with the strange and evil mixtures which it gathers from abiding in us. This frightful evil seems to rage in the Roman church more than anywhere else, probably from its highly wrought political spirit, the virtues and the vices of a close organization being much associated with one another. That same influence which keeps the mother from her child teaches Montalembert to glorify the corruption, cruelty and baseness which in the government of the papal states put the gospel itself to shame.

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1861

. 11 *Carlton H. Terrace, March 5.*—I dare scarcely reply to your letter, for although the scene at Trentham [the death of the Duke of Sutherland] is much upon my mind, it is, amidst this crowd and pressure of business, an image reflected in ruffled waters, while it is also eminently one that ought to be kept true. A sacred sorrow seems to be profaned by bringing it within the touch of worldly cares. Still I am able, I hope not unnaturally, to speak of the pleasure which your letter has given me, for I could not wish it other than it is.

I am not one of those who think that after a stroke like this, it is our duty to try and make it seem less than it is. It is great for all, for you it is immense, for there has now been first loosened and then removed, the central stay of such a continuation of domestic love as I should not greatly exaggerate in calling without rival or example; and if its stay centred in him, so did its fire in you. I only wish and heartily pray that your sorrow may be a tender and gentle one, even as it is great and strong. I call it great and strong *more* than sharp, for then only the fierceness of Death is felt when it leaves painful and rankling thoughts of the departed, or when it breaks the kindly process of nature and reverses the order in which she would have us quit the place of our pilgrimage, by ravishing away those whose life is but just opened or is yet unfulfilled. But you are now yearning over a

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Death which has come softly to your door and gone softly from it; a death in ripeness of years, ripeness of love and honour and peace, ripeness above all in character. . . . A part of your letter brings to my mind a letter of St. Bernard on the death of his brother (remember he was a monk and so what a brother might be to him) which when I read it years ago seemed to me the most touching and beautiful expression of a natural grief that I had ever known—I will try to find it, and if I find it answers my recollection you shall hear of it again.<sup>1</sup> I always think Thomas à Kempis a golden book for all times, but most for times like these; for though it does not treat professedly of sorrow, it is such a wonderful exhibition of the Man of Sorrows. . . .

1862

*April 4.*—I am grateful to you and to your thoughts for the quality they so eminently possess; the Latins have a word for it, but we have none, and I can only render it by a rude conversion into 'sequacious,' or thoughts given to following.

My labours of yesterday [budget speech] had no title to so kind a reception as they actually met with. Quiet my office in these times cannot be, but this year it promises me the boon of comparative peace, at least in the outer sphere. The world believes that this is what I cannot endure; I shall be glad of an opportunity of putting its opinion to the test.

All words from you about the Queen are full of weight and value even when they are not so decidedly words of consolation. In her, I am even glad to hear of the little bit of symbolism. That principle like others has its place, and its applications I believe are right when they flow from and conform to what is within. I cannot but hope she will have much refreshment in Scotland. Such contact with Nature's own very undisguised and noble self, in such forms of mountain, wood, breeze, and water! These are continual preachers, and so mild that they can bring no weariness. They come straight from their Maker's hand, and how faithfully they speak of Him in their strength, their majesty, and their calm.

As for myself I am a discharged vessel to-day. A load of figures has a suffocating effect upon the brain until they are well

<sup>1</sup> See Morison's *Life of St. Bernard* (Ed. 1868), ii. ch. v.

drilled and have taken their places. Then they are as digestible as other food of that region; still it is better when they are off, and it is always a step towards liberty.

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I must at some time try to explain a little more my reference to Thomas à Kempis. I have given that book to men of uncultivated minds, who were *also* presbyterians, but all relish it. I do not believe it is possible for any one to read that book earnestly from its beginning, and think of popish, or non-popish, or of anything but the man whom it presents and brings to us.

May 8.—Unfortunately I can give you no light on the question of time. I, a bear chained to a stake, cannot tell when the principal run will be made at me, and as I can only scratch once I must wait if possible till then. The only person who could give you *des renseignements suffisants* is Disraeli: Tennyson's note is charming. I return it, and with it a touching note from Princess Alice, which reached me this evening. Pray let me have it again.

1863

Jan. 23.—I am so sorry to be unable to come to you, owing to an engagement to-night at the admiralty. I am ashamed of being utterly destitute of news—full of figures and all manner of dullnesses. . . . I went, however, to the Drury Lane pantomime last night, and laughed beyond measure; also enjoyed looking from a third row, unseen myself, at your brother and the Blantyre party.

Bowden Park, Chippenham, Feb. 7.—I feel as if your generous and overflowing sympathies made it truly unkind to draw you further into the sorrows of this darkened house. My brother [John] closed his long and arduous battle in peace this morning at six o'clock; and if the knowledge that he had the love of all who knew him, together with the assurance that he is at rest in God, could satisfy the heart, we ought not to murmur. But the visitation is no common one. Eight children, seven of them daughters, of whom only one is married and most are young, with one little boy of seven, lost their mother last February, and now see their father taken. He dies on his marriage day, we are to bury him on the first anniversary of his wife's death. Altogether it is piteous beyond belief. It was affectionate anxiety in her illness that undermined his health; it was reluctance to make his children

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uneasy that made him suffer in silence, and travel to Bath for advice and an operation when he should have been in his bed. In this double sense he has offered up his life. The grief is very sharp, and as yet I am hardly reconciled to it. . . . But enough and too much. Only I must answer your question. He was the brother next above me; we were not brothers only but very intimate friends until we married, and since then we have only been separated in the relative sense in which our marriages and my public life in particular, implied. He was a man of high spirit and uncommon goodness, and for *him* I have not a thought that is not perfect confidence and peace.

*March 1.*—Even you could not, I am persuaded, do otherwise than think me rather a savage on Wednesday evening, for the opinion I gave about helping a bazaar for the sisters of charity of the Roman community at some place in England. Let me say what I meant by it and what I did not mean. I did not mean to act as one under the influence of violent anti-Roman feeling. I rejoice to think in community of faith among bodies externally separated, so far as it extends, and it extends very far; most of all with ancient churches of the greatest extent and the firmest organization. But the proselytising agency of the Roman church in this country I take to be one of the worst of the religious influences of the age. I do not mean as to its motives, for these I do not presume to touch, nor feel in any way called upon to question. But I speak of its effects, and they are most deplorable. The social misery that has been caused, not for truth, but for loss of truth, is grievous enough, but it is not all, for to those who are called converts, and to those who have made them, we owe a very large proportion of the mischiefs and scandals within our own communion, that have destroyed the faith of many, and that are I fear undermining the very principle of faith in thousands and tens of thousands who as yet suspect neither the process nor the cause. With this pernicious agency I for my own part wish to have nothing whatever to do; although I am one who thinks lightly, in comparison with most men, of the *absolute* differences in our belief from the formal documents of the church of Rome, and who wish for that church, on her own ground, as for our own, all health that she can desire, all reformation that can be good for her. The

object, however, of what I have said is not to make an argument, but only to show that if I spoke strongly, I was not also speaking lightly on such a subject.

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*April 20.*—I am afraid I shall not see you before Wednesday—when you are to do us so great a kindness—but I must write a line to tell you how exceedingly delighted we both are with all we have seen at Windsor. The charm of the princess, so visible at a distance, increases with the increase of nearness; the Queen's tone is delightful. All seems good, delighted, and happy in the family. As regards the Queen's physical strength, it must be satisfactory. What is more fatiguing than interviews? Last night, however, I saw her at half-past seven, after a long course of them during the day. She was quite fresh.

*May 10.*—I can answer you with a very good conscience. The affair of Friday night [his speech on Italy] was on my part entirely drawn forth by the speech of Disraeli and the wish of Lord Palmerston. It is D.'s practice, in contravention of the usage of the House, which allows the minister to wind up, to lie by until Lord Palmerston has spoken, and then fire in upon him. So on this occasion I was a willing instrument; but my wife, who was within ten minutes' drive, knew nothing.

We dined at Marlborough House last night. The charm certainly does not wear off with renewed opportunity. Clarendon, who saw her for the first time, *fully* felt it. Do you know, I believe they are actually disposed to dine with us some day. Do you think you can *then* be tempted? We asked the Bishop of Brechin to meet you on Thursday. Another bishop has volunteered: the Bishop of Montreal, who is just going off to America. You will not be frightened. Both are rather notable men. The other guests engaged are Cobden, Thackeray, and Mr. Evarts, the new U.S. coadjutor to Adams.

*July 10.*—I knew too well the meaning of your non-appearance, and because I knew it, was sorry for your indisposition as well as for your absence. We had the De Greys, Granville, Sir C. Eastlake, Fechter<sup>1</sup> and others, with the Comte de Paris, who is as simple as ever, but greatly developed and come on. He talked much of America. I hope we may come to-morrow, not later than

<sup>1</sup> A French actor who pleased the town in those days.

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by the 5.5 train, to which I feel a kind of grateful attachment for the advantage and pleasure it has so often procured me. We are glad to have a hope of you next week. All our people are charmed with Mr. Fechter.—Yours affectionately.

*July 29.*—I am greatly concerned to hear of your suffering. You are not easily arrested in your movements, and I fear the time has been sharp. But (while above all I trust you will not stir without free and full permission) I do not abandon the hope of seeing you . . . I have been seeing Lady Theresa Lewis. It was heartrending woe; such as makes one ashamed of having so little to offer. She dwells much upon employing herself. . . . I greatly mistrust compulsion in the management of children, and under the circumstances you describe, I should lean as you do. . . . Many thanks for the carnations you sent by my wife; they still live and breathe perfume. . . . You spoke of our difference about slavery. I hope it is not very wide. I stop short of war as a means of correction. I have not heard you say that you do otherwise.

11 *Carlton House Terrace (no date).*—I am glad my wife saw you yesterday, for I hope a little that she may have been bold enough to lecture you about not taking enough care of yourself. If this sounds rather intrusive, pray put it down to my intense confidence in her as a doctor. She has a kind of divining power springing partly from a habitual gift and partly from experience, and she hardly ever goes wrong. She is not easy about your going to Vichy alone. The House of Commons, rude and unmannerly in its arrangements at all times, is singularly so in its last kicks and plunges towards the death of the session; but after to-morrow we are free and I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday according to the hope you give. . . . Soon after this reaches you I hope to be at Hawarden. On Wednesday I am to have luncheon at Argyll Lodge to meet Tennyson. Since I gave him my translation of the first book of the *Iliad*, I have often remembered those words of Kingsley's to his friend Mr. —, 'My dear friend, your verses are not good but bad.' The Duc d'Aumale breakfasted with us on Thursday and I had some conversation about America. He is, I think, pleased with the good opinions which the young princes have won so largely, and seems to have come very reluctantly to the

conclusion that the war is hopeless. Our children are gone and the vacant footfall echoes on the stair. My wife is waiting here only to see Lady Herbert.

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*Hawarden, Aug. 21.*—We have had Dr. Stanley here with his sister. He was charming, she only stayed a moment. He gave a good account of the Queen. They go to Italy for September and October. When any one goes there I always feel a mental process of accompanying them. We have got Mr. Woolner here too. He took it into his head to wish to make a bust of me, and my wife accepted his offer, at least by her authority caused me to accept it. He has worked very quickly and I think with much success, but he bestows immense labour before closing. He is a poet too, it seems, and generally a very good companion. . . . My journey to Balmoral will not be for some five weeks. I am dreadfully indolent as to any exertion beyond reading, but I look forward to it with interest. . . . Indeed your scruples about writing were misplaced. There is no holiday of mine to leave unbroken so far as post is concerned, and well would it be with me, even in the time of an exhaustion which requires to be felt before it can pass away, if the words of my other letters were, I will not say like, but more like, yours. However, the murmur which I thus let escape me is ungrateful. I ought to be thankful for the remission that I get, but treasury business is the most odious that I know, and hence it is that one wishes that the wheel would for a little time cease its drive altogether, instead of merely lowering it.

*Penmaenmawr, Sept. 20.*—It was so kind of you to see our little fellows on their way through town. I hope they were not troublesome. Harry is rather oppressed, I think, with the responsibilities of his captainship—he is the head of seven boys!

We went yesterday to visit the Stanleys, and saw the South Stack Lighthouse with its grand and savage rocks. They are very remarkable, one part for masses of sheer precipices descending in columns to the sea, the other for the extraordinary contortions which the rocks have undergone from igneous action and huge compressing forces. Our weather has been and continues cold for the season, which draws onwards, however, and the gliding days recall to mind the busy outer world from which we are so well defended.

1864

*Jan. 4.*—Often as I have been struck by the Queen's extraordinary integrity of mind—I know of no better expression—I never felt it more than on hearing and reading a letter of hers on Saturday (at the cabinet) about the Danish question. Her determination in this case as in others, not inwardly to 'sell the truth' (this is Robert Pollok) overbears all prepossessions and longings, strong as they are, on the German side, and enables her spontaneously to hold the balance, it seems to me, tolerably even.

*Jan. 14.*—I am glad you were not scandalised about my laxity as to the 'public house.' But I expected from you this liberality. I really had no choice. How can I who drink good wine and bitter beer every day of my life, in a comfortable room and among friends, coolly stand up and advise hardworking fellow-creatures to take 'the pledge'? However, I have been reading Maguire's *Life of Father Mathew*, with a most glowing admiration for the Father. Every one knew him to be good, but I had no idea of the extent and height of his goodness, and his boundless power and thirst not for giving only but for loving.

*June 27.*—Just at this time when the press and mass of ordinary business ought to be lessening, the foreign crisis you see comes upon us, and drowns us deeper than ever. I fully believe that England *will* not go to war, and I am sure she *ought* not. Are you not a little alarmed at Argyll on this matter. Of the fate of the government I cannot speak with much confidence or with much anxious desire; but on the whole I *rather* think, and *rather* hope, we shall come through.

Three marriages almost in as many weeks among your own immediate kin! I look for a dinner at Woolner's with Tennyson to day: *a sei occhi*. Last night Manning spent three hours with me; the conversation must wait. He is sorely anti-Garibaldian. How beautiful is the ending of Newman's *Apologia*, part VII.

*Oct. 23.*—Singularly happy in my old and early political friendships, I am now stripped of every one of them. It has indeed been my good lot to acquire friendships in later life, which I could not have hoped for; but at this moment I seem to see the spirits of the dead gathered thick around me, 'all along the narrow



valley,' the valley of life, over and into which the sun of a better, of a yet better life, shines narrowly. I do not think our political annals record such a removal of a generation of statesmen before its time as we have witnessed in the last four years. I could say a great deal about Newcastle. He was a high and strong character, very true, very noble, and, I think, intelligible, which (as you know) I think rare in politicians. My relations with him will be kept up in one sense by having to act, and I fear act much, as his executor and trustee, with De Tabley, an excellent colleague, who discharged the same duty for the Duke of Hamilton and for Canning.

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ÆT 50 50

Dec. 28.—I cannot give you a full account of Lord Derby's translation [of the *Iliad*], but there is no doubt in my mind that it is a very notable production. He always had in a high degree the inborn faculty of a scholar, with this he has an enviable power of expression, and an immense command of the English tongue; add the quality of dash which appears in his version quite as much as in his speeches. Undoubtedly if he *wrought* his execution as Tennyson does, results might have been attained beyond the actual ones; but, while I will not venture to speak of the precision of the version, various passages in the parts I have read are of very high excellence. Try to find out what Tennyson thinks of it.

1865

Aug. 8.—My reading has been little, but even without your question I was going to mention that I had caught at the name of 'L'Ami Fritz,' seeing it was by the author of the *Conscrit*, and had read it. I can recommend it too, though the subject does not at first sight look ravishing: it tells how a middle-aged middle-class German bachelor comes to marry the daughter of his own farm bailiff. Some parts are full of grace; there is a tax-gatherer's speech on the duty of paying taxes, which came home to *my* heart. Though it a little reminds me of a sermon which I heard preached in an aisle of the Duomo of Milan to the boys of a Sunday school (said to have been founded by St. Charles Borromeo) on the absolute necessity of paying tithes! The golden breadths of harvest are now a most lively joy to me. But we have had great official troubles in the death of Mr. Arbuthnot, a *pillar* of the treasury, and a really notable man.

BOOK  
V.  
1859-68.

*Sept. 12.*—I am working off my post as well as I can with the bands playing and flags fluttering outside. By and by I am going to carve rounds of beef for some part of four hundred diners. The ladies are only allowed tea. Our *weather* anxieties are great, but all is going well. The new telegram and announcement that you will come on Friday is very welcome. Indeed, I did not say anything about the marriage, because, without knowing more, I did not know what to say, except that I most sincerely wish them all good and all happiness. The rest must keep till Friday. The characters you describe are quite, I think, on the right ground. It was the great glory of the Greeks that they had those full and large views of man's nature, not the narrow and pinched ones which are sometimes found even among Christians. Lord Palmerston's abandoning his trip to Bristol is rather a serious affair. There is more in it, I fear, than gout.

*Oct. 24.*—If you were well enough, and I had wings, there is nothing I should more covet at this moment than to appear at Inveraray and compare and correct my impressions of Lord Palmerston's character by yours. Death of itself produces a certain tendency to view more warmly what was before admired, and more slightly anything that was not. And by stirring the thought of the nation through the press it commonly throws lights upon the subject either new in themselves or new in their combination. *Twelve* cabinet ministers I have already reckoned in my mind, all carried off by the rude hand of death in the last five years, during which three only have been made. They are:—Lord Dalhousie, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Herbert, Sir J. Graham, Lord Canning, Lord Elgin, Sir G. Lewis, Lord Campbell, Lord Macaulay, Mr. Ellice, Lord Lyndhurst, Lord Palmerston. This, in the political world, and to me especially, is an extraordinary desolation.

I hope you are at least creeping on. It was so kind of you to think about my little neuralgic affairs; thank God, I have had no more.

1866

*Hawarden, Jan. 4.*—We have been pleased with some partial accounts of improvement, and I can the better speak my wish to you for a happy new year. Next Wednesday I hope to inquire

for myself. I have been much laden and a good deal disturbed. We have the cattle plague in full force here, and it has even touched my small group of tenants. To some of them it is a question of life and death; and my brother-in-law, who is by nature one of the most munificent persons I ever knew, is sorely straitened in mind at not being able to do all he would like for his people. But do not let this sound like complaint from me. Few have such cause for ceaseless and unbounded thankfulness. . . . If you come across Armstrong's poems<sup>1</sup> pray look at them. An Irish youth cut off at twenty-four. By the by, Wortley's children have admirable acting powers, which they showed in charades very cleverly got up by his wife as stage manager. Grosvenor seconds the Speaker, and F. Cavendish moves the address. We have had divers thrushes singing here, a great treat at this season. I like them better than hothouse strawberries.

CHAP.  
XII.  
Æt. 50-59.

July 7.—I cannot feel unmixedly glad for yourself that you are returning to Chiswick. For us it will be a great gain. . . . Disraeli and I were affectionate at the Mansion House last night. Poor fellow, he has been much tried about his wife's health. The King of the Belgians pleases me, and strikes me more as to his personal qualities on each successive visit. God bless you, my dear duchess and precious friend, affectionately yours.

1867

Hawarden, April 29.—We both hope to have the pleasure of dining at Chiswick on Wednesday. We assume that the hour will be 7.30 as usual. I shall be so glad to see Argyll, and to tell him the little I can about the literary department of the *Guardian*. I write from the 'Temple of Peace.' It is a sore wrench to go away. But I am thankful to have had such a quiet Easter. The false rumour about Paris has had a most beneficial effect, and has spared me a multitude of demands. The birds are delightful here. What must they be at Cliveden.—Ever affectionately yours.

<sup>1</sup> Edmund John Armstrong (1841-65). Republished in 1877. Sir Henry Taylor, *Edinburgh Review*, July 1878, says of this poet:—'Of all the arts poetic, that which was least understood between the Elizabethan age and the second quarter of this century was the art of writing blank verse.

Armstrong's blank verse [The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael] not otherwise than good in its ordinary fabric, affords by its occasional excellence a strong presumption that, had he lived, he would have attained to a consummate mastery of it.'

BOOK *Holker Hall, Sept. 22.*—We find this place very charming. It  
 V. explains at once the secret of the great affection they all have for  
 1859-68. it. It has a singular combination of advantages—sea, hill, home  
 ground, and views, access, and the house such an excellent living  
 house; all the parts, too, in such good keeping and proportion.  
 We much admire your steps. The inhabitants would be quite  
 enough to make any place pleasant. We have just been at that  
 noble old church of Cartmel. These churches are really the best  
 champions of the men who built them.

*Nov. 23.*—I cannot let the moment pass at which I would have  
 been enjoying a visit to you after your severe illness without one  
 word of sympathy. . . . Our prospects are uncertain; but I cling  
 to the hope of escaping to the country at the end of next week,  
 unless the proposals of the government as to the mode of providing  
 for the expense of this unhappy war should prove to be very excep-  
 tionable, which at present I do not expect. I saw Lord Russell  
 last night. He seemed very well but more deaf. Lady Russell  
 has had some partial failure of eyesight. Lord R. is determined  
 on an educational debate, and has given notice of resolutions; all  
 his friends, I think, are disposed to regret it. I am told the  
 exchequer is deplorably poor. Poor Disraeli has been sorely cut  
 up; and it has not yet appeared that Mrs. Disraeli is out of  
 danger, though she is better. Her age seems to be at the least  
 seventy-six. I have been to see my china exhibited in its new  
 home at Liverpool, where it seemed pretty comfortable.

1868

31 *Bloomsbury Square, Jan. 3.*—I promised to write to you in case  
 I found matters either bad or good. I lament to say they are  
 bad. He [Panizzi] is weaker, more feverish (pulse to-day at 122  
 about noon), and very restless. The best will be a severe struggle  
 and the issue is *likely* to be unfavourable. At the same time he  
 is not given over. I said, I shall come to-morrow. He said, You  
 will not find me alive. I replied that was wrong. I believe there  
 is no danger to-morrow, but what next week may do is another  
 matter. He is warm and affectionate as ever, and very tender.  
 He is firm and resigned, not stoically, but with trust in God. I  
 am very sad at the thought of losing this very true, trusty, hearty

friend. I must go to-morrow, though of course I should stay if I could be of any use.<sup>1</sup>

CHAP.  
XII.

This year the end came, and a few lines from his diary show the loss it was to Mr. Gladstone:—

Æt. 50-52.

*Oct. 28.*—The post brought a black-bordered letter which announced the death of the Dowager Duchess of Sutherland. I have lost in her from view the warmest and dearest friend, surely, that ever man had. Why this noble and tender spirit should have had such bounty for me and should have so freshened my advancing years, my absorbed and divided mind, I cannot tell. But I feel, strange as it might sound, ten years the older for her death. May the rest and light and peace of God be with her ever more until *that day*. None will fill her place for me, nor for many worthier than I.

<sup>1</sup> Panizzi recovered and lived for eleven years. See *Life*, ii. p. 299.

## CHAPTER XIII

### REFORM

(1866)

L'aristocratie, la démocratie ne sont pas de vaines doctrines livrées à nos disputes ; ce sont des puissances, qu'on n'abat point, qu'on n'élève point par la louange ou par l'injure ; avant que nous parlions d'elles, elles sont ou ne sont pas.—ROYER-COLLARD.

Aristocracy, democracy, are not vain doctrines for us to dispute about ; they are powers ; you neither exalt them nor depress them by praise or by blame ; before we talk of them, they exist or they do not exist.

BOOK  
V.  
1866.

MR. DENISON, the Speaker, had a conversation with Mr. Gladstone almost immediately after the death of Lord Palmerston, and he reported the drift of it to Sir George Grey. The Speaker had been in Scotland, and found no strong feeling for reform or any other extensive change, while there was a general decline of interest in the ballot:—

Gladstone said, 'Certainly, as far as my constituents go, there is no strong feeling for reform among them. And as to the ballot, I think it is declining in favour.' He spoke of the difficulties before us, of the embarrassment of the reform question. 'With a majority of 80 on the liberal side, they will expect some action.' I answered, 'No doubt a majority of 80, agreed on any point, would expect action. At the time of the first Reform bill, when the whole party was for the bill, the course was clear. But is the party agreed now ? The point it was agreed upon was to support Lord Palmerston's government. But was that in order to pass a strong measure of reform ? Suppose that the country is satisfied with the foreign policy, and the home policy, and the financial policy, and wants to maintain these and their authors, and does not want great changes of any kind ?' I was, on the

whole, pleased with the tone of Gladstone's conversation. It was calm, and for soothing difficulties, not for making them. . . . I should add that Gladstone spoke with great kindness about yourself, and about your management of the House of Commons, and said that it would be his wish that you should lead it.<sup>1</sup>

CHAP.  
XIII.  
Æt. 57.

The antecedents of the memorable crisis of 1866-7 were curious. Reform bills had been considered by five governments since 1849, and mentioned in six speeches from the throne. Each political party had brought a plan forward, and Lord John Russell had brought forward three. Mr. Bright also reduced his policy to the clauses of a bill in 1858. In 1859 Lord Derby's government had introduced a measure which old whigs and new radicals, uniting their forces, had successfully resisted. This move Mr. Gladstone—who, as the reader will recollect, had on that occasion voted with the tories<sup>2</sup>—always took to impose a decisive obligation on all who withstood the tory attempt at a settlement, to come forward with proposals of their own. On the other hand, in the new parliament, the tory party was known to be utterly opposed to an extension of the franchise, and a considerable fringe of professing liberals also existed who were quite as hostile, though not quite as willing to avow hostility before their constituents. All the leaders were committed, and yet of their adherents the majority was dubious or adverse. The necessity of passing a Reform bill through an anti-reform parliament thus produced a situation of unsurpassed perplexity. Some thought that formidable susceptibilities would be soothed, if the government were reconstructed and places found for new men. Others declared that the right course would be first to weld the party together by bills on which everybody was agreed; to read a good Reform bill a first time; then in the recess the country would let ministers see where they were, and the next session would find them on firm ground. But Lord Russell knew that he had little time to spare—he was now close upon seventy-four—and Mr. Gladstone was the last man to try to hold him back.

<sup>1</sup> *Grey Papers*, Oct. 22, 1865.

<sup>2</sup> See above p. 625.

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1866.

The proceedings of the new government began with a familiar demonstration of the miserable failure of English statesmen to govern Ireland, in the shape of the twentieth coercion bill since the union. This need not detain us, nor need the budget, the eighth of the series that made this administration so memorable in the history of national finance. It was naturally quite enough for parliament that the accounts showed a surplus of £1,350,000; that the last tax on raw material vanished with the repeal of the duty on timber; that a series of commercial treaties had been successfully negotiated; and that homage should be paid to virtue by the nibbling of a mouse at the mountain of the national debt. The debt was eight hundred millions, and it was now proposed to apply half-a-million a year towards its annihilation. Reform, however, was the fighting question, and fighting questions absorb a legislature.

The chancellor of the exchequer introduced the Reform bill (March 12) in a speech that, though striking enough, was less impassioned than some of his later performances in the course of this famous contest. He did not forget that 'the limbo of abortive creations was peopled with the skeletons of reform bills'; and it was his cue in a House so constituted as the one before him, to use the language and arguments of moderation and safety. Franchise was the real question at stake, and to that branch of reform the bill was limited. The other question of redistributing seats he likened to fighting in a wood, where there may be any number of partial encounters; but hardly a great and deciding issue. The only point on which there was a vital difference was the figure of the borough franchise. In 1859 Mr. Disraeli invented a quackish phrase about lateral extension and vertical extension, and offered votes to various classes who mainly had them already, without extending downwards; but whatever else his plan might do, it opened no door for the workmen. In 1860 the Palmerston government proposed a six pound occupation franchise for boroughs, and ten pounds for counties. The proposal of 1866 was seven pounds for boroughs, and fourteen for counties. We may smile at the thought that some of the



most brilliant debates ever heard in the House of Commons now turned upon the mighty puzzle whether the qualification for a borough voter should be occupancy of a ten, a seven, or a six pound house;—nay, whether the ruin or salvation of the state might not lie on the razor-edge of distinction between rating and rental. Ministers were taunted with having brought in Mr. Bright's bill. Mr. Bright replied that he could not find in it a single point that he had recommended. He was never in favour of a six pound franchise; he believed in a household franchise; but if a seven pound franchise was offered, beggars could not be choosers, and seven pounds he would take. In a fragmentary note of later years Mr. Gladstone, among other things, describes one glittering protagonist of the hour:—

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Æt. 57.

Lord Russell adhered with great tenacity to his ideas, in which he was strongly supported by me as his leader in the Commons, and by Granville and others of the cabinet. Bright, the representative man of popular ideas, behaved with an admirable combination of discretion and loyalty. Lowe was an outspoken opponent, so superstitiously enamoured of the ten pound franchise as to be thrown into a temper of general hostility to a government which did not recognise its finality and sanctity. He pursued our modest Reform bill of 1866 with an implacable hostility, and really supplied the whole brains of the opposition. So effective were his speeches that, during this year, and this year only, he had such a command of the House as had never in my recollection been surpassed. Nor was there any warrant for imputing to him dishonesty of purpose or *arrière-pensée*. But his position was one, for the moment, of personal supremacy, and this to such an extent that, when all had been reconciled and the time for his peerage came, I pressed his viscounty on the sovereign as a tribute to his former elevation, which, though short-lived, was due to genuine power of mind, as it seemed to me that a man who had once soared to those heights trodden by so few, ought not to be lost in the common ruck of official barons.

The first trial of strength arose upon a device of one of the greatest of the territorial whigs, seconded by a much more eminent man in the ranks of territorial Tories. Lord Grosvenor

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V.  
1866.

announced a motion that they would not proceed with the franchise, until they were in possession of the ministerial intentions upon seats. Lord Stanley, the son of the tory leader, seconded the motion. Any other form would have served equally well as a test of conflicting forces. The outlook was clouded. Mr. Brand, the skilful whip, informed the cabinet, that there were three classes of disaffected liberals, who might possibly be kept in order; first, those who, although opposed to reform, were averse to a change of government; next, those who doubted whether ministers really intended to deal with the seats at all; and finally, those who felt sure that when they came to deal with seats, they would be under the baleful influence of Bright. The first of the three sections could best be kept right by means of a stiff line against Grosvenor and Stanley and the other two sections, by the simple production of the seats bill before taking the committee on franchise. The expert's counsels were followed. Mr. Gladstone told the House that Lord Grosvenor's motion would be treated as a vote of want of confidence, but that he would disclose the whole plan as soon as the franchise bill had passed its second reading. The mutterings only grew louder. At a great meeting in Liverpool (April 6), accompanied by some of his colleagues, Mr. Gladstone roused the enthusiasm of his audience to the utmost pitch by declaring that the government would not flinch, that they had passed the Rubicon, broken the bridges, burned their boats. Still the malcontents were not cowed.

The leader himself rose in warmth of advocacy as the struggle went on. The advocates of privilege used language about the workers, that in his generous and sympathetic mind fanned the spark into a flame. Lowe asked an unhappy question, that long stood out as a beacon mark in the controversy—whether 'if you wanted venality, ignorance, drunkenness—if you wanted impulsive, unreflecting, violent people—where do you look for them? Do you go to the top or to the bottom?' Harsh judgments like this of the conditions of life and feeling in the mass of the nation—though Lowe was personally one of the kindest of men—made Mr. Gladstone stand all the more ardently by the

objects of such sweeping reproach. In a discussion upon electoral statistics, he let fall a phrase that reverberated through the discussion inside parliament and out. Some gentlemen, he said, deal with these statistics, as if they were ascertaining the numbers of an invading army. 'But the persons to whom their remarks apply are our fellow-subjects, our fellow-Christians, *our own flesh and blood*, who have been lauded to the skies for their good conduct.'<sup>1</sup> This was instantly denounced by Lord Cranborne<sup>2</sup> as sentimental rant, and inquiries soon followed, why kinship in flesh and blood should be strictly limited by a seven pound rental. Speedily Mr. Gladstone passed from steady practical argument in the ministerial key, to all the topics of popular enthusiasm and parliamentary invective. His impulsiveness, said critical observers, 'betrays him at times into exaggeration or incaution; but there is a generous quality in it.' Mr. Bright once talked of his own agitation for reform as no better than flogging a dead horse. The parliamentary struggle, led by Mr. Gladstone, brought the dead horse to life, stirred the combative instincts, and roused all the forces of reform. Lowe was glittering, energetic, direct, and swift. Mr. Disraeli, contented to watch his adversaries draw their swords on one another, did not put forth all his power. In a moment of unwisdom he taunted Mr. Gladstone with his stripling's speech at the Oxford Union five-and-thirty years before. As Aberdeen once said, 'Gladstone is terrible on the rebound,'<sup>3</sup> and anybody less imperturbable than Disraeli would have found his retort terrible here. His speech on the second reading (April 27), as a whole, ranks among the greatest of his performances. 'Spoke,' he says, 'from one to past three, following Disraeli. It was a toil much beyond my strength, but I seemed to be sustained and borne onwards I knew not how.' The party danger, the political theme, the new responsibility of command, the joy of battle, all seemed to transfigure the orator before the vision of the House, as if he were the Greek hero sent forth to combat by Pallas

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<sup>1</sup> *Hans.*, Mar. 23, 1866, p. 873.

become Lord Cranborne.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Robert Cecil had on the death of his elder brother in 1865<sup>3</sup> Above p. 613.

BOOK V. Athene, with flame streaming from head and shoulders, from helmet and shield, like the star of summer rising effulgent from the sea. One personal passage deserves a biographic place:—

1866.

My position, Sir, in regard to the liberal party, is in all points the opposite of Earl Russell's. . . . I have none of the claims he possesses. I came among you an outcast from those with whom I associated, driven from them, I admit, by no arbitrary act, but by the slow and resistless forces of conviction. I came among you, to make use of the legal phraseology, *in formâ pauperis*. I had nothing to offer you but faithful and honourable service. You received me, as Dido received the shipwrecked Æneas—

' . . . Ejectum littore, egentem  
Excepi,'

and I only trust you may not hereafter at any time have to complete the sentence in regard to me—

' Et regni demens in parte locavi.'<sup>1</sup>

You received me with kindness, indulgence, generosity, and I may even say with some measure of confidence. And the relation between us has assumed such a form that you can never be my debtors, but that I must for ever be in your debt.

The closing sentences became memorable:—'You cannot fight against the future,' he exclaimed with a thrilling gesture, 'time is on our side. The great social forces which move onwards in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of our debates does not for a moment impede or disturb—those great social forces are against you; they are marshalled on our side; and the banner which we now carry in this fight, though perhaps at some moment it may droop over our sinking heads, yet it soon again will float in the eye of Heaven, and it will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy, but to a certain and to a not far distant victory.'

A drama, as good critics tell us, is made not by words but by situations. The same is the truth of the power of the orator. Here the speaker's trope was a sounding battle-cry,

<sup>1</sup> *Æn.* iv. 373: 'The exile on my shore I sheltered and, fool as I was, shared with him my realm.'

not a phrase; it disclosed both a cause and a man. For the hour neither man nor cause prospered. Neither fervour nor force of argument prevailed against the fears and resentments of the men of what Mr. Bright called the Cave of Adullam, 'to which every one was invited who was distressed, and every one who was discontented.' After eight nights of debate (April 27) Lord Grosvenor was beaten, and ministers were saved—but only by the desperate figure of five. Some thirty of the professed supporters of government voted against their leaders. A scene of delirious triumph followed the announcement of the numbers, and Mr. Lowe believed for the moment that he had really slain the horrid Demogorgon. Two men knew much better—the leader of the House and the leader of the opposition.

The cabinet, which was not without an imitation cave of its own, hesitated for an hour or two, but the two chief men in it stood firm. Mr. Gladstone was as resolute as Lord Russell, that this time nobody should say reform was only being played with, and they both insisted on going on with the bill. The chances were bad, for this was a Palmerstonian parliament, and the Gladstonian hour had not yet struck. As an honourable leader among the conservatives admitted, not one of the divisions against the bill was taken in good faith. If Mr. Gladstone gave way, he was taunted with cringing; if he stood his ground, it was called bullying; if he expressed a desire to consult the views of the House, Mr. Disraeli held up ministers to scorn as unhappy men without minds of their own. In introducing the bill, says Mr. Gladstone, 'I struggled with studious care to avoid every word that could give offence.' The only effect of this was to spread the tale that he was not in earnest, and did not really care for the bill. Such was the temper in which ministers were met. And the whole operation was conducted upon the basis of a solemn, firm, and formal understanding between the regular opposition and the cave men, that were it proposed to reduce the ten pound qualification no lower than nine pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence, even that change should be resisted.

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Meanwhile, for the leader of the House vexation followed vexation. 'The worst incident in the history of our reform struggle,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to the prime minister from the House, on May 28, 'has occurred to-night. A most bare-faced proposal further to load the bill by an instruction to insert clauses respecting bribery has been carried against us by a majority of 10; the numbers were 248 to 238. This is extremely discouraging, and it much reduces the usual strength and authority of the government. This defeat alters our position with reference to fresh defeats.' The air was thick with ideas and schemes for getting rid of the bill and yet keeping the ministers. 'I cannot,' Mr. Gladstone says to Lord Russell (June 4), 'divest such ideas and proposals of the aspect of dishonour.' They were told, he said, to introduce an amended plan next year. How would the case be altered? They would have to introduce a plan substantially identical, to meet the same invidious opposition, made all the more confident by the success of its present manoeuvres.

At length an end came. On June 18, on a question raised by Lord Dunkellin, of rateable value as against gross estimated rental for the basis of the new seven-pound franchise, ministers were beaten. The numbers were 315 against 304, and in this majority of 11 against government were found no fewer than 44 of their professed supporters. The sensation was almost beyond precedent. 'With the cheering of the adversary there was shouting, violent flourishing of hats, and other manifestations which I think novel and inappropriate,' Mr Gladstone says. The next morning, in a note to a friend, he observed:—'The government has now just overlived its seven years: a larger term than the life of any government of this country since that of Lord Liverpool. Many circumstances show that it was time things should come to a crisis—none so much as the insidious proceedings, and the inconstant and variable voting on this bill.'

It had been decided in the cabinet a couple of days before this defeat, that an adverse vote on the narrow issue technically raised by Lord Dunkellin was not in itself to be treated in debate as a vital question, for the rating value could

easily have been adjusted to the figure of rental proposed by the government. The debate, however, instead of being confined to a narrow question raised technically, covered the whole range of the bill. Taken together with the previous attempts to get rid of the thing, and the increasing number of the disaffected, all this seemed to extinguish hope, and after what had been said about crossing Rubicons and burning boats, most thought no course open but resignation. They might appeal to the country. But Mr. Brand, the expert whip, told the prime minister that he felt so strongly on the impolicy of dissolution that he could not bring himself to take a part in it. The proceeding would be unpopular with their own friends, who had been put to great expense at their election only a few months before. It would, moreover, break the party, because at an election they would have to bring out men of more extreme views to fight the whigs and liberals who had deserted them on reform, and who might thus be driven permanently to the other side. Such were the arguments, though Mr. Gladstone seems not to have thought them decisive. At hardly any crisis in his life, I think, did Mr. Gladstone ever incline to surrender, short of absolute compulsion. To yield was not his temper. When he looked back upon this particular transaction in later years, he blamed himself and his colleagues for too promptly acquiescing in advice to throw down the reins.

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I incline to believe that we too readily accepted our defeat by an infinitesimal majority, as a ground for resignation. There were at least four courses open to us: first, resignation; secondly, dissolution; thirdly, to deny the finality of the judgment and reverse the hostile vote on report; fourthly, to take shelter under a general vote of confidence which Mr. Crawford, M.P. for the City of London, was prepared to move. Of these, the last was the worst, as disparaging to political character. Lord Russell, secretly conscious, I suppose, that he had arrived at the last stage of his political existence, and desirous that it should not be forcibly abbreviated, inclined to adopt it. Granville and I were so decidedly set against it that we allowed ourselves, I think, to be absorbed in its defeat, and set up against it what was undoubtedly

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the readiest and simplest expedient, namely, immediate withdrawal. To dissolve would have been a daring act, an appeal from a shuffling parliament to an unawakened people. Yet it is possible, even probable, that such an appeal, unhesitatingly made, would have evoked a response similar, though not equal, to that of 1831. Or again, a re-trial of the question, with a call of the House, would in all likelihood have resulted in victory. By our retirement we opened the door for that series of curious deceptions and intrigues within the tory party, which undoubtedly accelerated the arrival of household suffrage.

Lord Russell tendered their resignation to the Queen, then far away at Balmoral. The Queen received the communication with the greatest concern, and asked them to reconsider. 'The state of Europe,' she said, 'was dangerous; the country was apathetic about reform; the defeat had only touched a matter of detail; the question was one that could never be settled unless all sides were prepared to make concessions.' In London three or four days were passed in discussing the hundred ingenious futilities by which well-meaning busybodies on all such occasions struggle to dissolve hard facts by soft words. In compliance with the Queen's request, the cabinet reopened their own discussion, and for a day or two entertained the plan of going on, if the House would pass a general vote of confidence. Mr. Gladstone, as we have seen, was on the morrow of the defeat for resignation, and from the first he thought ill of the new plan. The true alternatives were to try either a fresh parliament or a fresh ministry. Bright—not then a member of the government—wrote to Mr. Gladstone (June 24) in strong terms in favour of having a new parliament. Mr. Brand, he says, 'makes no allowance for the force of a moral contest through the country for a great principle and a great cause. Last Easter showed how much feeling your appeals could speedily arouse. . . . I do not believe in your being beaten. Besides there is something far worse than a defeat, namely to carry on your government with a party poisoned and enfeebled by the baseness of the forty traitors [elsewhere in the same letter called the "forty thieves"]. In great contingencies something must be risked.



You will have a great party well compacted together, and a great future. Mr. Brand's figures should be forgotten for the moment. . . . You must not forget the concluding passage of your great speech on the second reading of the bill. Read it again to nerve you to your great duty.' The Duke of Argyll was strong in the same sense. He saw no chance of 'conducting opposition with decent sincerity or possible success, except in a parliament in which we know who are our friends and who are our enemies on this question.' In the end resignation carried the day:—

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June 25.—Cabinet 2½-4½ . . . The final position appeared to be this, as to alternatives before the cabinet. 1. Dissolution, only approved by three or four. 2. A vote of confidence with vague assurances as to future reform—desired by seven, one more acquiescing reluctantly, six opposing. *W. E. G. unable to act on it.* 3. Lord Russell's proposal to rehabilitate the clause—disapproved by seven, approved by six, two ready to acquiesce. 4. Resignation, generally accepted, hardly any strongly dissenting. I have had a great weight on me in these last days, and am glad the matter draws near its close.

This decision greeted the Queen on her arrival at Windsor on the morning of June 26. Both the prime minister and the chancellor of the exchequer had audiences the same day. 'Off at 11.30 to Windsor with Lord Russell, much conversation with him. Single and joint audiences with the Queen, who showed every quality required by her station and the time. We had warm receptions at both stations.' Mr. Gladstone's memorandum of the interview is as follows:—

*Windsor Castle, June 26.*—H.M. expressed her regret that this crisis could not be averted; stated she had wished that this question could have been postponed altogether to another year; or that upon finding the strength and tenacity of the opposition to the measure, it could have been withdrawn. I reminded H.M. that she had early expressed to me her hope that if we resumed the subject of the reform of parliament, we should prosecute it to its completion. Also, I said that in my opinion, from all the mis-carriages attending the past history of this question, not ministries alone, and leaders of parties, nor parties alone, but parliament

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itself and parliamentary government were discredited. The Queen was impressed with this, and said there was certainly great force in it. She had previously seen Lord Russell, and spoke of his proposal further to amend the clause. Such a proposal she considered advisable, subject to two conditions: (1.) The general assent and concurrence of the cabinet; (2.) The reasonable chance of its being carried. If the proposal were made she was quite willing it should be said, with the approval of the cabinet, that she had observed that the issue taken was on a point apparently one of detail, and that it was just to the H. of C. that it should have an opportunity of voting upon the substance. Lord Russell wished in any case to state, and H.M. approved, that the Queen had founded her hesitation to accept the resignation (1.) on the fact that the decision was on a matter of detail; (2.) on the state of the continent<sup>1</sup> (and the difficulty of bringing a new ministry in such a state of things at once into the position of the old). The Queen offered to write what she had said about Lord Russell's proposed amendment. Lord Russell waived this. But thinking it desirable, I afterwards revived the question, and H.M. said she thought it would be better, and went to do it.

I said to Lord Russell, 'It is singular that the same members of the cabinet (generally speaking) who were prematurely eager for resignation after the division on Lord Grosvenor's motion, are now again eager to accept almost anything in the way of a resolution as sufficient to warrant our continuing in office.' He replied, 'Yes, but I am afraid at the root of both proceedings there is a great amount of antipathy to our Reform bill. They were anxious to resign when resignation would have been injurious to it, and now they are anxious to avoid resignation because resignation will be beneficial to it.' Lord Russell showed me a letter he had written to Clarendon justifying me for my unwillingness to accept Mr. Crawford's motion of confidence. He also said that if the Queen should desire the revival of his plan for a further vote, he thought it ought to be proposed.

'On returning,' Mr. Gladstone enters in the diary, 'we went to consult Brand and then to the cabinet, when resignation was finally decided on, and a telegram was sent to

<sup>1</sup> Prussia had declared war on Austria, June 18.

Windsor. At six I went down and made my explanation for the government. I kept to facts without epithets, but I thought as I went on that some of the words were scorching. A crowd and great enthusiasm in Palace Yard on departure. Lord Derby was sent for, accepted the royal commission, and finding Mr. Lowe and the Adullamites not available, he formed his third administration on regular conservative lines, with Mr. Disraeli as its foremost man.

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July 6.—Went to Windsor to take my leave. H.M. short but kind. H. of C. on return, took my place on the opposition bench, the first time for fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> . . . Finished in Downing Street. Left my keys behind me. Somehow it makes a void. July 19.—H. of C. Made a little dying speech on reform. Sept. 14.—Woburn. Morning *sedesunt* with Lord Russell and Brand on reform and other matters. We agreed neither to egg on the government nor the reverse.

Turbulent scenes had already occurred in the metropolis, and it speedily became evident that whatever value the workmen might set on the franchise for its own sake, they would not brook the refusal of it. They chose Mr. Gladstone for their hero, for, as a good observer remarked, he was the first official statesman who had convinced the working classes that he really cared for them. On the occasion of one popular assemblage the crowd thronged (June 28) to Carlton House Terrace, shouting for Gladstone and liberty. The head of the house was away. Police officers sent up word to Mrs. Gladstone that the multitude would speedily disperse if she would appear for a moment or two on the balcony. In compliance with their request and for the public convenience, she appeared, and all passed off. The incident was described by newspapers that ought to have known better, as the ladies of his family courting an ovation from persons of the lowest class. Mr. Gladstone was compared to Wilkes and Lord George Gordon. With characteristic tenacity he thought it worth while to contradict the story, but not in the columns where the offensive

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone had sat on the front opposition bench from 1847 to the defeat of the Russell govern- ment in Feb. 1852. See footnote, p. 631.

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1866. tale had been invented. In July, declining an invitation to speak at a demonstration in Hyde Park Mr. Gladstone said he believed the resignation of the government to be a fresh and important step towards final success. 'In the hour of defeat I have the presentiment of victory.'

An interesting glimpse of Mr. Gladstone in the height of these distractions is given in a passage from the diaries of Mr. Adams, still the American minister:—<sup>1</sup>

*Thursday, 7th June 1866.*—The other evening at the Queen's ball Mrs. Gladstone asked me as from her husband, to come to breakfast this morning, at the same time that Colonel Holmes,<sup>2</sup> was invited. . . . I decided to go. I found no cause to regret the decision, for the company was very pleasant. The Duke and Duchess of Argyll, Lord Lyttelton, Lord Houghton, Lord Frederick Cavendish with his wife, and one of his uncles, and several whom I did not know. I forgot Lord Dufferin. We sat at two round tables, thus dividing the company; but Mr. Gladstone took ours, which made all the difference in the world. His characteristic is the most extraordinary facility of conversation on almost any topic, with a great command of literary resources, which at once gives it a high tone. Lord Houghton, if put to it, is not without aptness in keeping it up; whilst the Duke of Argyll was stimulated out of his customary indifference to take his share. Thus we passed from politics, the House of Commons, and Mr. Mill, to English prose as illustrated from the time of Milton and Bacon down to this day, and contrasted with German, which has little of good, and with French. In the latter connection Mr. Gladstone asked me if I had read the *Conscrit* of Erckmann-Chatrion. Luckily for me, who have little acquaintance with the light current literature, I could say 'Yes,' and could contrast it favourably with the artificial manner of Hugo. It is a cause of wonder to me how a man like Gladstone, so deeply plunged in the current of politics, and in the duties of legislation and official labour, can find time to keep along with the ephemeral literature abroad as well as at home. After an hour thus spent we rose, and on a question proposed by

<sup>1</sup> *Charles Francis Adams*. By his son, p. 368. chusetts, and in 1902 appointed a judge of the United States Supreme Court.

<sup>2</sup> Son of Oliver Wendell Holmes, afterwards chief justice of Massa-

Colonel Holmes respecting a group of figures in china which stood in a corner, Mr. Gladstone launched forth into a disquisition on that topic, which he delights in, and illustrated his idea of the art by showing us several specimens of different kinds. One a grotesque but speaking figure in Capo di Monte, another a group of combatants, two of whom were lying dead with all the aspect of strained muscle stiffening; and lastly, a very classical and elegant set of Wedgwood ware, certainly finer than I ever saw before. This is the pleasantest and most profitable form of English society.

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Towards the close of the session (July 21) Mr. Gladstone presided over the annual dinner of the club founded in honour of Cobden, who had died the year before. As might have been foretold, he emphasised the moral rather than the practical results of Cobden's work. 'Public economy was with Cobden,' he said, 'nothing less than a moral principle. The temper and spirit of Mr. Cobden in respect to questions of public economy was a temper and a spirit that ought to be maintained, encouraged, and propagated in this country—a temper and spirit far more in vogue, far more honoured and esteemed and cultivated by both political parties twenty or thirty years ago than it is at the present moment.' An intense love of justice, a singleness of aim, a habit of judging men fairly and estimating them favourably, an absence of the suspicion that so often forms the bane of public life—these elements and all other such elements were to be found in the character of Cobden abundantly supplied. Mr. Cobden's was a mind incapable of entertaining the discussion of a question without fully weighing and estimating its moral aspects and results. In these words so justly applied to Cobden, the orator was doubtless depicting political ideals of his own.

## II

In the autumn Mr. Gladstone determined on going abroad with his wife and daughters. 'One among my reasons for going,' he told Mr. Brand, 'is that I think I am better out of the way of politics during the recess. In England I should find it most difficult to avoid for five minutes attend-

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ing some public celebration or other, especially in Lancashire. I think that I have said already in one way or other, all that I can usefully say, perhaps more than all. So far as I am concerned, I now leave the wound of the liberal party to the healing powers of nature. . . . If we cannot arrive in sufficient strength at a definite understanding with respect to the mode of handling the question of the franchise, then our line ought to be great patience and quietude in opposition. If we can, then certainly the existing government might at any time disappear, after the opening of the session I mean, with advantage.' 'The journey to Italy, says Phillimore, 'was really a measure of self-defence, to escape the incessant persecution of correspondence, suggestions, and solicitations.'

They left England in the last week of September, and proceeded direct to Rome. The Queen had given as one good reason against a change of ministers the dangerous outlook on the continent of Europe. This was the year of the Seven Weeks' War, the battle of Sadowa (July 3), and the triumph of Prussia over Austria, foreshadowing a more astonishing triumph four years hence. One of the results of Sadowa was the further consolidation of the Italian kingdom by the transfer of Venetia. Rome still remained outside. The political situation was notoriously provisional and unstable, and the French troops who had gone there in 1849 were still in their barracks at the Castle of St. Angelo. But this was no immediate concern of his. 'Nothing can be more unlikely,' he wrote to Acton (Sept. 11), 'than that I should meddle with the prisons, or anything else of the kind. The case of Rome in 1866 is very different from that of Naples in 1850, when the whole royal government was nothing but one gross and flagrant illegality. I have seen Archbishop Manning repeatedly,' he continues, 'and my impression is that he speaks to me after having sought and received his cue from Rome. He is to put me in communication with Cardinal Antonelli and others. I consider myself bound to good conduct in a very strict sense of the word.' We now know that the archbishop took pains to warn his friends at Rome to

show their visitor all the kindness possible. 'Gladstone,' he wrote, 'does not come as an enemy, and may be made friendly, or he might become on his return most dangerous.' The liberals would be very jealous of him on the subject of the temporal power of the pope. Meanwhile Gladstone fully held that the Holy Father must be independent. 'Towards us in England,' said Manning, 'and towards Ireland he is the most just and forgiving of all our public men. He is very susceptible of any kindness, and his sympathies and respect religiously are all with us.'<sup>1</sup>

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*To the Duchess of Sutherland.*

*Rome, Oct. 13.*—We had for five days together last week, I will not say a surfeit or a glut, for these imply excess and satiety, but a continuous feast of fine scenery; all the way from Pontarlier by Neuchâtel to Lucerne, and then by the St. Gothard to Como. Since then we have had only the passage of the Apennines by the railway from Ancona to Rome. This is much finer than the old road, according to my recollection. It has three grand stages, one of them rising from the north and east, the others through close defiles from Foligno to Terni, and from Spoleto to Narni, where we went close by the old bridge. As to the St. Gothard I think it the finest in scenery of all the Alpine passes I have seen, and I have seen all those commonly traversed from the Stelvio downwards (in height) to the Brenner, except the Bernardino. A part of the ascent on the Italian side may perhaps compete with the Via Mala which it somewhat resembles. We were also intensely delighted with the Lake of Lugano, which I had never seen before, and which appeared to me the most beautiful of the Italian lakes.

Here we find Rome solitary, which we wished, but also wet and dirty, which we did not. We hope it will soon be clear and dry. No scenery and no city can stand the stripping off its robe of atmosphere. And Rome, which is not *very* rich in its natural features, suffers in a high degree. We caught sight of the pope yesterday on the steps of St. Peter's, made our obeisance, and received that recognition with the hand which is very appropriate, and I imagine to him not at all troublesome. Next week I hope to see Cardinal Antonelli. We have been to-day to St. Paul's.

<sup>1</sup> Purcell, ii. p. 398.

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Its space is amazing, and at particular points it seems to vie with or exceed St. Peter's. But there can be no real comparison in magnificence, and St. Peter's is the more churchlike of the two. The exterior of St. Paul's [beyond the walls] is very mean indeed, and is in glaring contrast with the gorgeousness within.

Rome, Oct. 30.— . . . I observe reserve in conversation, except with such persons as cardinals. To two of them who wished me to speak freely I have spoken without any restraint about the great question immediately pending here. And next to them my most free and open conversation has been with the pope, but of course I did not go further than he led me, and on the affairs of Italy this was nearly all the way. I have seen him twice, once in an audience *quattr' occhi*, and once with my wife and daughters, Lady A. Stanley accompanying us. Nothing can be more pleasant than the impression made by his demeanour and language. He looks well and strong, but seems to have a slight touch of deafness.<sup>1</sup>

You ask about our 'apartment,' and I send you (partly to inform the Argylls, in the hope that they might take one of the floors) first a sketch of our general position, nearly opposite the Europa, and secondly a rude plan of the rooms. Half a bedroom unfortunately is cut off from bad management, and the Fratini rooms are much too small. Besides three rooms which we occupy there is another which we do not. We are boarded too, which saves much trouble, and we have the Stanleys here. We go quietly about our work of seeing Rome. The Vatican has been much enriched since I was here. The sculpture gallery is really wonderful in its superiority to all others. I think if I were allowed to choose two pieces I should perhaps take the Demosthenes and the Torso. The pictures have also secured valuable additions. The Palace of the Caesars since the French *scavi*, not by any means finished yet, offers a new world to view, and we expect to see another, probably next week, in the catacombs. Among modern works seen as yet I am most pleased with Tenerani's Psyche fainting. A German, Löwenthal, has done a very good picture of Gibson, and there has come up a singularly interesting portrait

<sup>1</sup> Oct. 22.—Saw the pope. Oct. 28. in French, rather miscellaneous. He  
—We went at 3 (reluctantly) to the was gracious as usual. N.B. his  
pope. Lady Augusta Stanley accom- reference to the papal coinages.—  
panied us. We had a conversation (*Diary*).



believed to be of Harvey. But it is idle to attempt to write of all the beauties and the marvels. The church here is satisfactory; the new clergyman, Mr. Crowther, introduced himself on Sunday with an admirable sermon. We expect the Clarendons to-night. We do Dante every morning, and are in the sixteenth canto.

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*Dec. 4.*—At last we have got the Argylls, and I need not say what an addition they are, even amidst the surpassing and absorbing interests that surround us. I hope for your approbation in that I have recommended to his notice a beautiful set of old Sèvres dinner plates, soft paste, which with great spirit he has purchased for little more, I believe, than half what the proprietor refused for them a while ago. I shall be much disappointed if you do not think them a valuable acquisition. I own that I should never have passed them on to a second purchaser had I not, when I first saw them, already got much too near the end of my own little tether. But Sèvres plates and all other 'objects' are of small interest in comparison with the great events that hang as great thick clouds in the heaven around us, yet tipped with broad gleams of light. To-day we are at length assured unconditionally of the departure of the French; in which I believed already on some grounds, including this, that General Count Montebello had ordered sixteen boxes to be packed with the spoils of Rome, or his share of them. This departure of the might of France represented in the garrison, takes a weight off Roman wills and energies, which has for seventeen years bowed them to the ground. With what kind of bound will they spring up again, and what ugly knocks may be given in the process?

The trip was not in every respect successful. On Christmas day, he writes to Brand: 'We have had some discomforts. Our apartments twice on fire, a floor burnt through each time. Then I was laid down with a most severe influenza: very sore throat, a thing quite new to me. The Roman climate is as bad for me as can be.' I have been told by one who saw much of the party during the Roman visit, that Mr. Gladstone seemed to care little or not at all about wonders of archæology alike in Christian and pagan Rome, but never wearied of hearing Italian sermons from priests and preaching friars. This was consonant with the whole temper of his life. He

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was a collector of ivories, of china, of Wedgwood, but in architecture in all its high historic bearings I never found him very deeply interested. I doubt if he followed the controversies about French Gothic and Italian, about Byzantine and Romanesque, with any more concern than he had in the controversies of geology. He had two audiences of Pope Pius IX., as we have seen, as had others of his colleagues then in Rome; and Mr. Gladstone used to tell with much glee in what diverse fashion they impressed the pontiff. 'I like but I do not understand Mr. Gladstone,' the pope said; 'Mr. Cardwell I understand, but I do not like; I both like and understand Lord Clarendon; the Duke of Argyll I neither understand nor like.' He saw ten of the cardinals, and at Florence he had an audience of the king 'who spoke very freely'; he had two long interviews with Ricasoli; and some forty or fifty members of the Italian parliament gave him the honour of a dinner at which Poerio made a most eloquent speech. To the Duchess of Sutherland he wrote:—

*Florence, Jan. 13, 1867.*—Yesterday Argyll, Cardwell, and I went to the king. He spoke with an astounding freedom; freely concerning the pope and the emperor, hopeful about Italy in general, rather feebly impressed with the financial difficulty, and having his head stuffed full of military notions which it would be very desirable to displace. We have rumours from England of reform and of no reform; but we do not trouble ourselves overmuch about these matters. To-morrow I am to be entertained by a number of the deputies in memory especially of the Naples letters. I shrank from this, as I have long ago been much over praised and over paid for the affair, but I could not find a proper ground for refusing. The dinner is to be a private one, but I suppose some notice of it will find its way into the journals. It is a curious proof of the way in which a free and open press has taken hold here, that the newspapers are ordinarily habitually cried in the streets until near midnight!

Among other objects of his keen and active interest was the preservation for its established uses of the famous monastery founded by St. Benedict thirteen centuries before at Monte Cassino,—the first home of that great

rule and institute which for long ages played so striking a part in the history of civilisation in the western world. He now visited Monte Cassino in the company of Padre Tosti. The historian of this venerable nursery of learning was his friend long before now—they met first at Naples in 1850—and he had induced Mr. Gladstone to subscribe for the reparation of the tomb of the founder. In 1863 Dean Stanley visited the monastery with a letter from Mr. Gladstone: 'It secured for me not only the most hospitable reception, but an outpouring of Padre Tosti's whole soul on pope and church, and Italy and Europe, past and present, in an almost unbroken conversation of three hours.' In 1866, it seemed as if the hand of the Italian government were about to fall as heavily on Monte Cassino as on any other monastic establishment. Mr. Gladstone besides doing his best with Ricasoli and others, wrote a letter of admirable spirit to his friend Sir James Lacaita:—

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It seems, he said, as if one of the lamps of learning were put out; much promise for the future extinguished; and a sacred link of union with the past broken. If it be asked why Englishmen should speak and feel on this Italian subject, my answer would be this: that the foundation and history of Monte Cassino have the interest for us which the Americans of the States feel in Alfred, in Edward III., in Henry V. They are part of the great current of Italian civilisation which has been diffused and distributed over all European lands. Much of my life has been devoted to the promotion of public wealth, and of that vast exterior activity which distinguishes the age; but I am deeply anxious for the preservation of all those centres, not too numerous, at which the power of thought may be cultivated, and the inner and higher life of man maintained. It has, as you know, been pressed upon me that I should endeavour to make a respectful appeal to the Italian government on this subject through the medium of a discussion in the House of Commons. But I shrink from taking such a course, as I fear that the general effect might be to present an appearance of intrusive and impertinent interference with the affairs of a foreign country, and that the very country towards which I should least wish to offer the appearance of a slight.

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I cannot likewise refuse to cherish the hope that the enlightened mind of Baron Ricasoli and his colleagues may lead them either to avert or mitigate this blow.

On his return he passed through Paris. In 1865 a signal honour had been bestowed upon him by the illustrious Institute of France—founded on that Academy, in which Richelieu had crowned the fame of arms and statesmanship by honour to purity in national language and competence in letters.<sup>1</sup> In acknowledging the election, he wrote to Mignet, the historian, then perpetual secretary:—

11 *Carlton House Terrace*, March 9, 1865.—I have already expressed although in an imperfect manner to your distinguished colleagues Count Wolowski and M. Guizot, the sentiments of gratitude with which I accept the signal and most unexpected honour of my election as a foreign associate of the Institute of France. Even the pressure, and what I might call the tumult, of my daily occupations do not render me insensible to the nature of this distinction, which carries with it a world-wide fame. I will not, however, dwell further on the nature of the honour, or on my own unworthiness to receive it: except to refer for a moment to the gentleman whose name was placed in competition with my own. I cannot but be aware of his superior claims. I fear that, for once, the judgment of the Academy has erred, and that in preferring me to Mr. Mill, its suffrages have taken a wrong direction. I am only consoled by reflecting that such a body, with such renown, and with its ranks so filled, can afford to suffer the detriment attaching to a single mistake. I have the honour to be, etc.

This distinction brought with it the duty of attending the funeral of a writer eminent among the philosophers and men of letters of his day. It had been said of him that three days in the week he was absurd, three days mediocre, and one day sublime. The verdict seems to be confirmed.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone was elected by 27 votes out of 29, two being cast for J. S. Mill. The minister of instruction wrote:—'Veuillez croire, monsieur, qu'il n'est pas de décret que j'aie contresigné avec plus de bonheur que celui qui rattache à notre Institut de France un homme dont le savoir littéraire, l'habileté politique, et l'éloquence sont l'orgueil de l'Angleterre.'

*Jan. 23.*—From 10 to 3.45 at the successive stages of Victor Cousin's internment, in my character of member of the Institute. It was of great interest. I saw many most eminent Frenchmen, so many that they remained as a cloud upon my recollection, except Berryer, Thiers, and some whom I had known before.

*Jan. 26.*—Attended the meeting of the Institute 12-2. Spent the rest of the afternoon with M. Jules Simon in seeing certain quarters of Paris.

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'Yesterday,' he wrote to Mr. Brand (Jan. 27), 'a dinner was given to Cardwell and me at the Grand Hotel, by the Society of Political Economists of France, and I did my best to improve the occasion in terms which might imply censure on the military measures here and the new turn of affairs. Also I am a known accomplice of M. Fould's. So I let all this be balanced by dining with the Emperor to-day, and with Rouher to-morrow.' Of the reception at court, he says 'Dined at the Tuileries, and was surprised at the extreme attention and courtesies of both their majesties, with whom I had much interesting conversation.' The fates with no halting foot were drawing near. The palace was a heap of ashes, host and hostess were forlorn exiles, before in no long span of time they met their guest again.'

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE STRUGGLE FOR HOUSEHOLD SUFFRAGE

(1867)

FIRST of all we had a general intimation and promise that something would be done; then a series of resolutions, which strutted a brief hour upon the stage and then disappeared; then there was a bill, which we were told, on the authority of a cabinet minister, was framed in ten minutes, and which was withdrawn in very little more than ten minutes; and lastly, there was a bill which—undergoing the strangest transformations in its course through parliament—did, I will not say, become the law of the land, but was altered into something like that which became the law of the land.—GLADSTONE.

BOOK V. FROM Rome Mr. Gladstone kept a watchful eye for the approaching political performances at Westminster. He has written to Mr. Brand a month after his arrival:—

51 P. di Spagna, Oct. 30, '66.—The Clarendons are to be here this evening to stay for a fortnight or three weeks. Dean and Lady A. Stanley are in the house with us. I doubt if there are any other English parties in Rome.

The reform movement is by degrees complicating the question. It is separating Bright from us, and in one sense thus clearing our way. But then it may become too strong for us; or at least too strong to be stayed with our bill of last year. I do not envy Lord Derby and his friends their reflections this autumn on the course they have pursued. Meanwhile I wish that our press, as far as we may be said to have one, would write on this text: *that a bill from them, to be accepted by the people, must be larger, and not smaller, than would have been, or even would be, accepted from us.* For confidence, or credit, stands in politics in lieu of ready money. If, indeed, your enemy is stronger than you are, you must take what he gives you. But in this case

he is weaker, and not stronger. A good bill from them would save us much trouble and anxiety. A straightforward bill, such as an £8 franchise without tricks, would be easily dealt with. But their bill will be neither good nor straightforward. The mind of Disraeli, as leader of the House of Commons, and standing as he does among his compeers, will predominate in its formation. Now he has made in his lifetime three attempts at legislation—the budget of 1852, the India bill of 1858, the Reform bill of 1859. All have been thoroughly tortuous measures. And the Ethiopian will not change his skin. His Reform bill of 1867 will be tortuous too. But if you have to drive a man out of a wood, you must yourself go into the wood to drive him. We may have to meet a tortuous bill by a tortuous motion. This is what I am afraid of, and what I am, for one, above all things anxious to avoid. In 1859 the liberal party had to play the obstructive, and with evil consequences. It would be most unfortunate if they should be put into such a position again. Pray consider this. I do not like what I see of Bright's speeches. We have no claim upon him, more than the government have on us; and I imagine he will part company the moment he sees his way to more than we would give him.

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## II

The general character of the operations of 1867, certainly one of the most curious in our parliamentary history, was described by Mr. Gladstone in a fragment written thirty years after. Time had extinguished the volcanic fires, and the little outline is sketched with temper and a sort of neutrality:—

When the parliament reassembled in 1867, parties and groups were curiously distributed. The two great bodies were the regular supporters of the tory ministry, and those grouped around us who had been expelled. The first did not know what course they would have to take; that depended on the secret counsels of another mind. To keep to the *drapeau* was the guiding motive, as it has been since the creed and practice of Peel were subverted by the opposite principles of Disraeli, who on a franchise question had his peer colleagues at his feet. Besides these, other divisions had to be recognised. The Salisbury secession from the govern-

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ment, supported by Sir W. Heathcote and Beresford Hope, was high in character, but absolutely insignificant in numbers. There was Lowe, so great among the Adullamites of 1866, but almost alone among them in the singleness and strength of his opposition to reform. There was the bulk of the Adullamite body, unable to place themselves in declared opposition to the liberal mass, but many of them disposed to tamper with the question, and to look kindly on the tory government as the power which would most surely keep down any enlargement of the franchise to its minimum.

It would be idle to discuss the successive plans submitted by the government to the House of Commons with an unexampled rapidity. The governing idea of the man who directed the party seemed to be not so much to consider what ought to be proposed and carried, as to make sure that, whatever it was, it should be proposed and carried by those now in power. The bill on which the House of Commons eventually proceeded was a measure, I should suppose, without precedent or parallel, as, on the other hand it was, for the purpose of the hour, and as the work of a government in a decided minority, an extraordinary stroke of parliamentary success. Our position, on the other hand, was this: (1) We felt that if household suffrage were to be introduced into the boroughs, it ought to be a real household suffrage. (2) The existing state of our legislation, under which a large majority of the householders made no disbursement of rates, but paid them without distinction in their rent, showed that a bill professedly for household suffrage, but taking no notice of compounding, would be in the first place a lottery, and in the second an imposture. Some towns would have large enfranchisement, some none at all, and no principle but the accidental state of local law would determine on which side of the line any town was to be found. And the aggregate result would be ludicrously small as a measure of enfranchisement. Of such a measure we could not approve. We did not wish to make at once so wide a change as that involved in a genuine household suffrage (always in our minds involving county as well as town), and we could not fairly separate ourselves from Bright on such a point. (3) So we adhered to our idea of an extension, considerable but not violent, and performing all it promised.



But the Adullamite spirit went to work, and finding that the bill had the popular recommendation of a great phrase [household suffrage], combined with the recommendation to them of a narrow sphere of practical operation, determined to support the principle of the bill and abandon our plan, although our mode of operation had been warmly approved at party meetings held at my house. The result was in a tactical sense highly damaging to us. Perhaps we ought to have recognised that the idea of household suffrage, when the phrase had once been advertised by a government as its battle-ground, was irresistible, and that the only remaining choice was whether it should be a household suffrage cribbed, cabined, and confined by the condition of personal ratepaying, or a household suffrage fairly conforming in substance and operation to the idea that the phrase conveyed. The first was in our view totally inadmissible; the second beyond the wants and wishes of the time. But the government, it must be admitted, bowled us over by the force of the phrase; and made it our next duty to bowl them over by bringing the reality of the bill into correspondence with its great profession. This we were able to do in some degree, when we reached the committee, for some of the restrictions included in the measure were such as the double-facing liberal fringe did not venture to uphold against the assaults of their own party. But the grand question of compound householding, which was really to determine the character of our legislation, was one on which we could not reckon upon either the conscientious or the intimidated and prudential support of our liberal fringe. The government were beyond all doubt, at least for the moment, masters of the situation. The question was raised, if not in its fullest breadth yet in a form of considerable efficiency, by a proposal from Mr. Hodgkinson, member for Newark, and a local solicitor little known in the House.<sup>1</sup> He went there to support it, but without an idea that it could be carried, and anticipating its defeat by a majority of a hundred. Never have I undergone a stranger emotion of surprise than when, as I was entering the House, our whip met me and stated that Disraeli was about to

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<sup>1</sup> This proposal was in effect to of parliamentary boroughs. Carried abolish compounding in the limits. May 27.

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 V. was adopted without disturbance, as if it had been an affair of  
 1867. trivial importance.

How it came about I partially learned at a later date. A cabinet was held after the fact, which Sir John Lambert, the great statistician of the day, was summoned to attend. The cabinet had had no idea that the Hodgkinson amendment was to be accepted; the acceptance was the sole act of Mr. Disraeli; and when it had been done the ministers assembled in order to learn from Sir John Lambert what was the probable addition that it would make to the constituency.

I do not suppose that in the whole history of the 'mystery-man,' this proceeding can be surpassed. The Tories, having been brought to accept household suffrage on the faith of the limitation imposed by personal payment of the rates, found at a moment's notice that that limitation had been thrown overboard, and that their leader had given them a bill virtually far larger than any that Mr. Bright had sought to impose upon them. It was certainly no business of ours to complain, and they made it no business of theirs. I imagine that they still relied upon rectification of the bill by the House of Lords. And the Lords did rectify it largely; but these rectifications were all rejected when the bill returned to us, except the minority [representation], which Mr. Disraeli was strong enough to secure by means of the votes of a body of liberals who approved it, and which he accepted to humour or comfort the Lords a little, while he detested it, and made, as Bright said, the best speech ever delivered against it. So came about the establishment of an effective household suffrage in the cities and boroughs of England.

### III

The process effecting this wide extension of political power to immense classes hitherto without it, was in every respect extraordinary. The great reform was carried by a parliament elected to support Lord Palmerston, and Lord Palmerston detested reform. It was carried by a government in a decided minority. It was carried by a minister and by a leader of opposition, neither of whom was at the time in the full confidence of his party. Finally, it was

carried by a House of Commons that the year before had, in effect, rejected a measure for the admission of only 400,000 new voters, while the measure to which it now assented added almost a million voters to the electorate.<sup>1</sup>

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We always do best to seek rational explanations in large affairs. It may be true that 'if there were no blunders there would be no politics,' but when we have made full allowance for blunder, caprice, chance, folly, craft, still reason and the nature of things have a share. The secret of the strange reversal in 1867 of all that had been said, attempted, and done in 1866, would seem to be that the tide of public opinion had suddenly swelled to flood. The same timidity that made the ruling classes dread reform, had the compensation that very little in the way of popular demonstration was quite enough to frighten them into accepting it. Here the demonstration was not little. Riots in Hyde Park, street processions measured by the mile in the great cities from London up to Glasgow, open-air meetings attended by a hundred, two hundred, two hundred and fifty thousand people at Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, showed that even though the workmen might not be anxious to demand the franchise, yet they would not stand its refusal. In the autumn of 1866 Mr. Bright led a splendid campaign in a series of speeches in England, Scotland, and Ireland, marked by every kind of power. It is worthy of remark that not one of the main changes of that age was carried in parliament without severe agitation out of doors. Catholic emancipation was won by O'Connell; the reform act of 1832 by the political unions; free trade by the league against the corn law. Household suffrage followed the same rule.

It was undoubtedly true in a sense that Mr. Gladstone was at the head of a majority in 1866, and now again in 1867. But its composition was peculiar. Sir Thomas Acland (April 10, 1867) describes Mr. Gladstone as hampered by three sets of people:—1. Radicals, who will vote for household suffrage, but don't want it carried. 2. Whigs (aristocrats), who won't risk a collision with the government, and hope

<sup>1</sup> The electorate was enlarged from 1,352,970 in 1867 to 2,243,259 in 1870.

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that very little reform will be carried, and want to discredit Gladstone. 3. A large body who care for nothing except to avoid a dissolution.' 'There is a fresh intrigue,' he adds, 'every twelve hours.'

The trenchant and sardonic mind of the leader of the revolt that had destroyed the bill of 1866, soon found food for bitter rumination. On the eve of the session Lowe admitted that he had very little hope of a successful end to his efforts, and made dismal protests that the reign of reason was over. In other words, he had found out that the men whom he had placed in power, were going to fling him overboard in what he called this miserable auction between two parties, at which the country was put up for sale, and then knocked down to those who could produce the readiest and swiftest measure for its destruction.

The liberal cave of the previous year was broken up; Lowe and the ablest of its old denizens now voting with Mr. Gladstone, but the great majority going with the government. The place of the empty cave was taken by a new group of dissidents, named from their habitat the party of the Tea-Room. Many, both whigs above the gangway and even radicals below, were averse to bringing Lord Russell and Mr. Gladstone back again; they thought a bill would have a better chance with the Tories than with the old leaders. Insubordination and disorganization were complete. 'I have never seen anything like it,' says the new Lord Halifax;<sup>1</sup> 'but the state of things this year enables me to understand what was very inexplicable in all I heard of last year.' We can hardly wonder that the strain was often difficult to bear. A friend, meeting Mr. Gladstone at dinner about this time (March 25), thought that he saw signs of irritated nerve. 'What an invaluable gift,' he reflects, 'a present of phlegm from the gods would be! If we could roll up Thompson [master of Trinity] or Bishop Thirlwall with him and then bisect the compound, we should get a pair as invincible as the Dioscuri.' An accomplished observer told his constituents that one saw

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Wood had been created Viscount Halifax on his resignation of the India Office in 1866.

the humour of the great parliamentary chess tournament, looking at the pieces on the board and the face of Disraeli; its tragic side in a glimpse of the face of Gladstone; in the mephistophelian nonchalance of one, the melancholy earnestness of the other.<sup>1</sup>

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Everybody knew that Disraeli, as he watched the scene from behind his mask, now and again launching a well-devised retort, was neither liked nor trusted, though more than a little feared; and that Gladstone, with his deeply lined face, his 'glare of contentious eagerness,' his seeming over-righteousness, both chafed his friends and exasperated his foes. As it was excellently put by a critic in the press,—the House was indifferent, and Mr. Gladstone was earnest; the House was lax and he was strict; it was cynical about popular equality, and he was enthusiastic; it was lazy about details, he insisted upon teaching it the profoundest minutiae.<sup>2</sup> About this time, Lord Russell told Lord Halifax that he had gone down to see his brother the Duke of Bedford when he was dying, and had said to him that things were drifting into the country being governed by Disraeli and Gladstone, and the Duke observed that neither of them was fit for it. And Halifax himself went on to say that Gladstone had, in truth, no sympathy or connection with any considerable party in the House of Commons. For the old whig party remembered him as an opponent for many years; the radicals knew that on many points, especially on all church matters, he did not agree with them, and though they admired his talents, and hailed his recent exertions in favour of reform, they had no great attachment to him, nor did he seem to be personally popular with any of them.

Far away from the world of politics, we have an estimate of Mr. Gladstone at this time from the piercing satirist of his age. 'Is not he at any rate a man of principle,' said a quaker lady to Carlyle. 'Oh, Gladstone!' the sage replied, 'I did hope well of him once, and so did John Sterling, though I heard he was a Puseyite and so forth; still it seemed the right thing for a state to feel itself bound to

<sup>1</sup> Grant Duff, *Elgin Speeches*, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Spectator*, April 20.

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God, and to lean on Him, and so I hoped that something might come of him. But now, he has been declaiming that England is such a wonderfully prosperous state, meaning that it has plenty of money in its breeches pocket. . . . But that's not the prosperity we want. And so I say to him, "You are not the life-giver to England. I go my way, you go yours, good morning (with a most dramatic and final bow)." <sup>1</sup> England however thought otherwise about life-givers, and made a bow of a completely different sort. Yet not at once. It was Mr. Disraeli who played the leading part in this great transaction, not by inventing the phrase of household suffrage, for that principle was Mr. Bright's; nor by giving his bill the shape in which it ultimately became law, for that shape was mainly due to Mr. Gladstone, but as the mind by whose secret counsels the arduous and intricate manœuvre was directed. 'The most wonderful thing,' wrote Bishop Wilberforce at the end of the session, 'is the rise of Disraeli. It is not the mere assertion of talent. He has been able to teach the House of Commons almost to ignore Gladstone, and at present lords it over him, and, I am told, says that he will hold him down for twenty years.'<sup>2</sup> If Mr. Disraeli said this, he proved almost as much mistaken as when Fox was confident of holding the young Pitt down in 1783. Still he impressed his rival. 'I met Gladstone at breakfast,' says Lord Houghton (May), 'he seems quite awed by the diabolical cleverness of Dizzy.' Awe, by no means the right word, I fancy.

## IV

On April 12 the first act of the Reform question of 1867 ended in an awkward crisis for Mr. Gladstone. The details of the story are intricate and not much to our purpose. Mr. Gladstone's version printed above discovers its general features. Some particulars, properly biographic, will fill up his sketch. 'If you have to drive a man out of a wood,' Mr. Gladstone said, 'you must yourself go into the wood to drive him.' The bystander of a later time, however, may be content to keep outside the thicket until the driver

<sup>1</sup> *Memories, etc., of Miss Caroline Fox*, p. 339 (March 5, 1867).

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Wilberforce*, iii. p. 227.

and the driven both emerge. Mr. Disraeli began by preparing a series of resolutions—platitudes with little relation to realities. He told the House that reform should no longer be allowed to determine the fate of cabinets, and the House laughed. Yet if Mr. Disraeli had only at this time enjoyed the advantage of a better character—if he had been Althorp, Russell, Peel—instead of laughing, his hearers would perhaps have recognised good sense and statesmanship. As he said later, whig prime ministers, coalition prime ministers, coalition chancellors of the exchequer, had one after another had their innings, and with a majority at their back; was it not well now to try something that might be carried by consent? Under pressure from Mr. Gladstone the government explained their plan, dropped the resolutions, and brought in a bill.<sup>1</sup> Men were to have votes who had university degrees, or were members of learned professions, or had thirty pounds in a savings bank, or fifty pounds in the funds, or paid a pound in direct taxes; but the fighting point was that every householder who paid rates should have a vote. A scheme for seats accompanied. To comfort his party for giving so wide a suffrage, the minister provided checks by conferring a double vote on certain classes of citizens, and imposing strict terms as to residence. Three members of his cabinet, of whom Lord Cranborne was the most important, refused the unsubstantial solace and resigned. But Mr. Disraeli saw that he would regain by disorganizing his opponents more than he would lose by dislocating his friends.

Mr. Gladstone flew down upon the plan with energy, as a measure of illusory concessions, and securities still more illusory. His speech was taken in some quarters in a conservative sense, for Lowe at once wrote to him (March 21) urging him to follow it up by resisting the second reading on the principle of fighting rent against rating. Since Callimachus, the Athenian polemarch, had to give the casting vote at Marathon when the ten generals were equally divided on the question of fighting the Persians or not fighting, 'no one,' cried Lowe, 'ever had a weightier cause to decide' than Mr. Gladstone now. He forgot that the brave Callimachus was

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<sup>1</sup> March 18.

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slain, and Mr. Gladstone would in a political sense have been slain likewise if he had taken Lowe's advice, for, as he says, Disraeli had by talk of household suffrage 'bowled them over.' A meeting of 278 liberals was held at his house, and he addressed them for nearly an hour, concurring not over-willingly in the conclusion that they should not resist the second reading.<sup>1</sup> He had a long conversation with Mr. Bright two days before, whom he found 'sensible, moderate, and firm,' and whose view was no doubt the opposite of Lowe's. The bill was read a second time without a division (March 26).

A few entries in Sir Robert Phillimore's journal help us to realise the state of the case during this extraordinary session:—

*April 9.*—Entire collapse of Gladstone's attack on government yesterday. *Tea-room* schism of liberal members, including the H. of C. Russells. Disraeli's insolent triumph. 10.—Returned to the Coppice with Ld. Richard Cavendish. He tells me Hastings Russell and his brother cannot bear Gladstone as their leader. 12.—In the middle of the day saw Gladstone and Mrs. Gladstone. His *disgust* and *deep mortification* at the defection of his party, mingled with due sense of the loyalty of the greater number, and especially of his old cabinet. The expression of my wish that, if deserted, he will abdicate and leave them to find another leader fully responded to by him. 13.—Defeat of the opposition last night; great triumph of Disraeli; a surprise, I believe, to both parties; 289 voted with Gladstone. What will he do? *Query.*—Ought he on account of the defection of 20 to leave so considerable a party?

The occasion just mentioned marked a climax. Mr. Gladstone moved an amendment to remove the personal payment of rates as an essential qualification, and to confer the franchise on the householder whether he paid the rate direct or through the landlord. The next day the diary records:—*April 12.*—

<sup>1</sup> 'Gladstone,' says Lord Selborne, 'would have been ready to oppose Disraeli's bill as a whole, if he could have overcome the reluctance of his followers. But when a meeting was

called to take counsel on the situation, it became apparent that this could not be done' (*Memorials*, Part II. i. pp. 68-9).



'Spoke in reply and voted in 289-310. A smash perhaps without example. A victory of 21 for ministers.' A new secession had taken place, and 43 liberal members voted with the government, while nearly 20 were absent. The Cranborne secession was small, and some who had been expected to stay away voted with the government. 'Gladstone expressed himself strongly to five or six members of the late government whom he summoned to his house in the morning. He spoke of retiring to a back bench, and announcing that he would give up the ostensible post of leader of the opposition. He was dissuaded from doing this at the present moment, and went out of town, as indeed did almost everybody else.'<sup>1</sup> Still the notion of a back bench did lodge itself in his mind for long. The 'smash' was undoubtedly severe. As Mr. Gladstone wrote to one of the members for the City, a supporter, it showed that the liberals whose convictions allowed united action upon reform were not a majority but a minority of the House of Commons. Considering the large number who supported his proposal, he told his correspondent that though he would move no further amendment of his own, he was not less willing than heretofore to remain at the service of the party. 'The friendly critics,' he said to Brand, 'note a tone of despondency in my letter to Crawford. That is all owing to Granville and others who cut off a fine peacock's tail that I had appended.' So day after day amid surf and breakers he held to his oar. If Mr. Gladstone was much buffeted in the house of his friends, he was not without valiant backers, and among them none was more stout than Mr. Bright, the least effusive of all men in the direction of large panegyric. Speaking to his constituents at Birmingham, 'Who is there in the House of Commons,' he demanded, 'who equals Mr. Gladstone in knowledge of all political questions? Who equals him in earnestness? Who equals him in eloquence? Who equals him in courage and fidelity to his convictions? If these gentlemen who say they will not follow him have any one who is equal, let them show him. If they can point out any statesman who can add

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<sup>1</sup> *Halifax Papers.*

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dignity and grandeur to the stature of Mr. Gladstone, let them produce him.' A deputation against the bill from some popular body came to him (May 11). Mr. Disraeli at once regretted that these 'sputters of stale sedition,' these 'obsolete incendiaries,' should have come forward to pay their homage to one who, wherever he may sit, must always remain the pride and ornament of the House—

Who but must laugh if such a man there be?  
Who would not weep if Atticus were he?

V

To the Duchess of Sutherland Mr. Gladstone wrote (July 9):—

I do not plead guilty to the indictment for 'non-attendance.' I think that for three months I have been in the House for more hours than the Speaker. I have heard every important word that has been spoken on the Reform bill, and at least nine-tenths of all the words. True, outside the Reform bill I only attend when I think there is a chance of being useful; and in the present state of the House these opportunities are few. I act from no personal motive. But for me to be present and interfere continuously, or so far continuously as I might in other circumstances, would exhibit needlessly from day to day the divisions and consequent weakness of the liberal party. I admit also that time tells on a man of my age and temperament; and my brain tells me that I want more rest and not less. Is this unreasonable? I am against all needless waste of life or anything else. Everything should be husbanded. I must add that more attendance would but aggravate the susceptibility which depends on nerves rather than will, and already makes my attendance less useful.

The Phillimore diary gives us one or two glimpses more:—

May 9.—Carnarvon delighted with Gladstone's speech at S.P.G. meeting. 10.—Called on Gladstone in bed at 1.30. Ill from effect of the great exertion of yesterday.—S.P.G. in the morning, H. of C. in the evening. . . . The effect of these defeats of Gladstone in the H. of C. has been to bind the whigs closer to him. 24.—The dinner to Brand and presentation of plate deferred, ostensibly on the ground of his health and necessity of going to German

waters, really because at present Gladstone refuses to take the chair at the dinner, though attached to Brand, because many who had deserted him (G.) would attend the dinner. Gladstone will not countenance the appearance of a sham union when the party is discredited. *June 7.*—Attack on Gladstone as being in debt 'hard pressed by creditors,' and therefore wishing for office. The malice against him is wonderful. *29.*—Dined at Newspaper Press Fund. Gladstone in the chair, made a really faultless speech. Never did I hear his voice better, nor the flow of his eloquence more unbroken.

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Two or three items more from Mr. Gladstone's diary are worth recording:—

*May 6.*—The underground tone of the House most unsatisfactory. *May 9.*—Spoke earnestly and long for compound householders, in vain. Beaten by 322-256. Much fatigued by heat and work. *May 28.*—Spoke (perforce) on Disraeli's astonishing declaration of consistency. *July 15.*—Third reading of Reform bill. A remarkable night. Determined at the last moment not to take part in the debate, for fear of doing mischief on our own side.

The conservative leader himself was exposed to onslaughts from his followers and confederates of the previous year as severe as have ever fallen on the head of an English party. 'Never,' cried Mr. Lowe, in desolation and chagrin, 'never was there tergiversation so complete. Such conduct may fail or not; it may lead to the retention or the loss of office; but it merits alike the contempt of all honest men, and the execration of posterity.' Lord Cranborne, the chief conservative seceder, described the bill in its final shape, after undergoing countless transformations, as the result of the adoption of the principles of Bright at the dictation of Gladstone. It was at Mr. Gladstone's demand that lodgers were invested with votes; that the dual vote, voting papers, educational franchise, savings-bank franchise, all disappeared; that the distribution of seats was extended into an operation of enormously larger scale. In his most biting style, Lord Cranborne deplored that the House should have applauded a policy of legerdemain; talked about borrowing their ethics from the

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political adventurer; regretted, above all things, that the Reform bill should have been purchased at the cost of a political betrayal that had no parallel in our parliamentary annals, and that struck at the very root of that mutual confidence which is the very soul of our party government.

Merciless storms of this kind Mr. Disraeli bore imperturbably. He complained of the intolerant character of the discussions. 'Everybody who does not agree with somebody else is looked upon as a fool, or as being mainly influenced by a total want of principle in the conduct of public affairs.' He doubted whether Mr. Bright or anybody else could show that the tory party had changed their opinions. He had not changed his own opinions; the bill was in harmony with the general policy they had always maintained, though adapted, of course, to the requirements of the year. On Mr. Lowe's 'most doleful vaticinations that ever were heard,' about the new voters repudiating the national debt and adopting an inconvertible paper currency, he poured easy ridicule. Yet only a year before this Mr. Disraeli himself had prophesied that the end of a seven pound franchise would be a parliament of no statesmanship, no eloquence, no learning, no genius. 'Instead of these you will have a horde of selfish and obscure mediocrities, incapable of anything but mischief, and that mischief devised and regulated by the raging demagogue of the hour.'

Mr. Gladstone summed the matter up in a sentence to Dr. Pusey:—'We have been passing through a strange and eventful year: a deplorable one, I think, for the character and conduct of the House of Commons, but yet one of promise for the country, though of a promise not unmixed with evils.'

## CHAPTER XV

### OPENING OF THE IRISH CAMPAIGN

(1868)

'I CLAIM not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party or any man desired or expected.'—ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1864).

WRITING to his brother-in-law, Lord Lyttelton, in April 1865, Mr. Gladstone sets out pretty summarily the three incidents that had been taken to mark the line of his advance in the paths of extreme and visionary politics. When it was written, his speech on the franchise the previous year had not ripened,<sup>1</sup> and his speech on the Irish church was only on the eve, nor did he yet know it, of taking shape as a deliberate policy of action.

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#### *To Lord Lyttelton.*

11 *Carlton House Terrace, S.W.*, April 9, '65.—Our interesting conversation of Wednesday evening, which looked before and after, and for your share in which I heartily thank you, has led me to review the subject matters, a process which every man in public life as well as elsewhere ought often to perform, but which the pressure of overwork, and the exhaustion it leaves behind, sadly hinder. But I sum up in favour of a verdict of 'Not guilty,' on the following grounds.

As far as I know, there are but three subjects which have exposed me to the charge of radicalism: the Irish church, the franchise, the paper duty, and the consequent struggle with the House of Lords.

My opinions on the Irish church were, I know, those of New-

<sup>1</sup> See above p. 760.

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castle and Sidney Herbert twenty years ago; and they were not radicals. Ever since Maynooth, in 1845, I have seen that resistance *in principle* was gone. That was the main reason which led me to make such a serious affair of my own case about the Maynooth grant in that year. But I held this embryo opinion in my mind as there was no cause to precipitate it into life, and waited to fortify or alter or invalidate it by the teachings of experience. At last the time for speaking, and therefore for formulating my ideas came, and I have spoken according as I believe to be the sense of all the leading men with whom I acted from Peel's death onwards, and within the sense not only of Lord Macaulay, but of the present Lord Grey.

With respect to the franchise, my belief is that the objection taken to my speech really turned not upon the doctrine of *prima facie* title, but upon the fact that it was a speech decisively and warmly in favour of the £6 franchise or something equivalent to it. That is to say, of the very franchise which as a member of the cabinet I had supported in 1860, on the credit and promise of which Lord Derby had been put out in 1859, and which, if it did not appear in the Aberdeen Reform bill of 1852, was represented there by other concessions equally large. The truth is this, that ever since the Aberdeen Reform bill, I have remained just where it placed me; but many seem to think that it is a subject to be played with or traded on. In thinking and acting otherwise I feel myself to be upholding principles essential to the confidence of the people in governments and parliaments, and also a measure which promises by reasonably widening the basis of our institutions to strengthen the structure above.

To the repeal of the paper duty the House of Commons, when led by the Derby government, chose to commit itself unanimously, and this at a time when the tea duty was at 17d. per lb. In 1860 and 1861 the cabinet considered the respective claims, and took the same course which the Derby government had assisted the House of Commons to take before. Upon this it was found that the measure which they had approved had become in my hands a radical one; the House of Lords was encouraged to rescue the finance of the country from the hands of the House of Commons; and the claims of tea were declared to be paramount to those of

paper. In proposing the repeal of the last remaining excise duty upon a simple article of manufacture, I adopted a principle which had already received an unanimous acceptance. In resisting to the uttermost of my power the encroachment of the House of Lords, I acted, as I believe, on the only principle which makes it practicable to defend the true, legitimate, and constitutional powers of that House itself against encroachment from other quarters.

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Now let me look at the other side of the question. On church rates, on university tests, on clerical subscription (the two last being the only two questions really of principle which, as far as I remember, have been raised), I have held my ground; and on the two last the cabinet of which I form a part has in the main adopted a course essentially (but with a little *c*) conservative.

The question of franchise was settled, the question of the powers of the Lords in matters of taxation was settled. The Irish church held its ground. In 1865 Mr. Gladstone voted against a radical member who had moved that the case of the Irish church 'called for the early attention of the government.' He agreed with the mover on the merits, but did not believe that the time had come. In 1866, when he was leader of the House, he concurred with Lord Russell, then first minister, in meeting a motion against the Irish church, with a direct negative. 'In meeting a question with a negative,' he wrote to the Irish secretary (April 7), 'we may always put it on the ground of time, as well as on the merits. To meet a motion of this kind with the previous question only, implies almost an engagement to take it up on some early occasion, and this I take it we are not prepared for.' In the summer of 1865 he wrote to the warden of Glenalmond that the question was 'remote and apparently out of all bearing on the practical politics of the day.' So far as his own judgment went, he had told Sir Roundell Palmer in 1863, that he had made up his mind on the subject, and should not be able to keep himself from giving expression to his feelings. Why did he say that he did not then believe that the question would come on in his time? 'A man,' he replied, 'who in 1865 completed his thirty-third year of a

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laborious career, who had already followed to the grave the remains of almost all the friends abreast of whom he had started from the university in the career of public life; and who had observed that, excepting two recent cases [I suppose Palmerston and Russell], it was hard to find in our whole history a single man who had been permitted to reach the fortieth year of a course of labour similar to his own within the walls of the House of Commons; such a man might be excused . . . if he formed a less sanguine estimate of the fraction of space yet remaining to him, than seems to have been the case with his critics.<sup>1</sup>

It was Maynooth that originally cut from under his feet the principle of establishment in Ireland as an obligation of the state. When that went, more general reflections arose in his mind. In 1872 he wrote to Guizot:—

It is very unlikely that you should remember a visit I paid you, I think at Passy in the autumn of 1845, with a message from Lord Aberdeen about international copyright. The Maynooth Act had just been passed. Its author, I think, meant it to be final. I had myself regarded it as *seminal*. And you in congratulating me upon it, as I well remember, said we should have the sympathies of Europe in the work of giving Ireland justice—a remark which evidently included more than the measure just passed, and which I ever after saved and pondered. It helped me on towards what has been since done.

‘I must own,’ he wrote to Lord Granville (April 11, 1868), ‘that for years past I have been watching the sky with a strong sense of the obligation to act with the first streak of dawn.’ He now believed the full sun was up, and he was right. In an autobiographic note, undated but written near to the end of his days, he says:—

I am by no means sure, upon a calm review, that Providence has endowed me with anything that can be called a striking gift. But if there be such a thing entrusted to me it has been shown at certain political junctures, in what may be termed appreciations of the general situation and its result. To make good the idea, this must not be considered as the simple acceptance of public opinion,

<sup>1</sup> *Gleanings*, vii. p. 135.



founded upon the discernment that it has risen to a certain height needful for a given work, like a tide. It is an insight into the facts of particular eras, and their relation one to another, which generates in the mind a conviction that the materials exist for forming a public opinion and for directing it to a particular end. There are four occasions of my life with respect to which I think these considerations may be applicable. They are these:—1. The renewal of the Income-tax in 1853; 2. The proposal of religious equality for Ireland, 1868. . . .

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The remaining two will appear in good time. It is easy to label this with the ill-favoured name of opportunist. Yet if an opportunist be defined as a statesman who declines to attempt to do a thing until he believes that it can really be done, what is this but to call him a man of common sense?

## II

In 1867 Ireland was disturbed by bold and dangerous Fenian plots and the mischief flowed over into England. In September, at Manchester, a body of armed men rescued two Fenian prisoners from a police van, and shot an officer in charge, a crime for which three of them were afterwards hanged. In December a Fenian rolled a barrel of gunpowder up to the wall of a prison in London where a comrade was confined, and fired it. The explosion that followed blew down part of the wall and cost several lives.

In my opinion,—Mr. Gladstone said afterwards in parliament, and was much blamed for saying,—and in the opinion of many with whom I communicated, the Fenian conspiracy has had an important influence with respect to Irish policy; but it has not been an influence in determining, or in affecting in the slightest degree, the convictions which we have entertained with respect to the course proper to be pursued in Ireland. The influence of Fenianism was this—that when the habeas corpus Act was suspended, when all the consequent proceedings occurred, when the tranquillity of the great city of Manchester was disturbed, when the metropolis itself was shocked and horrified by an inhuman outrage, when a sense of insecurity went abroad far and wide . . . when the inhabitants of the different towns of the

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country were swearing themselves in as special constables for the maintenance of life and property—then it was ~~when~~ these phenomena came home to the popular mind, and produced that attitude of attention and preparedness on the part of the whole population of this country which qualified them to embrace, in a manner foreign to their habits in other times, the vast importance of the Irish controversy.<sup>1</sup>

This influence was palpable and undoubted, and it was part of Mr. Gladstone's courage not to muffle up plain truth, from any spurious notions of national self-esteem. He never had much patience with people who cannot bear to hear what they cannot fail to see. In this case the truth was of the plainest. Lord Stanley, then a member of his father's government, went to a banquet at Bristol in the January of 1868, and told his conservative audience that Ireland was hardly ever absent from the mind of anybody taking part in public affairs. 'I mean,' he said, 'the painful, the dangerous, the discreditable state of things that unhappily continues to exist in Ireland.' He described in tones more fervid than were usual with him, the 'miserable state of things,' and yet he asked, 'when we look for a remedy, who is there to give us an intelligible answer?' The state of Ireland, as Mr. Gladstone said later,<sup>2</sup> was admitted by both sides to be the question of the day. The conservatives in power took it up, and they had nothing better nor deeper to propose than the policy of concurrent endowment. They asked parliament to establish at the charge of the exchequer a Roman catholic university; and declared their readiness to recognise the principle of religious equality in Ireland by a great change in the status of the unendowed clergy of that country, provided the protestant establishment were upheld in its integrity. This was the policy of levelling up. It was met by a counter plan of religious equality; disestablishment of the existing church, without establishing any other, and with a general cessation of endowments for religion in Ireland. Mr. Disraeli's was at bottom the principle of Pitt and Castlereagh and of many great whigs, but he might have known, and doubtless did

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, May 31, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> At Greenwich, Dec. 21, 1868.

know, how odious it would be to the British householders, who were far more like King George III. than they at all supposed.

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## III

In May, 1867, Mr. Gladstone had told the House that the time could not be far distant when parliament would have to look the position of the Irish church fairly and fully in the face. In the autumn Roundell Palmer visited Mr. Cardwell, and discovered clearly from the conversation that the next move in the party was likely to be an attack upon the Irish church. The wider aspects of the Irish case opened themselves to Mr. Gladstone in all their melancholy dimensions. At Southport (Dec. 19) he first raised his standard, and proclaimed an Irish policy on Irish lines, that should embrace the promotion of higher education in a backward country, the reform of its religious institutions, the adjustment of the rights of the cultivator of the soil. The church, the land, the college, should all be dealt with in turn.<sup>1</sup> It might be true, he said, that these things would not convert the Irish into a happy and contented people. Inveterate diseases could not be healed in a moment. When you have long persevered in mischief, you cannot undo it at an instant's notice. True though this might be, was the right conclusion that it was better to do nothing at all? For his own part he would never despair of redeeming the reproach of total incapacity to assimilate to ourselves an island within three hours of our shores, that had been under our dominating influence for six centuries.

At Christmas in 1867 Lord Russell announced to Mr. Gladstone his intention not again to take office, in other words to retire from the titular leadership of the liberal party. Mr. Gladstone did not deny his claim to repose. 'Peel,' he said, 'in 1846 thought he had secured his dismissal at an

<sup>1</sup> He had also in his own mind the question of the acquisition of the Irish railways by the state, and the whole question of the position of the royal family in regard to Ireland. On the first of these two heads he was able to man a good commission, with the Duke of Devonshire at its

head, and Lord Derby as his coadjutor. 'But this commission,' he says, 'did not venture to face any considerable change, and as they would not move, I, who might be held in a manner to have appealed to them, could do nothing.'

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age which, if spared, I shall touch in three days' time.' Lord Russell was now seventy-five. He once told Lord Granville that 'the great disappointment of his life had been Grey's refusal to join his government in December 1845, which had prevented his name going down in history as the repealer of the corn laws.' 'A great reputation,' wrote Mr. Gladstone to Granville in 1868, 'built itself up on the basis of splendid public services for thirty years; for almost twenty it has, I fear, been on the decline. The movement of the clock continues, the balance weights are gone.'<sup>2</sup>

A more striking event than Lord Russell's withdrawal was the accession of Mr. Disraeli to the first place in the counsels of the crown. In February 1868 Lord Derby's health compelled him to retire from his position as head of the government. Mr. Gladstone found fault with the translator of Stockmar's *Memoirs* for rendering 'leichtsinnig' applied to Lord Derby as 'frivolous.' He preferred 'light-minded':—

The difference between frivolous and light-minded is not a broad one. But in my opinion a man is frivolous by disposition, or as people say by nature, whereas he is light-minded by defect or perversity of will; further he is frivolous all over, he may be light-minded on one side of his character. So it was in an eminent degree with Lord Derby. Not only were his natural gifts unsurpassed in the present age, but he had a serious and earnest side to his character. Politics are at once a game and a high art; he allowed the excitements of the game to draw him off from the sustained and exhausting efforts of the high art. But this was the occasional deviation of an honourable man, not the fixed mental habit of an unprincipled one.

Mr. Disraeli became prime minister. For the moment, the incident was more dramatic than important; it was plain that his tenure of office could not last long. He was five years older (perhaps more) than Mr. Gladstone; his parliamentary existence had been four or five years shorter. During the thirty-one years of his life in the House of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone's letter to Lord Russell is given in Walpole's *Russell*, ii. p. 446.

<sup>2</sup> Till like a clock worn out with eating time,  
The wheels of weary life at last stood still.—Dryden's *Ædipus*.

Commons, up to now he had enjoyed three short spells of office (from 1852 to 1868), covering little more than as many years. He had chosen finance for his department, but his budgets made no mark. In foreign affairs he had no policy of his own beyond being Austrian and papal rather than Italian, and his criticisms on the foreign policy of Palmerston and Russell followed the debating needs of the hour. For legislation in the constructive sense in which it interested and attracted Mr. Gladstone, he had no taste and little capacity. In two achievements only had he succeeded, but in importance they were supreme. Out of the wreckage left by Sir Robert Peel twenty-two years before he had built up a party. In the name of that party, called conservative, he had revolutionised the base of our parliamentary constitution. These two extraordinary feats he had performed without possessing the full confidence of his adherents, or any real confidence at all on the part of the country. That was to come later. Meanwhile the nation had got used to him. He had culture, imagination, fancy, and other gifts of a born man of letters; the faculty of slow reflective brooding was his, and he often saw both deep and far; he was artificial, but he was no pharisee, and he was never petty. His magniloquence of phrase was the expression of real size and spaciousness of character; as Goethe said of St. Peter's at Rome, in spite of all the rococo, there was *etwas grosses*, something great. His inexhaustible patience, his active attention and industry, his steadfast courage, his talent in debate and the work of parliament; his genius in espying, employing, creating political occasions, all made him, after prolonged conflict against impediments of every kind, one of the imposing figures of his time. This was the political captain with whom Mr. Gladstone had contended for some sixteen years past, and with whom on a loftier elevation for both, he was to contend for a dozen years to come.

On a motion about the state of Ireland, proceeding from an Irish member (March 16, 1868) Mr. Gladstone at last launched before parliament the memorable declaration that the time had come when the church of Ireland as a church in alliance with the state must cease to exist. This was not

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a mere sounding sentence in a speech ; it was one of the heroic acts of his life. Manning did not overstate the case when he wrote to Mr. Gladstone (March 28, '68):—'The Irish establishment is a great wrong. It is the cause of division in Ireland, of alienation between Ireland and England. It embitters every other question. Even the land question is exasperated by it. The fatal ascendancy of race over race is unspeakably aggravated by the ascendancy of religion over religion.' But there were many pit-falls, and the ground hid dangerous fire. The parliament was Palmerstonian and in essence conservative; both parties were demoralised by the strange and tortuous manœuvres that ended in household suffrage; many liberals were profoundly disaffected to their leader; nobody could say what the majority was, nor where it lay. To attack the Irish church was to alarm and scandalise his own chosen friends and closest allies in the kindred church of England. To attack a high protestant institution 'exalting its mitred front' in the catholic island, was to run sharp risk of awaking the sleuth-hounds of No-popery. The House of Lords would undoubtedly fight, as it did, to its last ditch. The legislative task itself was in complexity and detail, apart from religious passion and the prejudice of race, gigantic.

Having once decided upon this bold campaign, Mr. Gladstone entered upon it with military promptitude, and pursued it with an intrepidity all his own among the statesmen of his day, and not surpassed by Pym in 1640, nor Chatham in 1758, nor Chatham's son in 1783, nor anybody else in days gone by. Within a week of this historic trumpet-blast, he gave notice of three resolutions to the effect that the established church of Ireland should cease to exist as an establishment. Attendant and consequential changes were appended. Within a week of giving notice, he opened the first resolution, and carried the preliminary motion by a majority of 61. The cheering at this demonstration of a united and victorious party was prodigious, both within the House and in Westminster Hall, and an enthusiastic crowd followed the leader and his two sons as they walked home to Carlton House Terrace. 'This,' he wrote to the Duchess of Sutherland, 'is a day of excitement—almost of exultation. We have made a step, nay a stride, and this stride is on the

pathway of justice, and of peace, and of national honour and renown.'<sup>1</sup>

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The first resolution was carried (April 30) by a majority of 65, and a week later the second and third went through without a division. Mr. Disraeli fought his battle with much steadiness, but did not go beyond a dilatory amendment. If Mr. Gladstone had old deliverances to reconcile with new policy, so had his tory antagonist. Disraeli was reminded of that profound and brilliant oracle of 1844, when he had described the root of mischief in Ireland as a weak executive, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien church. He wasted little time in trying to explain why the alien church now found in him its champion. 'Nobody listened,' he said, 'at that time. It seemed to me that I was pouring water upon sand, but it seems now that the water came from a golden goblet.' The sentiment may have been expressed, he said, 'with the heedless rhetoric which, I suppose, is the appanage of all who sit below the gangway; but in my historical conscience, the sentiment of that speech was right.' The prime minister did not escape taunts from those in his own camp who thought themselves betrayed by him upon reform the year before. He repaid the taunts by sarcasm. He told Lord Cranborne that there was vigour in his language and no want of vindictiveness, what it wanted was finish. Considering that Lord Cranborne had written anonymous articles against him before and since they were colleagues—'I do not know whether he wrote them when I was his colleague,'—they really ought to have been more polished. Mr. Lowe, again, he described as a remarkable man; especially remarkable for his power of spontaneous aversion; he hates the working classes of England; he hates the Roman catholics of Ireland; he hates the protestants of Ireland; he hates ministers; and until Mr. Gladstone placed his hand upon the ark, he seemed almost to hate Mr. Gladstone.

After Mr. Gladstone's first resolution was carried, the prime minister acknowledged the change in the relations of the government and the House. He and his party had conducted the business of the country though in a minority, just as Lord John Russell between 1846 and 1851 had con-

<sup>1</sup> Lord R. Gower, *Reminiscences*, p. 202.

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ducted business for five or six years, though in a minority; but being morally supported by a majority, as we have been supported by a majority.' In this crisis he pursued a peculiar course. He advised the Queen to dissolve the parliament; but at the same time he told her Majesty that if she thought the interests of the country would be better served, he tendered his resignation. The Queen did not accept it, he said; and the ministerial decision was to dissolve in the autumn when the new constituencies would be in order. The statement was not clear, and Mr. Gladstone sought in vain to discover with precision whether the prime minister had begun by resigning, or had presented two alternatives leaving the decision to the Queen, and did he mean a dissolution on existing registers? The answer to these questions was not definite, but it did not matter.

This episode did not check Mr. Gladstone for a moment in his course; in a week after the resolutions were carried, he introduced a bill suspending the creation of new interests in the Irish church. This proof of vigour and resolution rapidly carried the suspensory bill through the Commons. The Lords threw it out by a majority of 95 (June 29). If we sometimes smile at the sanguine prediction of the optimist, the gloom of his pessimist opponent is more ludicrous. 'If you overthrow the Irish established church,' cried the Archbishop of Dublin, 'you will put to the Irish protestants the choice between apostasy and expatriation, and every man among them who has money or position, when he sees his church go will leave the country. If you do that, you will find Ireland so difficult to manage that you will have to depend on the gibbet and the sword.' The Bishop of Chester and Bishop Thirlwall, whom Mr. Gladstone described as 'one of the most masculine, powerful, and luminous intellects that have for generations been known among the bishops of England,' were deliberately absent from the division. The effect of the bill was not impaired, perhaps it was even heightened; for it convinced the public that its author meant earnest and vigorous business, and the air was instantly alive with the thrill of battle. For it is undoubted that if the country cares for a thing, the resistance to it of the hereditary House seems to add spice and an element of sport.



## CHAPTER XVI

### PRIME MINISTER

(1868)

GEWORDEN ist ihm eine Herrscherseele,  
Und ist gestellt auf einen Herrscherplatz.  
Wohl uns, dass es so ist! . . .

Wohl dem Ganzen, findet  
Sich einmal einer, der ein Mittelpunkt  
Für viele Tausend wird, ein Halt.

SCHILLER.

He is possessed by a commanding spirit,  
And his, too, is the station of command.  
And well for us it is so. . . .  
Well for the whole if there be found a man  
Who makes himself what Nature destined him,  
The pause, the central point of thousand thousands.

*Coleridge's Translation.*

DURING the election (Nov. 23) Mr. Gladstone published his *Chapter of Autobiography*, the history of his journey from the book of 1838 to the resolutions thirty years later.<sup>1</sup> Lord Granville told him frankly that he never liked nor quite understood the first book; that the description of it in the new 'Chapter' gave him little pleasure; that he had at first a feeling that the less a person in Mr. Gladstone's position published, the better; and that unnecessary explanation would only provoke fresh attacks. But as he read on, these misgivings melted away; he thought the description of a certain phase of the history of the English church one of the most eloquent and feeling passages he ever read; the reference to the nonconformists was a graceful amend to them for being so passionate an Oxonian and churchman; the piece of controversy with Macaulay rather an exaggeration and not easy to understand; the closing pages admirable. In

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ducted business for five or six years, though in a minority 'but being morally supported by a majority, as we have been supported by a majority.' In this crisis he pursued peculiar course. He advised the Queen to dissolve the parliament; but at the same time he told her Majesty that if she thought the interests of the country would be better served, he tendered his resignation. The Queen did not accept it, he said; and the ministerial decision was to dissolve in the autumn when the new constituencies would be in order. The statement was not clear, and Mr. Gladstone sought in vain to discover with precision whether the prime minister had begun by resigning, or had presented two alternatives leaving the decision to the Queen, and did he mean a dissolution on existing registers? The answer to these questions was not definite, but it did not matter.

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he assailed the system of making things pleasant all round, stimulating local cupidity to feed upon the public purse, and scattering grants at the solicitation of individuals and classes. No minister that ever lived toiled more sedulously, in office and out of office, to avert this curse of popular government. The main staple of his discourse was naturally the Irish case, and though within the next twenty years he acquired a wider familiarity with detail, he never exhibited the large features of that case with more cogent and persuasive mastery. He told the story of the transformation of the franchise bill with a combined precision, completeness and lightness of hand that made his articles of charge at once extremely interesting and wholly unanswerable. In a vein of pleasant mockery, on the accusation that he was going to ruin and destroy the constitution, he reminded them that within his own recollection it had been wholly ruined and destroyed eight times: in 1828 by the repeal of the Corporation and Test acts; in 1829 by admitting Roman catholics to parliament; in 1832 by reform; in 1846 by free trade; in 1849 by repeal of the navigation law; in 1858 when Jews were allowed to sit in parliament; in 1866 when the government of Lord Russell had the incredible audacity to propose a reform bill with the intention of carrying it or falling in the attempt.

It was a magnificent campaign. But in South-West Lancashire the church of England was strong; orange prevailed vastly over green; and Mr. Gladstone was beaten. Happily he had in anticipation of the result, and by the care of friends, already been elected for Greenwich.<sup>1</sup> In the kingdom as a whole he was triumphant. The liberal majority was 112. When the gross votes were added up, it was calculated that the liberals had a million and a half and the conservatives less than a million.<sup>2</sup> After a long era of torpor a powerful party thus once more came into

<sup>1</sup> In Lancashire (Nov. 24) the numbers were—Cross, 7729; Turner, 7676; Gladstone, 7415; Grenfell, 6939. At Greenwich (Nov. 17)—Salomons, 6645; Gladstone, 6351; Parker, 4661; Mahon, 4342.

	Liberal.	Conservative.	Liberal Majority.
<sup>2</sup> England and Wales,	1,231,450	824,056	407,393
Scotland,	123,410	23,391	100,019
Ireland,	53,379	36,083	17,297

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being. The cause was excellent, but more potent than the cause was the sight of a leader with a resolute will, an unresting spirit of reform, and the genius of political action. This ascendancy Mr. Gladstone maintained for quarter of a century to come.

## II

On the afternoon of the first of December, he received at Hawarden the communication from Windsor. 'I was standing by him,' says Mr. Evelyn Ashley, 'holding his coat on my arm while he in his shirt sleeves was wielding an axe to cut down a tree. Up came a telegraph messenger. He took the telegram, opened it and read it, then handed it to me, speaking only two words, "Very significant," and at once resumed his work. The message merely stated that General Grey would arrive that evening from Windsor. This of course implied that a mandate was coming from the Queen charging Mr. Gladstone with the formation of his first government. . . . After a few minutes the blows ceased, and Mr. Gladstone resting on the handle of his axe, looked up and with deep earnestness in his voice and with great intensity in his face, exclaimed, "My mission is to pacify Ireland." He then resumed his task, and never said another word till the tree was down.'<sup>1</sup> General Grey reached Hawarden the next day, bringing with him the letter from the Queen.

### *From the Queen*

*December 1st, 1868.*—Mr. Disraeli has tendered his resignation to the Queen. The result of the appeal to the country is too evident to require its being proved by a vote in parliament, and the Queen entirely agrees with Mr. Disraeli and his colleagues in thinking that the most dignified course for them to pursue, as also the best for the public interests, was immediate resignation. Under these circumstances the Queen must ask Mr. Gladstone, as the acknowledged leader of the liberal party, to undertake the formation of a new administration. With one or two exceptions, the reasons for which she has desired General Grey (the bearer of

<sup>1</sup> *National Review*, June 1898.

this letter) to explain, the Queen would impose no restrictions on Mr. Gladstone as to the arrangement of the various offices in the manner which he believes to be best for the public service, and she trusts that he will find no difficulty in filling them up, or at least the greater part of them, so that the council may be held before the 13th. Mr. Gladstone will understand why the Queen would wish to be spared making any arrangements of this nature for the next few days after the 13th. The Queen adds what she said on a similar occasion two years and a half ago to Lord Derby, that she will not name any time for seeing Mr. Gladstone, who may wish to have an opportunity of consulting some of his friends, before he sees her; but that, as soon as he shall have done so, and expresses a desire to see the Queen, she will be ready to receive him.

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One of his first letters after undertaking to form a government was to Lord Russell, to whom he said that he looked forward with hope and confidence to full and frequent communications, and to the benefit of his friendship and advice. 'There remains, however, a question,' he went on; 'you have an experience and knowledge to which no living statesman can pretend; of the benefit to be derived from it, I am sure that all with whom I can be likely to act would be deeply sensible. Would it be too great an invasion of your independence to ask you to consider whether you could afford it as a member of the cabinet without the weight of any other responsibility?' Lord Russell replied in cordial terms, but said that the servitude of a cabinet, whether with or without a special office, was what he did not wish to encounter. 'What I should have said,' he added at a later date (Dec. 28), 'if the office of the president of the council or the privy seal had been offered me, I do not know: at all events I am personally very well satisfied to be free from all responsibility.' Sir George Grey also declined, on the ground of years: he was within one of the three score and ten allotted to mortal man. Lord Halifax, on whose ability and experience both the Queen and Mr. Gladstone set special value, declined the Irish viceroyalty, and stood good-naturedly aside until 1870 when he joined as privy seal. The

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inclusion in the same cabinet of Mr. Bright, who had been the chief apostle of reform, with Mr. Lowe, its fiercest persecutor, startled the country. As for Lowe, Lord Acton said to me that he once informed Mr. Gladstone that Lowe had written the review of his *Financial Statements* in the periodical of which Acton was editor. 'He told me at Grillion's that I thereby made him chancellor of the exchequer.' With Bright he had greater difficulties. He often described how he wrestled with this admirable man from eleven o'clock until past midnight, striving to overcome his repugnance to office. The next day Bright wrote to him (Dec. 5):—'Since I left you at midnight I have had no sleep, from which you may imagine the mental disturbance I have suffered from our long conversation last night. Nevertheless I am driven to the conclusion to take the step to which you invite me, surrendering my inclination and my judgment to your arguments and to the counsel of some whom I have a right to consider my friends. . . . I am deeply grateful to you for the confidence you are willing to place in me, and for the many kind words you spoke to me yesterday.' In the parched air of official politics the relation of these two towards one another is a peculiar and a refreshing element. In the case of Lord Clarendon, some difficulty was intimated from Windsor before Mr. Gladstone began his task. Mr. Gladstone says in one of his late notes:—

Clarendon had already held with credit and success for a lengthened period the seals of the foreign office, and his presumptive title to resume them was beyond dispute. He was a man of free and entertaining and almost jovial conversation in society, and possibly some remark culled from the dinner hour had been reported to the Queen with carelessness or malignity. I do not know much of the interior side of court gossip, but I have a very bad opinion of it, and especially on this ground, that while absolutely irresponsible it appears to be uniformly admitted as infallible. In this case, it was impossible for me to recede from my duty, and no grave difficulty arose. So far as I can recollect the Queen had very little to say in objection, and no keen desire to say it. Clarendon was the only living British statesman whose name carried any



influence in the councils of Europa. Only eighteen or twenty months remained to him; they were spent in useful activity. My relations with him were, as they were afterwards with Granville, close, constant, and harmonious.

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Of this cabinet Mr. Gladstone always spoke as one of the best instruments for government that ever were constructed.<sup>1</sup> Nearly everybody in it was a man of talent, character and force, and showed high capacity for public business. In one or two cases, conformably to the old Greek saying, office showed the man; showed that mere cleverness, apart from judgment and discretion is only too possible, and that good intention only makes failure and incapacity in carrying the intention out, so much the more mortifying. The achievements of this cabinet as a whole, as we shall see, are a great chapter in the history of reform and the prudent management of national affairs. It forms one of the best vindications of the cabinet system, and of the powers of the minister who created, guided, controlled and inspired it.

'And so,' Manning, the close friend of other years, now wrote to him, 'you are at the end men live for, but not, I believe, the end for which you have lived. It is strange so to salute you, but very pleasant. . . . There are many prayers put up among us for you, and mine are not wanting.' At an earlier stage sympathetic resolutions had been sent to him from nonconformist denominations, and in writing to Dr. Allon who forwarded them, Mr. Gladstone said:—'I thank you for all the kind words contained in your letter, but most of all for the assurance, not the first I am happy to say which has reached me, that many prayers are offered on my behalf. I feel myself by the side of this arduous undertaking a small creature; but where the Almighty sends us duties, He also sends the strength needful to perform them.' To Mr. Arthur Gordon, the son of Lord Aberdeen, he wrote (Jan. 29, 1869):—

As regards my own personal position, all its interior relations are up to this time entirely satisfactory. I myself, at the period of the Aberdeen administration, was as far as the world in general

<sup>1</sup> The reader will find the list of its members, now and at later periods of its existence, in the Appendix.

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could possibly be, from either expecting or desiring it. I thought at that time that when Lord Russell's career should end, the Duke of Newcastle would be the proper person to be at the head of the government. But during the government of Lord Palmerston, and long before his health broke down, I had altered this opinion; for I thought I saw an alteration both in his tone of opinion, and in his vigour of administration and breadth of view. Since that time I have seen no alternative but that which has now come about, although I am sensible that it is a very indifferent one.

On December 29 he enters in his diary:—'This birthday opens my sixtieth year. I descend the hill of life. It would be a truer figure to say I ascend a steepening path with a burden ever gathering weight. The Almighty seems to sustain and spare me for some purpose of His own, deeply unworthy as I know myself to be. Glory be to His name. In the closing hours of the year, he enters:—

This month of December has been notable in my life as follows  
*Dec.* 1809.—Born. 1827.—Left Eton. 1831.—Classes at Oxford. 1832.—Elected to parliament. 1838.—Work on Church and State published. 1834.—Took office as lord of the treasury. 1845.—Secretary of state. 1852.—Chancellor of exchequer. 1868.—First lord. Rather a frivolous enumeration. Yet it would not be so if the love of symmetry were carried with a well-proportioned earnestness and firmness into the higher parts of life. I feel like a man with a burden under which he must fall and be crushed if he looks to the right or left or fails from any cause to concentrate mind and muscle upon his progress step by step. This absorption, this excess, this constant *ἀγαν* is the fault of political life with its insatiable demands, which do not leave the smallest stock of moral energy unexhausted and available for other purposes. . . . Swimming for his life, a man does not see much of the country through which the river winds, and I probably know little of these years through which I busily work and live. . . . It has been a special joy of this December that our son Stephen is given to the church, 'whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose.'

# Book VI

1869-1874

## CHAPTER I

### RELIGIOUS EQUALITY

(1869)

IN the removal of this establishment I see the discharge of a debt of civil justice, the disappearance of a national, almost a world-wide reproach, a condition indispensable to the success of every effort to secure the peace and contentment of that country; finally relief to a devoted clergy from a false position, cramped and beset by hopeless prejudice, and the opening of a freer career to their sacred ministry.—GLADSTONE.

ANYBODY could pulverise the Irish church in argument, and to show that it ought to be disestablished and dis-endowed was the easiest thing in the world. But as often happens, what it was easy to show ought to be done, was extremely hard to do. Here Mr. Gladstone was in his great element. It was true to say that 'never were the wheels of legislative machinery set in motion under conditions of peace and order and constitutional regularity to deal with a question greater or more profound,' than when the historic protestant church in Ireland was severed from its sister church in England and from its ancient connection with the state. The case had been fully examined in parliament. After examination and decision there, it was discussed and decided in the constituencies of the United Kingdom. Even then many held that the operation was too gigantic in its bearings, too complex in the mass of its detail, to be practicable. Never was our political system more severely

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tested, and never did it achieve a completer victory. Every great organ of the national constitution came into active play. The sovereign performed a high and useful duty. The Lords fought hard, but yielded before the strain reached a point of danger. The prelates in the midst of anger and perturbation were forced round to statesmanship. The Commons stood firm and unbroken. The law, when at length it became law, effected the national purpose with extraordinary thoroughness and precision. And the enterprise was inspired, guided, propelled, perfected, and made possible from its inception to its close by the resource, temper, and incomparable legislative skill of Mr. Gladstone. That the removal of the giant abuse of protestant establishment in Ireland made a deeper mark on national well-being than other of his legislative exploits, we can hardly think, but—quite apart from the policy of the act, as to which there can now be scarcely two opinions—as a monument of difficulties surmounted, prejudices and violent or sullen heats overcome, rights and interests adjusted, I know not where in the records of our legislation to find its master.

With characteristic hopefulness and simplicity Mr. Gladstone tried to induce Archbishop Trench and others of the Irish hierarchy to come to terms. Without raising the cry of no surrender, they declined all approaches. If Gladstone, they said, were able to announce in the House of Commons a concordat with the Irish clergy, it would ruin them both with the laity of the Irish establishment, and with the English conservatives who had fought for them at the election and might well be expected, as a piece of party business if for no better reasons, to fight on for them in the House of Lords. Who could tell that the Gladstone majority would hold together? Though 'no surrender' might be a bad cry, it was even now at the eleventh hour possible that 'no popery' would be a good one. In short, they argued, this was one of the cases where terms could only be settled on the field of battle. There were moderates, the most eminent being Bishop Magee of Peterborough, who had an interview with Mr. Gladstone at this stage, but nothing came of it. One Irish clergyman only, Stopford the

archdeacon of Meath, a moderate who disliked the policy but wished to make the best of the inevitable, gave Mr. Gladstone the benefit of his experience and ability. When the work was done, Mr. Gladstone wrote to the archdeacon more than once expressing his sense of the advantage derived from his 'thorough mastery of the subject and enlightened view of the political situation.' He often spoke of Stopford's 'knowledge, terseness, discrimination, and just judgment.'

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Meanwhile his own course was clear. He did not lose a day:—

Dec. 13, 1868.—Saw the Queen at one, and stated the case of the Irish church. It was graciously received. 24.—At night went to work on draft of Irish church measure, feeling the impulse. 25.—Christmas Day. Worked much on Irish church *abbozza*. Finished it at night. 26.—Revised the Irish church draft and sent it to be copied with notes.

The general situation he described to Bishop Hinds on the last day of the year:—

We cannot wait for the church of Ireland to make up her mind. We are bound, nay compelled, to make up ours. Every day of the existence of this government is now devoted to putting forward by some step of inquiry or deliberation the great duty we have undertaken. Our principles are already laid in the resolutions of the late House of Commons. But in the mode of applying them much may depend on the attitude of resistance or co-operation assumed by the Irish church. It is idle for the leading Irish churchmen to think 'we will wait and see what they offer and then ask so much more.' Our mode of warfare cannot but be influenced by the troops we lead. Our three *corps d'armée*, I may almost say, have been Scotch presbyterians, English and Welsh nonconformists and Irish Roman catholics. We are very strong in our minority of clerical and lay churchmen, but it is the strength of weight not of numbers. The English clergy as a body have done their worst against us and have hit us hard, as I know personally, in the counties. Yet we represent the national force, tested by a majority of considerably over a hundred

voices. It is hazardous in these times to tamper with such a force.

The preparation of the bill went rapidly forward:—

*Hawarden, Jan. 13, 1869.*—Wrote out a paper on the plan of the measure respecting the Irish church, intended perhaps for the Queen. Worked on Homer. We felled a lime. 14.—We felled another tree. Worked on Homer, but not much, for in the evening came the Spencers [going to Dublin], also Archdeacon Stopford, and I had much Irish conversation with them. 15.—We felled an ash. Three hours conversation with the viceroy and the archdeacon. I went over much of the roughest ground of the intended measure; the archdeacon able and helpful. Also conversation with the viceroy, who went before 7. Worked on Homer at night. 19.—One hour on Homer with Sir J. Acton. Whist in evening. 20.—Further and long conversations on the Irish church question and its various branches with Granville, the attorney-general for Ireland, and in the evening with Dean Howson, also with Sir J. Acton. 21.—Wrote a brief abstract of the intended bill. Woodcutting. 23.—Saw the Queen [at Osborne] on the Irish church especially, and gave H.M. my paper with explanation, which appeared to be well taken. She was altogether at ease. We dined with H.M. afterwards. 24.—Saw her Majesty, who spoke very kindly about Lord Clarendon, Mr. Bright, Mr. Lowe, the Spanish crown, Prince Leopold, Mr. Mozley, and so forth, but not a word on the Irish church. *Feb. 4.*—A letter from H.M. to-day showed much disturbance, which I tried to soothe.

In February Lord Granville thought that it might do good if the Queen were to see Bishop Magee. Mr. Gladstone said to him in reply (Feb. 7 '69):—

The case is peculiar and not free from difficulty. On the whole I think it would be wrong to place any limit upon the Queen's communications to the Bishop of Peterborough except this, that they would doubtless be made by H.M. to him for himself only, and that no part of them would go beyond him to any person whatever.

On Feb. 12, the Queen wrote to Mr. Gladstone from Osborne:—

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The Queen has seen the Bishop of Peterborough according to the suggestion made by Lord Granville with the sanction of Mr. Gladstone, and has communicated to him in the strictest confidence the correspondence which had passed between herself and Mr. Gladstone on the subject of the Irish church. She now sends Mr. Gladstone a copy of the remarks made by the bishop on the papers which she placed in his hands for perusal, and would earnestly entreat Mr. Gladstone's careful and dispassionate consideration of what he says. She would point especially to the suggestion which the bishop throws out of the intervention of the bench of English bishops. The country would feel that any negotiation conducted under the direction of the Archbishop of Canterbury would be perfectly safe, and from the concessions which the Bishop of Peterborough expresses his own readiness to make, the Queen is sanguine in her hope that such negotiations would result in a settlement of the question on conditions which would entirely redeem the pledges of the government and be satisfactory to the country. The Queen must therefore strongly deprecate the hasty introduction of the measure, which would serve only to commit the government to proposals from which they could not afterwards recede, while it is *certain* from what the bishop says, that they would not be accepted on the other side, and thus an acrimonious contest would be begun, which, however it ended, would make any satisfactory settlement of the question impossible.

He replied on the following day:—

Feb 13.—First the bishop suggests that the endowments posterior to the Reformation should be given to the church, and those preceding it to the Roman catholics. It would be more than idle and less than honest, were Mr. Gladstone to withhold from your Majesty his conviction that no negotiation founded on such a basis as this could be entertained, or, if entertained, could lead to any satisfactory result. Neither could Mr. Gladstone persuade the cabinet to adopt it, nor could the cabinet persuade the House of Commons, nor could cabinet and House of Commons

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united persuade the nation to acquiesce, and the very attempt would not only prolong and embitter controversy, but would weaken authority in this country. For the thing contemplated is the very thing that the parliament was elected not to do.

*Osborne, Feb. 14.*—The Queen thanks Mr. Gladstone for his long letter, and is much gratified and relieved by the conciliatory spirit expressed throughout his explanations on this most difficult and important question. The Queen thinks it would indeed be most desirable for him to see the Archbishop of Canterbury—and she is quite ready to write to the archbishop to inform him of her wish and of Mr. Gladstone's readiness to accede to it, should he wish it.

'My impression is,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord Granville (Feb. 14), 'that we should make a great mistake if we were to yield on the point of time. It is not time that is wanted; we have plenty of time to deal with the Bishop of Peterborough's points so far as they can be dealt with at all. Sir R. Palmer has been here to-day with overtures from persons of importance unnamed. I think probably the Archbishop of Canterbury and others.<sup>1</sup> I do not doubt that on the other side they want time, for their suggestions are crude.'

On the following day (Feb. 15) the Queen wrote to the archbishop, telling him that she had seen Mr. Gladstone, 'who shows the most conciliatory disposition,' and who at once assured her 'of his readiness—indeed, his anxiety—to meet the archbishop and to communicate freely with him.' The correspondence between the Queen and the archbishop has already been made known, and most of that between the archbishop and Mr. Gladstone, and I need not here reproduce it, for, in fact, at this first stage nothing particular came of it.<sup>2</sup> 'The great mistake, as it seems to me,' Mr. Gladstone writes to Archdeacon Stopford (Feb. 8), 'made by the Irish bishops and others is this. They seem to think that our friends are at the mercy of our adversaries, whereas our adversaries are really at the mercy of our friends, and it is to these latter

<sup>1</sup> No: Archbishop Trench and Lord Carnarvon. See *Selborne, Memorials*, i. pp. 114-6.

<sup>2</sup> See *Life of Tait*, ii. pp. 8-14.



that the government, especially in the absence of other support, must look.' Meanwhile the bill had made its way through the cabinet:—

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*Feb.* 8.—Cabinet, on the heads of Irish Church bill. 9.—Cabinet, we completed the heads of the Irish Church measure to my great satisfaction. 19.—At Lambeth, 12-1½ explaining to the archbishop. 22.—Conclave on Irish church, 2-4½ and 5½-7½. After twenty hours' work we finished the bill for this stage.

## II

On March 1, Mr. Gladstone brought his plan before a House of Commons eager for its task, triumphant in its strength out of doors, and confident that its leader would justify the challenge with which for so many months the country had been ringing. The details are no longer of concern, and only broader aspects survive. A revolutionary change was made by the complete and definite severance of the protestant episcopal church in Ireland alike from the established church of England and from the government of the United Kingdom. A far more complex and delicate task was the winding up of a great temporal estate, the adjustment of many individual and corporate interests, and the distribution of some sixteen millions of property among persons and purposes to be determined by the wisdom of a parliament, where rival claims were defended by zealous and powerful champions influenced by the strongest motives, sacred and profane, of party, property, and church. It was necessary to deal with the sums, troublesome though not considerable, allotted to the presbyterians and to the catholic seminary at Maynooth. Machinery was constructed for the incorporation of a body to represent the emancipated church, and to hold property for any of its uses and purposes. Finally, the residue of the sixteen millions, after all the just demands upon it had been satisfied, computed at something between seven and eight millions, was appropriated in the words of the preamble, 'not for the maintenance of any church or clergy, nor for the teaching of religion, but mainly for the relief of unavoidable calamity and suffering' not touched by the poor law.

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The speech in which this arduous scheme was explained to parliament was regarded as Mr. Gladstone's highest example of lucid and succinct unfolding of complicated matter. Mr. Disraeli said there was not a single word wasted. So skilfully were the facts marshalled, that every single hearer believed himself thoroughly to comprehend the eternal principles of the commutation of tithe-rent-charge, and the difference in the justice due to a transitory and a permanent curate. Manning said that the only two legislative acts in our history that approached it in importance for Ireland were the repeal of the penal laws and the Act of Union. However this may be, it is hardly an excess to say that since Pitt, the author of the Act of Union, the author of the Church Act was the only statesman in the roll of the century, capable at once of framing, such a statute and expounding it with the same lofty and commanding power.<sup>1</sup>

In a fugitive note, Mr. Gladstone named one or two of the speakers on the second reading:—'Ball: elaborate and impressive, answered with great power by Irish attorney general. Bright: very eloquent and striking. Young George Hamilton: a first speech of great talent, admirably delivered. Hardy: an uncompromising defence of laws and institutions as they are, with a severe picture of the character and civil conduct of the Irish population.' Mr. Disraeli's speech was even more artificial than usual. It was Mr. Hardy and Dr. Ball who gave cogent and strenuous expression to the argument and passion of the church case. When the division came, called by Mr. Gladstone 'notable and historic' (March 24), the majority in a crowded house was 118.<sup>2</sup> 'Our division this morning,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord Granville, 'even exceeded expectations, and will powerfully propel the bill' 'The size of this majority deserves the reader's attention, for it marked the opening of a new parliamentary era. In 1841 Peel had turned out the whigs by a majority of 1. Lord John Russell was displaced in 1852 by 9. The Derby govern-

<sup>1</sup> The Irish Church bill is the greatest monument of genius that I have yet known from Gladstone; even his marvellous budgets are not so marvellous.—*Dr. Temple to Acland, March 12, 1869.*  
<sup>2</sup> 368 against 250.

ment was thrown out in December 1852 by 19. The same government was again thrown out seven years later by 13. Palmerston was beaten in 1857 by 14, and the next year by 19. In 1864 Palmerston's majority on the Danish question was only 18. The second reading of the Franchise bill of 1866 was only carried by 5, and ministers were afterwards beaten upon it by 11. With Mr. Gladstone's accession the ruling majority for a long time stood at its highest both in size and stability.

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With invincible optimism, Mr. Gladstone believed that he would now have 'material communications from the heads of the Irish church'; but letters from Lord Spencer at Dublin Castle informed him that, on the contrary, they were angrier after they knew what the majority meant, than they were before. At the diocesan conferences throughout Ireland the bill was denounced as highly offensive to Almighty God, and the greatest national sin ever committed. The Archdeacon of Ossory told churchmen to trust in God and keep their powder dry, though he afterwards explained that he did not allude to carnal weapons. The cabinet was called a cabinet of brigands, and protestant pastors were urged to see to it that before they gave up their churches to an apostate system a barrel of gunpowder and a box of matches should blow the cherished fabrics to the winds of heaven.

Even Mr. Disraeli's astuteness was at fault. The Archbishop of Canterbury perceived from his conversation that he was bent on setting the liberals by the ears, that he looked for speeches such as would betray utter dissension amid professed agreement, that he had good hopes of shattering the enemy, and 'perhaps of playing over again the game that had destroyed Lord Russell's Reform bill of 1866.' The resounding majority on the second reading, he told the archbishop, was expected; it created no enthusiasm; it was a mechanical majority.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Tait*, ii. pp. 18-19. 'Dizzy said very little,' he wrote to a friend, 'and that merely as a politician, on the possibilities in the House of Lords. He regards it as a lost game in the Commons.'—*Life of Archbishop Mayee*, i. p. 214.

How little he was himself the dupe of these illusions was shown by the next sentence, 'What is of importance now is the course to be pursued by the House of Lords.' Bishop Magee met Disraeli on Jan. 28, '69.

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The bill swept through the stages of committee without alteration of substance and with extraordinary celerity, due not merely to the 'brute majority,' nor to the expectation that all was sure to be undone in another place, but to the peculiar powers developed by the minister. From the speech in which he unfolded his plan, down to the last amendment on report, he showed a mastery alike of himself and of his project and of the business from day to day in hand, that routed opposition and gave new animation and ardour to the confidence of his friends. For six or seven hours a day he astonished the House by his power of attention, unrelaxed yet without strain, by his double grasp of leading principle and intricate detail, by his equal command of legal and historic controversy and of all the actuarial niceties and puzzles of commutation. 'In some other qualities of parliamentary statesmanship,' says one acute observer of that time, 'as an orator, a debater, and a tactician he has rivals; but in the powers of embodying principles in legislative form and preserving unity of purpose through a multiplicity of confusing minutiae he has neither equal nor second among living statesmen.'<sup>1</sup> The truth could not be better summed up. He carried the whole of his party with him, and the average majority in divisions on the clauses was 113. Of one dangerous corner, he says:—

*May 6.*—H. of C., working Irish Church bill. Spoke largely on Maynooth. [Proposal to compensate Maynooth out of the funds of the Irish church.] The final division on the pinching point with a majority of 107 was the most creditable (I think) I have ever known.

By a majority of 114 the bill was read a third time on the last day of May.

### III

The contest was now removed from the constituencies and their representatives in parliament to the citadel of privilege. The issue was no longer single, and the struggle for religious equality in Ireland was henceforth merged before the public eye in a conflict for the supremacy of the Commons

<sup>1</sup> See *Daily News*, April 26, 1869.

in England. Perhaps I should not have spoken of religious equality, for in fact the establishment was known to be doomed, and the fight turned upon the amount of property with which the free church was to go forth to face its new fortunes. 'I should urge the House of Lords,' wrote the Archbishop of Canterbury to Mr. Gladstone (June 3), 'to give all its attention to saving as large an endowment as possible.'

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As at the first stage the Queen had moved for conciliatory courses, so now she again desired Archbishop Tait to communicate with the prime minister. To Mr. Gladstone himself she wrote from Balmoral (June 3):—'The Queen thanks Mr. Gladstone for his kind letter. She has invariably found him most ready to enter into her views and to understand her feelings.' The first question was whether the Lords should reject the bill on the second reading:—

It is eminently desirable, Mr. Gladstone wrote to the archbishop (June 4), that the bill should be read a second time. But if I compare two methods, both inexpedient, one that of rejection on the second reading, the other that of a second reading followed by amendments inconsistent with the principle, I know no argument in favour of the latter, except what relates to the very important question of the position and true interest of the House of Lords itself.

At the same time he promised the archbishop that any views of his upon amendments should have the most careful attention of himself and his colleagues, and 'they would be entertained in a spirit not of jealousy but of freedom, with every desire to bring them into such a shape that they may be in furtherance, and not in derogation, of the main design of the bill.'

General Grey, the Queen's secretary, told Mr. Gladstone that she had communicated with the archbishop, 'having heard that violent counsels were likely to prevail, and that in spite of their leaders, the opposition in the House of Lords was likely to try and throw out the measure on the second reading.' Her own feeling was expressed in General

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Grey's letter to the archbishop of the same date, of which a copy was sent to the prime minister:—

Mr. Gladstone is not ignorant (indeed the Queen has never concealed her feeling on the subject) how deeply her Majesty deplores the necessity, under which he conceived himself to lie, of raising the question as he has done; or of the apprehensions of which she cannot divest herself, as to the possible consequences of the measure which he has introduced. These apprehensions, her Majesty is bound to say, still exist in full force; but considering the circumstances under which the measure has come to the House of Lords, the Queen cannot regard without the greatest alarm the probable effect of its absolute rejection in that House. Carried, as it has been, by an overwhelming and steady majority through a House of Commons, chosen expressly to speak the feeling of the country on the question, there seems no reason to believe that any fresh appeal to the people would lead to a different result. The rejection of the bill, therefore, on the second reading, would only serve to bring the two Houses into collision, and to prolong a dangerous agitation on the subject.

Mr. Gladstone replied:—

*June 5.*—From such information as has indirectly reached Mr. Gladstone, he fears that the leaders of the majority in the House of Lords will undoubtedly oppose the second reading of the Irish Church bill, of which Lord Harrowby is to propose the rejection. He understands that Lord Salisbury, as well as Lord Carnarvon, decidedly, but in vain, objected to this course at the meeting held to-day at the Duke of Marlborough's. Very few of the bishops were present. Lord Derby, it is said, supported the resolution. Although a division must now be regarded as certain, and as very formidable, all hope need not be abandoned that your Majesty's wise counsels through the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the sagacity of the peers themselves with reference to the security and stability of their position in the legislature, may avail to frustrate an unwise resolution.

'How much more effectually,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to Hawarden, 'could the Queen assist in the settlement of this question were she not six hundred miles off.' As it was, she

took a step from which Mr. Gladstone hoped for 'most important consequences,' in writing direct to Lord Derby, dwelling on the danger to the Lords of a collision with the Commons. In a record of these proceedings prepared for Mr. Gladstone (August 4, '69), Lord Granville writes:—

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Before the second reading of the Irish Church bill in the House of Lords, I was asked by the Archbishop of York to meet him and the Archbishop of Canterbury. They said it was impossible for them to vote for the second reading in any case, but before they decided to abstain from voting against it they wished to know how far the government would act in a conciliatory spirit. I made to them the same declaration that I afterwards made in the House, and after seeing you I had another interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury. I told his grace that it was impossible for the government to suggest amendments against themselves, but I gave a hint of the direction in which such amendments might be framed, and, without mentioning that the suggestion came from you, I said that if his grace would tell Dr. Ball that he only wished to propose amendments which it would be possible for the government to accept, that learned gentleman would know better than others how it could be done. The archbishop, however, seems chiefly to have made use of Dr. Ball to supply him with arguments against the government.

The result was doubtful to the very end. It was three o'clock in the morning (June 19) before the close of a fine debate—fine not merely from the eloquence of the speakers and cogency of argument on either side, but because there was a deep and real issue, and because the practical conclusion was not foregone. It was the fullest House assembled in living memory. Three hundred and twenty-five peers voted. The two English archbishops did not vote, and Thirlwall was the only prelate who supported the second reading. It was carried by a majority of 33. In 1857 Lord Derby's vote of censure on Palmerston for the China war was defeated by 36, and these two were the only cases in which the conservatives had been beaten in the Lords for twenty years. Thirty-six conservative peers, including Lord Salisbury, voted away from their party in favour of the second reading.

For the moment ministers breathed freely, but the bill was soon in the trough of the sea. The archbishop wrote to the Queen that they had decided if they could not get three million pounds to float the new church upon, they would take their chance of what might happen by postponing the bill until next year. Asked by the Queen what could be done (July 10), Lord Granville, being at Windsor, answered that the cabinet would not make up their mind until they knew how far the Lords would go in resistance, but he thought it right to tell her that there was no chance of ministers agreeing to postpone the bill for another year. The day after this conversation, the Queen wrote again to the archbishop, asking him seriously to reflect, in case the concessions of the government should not go quite so far as he might himself wish, whether the postponement of the settlement for another year would not be likely to result rather in worse than in better terms for the church. She trusted that he would himself consider, and endeavour to induce others to consider, any concessions offered by the House of Commons in the most conciliatory spirit, rather than to try and get rid of the bill. 'The amendments,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'seem to mean war to the knife.'

After the second reading a tory lady of high station told Lord Clarendon and Mr. Delane that in her opinion a friendly communication might have great influence on Lord Salisbury's course.

I therefore wrote to him (Lord Granville says in the memorandum already referred to), stating why on public and personal grounds it was desirable that he should meet you. I said that although it would be difficult for us to initiate suggestions, yet from your personal regard for him such a conversation would advance matters. He consented, stating that he was in communication as to amendments with Lord Cairns and the archbishop. He was extremely desirous that no one should know of the interview. You were of opinion that the interview had done good, and I wrote to ask Lord Salisbury whether he would like me to put dots on some of your i's. He declined, and considered



the interview had been unsatisfactory, but gave me an assurance of his desire to avoid a conflict. . . . On the 4th of July I wrote again suggesting a compromise on Lord Carnarvon's clause. He declined, that clause being the one thing they cared about. He ended by telling me his growing impression was, that there would be no Church bill this session.

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The general result of the operations of the Lords was to leave disestablishment complete, and the legal framework of the bill undisturbed. Disendowment, on the other hand, was reduced to a shadow. An additional sum of between three and four millions was taken for the church, and the general upshot was, out of a property of sixteen millions, to make over thirteen or fourteen millions to an ecclesiastical body wholly exempt from state control. This, Mr. Gladstone told the Queen, the House of Commons would never accept, and the first effect of persistence in such a course would be a stronger move against the episcopal seats in the House of Lords than had been seen for more than two hundred years. He ridiculed as it deserved the contention that the nation had not passed judgment on the question of disendowment, and he insisted that the government could not go further than three quarters of a million towards meeting the extravagant claims of the Lords. Confessing his disappointment at the conduct of the episcopal body, even including the archbishop, he found a certain consolation in reflecting that equally on the great occasions of 1829 and 1831, though 'the mild and wise Archbishop Howley was its leader,' that body failed either to meet the desires of the country, or to act upon a far-sighted view of the exigencies of the church. One point obstinately contested was the plan for the future application of the surplus. A majority of the Lords insisted on casting out the words of the preamble providing that the residue should not be applied for purposes of religion, and substituting in one shape or another the principle of concurrent endowment, so hostile, as Mr. Gladstone judged it, to the peace of Ireland, and so irreconcilable with public feeling in England and Scotland.

On July 12, the bill came back to the Commons. The

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tension had hardly yet begun to tell upon him, but Mr. Gladstone enters on these days:—

*July 11.*—Formidable accounts from and through Windsor. 12.—The time grows more and more anxious. 15.—This day I received from a Roman catholic bishop the assurance that he offered mass and that many pray for me; and from Mr. Spurgeon (as often from others), an assurance of the prayers of the non-conformists. I think in these and other prayers lies the secret of the strength of body which has been given me in unusual measure during this very trying year.

This was the day on which, amid the ardent cheers of his party, he arose to announce to the House the views of the government. He was in no compromising mood. In a short speech he went through the amendments made by men so out of touch with the feeling of the country that they might have been 'living in a balloon.' One by one he moved the rejection of all amendments that involved the principle of concurrent endowment, the disposal of the surplus, or the postponement of the date of disestablishment. He agreed, however, to give a lump sum of half a million in lieu of private benefactions, to readjust the commutation terms, and make other alterations involving a further gift of £280,000 to the church. When the Commons concluded the consideration of the Lords' amendments (July 16), Mr. Gladstone observed three things: first, that the sentiment against concurrent endowment in any form was overwhelming; second, that not only was no disposition shown to make new concessions, but concessions actually made were sorely grudged; and third, that the tories were eager to postpone the destination of the residuary property.

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On July 16, the bill, restored substantially to its first shape, was again back on the table of the Lords, and shipwreck seemed for five days to be inevitable. On July 20, at eleven o'clock, by a majority of 175 to 93, the Lords once more excluded from the preamble the words that the Commons had placed and replaced there, in order to declare the policy of parliament on matters ecclesiastical in Ireland. This

involved a meaning which Mr. Gladstone declared that no power on earth could induce the Commons to accept. The crisis was of unsurpassed anxiety for the prime minister. He has fortunately left his own record of its phases:<sup>1</sup>—

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*Saturday, July 17.*—On the 16th of July the amendments made by the Lords in the Irish Church bill had been completely disposed of by the House of Commons. The last division, taken on the disposal of the residue, had, chiefly through mere lazy absences, reduced the majority for the government to 72. This *relative* weakness offered a temptation to the opposition to make play upon the point. The cabinet met the next forenoon. We felt on the one hand that it might be difficult to stake the bill on the clause for the disposal of the residue, supposing that to be the single remaining point of difference; but that the postponement of this question would be a great moral and political evil, and that any concession made by us had far better be one that would be of some value to the disestablished church.

By desire of the cabinet I went to Windsor in the afternoon, and represented to H. M. what it was in our power to do; namely, although we had done all we could do upon the merits, yet, for the sake of peace and of the House of Lords, [we were willing], (*a*) to make some one further pecuniary concession to the church of sensible though not very large amount; (*b*) to make a further concession as to curates, slight in itself; (*c*) to amend the residue clause so as to give to parliament the future control, and to be content with simply declaring the principle on which the property should be distributed. The Queen, while considering that she could not be a party to this or that particular scheme, agreed that it might be proper to make a representation to the archbishop to the general effect that the views of the government at this crisis of the measure were such as deserved to be weighed, and to promote confidential communication between us. She intimated her intention to employ the Dean of Windsor as a medium of communication between herself and the archbishop, and wished me to explain particulars fully to him. I went to the deanery, and, not finding the dean, had written as much as here follows on a scrap of paper, when he came in. . . .

<sup>1</sup> The memorandum is dated Aug. 14, 1869.

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The object of this paper was to induce the archbishop to discountenance any plan for pressing the postponement of the provisions respecting the residue, and to deal with us in preference respecting any practicable concession to the church. When the dean came in, I explained this further, recited the purport of my interview with the Queen, and on his asking me confidentially for his own information, I let him know that the further pecuniary concession we were prepared to recommend would be some £170,000 or £180,000.

*Sunday, July 18.*—In the afternoon Lord Granville called on me and brought me a confidential memorandum, containing an overture which Mr. Disraeli had placed in the hands of Lord Bessborough for communication to us. [Memorandum not recoverable.] He had represented the terms as those which he had with much difficulty induced Lord Cairns to consent to. While the contention as to the residue was abandoned, and pecuniary concessions alone were sought, the demand amounted, according to our computation, to between £900,000 and £1,000,000. . . . This it was evident was utterly inadmissible. I saw no possibility of approach to it; and considered that a further quarter of a million or thereabouts was all that the House of Commons could be expected or asked further to concede. On the same afternoon Lord Granville, falling in with Mr. Goschen, asked him what he thought the very most that could be had—would it be £500,000? Goschen answered £300,000, and with this Glyn agreed. Mr. Disraeli desired an answer before three on Monday.

*Monday, July 19.*—Those members of the government who had acted as a sort of committee in the Irish church question met in the afternoon. We were all agreed in opinion that the Disraeli overture must be rejected, though without closing the door; and a reply was prepared in this sense, which Lord Granville undertook to send. [*Draft, in the above sense that no sum approaching £1,000,000 could be entertained.*]

Meantime the archbishop had arrived in Downing Street, in pursuance of the arrangements of Saturday; and a paper was either now drawn, or sanctioned by my colleagues, I do not

remember which, in order to form the basis of my communication to the archbishop. I returned from my interview, and reported, as I afterwards did to the Dean of Windsor, that his tone was friendly, and that he appeared well disposed to the sort of arrangement I had sketched.

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*Tuesday, July 20.*—The archbishop, who had communicated with Lord Cairns in the interval, came to me early to-day and brought a memorandum as a basis of agreement, which, to my surprise, demanded higher terms than those of Mr. Disraeli.<sup>1</sup> I told the archbishop the terms in which we had already expressed ourselves to Mr. Disraeli. . . . Meantime an answer had come from Mr. Disraeli stating that he could not do more. Then followed the meeting of the opposition peers at the Duke of Marlborough's.

On the meeting of the Houses, a few of us considered what course was to be taken if the Lords should again cast out of the preamble the words which precluded concurrent endowment; and it was agreed to stay the proceedings for the time, and consider among ourselves what further to do. [Lord Granville has a pencil note on the margin, 'The first order I received was to throw up the bill, to which I answered that I could not do more than adjourn the debate.'] Lord Granville made this announcement accordingly after the Lords had, upon a hot debate and by a large majority, again excluded our words from the preamble [173 : 95]. This had been after a speech from Lord Cairns, in which he announced his intention of moving other amendments which he detailed, and which were in general conformable to the proposals already made to us. The first disposition of several of us this evening, myself included, was to regard the proceeding of the opposition as now complete; since the whole had been announced, the first stroke struck, and the command shown of a force of peers

1. The Lords' amendment as to curates to be adopted, . . . . .	£380,000
2. The Ulster glebes, . . . . .	465,000
3. The glebehouses to be free, . . . . .	150,000

£995,000

Or the Bishop of Peterborough's amendment as to the tax upon livings in lieu of No. 3, would carry a heavier charge by . . . . .

124,000

£1,119,000

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amply sufficient to do the rest.<sup>1</sup> . . . The idea did not, however, include an absolute abandonment of the bill, but only the suspension of our responsibility for it, leaving the opposition to work their own will, and with the intention, when this had been done, of considering the matter further. . . .

*Wednesday, July 21.*—The cabinet met at 11; and I went to it in the mind of last night. We discussed, however, at great length all possible methods of proceeding that occurred to us. The result was stated in a letter of mine to the Queen, of which I annex a copy. [*See Appendix. He enumerates the various courses considered, and states that the course adopted was to go through the endowment amendments, and if they were carried adversely, then to drop their responsibility.*]

Most of the cabinet were desirous to go on longer; others, myself included, objected to proceeding to the end of the bill or undertaking to remit the bill again to the House of Commons as of our own motion. It occurred to me, however, that we might proceed as far as to the end of the many amendments, about the middle of the bill; and this appeared to meet the views of all, even of those who would have preferred doing more, or less.

*Thursday, July 22.*—I was laid up to-day, and the transactions were carried on by Lord Granville, in communication with me from time to time at my house. First he brought me a note he had received from Lord Cairns.

This, dated July 22, was to the effect that Lord Cairns had no right and no desire to ask for any information as to the course proposed that night; but that if the statements as to the intention of the government to proceed with the consideration of the amendments were correct, and if Lord Granville thought any advantage likely to result from it, Lord Cairns would be ready, 'as you know I have throughout been, to confer upon a mode by which without sacrifice of principle or dignity upon either side the remaining points of difference might be arranged.' The proceedings of this critical day

<sup>1</sup> The version in society was that Gladstone wanted to throw up the bill after the debate of last Tuesday, when the words of the preamble were re-inserted, but he was outvoted in

his cabinet; and it is said that Lord Granville told him that if he gave up the bill he must find somebody else to lead the Lords.—(July 22, 1869), *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, ii. p. 409.

are narrated by Lord Granville in a memorandum to Mr. Gladstone, dated August 4:—

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After seeing you I met Lord Cairns at the colonial office. He offered me terms.<sup>1</sup> . . . I asked him whether, in his opinion, he, the archbishop, and I could carry anything we agreed upon. He said, 'Yes, certainly.' After seeing you I met Lord Cairns a second time in his room at the House of Lords. I asked as a preliminary to giving any opinion on his amendments, how he proposed to deal with the preamble. He said, 'to leave it as amended by the Lords.' I then proposed the words which were afterwards adopted in the 68th clause. He was at first taken aback, but admitted that he had personally no objection to them. He asked what was the opposition to be feared. I suggested some from Lord Grey. He believed this to be certain, but immaterial. I objected *in toto* to Lord Salisbury's clause or its substitute. He was unwilling to yield, chiefly on Lord Salisbury's account, but finally consented. We agreed upon the commutation clause if the 7 and the 5 per cent. were lumped together. On the curates clause we could come to no agreement. He proposed to see Lord Salisbury and the archbishop, and to meet again at four at the colonial office. He spoke with fairness as to the difficulty of his position, and the risk he ran with his own party. I again saw you and asked the Irish attorney-general to be present at the last interview. I stated to him in Lord Cairns's presence how far we agreed, and expressed my regret that on the last point—the curates—our difference was irreconcilable. Lord Cairns said he hoped not, and proceeded to argue strongly in favour of his proposal. He at last, however, at 4.30, compromised the matter by accepting five years instead of one: I shook his hand, which was trembling with nervousness. We discussed the form of announcing the arrangement to the House. We at once agreed it was better to tell the whole truth, and soon settled that it would be

<sup>1</sup> They were somewhat but not very greatly improved. The Ulster glebes, however, were gone. He now demanded: 1. The acceptance of the amendment respecting curates = £380,000; 2. Five per cent. to be added to the seven per cent. on commutations = £300,000; 3. The glebe

houses to be given to the church at ten years' purchase of the sites, a slight modification of Lord Salisbury's amendment = £140,000. From this it appeared that even in the mid hours of this final day Lord Cairns asked above £800,000.

better for its success that he should announce the details. I was afterwards apprehensive that this latter arrangement might be disadvantageous to us, but nothing could be better or fairer than his statement. I cannot finish this statement, which I believe is accurate, without expressing my admiration at the firmness and conciliation which you displayed in directing me in all these negotiations.

'The news was brought to me on my sofa,' Mr. Gladstone says, 'and between five and six I was enabled to telegraph to the Queen. My telegram was followed up by a letter at 7 P.M., which announced that the arrangement had been accepted by the House of Lords, and that a general satisfaction prevailed.' To the Queen he wrote (July 22):—

Mr. Gladstone is at a loss to account for the great change in the tone and views of the opposition since Sunday and Monday, and even Tuesday last, but on this topic it is needless to enter. As to the principal matters, the basis of the arrangement on the side of the government is much the same as was intended when Mr. Gladstone had the honour of an audience at Windsor on Saturday; but various minor concessions have been added. Mr. Gladstone does not doubt that, if the majority of the House of Lords should accede to the advice of Lord Cairns, the government will be able to induce the House of Commons to agree on the conditions proposed. Mr. Gladstone would in vain strive to express to your Majesty the relief, thankfulness, and satisfaction, with which he contemplates not only the probable passing of what many believe to be a beneficent and necessary measure, but the undoubted and signal blessing of an escape from a formidable constitutional conflict. The skill, patience, assiduity, and sagacity of Lord Granville in the work of to-day demand from Mr. Gladstone the tribute of his warm admiration.

On reviewing this whole transaction, and doing full justice to the attitude both of the Queen and the archbishop, the reader will be inclined to agree with old Lord Halifax:—'I think we owe a good turn to Cairns, without whose *decision* on Thursday I hardly think that the settlement could have been effected. Indeed Derby's conduct proves what difficulty



there would have been, if Cairns had not taken upon himself the responsibility of acting as he did.' CHAP.  
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Among interesting letters was one from Manning :—(July 24) 'My joy over the event is not only as a catholic, though that must be, as it ought to be, my highest motive, but as an Englishman to whom, as I remember your once saying, the old English monarchy is dear next after the catholic church. But at this time I will only add that I may wish you joy on personal reasons. I could hardly have hoped that you could so have framed, mastered, and carried through the bill from first to last so complete, so unchanged in identity of principle and detail, and let me add with such unwearied and sustained self-control and forbearance.'

The diary gives us a further glimpse of these agitating days :—

*July 20.*—Conclave of colleagues on Irish church proceedings. An anxious day, a sad evening. *21.*—Cabinet 11-2½, stiff, but good. *22.*—I was obliged to take to my sofa and spent the day so in continual interviews with Granville, Glyn, West, Sullivan—especially the first—on the details and particulars of the negotiations respecting the Irish Church bill. The favourable issue left me almost unmanned in the reaction from a sharp and stern tension of mind. *23.*—My attack did not lessen. Dr. Clark came in the morning and made me up for the House, whither I went 2-5 P.M., to propose concurrence in the Lords' amendments. Up to the moment I felt very weak, but this all vanished when I spoke and while the debate lasted. Then I went back to bed *25.*—Weak still. I presumed over much in walking a little and fell back at night to my lowest point.

Sir Robert Phillimore records :—

*July 21.*—Found Gladstone at breakfast, calm, pale, but without a doubt as to the course which the government must pursue, viz. : to maintain upon every important point the bill as sent back by the Commons, probably an autumn session, a bill sternly repeated by the Commons, too probably without the clauses favourable to the Irish church. *23.*—Nothing talked or written of but the political marvel of yesterday. Gladstone in a speech universally praised proposed to the House of Commons the bill as

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now modified, and it passed with much harmony, broken by an Orange member. Gladstone very unwell, and ought to have been in bed when he made his speech. 24.—Gladstone still very weak but in a state of calm happiness at the unexpected turn which the Irish bill had taken. Does not now know the origin or history of the sudden resolution on the part of the leaders of the opposition. I am satisfied that Disraeli was alarmed and thoroughly frightened at the state of the House of Commons and the country, that Cairns was determined to regain what he had practically lost or was losing, the leadership of the Lords, and that many of his party were frightened at the madness and folly of Tuesday night considered after a day's reflection. . . . Above all there was a well-grounded alarm on the part of Cairns and his immediate supporters in the Lords, that their order was in imminent danger. Bluster disappeared, and a retreat, as decent as well could be expected, was made from a situation known to be untenable. They had never expected that Gladstone would drop the bill. 25.—Much conversation with Gladstone, who is still very weak. He wrote to the Archbishop of Dublin to say in effect, that as a private churchman he would be glad to assist in any way the archbishop could point out in the organizing of the voluntary church in Ireland.

Sir Thomas Acland writes, August 3, 1869 :—

I stayed at House of Commons perforce till about 1.30 or 2, and then walked away with Gladstone through the Park. It is beautiful to see his intense enjoyment of the cool fresh air, the trees, the sky, the gleaming of light on the water, all that is refreshing in contrast to the din of politics.

A month later the Archbishop of Canterbury found Mr. Gladstone at Lord Granville's at Walmer Castle :—

Reached Walmer Castle about 6.30. Found Gladstone lying in blankets on the ramparts eating his dinner, looking still very ill. . . . He joined us at night full of intelligence. His fierce vigour all the better for being a little tempered. . . . Much interesting conversation about the state of the church and morality in Wales, also about leading ecclesiastics. I gather that he will certainly nominate Temple for a bishopric.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Archbishop Tait*, ii. p. 45.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST CHAPTER OF AN AGRARIAN REVOLUTION

(1870)

THE Irish Land Act of 1870 in its consequences was certainly one of the most important measures of the nineteenth century.—LIMCKY.

IN the beginning of 1870 one of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues wrote of him to another, 'I fear that he is steering straight upon the rocks.' So it might well seem to any who knew the unplumbed depths on which he had to shape his voyage. Irish history has been said to resemble that of Spain for the last three centuries,—the elaboration of all those ideas of law and political economy most unsuited to the needs of the nation concerned. Such ideas, deeply cherished in Britain where they had succeeded, Mr. Gladstone was now gradually drawn forward to reverse and overthrow in Ireland where they had ended in monstrous failure. Here a pilot's eye might well see jagged reefs. The occasion was the measure for dealing with the land of Ireland, that he had promised at the election. The difficulty arose from the huge and bottomless ignorance of those in whose hands the power lay. Mr. Gladstone in the course of these discussions said, and said truly, of the learned Sir Roundell Palmer, that he knew no more of land tenures in Ireland than he knew of land tenures in the moon. At the beginning much the same might have been observed of the cabinet, of the two houses of parliament, and of the whole mass of British electors. No doubt one effect of this great ignorance was to make Mr. Gladstone dictator. Still ignorance left all the more power to prejudice and interests. We may imagine the task. The cabinet was in the main made up of landlords, lawyers, hardened and convicted economists,—not economists like

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Mill, but men saturated with English ideas of contract, of competitive rent, of strict rule of supply and demand. Mr. Bright, it is true, had a profound conviction that the root of Irish misery and disorder lay in the land question. Here he saw far and deep. But then Mr. Bright had made up his mind that the proper solution of the land question was the gradual transformation of the tenants into owners, and this strong preconception somewhat narrowed his vision. Even while Mr. Gladstone was in the middle of his battle on the church, Bright wrote to him (May 21, '69):—

When the Irish church question is out of the way, we shall find all Ireland, north and south alike, united in demanding something on the land question much broader than anything hitherto offered or proposed in compensation bills. If the question is to go on without any real remedy for the grievance, the condition of Ireland in this particular will become worse, and measures far beyond anything I now contemplate will be necessary. I am most anxious to meet the evil before it is too great for control, and my plan *will meet* it without wrong to any man.

'I have studied the Irish land question,' said Bright, 'from a point of view almost inaccessible to the rest of your colleagues, and from which possibly even you have not had the opportunity of regarding it. . . . I hope you are being refreshed, as I am, after the long nights in the House—long nights which happily were not fruitless. I only hope our masters in the other House will not undo what we have done.' Mr. Gladstone replied the next day, opening with a sentence that, if addressed to any one less revered than Bright, might have seemed to veil a sarcasm:—'I have this advantage for learning the Irish land question, that I do not set out with the belief that I know it already; and certainly no effort that I can make to acquire the mastery of it will be wanting.' He then proceeds to express his doubts as to the government embarking on a very large operation of land-jobbing, buying up estates from landlords and reselling them to tenants; and whether the property bought and sold again by the state would not by force of economic laws gradually return again to fewer hands. He then comes

still closer to the pith of the matter. He says to Mr. Bright:—‘Your plan, if adopted in its entirety, could only extend to a small proportion of the two or three hundred millions worth of land in Ireland; and I do not well see how the unprotected tenants of the land in general would take essential benefit from the purchase and owning of land by a few of their fortunate brethren.’ If the land question was urgent, and Bright himself, like Mill, thought that it was, this answer of Mr. Gladstone’s was irrefragable. In acknowledging the despatch of this correspondence from Mr. Gladstone, Lord Granville says to him (May 26, 1869):—

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This question may break us up. Bright is thin-skinned; the attacks in the Lords ruffle him more than he chooses to admit. I cannot make out how far he likes office, the cabinet, and his new position. It will be particularly disagreeable to him to have this plan, of which he is so much enamoured and for which he has received so much blame and a little praise, snuffed out by the cabinet. And yet how is it possible to avoid it, even putting aside the strong opinions of Lowe, Cardwell, and others? My only hope is that you have got the germ of some larger and more comprehensive plan in your head, than has yet been developed.

The plan ultimately adopted, after a severe struggle and with momentous consequences, did not first spring from Mr. Gladstone’s brain. The idea of adapting the law to custom in all its depth and breadth, and extending the rooted notion of tenant-right to its furthest bearings, was necessarily a plant of Irish and not of English growth. Mr. Chichester Fortescue, the Irish chief secretary and an Irishman, first opened a bold expansion of the familiar principle of many tenant-right bills. He had introduced such a bill himself in 1866, and the conservative government had brought in another in 1867. It is believed that he was instigated to adopt the new and bolder line by Sir Edward Sullivan, then the Irish attorney-general. Away from Sullivan, it was observed, he had little to say of value about his plan. In the cabinet Fortescue was not found effective, but he was thoroughly at home in the subject, and his speeches in public on Irish business had all the cogency of a man

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speaking his native tongue, and even genius in an acquired language is less telling. What is astonishing is the magic of the rapid and sympathetic penetration with which Mr. Gladstone went to the heart of the problem, as it was presented to him by his Irish advisers. This was his way. When acts of policy were not of great or immediate concern, he took them as they came; but when they pressed for treatment and determination, then he swooped down upon them with the strength and vision of an eagle.

## II

His career in the most deeply operative portion of it was so intimately concerned with Ireland, that my readers will perhaps benignantly permit a page or two of historic digression. I know the subject seems uninviting. My apology must be that it occupied no insignificant portion of Mr. Gladstone's public life, and that his treatment of it made one of his deepest marks on the legislation of the century. After all, there is no English-speaking community in any part of the wide globe, where our tragic mismanagement of the land of Ireland, and of those dwelling on it and sustained by it, has not left its unlucky stamp.

If Englishmen and Scots had not found the theme so uninviting, if they had given a fraction of the attention to the tenure and history of Irish land, that was bestowed, say, upon the Seisachtheia of Solon at Athens, or the Sempronian law in ancient Rome, this chapter in our annals would not have been written. As it was, parliament had made laws for landlord and tenant in Ireland without well understanding what is either an Irish landlord or an Irish tenant. England has been able to rule India, Mill said, because the business of ruling devolved upon men who passed their lives in India, and made Indian interests their regular occupation. India has on the whole been governed with a pretty full perception of its differences from England. Ireland on the contrary, suffering a worse misfortune than absentee landlords, was governed by an absentee parliament. In England, property means the rights of the rent-receiver who has equipped the land and prepared it for

the capital and the skill of the tenant. In Ireland, in the minds of the vast majority of the population, for reasons just as good, property includes rights of the cultivator, whose labour has drained the land, and reclaimed it, and fenced it, and made farm-roads, and put a dwelling and farm buildings on it, and given to it all the working value that it possesses. We need suppose no criminality on either side. The origin of the difference was perfectly natural. In Ireland the holdings were small and multitudinous; no landlord who was not a millionaire, could have prepared and equipped holdings numbered by hundreds or thousands; and if he could, the hundreds and thousands of tenants had not a straw of capital. This peculiarity in social circumstances made it certain, therefore, that if the moral foundation of modern ideas of property is that he who sows shall reap, the idea of property would grow up in the mind of the cultivator, whenever the outer climate permitted the growth in his mind of any ideas of moral or equitable right at all.

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In 1845 the Devon Commission had reported that it is the tenant who has made the improvements; that large confiscations of these improvements had been systematically practised in the shape of progressive enhancements of rent; that crime and disorder sprang from the system; and that parliament ought to interfere. A bill was proposed by the Peel government in 1845 for protecting the rightful interests of the tenant against the landlord. It was introduced in the House mainly composed of landlords. There it had such contumelious greeting, that it was speedily dropped. This was a crowning illustration of the levity of the imperial parliament dealing with Irish problems. The vital necessity for re-adjusting the foundations of social life demonstrated; a half measure languidly attempted; attempt dropped; bills sent to slumber in limbo; dry rot left quietly alone for a whole generation, until bloody outrage and murder awoke legislative conscience or roused executive fear. The union was seventy years old before the elementary feature in the agrarian condition of Ireland was recognised by the parliament which had undertaken to govern Ireland. Before the union Ireland

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was governed by the British cabinet, through the Irish landed gentry, according to their views, and in their interests. After the union it was just the same. She was treated as a turbulent and infected province within the larger island; never as a community with an internal economy peculiarly her own, with special sentiments, history, recollections, points of view, and necessities all her own. Between the union and the year 1870, Acts dealing with Irish land had been passed at Westminster. Every one of these Acts was in the interest of the landlord and against the tenant. A score of Insurrection Acts, no Tenant-right Act. Meanwhile Ireland had gone down into the dark gulfs of the Famine (1846-7).

Anybody can now see that the true view of the Irish cultivator was to regard him as a kind of copyholder or customary freeholder, or whatever other name best fits a man who has possessory interests in a piece of land, held at the landlord's will, but that will controlled by custom. In Ulster, and in an embryo degree elsewhere, this was what in a varying and irregular way actually had come about. Agrarian customs developed that undoubtedly belong to a backward social system, but they sprang from the necessities of the case. The essence of such customs in Ulster was first, a fair rent to be fixed not by competition, but by valuation, and exclusive of tenant's improvements; second, the right of the tenant to transfer to somebody else his goodwill, or whatever else we may call his right of occupancy in the holding.

Instead of adapting law to custom, habit, practice, and equity, parliament proceeded to break all this down. With well-meaning but blind violence it imported into Ireland after the famine the English idea of landed property and contract. Or rather, it imported these ideas into Ireland with a definiteness and formality that would have been impracticable even in England. Just as good people thought they could easily make Ireland protestant if only she could be got within earshot of evangelical truth, so statesmen expected that a few clauses on a parchment would suffice to root out at a stroke the inveterate habits and ideas of long generations. We talk of revolutionary doctrinaires in France and other countries. History hardly shows such revolutionary doctrin-



aires anywhere as the whig and tory statesmen who tried to regenerate Ireland in the middle of the nineteenth century. They first of all passed an Act (1849) inviting the purchase of the estates of an insolvent landlord upon precisely the same principles as governed the purchase of his pictures or his furniture. We passed the Encumbered Estates Act, Mr. Gladstone said, 'with lazy, heedless, uninformed good intentions.' The important rights given by custom and equity to the cultivator were suddenly extinguished by the supreme legal right of the rent-receiver. About one-eighth of the whole area of the country is estimated to have changed hands on these terms. The extreme of wretchedness and confusion naturally followed. Parliament thought this must be due to some misunderstanding. That there might be no further mistake, it next proceeded formally to declare (1860) that the legal relations between landlord and tenant in Ireland were to be those of strict contract.<sup>1</sup> Thus blunder was clenched by blunder. The cultivators were terror-struck, and agitation waxed hot.

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Oliver Cromwell had a glimpse of the secret in 1649. 'These poor people,' he said, 'have been accustomed to as much injustice and oppression from their landlords, the great men, and those who should have done them right, as any people in that which we call Christendom. Sir, if justice were freely and impartially administered here, the foregoing darkness and corruption would make it look so much the more glorious and beautiful.' It was just two hundred and twenty years before another ruler of England saw as deep, and applied his mind to the free doing of justice.

### III

Almost immediately after recovering from the fatigues of the session of 1869, Mr. Gladstone threw himself upon his new task, his imagination vividly excited by its magnitude and its possibilities. 'For the last three months,' he writes

<sup>1</sup> When the present writer once referred to the principle of the Act of 1860 as being that the hiring of land is just as much founded on trade principles as the chartering of a ship or the hiring of a street cab, loud

approbation came from the tory benches. So deep was parliamentary ignorance of Ireland even in 1887, after the Acts of 1870 and 1881.—*Hans.* 314, p. 295.

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to the Duke of Argyll (Dec. 5), 'I have worked daily, I think, upon the question, and so I shall continue to do. The literature of it is large, larger than I can master; but I feel the benefit of continued reading upon it. We have before us a crisis, and a great crisis, for us all, to put it on no higher ground, and a great honour or a great disgrace. As I do not mean to fail through want of perseverance, so neither will I wilfully err through precipitancy, or through want of care and desire at least to meet all apprehensions which are warranted by even the show of reason.'

It was not reading alone that brought him round to the full measure of securing the cultivator in his holding. The crucial suggestion, the expediency, namely, of making the landlord pay compensation to the tenant for disturbing him, came from Ireland. To Mr. Chichester Fortescue, the Irish secretary, Mr. Gladstone writes (Sept. 15):—

I heartily wish it were possible that you, Sullivan, and I could have some of those preliminary conversations on land, which were certainly of great use in the first stages of the Irish Church bill. As this is difficult, let us try to compare notes as well as we can in writing. I anticipate that many members of the cabinet will find it hard to extend their views to what the exigencies of the time, soberly considered, now require; but patience, prudence, and good feeling will, I hope, surmount all obstacles.

Like you, I am unwilling to force a peasant proprietary into existence. . . . The first point in this legislation, viz., that the presumption of law should give improvements to the tenant, is now, I suppose, very widely admitted, but no longer suffices to settle the question. . . . Now as to your 'compensation for disturbance.' This is indeed a question full of difficulty. It is very desirable to prevent the using of augmentation of rent as a method of eviction. I shall be most curious to see the means and provisions you may devise, without at present being too sanguine.

Meanwhile he notes to Lord Granville (Sept. 22) how critical and arduous the question is, within as well as without the cabinet, and wonders whether they ought not to be thinking of a judicious cabinet committee:—

The question fills the public mind in an extraordinary degree,

and we can hardly avoid some early step towards making progress in it. A committee keeps a cabinet quiet. It is highly necessary that we should be quite ready when parliament meets, and yet there is so much mental movement upon the question from day to day, as we see from a variety of curious utterances (that of the *Times* included), that it is desirable to keep final decisions open. Much information will be open, and this a committee can prepare in concert with the Irish government. It also, I think, affords a means of bringing men's minds together.

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He tells the Irish secretary that so far as he can enter into the secretary's views, he 'enters thoroughly into the spirit of them.' But many members of the cabinet, laden sufficiently with their own labours, had probably not so closely followed up the matter:—

The proposition, that *more* than compensation to tenants for their improvements will be necessary in order to settle the Irish land laws, will be unpalatable, or new, to several, and naturally enough. You will have observed the total difference in the internal situation between this case and that of the Irish church, where upon all the greater points our measure was in a manner outlined for us by the course of previous transactions.

At the end of October the question was brought formally before the cabinet:—

Oct. 30—Cabinet, 2-5½. . . . We broke ground very satisfactorily on the question of Irish land. Nov. 3.—Cabinet. Chiefly on Irish land, and stiff. 9.—To Guildhall, where I spoke for the government. The combination of physical effort with measured words is difficult. 22.—Worked six hours on my books, arranging and re-arranging. The best brain rest I have had, I think, since December last.

The brain rest was not for long. On Dec. 1 he tells Lord Granville that Argyll is busy on Irish land, and in his views is misled by 'the rapid facility of his active mind.' 'It is rather awkward at this stage to talk of breaking up the government, and that is more easily said than done.' I know no more singular reading in its way than the correspondence between Mr. Gladstone and the Duke of Argyll;

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Mr. Gladstone trying to lead his argumentative colleague over one or two of the barest rudiments of the history of Irish land, and occasionally showing in the process somewhat of the quality of the superior pupil teacher acquiring to-day material for the lesson of to-morrow. Mr. Gladstone goes to the root of the matter when he says to the Duke:—‘What I would most earnestly entreat of you is not to rely too much on Highland experience, but to acquaint yourself by careful reading with the rather extensive facts and history of the Irish land question. My own studies in it are very imperfect, though pursued to the best of my ability; but they have revealed to me many matters of fact which have seriously modified my views, most of them connected with and branching out of the very wide extension of the idea and even the practice of tenant right, mostly perhaps *unrecognised* beyond the limits of the Ulster custom.’

Then Lord Granville writes to him that Clarendon has sent him two letters running, talking of the certainty of the government being broken up. ‘The sky is very far from clear,’ Mr. Gladstone says to Mr. Fortescue (Dec. 3), ‘but we must bate no jot of heart or hope.’ The next day it is Mr. Bright to whom he turns in friendly earnest admonition. His words will perhaps be useful to many generations of cabinet ministers:—

It is not the courageous part of your paper to which I now object, though I doubt the policy of the reference to feebleness and timidity, as men in a cabinet do not like what may *seem* to imply that they are cowards. It is your argument (a very overstrained one in my opinion) against Fortescue’s propositions, and your proposal (so it reads) to put them back in order of discussion to the second place *now*, when the mind of the cabinet has been upon them for six weeks. . . . Had the cabinet adopted at this moment a *good and sufficient scheme for dealing with the Irish tenants as tenants*, I should care little how much you depreciated such a scheme in comparison with one for converting them into owners. But the state of things is most critical. This is not a time at which those who in substance agree, can afford to throw away strength by the *relative* depreciation of those parts of a plan of

relief, to which they do not themselves give the first place in importance. It is most dangerous to discredit *propositions which you mean to adopt*, in the face of any who (as yet) do not mean to adopt them, and who may consistently and honourably use all your statements against them, nay, who would really be bound to do so. No part of what I have said is an argument against your propositions. . . . If your seven propositions were law to-day, you would have made but a very small progress towards settling the land question of Ireland. For all this very plain speech, you will, I am sure, forgive me.

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A letter from Mr. Gladstone to Fortescue (Dec. 5) shows the competition between Bright's projects of purchase by state-aid, and the scheme for dealing with the tenants as tenants:—

I am a good deal staggered at the idea of any interference with present rents. But I shall not speak on this subject to others. It will be difficult enough to carry the substance of the plan you proposed, without any enlargement of it. I hope to see you again before the question comes in in the cabinet. . . . Bright is very full of waste lands, and generally of his own plans, considerably (at present) to the detriment of yours. He wants the government to buy waste lands, and says it is not against political economy, but yours is. I think he will come right. It appears to me we might in the case of waste lands lend money (on proper conditions) to *any buyers*; in the case of other lands we are only to lend to occupiers. What do you think of this?

At this date he was still in doubt whether anybody would agree to interference with existing rents, but he had for himself hit upon the principle that became the foundation of his law. He put to Fortescue (Dec. 9) as a material point:—

Whether it is expedient to adopt, wherever it can be made available, *the custom of the country as the basis for compensation on eviction and the like*. I cannot make out from your papers whether you wholly dissent from this. I hoped you had agreed in it. I have acquired a strong conviction upon it, of which I have written out the grounds; but I shall not circulate the paper till I understand your views more fully.

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Lowe, at the other extremity, describes himself as more and more 'oppressed by a feeling of heavy responsibility and an apprehension of serious danger,' and feeling that he and the minority (Clarendon, Argyll, and Cardwell—of whom he was much the best hand at an argument)—were being driven to choose between their gravest convictions, and their allegiance to party and cabinet. They agreed to the presumption of law as to the making of improvements; to compensation for improvements, retrospective and prospective; to the right of new tenants at will to compensation on eviction. The straw that broke the camel's back was compensation for eviction, where no custom could be proved in the case of an existing tenancy. Mr. Gladstone wrote a long argumentative letter to Lord Granville to be shown to Lowe, and it was effectual. Lowe thought the tone of it very fair and the arguments of the right sort, but nevertheless he added, in the words I have already quoted, 'I fear he is steering straight upon the rocks.'

What might surprise us, if anything in Irish doings could surprise us, is that though this was a measure for Irish tenants, it was deemed heinously wrong to ascertain directly from their representatives what the Irish tenants thought. Lord Bessborough was much rebuked in London for encouraging Mr. Gladstone to communicate with Sir John Gray, the owner of the great newspaper of the Irish tenant class. Yet Lord O'Hagan, the chancellor, who had the rather relevant advantage of being of the same stock and faith as three-fourths of the nation concerned, told them that 'the success or failure of the Land bill depends on the *Freeman's Journal*; if it says, We accept this as a fixity of tenure, every priest will say the same, and *vice versa*.' It was, however, almost a point of honour in those days for British cabinets to make Irish laws out of their own heads.

Nearly to the last the critical contest in the cabinet went on. Fortescue fought as well as he could even against the prime minister himself, as the following from Mr. Gladstone to him shows (Jan. 12):—

There can surely be no advantage in further argument between you and me at this stage—especially after so many hours and

pages of it—on the recognition of usage beyond the limit of Ulster custom as a distinct head. You pressed your view repeatedly on the cabinet, which did not adopt it. Till the cabinet alters its mind, we have no option except to use every effort to get the bill drawn according to its instructions.

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How much he had his Irish plans at heart, Mr. Gladstone showed by his urgency that the Queen should open parliament. His letter to her (Jan. 15) on the subject, he told Lord Granville, 'expresses my desire, not founded on ordinary motives, nor having reference to ordinary circumstances':—

We have now to deal with the *gros* of the Irish question, and the Irish question is in a category by itself. It would be almost a crime in a minister to omit anything that might serve to mark, and bring home to the minds of men, the gravity of the occasion. Moreover, I am persuaded that the Queen's own sympathies would be, not as last year, but in the same current as ours. To this great country the state of Ireland after seven hundred years of our tutelage is in my opinion so long as it continues, an intolerable disgrace, and a danger so absolutely transcending all others, that I call it the only real danger of the noble empire of the Queen. I cannot refrain from bringing before her in one shape or another my humble advice that she should, if *able*, open parliament.

## IV

Public opinion was ripening. The *Times* made a contribution of the first importance to the discussion, in a series of letters from a correspondent, that almost for the first time brought the facts of Irish land before the general public. A pamphlet from Mill, then at the height of his influence upon both writers and readers, startled them by the daring proposition that the only plan was to buy out the landlords. The whole host of whig economists and lawyers fell heavily upon him in consequence. The new voters showed that they were not afraid of new ideas. It was not until Jan. 25 that peril was at an end inside the government:—

Jan. 25, '70.—Cabinet. The great difficulties of the Irish Land bill *there* are now over. Thank God! Feb. 7.—With the Prince

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of Wales  $3\frac{1}{2}$ - $4\frac{1}{4}$  explaining to him the Land bill, and on other matters. He has certainly much natural intelligence. 15.—  
H. of C. Introduced the Irish Land bill in a speech of  $3\frac{1}{4}$  hours. Well received by the House at large. *Query*, the Irish popular party!

Lord Dufferin, an Irish landlord, watching, as he admits, with considerable jealousy exceptional legislation in respect to Ireland, heard the speech from the peers' gallery, and wrote to Mr. Gladstone the next day:—'I feel there is no one else in the country who could have recommended the provisions of such a bill to the House of Commons, with a slighter shock to the prejudices of the class whose interests are chiefly concerned.' He adds: 'I happened to find myself next to Lord Cairns. When you had done, he told me he did not think his people would oppose any of the leading principles of your bill.'

The policy of the bill as tersely explained by Mr. Gladstone in a letter to Manning, compressing as he said eight or ten columns of the *Times*, was 'to prevent the landlord from using the terrible weapon of undue and unjust eviction, by so framing the handle that it shall cut his hands with the sharp edge of pecuniary damages. The man evicted without any fault, and suffering the usual loss by it, will receive whatever the custom of the country gives, and where there is no custom, according to a scale, besides whatever he can claim for permanent buildings or reclamation of land. Wanton eviction will, as I hope, be extinguished by provisions like these. And if they extinguish wanton eviction, they will also extinguish those demands for *unjust* augmentations of rent, which are only formidable to the occupier, because the power of wanton or arbitrary eviction is behind them.' What seems so simple, and what was so necessary, marked in truth a vast revolutionary stride. It transferred to the tenant a portion of the absolute ownership, and gave him something like an estate in his holding. The statute contained a whole code of minor provisions, including the extension of Mr. Bright's clauses for peasant proprietorship in the Church Act, but this transfer was what gave the Act its place in solid legal form.



The second reading was carried by 442 to 11, the minority being composed of eight Irish members of advanced type, and three English Tories, including Mr. Henley and Mr. James Lowther, himself Irish secretary eight years later. The bill was at no point fought high by the opposition. Mr. Disraeli moved an amendment limiting compensation to unexhausted improvements. The government majority fell to 76, 'a result to be expected,' Mr. Gladstone reports, 'considering the natural leanings of English and Scotch members to discount in Ireland what they would not apply in Great Britain. They are not very familiar with Irish land tenures.' One fact of much significance he notes in these historic proceedings. Disraeli, he writes to the Duke of Argyll (April 21, 1870), 'has not spoken one word against valuation of rents or perpetuity of tenure.' It was from the house of his friends that danger came:—

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*April 4.*—H. of C. Spoke on Disraeli's amendment. A majority of 76, but the navigation is at present extremely critical. 7.—H. of C. A most ominous day from end to end. Early in the evening I gave a review of the state of the bill, and later another menace of overturn if the motion of Mr. William Fowler [a liberal banker], which Palmer had unfortunately (as is too common with him) brought into importance, should be carried. We had a majority of only 32.

To Lord Russell he writes (April 12):—

I am in the hurry-scurry of preparation for a run into the country this evening, but I must not omit to thank you for your very kind and welcome letter. We have had a most anxious time in regard to the Irish Land bill. . . . The fear that our Land bill may cross the water creates a sensitive state of mind among all Tories, many Whigs, and a few radicals. Upon this state of things comes Palmer with his legal mind, legal point of view, legal aptitude and inaptitude (*vide* Mr. Burke), and stirs these susceptibilities to such a point that he is always near bringing us to grief. Even Grey more or less goes with him.

Phillimore records a visit in these critical days:—

*April 8.*—Gladstone looked worn and fagged. Very affectionate  
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and confidential. Annoyed at Palmer's conduct. Gladstone feels keenly the want of support in debate. Bright ill. Lowe no moral weight. 'I feel when I have spoken, that I have not a shot in my locker.'

As a very accomplished journalist of the day wrote, there was something almost painful in the strange phenomenon of a prime minister fighting as it were all but single-handed the details of his own great measure through the ambushes and charges of a numerous and restless enemy—and of an enemy determined apparently to fritter away the principle of the measure under the pretence of modifying its details. 'No prime minister has ever attempted any task like it—a task involving the most elaborate departmental readiness, in addition to the general duties and fatigues of a prime minister, and that too in a session when questions are showered like hail upon the treasury bench.'<sup>1</sup>

Then the government put on pressure, and the majority sprang up to 80. The debate in the Commons lasted over three and a half months, or about a fortnight longer than had been taken by the Church bill. The third reading was carried without a division. In the Lords the bill was read a second time without a division. Few persons 'clearly foresaw that it was the first step of a vast transfer of property, and that in a few years it would become customary for ministers of the crown to base all their legislation on the doctrine that Irish land is not an undivided ownership, but a simple partnership.'<sup>2</sup>

In March Mr. Gladstone had received from Manning a memorandum of ill omen from the Irish bishops, setting out the amendments by them thought necessary. This paper included the principles of perpetuity of tenure for the tiller of the soil and the adjustment of rent by a court. The reader may judge for himself how impossible it would have been, even for Mr. Gladstone, in all the plenitude of his power, to persuade either cabinet or parliament to adopt such invasions of prevailing doctrine. For this, ten years more of agitation were required, and then he was able to complete the memorable chapter in Irish history that he had now opened.

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, i. p. 165.

Neither the Land Act nor the Church Act at once put out the hot ashes of Fenianism. A Coercion Act was passed in the spring of 1870. In the autumn Mr. Gladstone tried to persuade the cabinet to approve the release of the Fenian prisoners, but it was not until the end of the year that he prevailed. A secret committee was thought necessary in 1871 to consider outrages in Westmeath, and a repressive law was passed in consequence. Mr. Gladstone himself always leaned strongly against these exceptional laws, and pressed the Irish government hard the other way. 'What we have to do,' he said, 'is to defy Fenianism, to rely on public sentiment, and so provide (as we have been doing) the practical measures that place the public sentiment on our side, an operation which I think is retarded by any semblance of *severity* to those whose offence we admit among ourselves to have been an ultimate result of our misgovernment of the country. I am afraid that local opinion has exercised, habitually and traditionally, too much influence in Ireland, and has greatly compromised the character of the empire. *This question I take to be in most of its aspects an imperial question.*' The proposal for a secret committee was the occasion of a duel between him and Disraeli (Feb. 27, 1871) — 'both,' said Lord Granville, 'very able, but very bitter.' The tory leader taunted Mr. Gladstone for having recourse to such a proceeding, after posing as the only man capable of dealing with the evils of Ireland, and backed by a majority which had legalised confiscation, consecrated sacrilege, and condoned high treason.

## CHAPTER III

### EDUCATION—THE CAREER AND THE TALENTS

(1870)

HE that taketh away weights from the motions, doth the same as he that addeth wings.—PVM.

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AMID dire controversies that in all countries surround all questions of the school, some believe the first government of Mr. Gladstone in its dealing with education to have achieved its greatest constructive work. Others think that, on the contrary, it threw away a noble chance. In the new scheme of national education established in 1870, the head of the government rather acquiesced than led. In his own words, his responsibility was that of concurrence rather than of authorship. His close absorption in the unfamiliar riddles of Irish land, besides the mass of business incident to the office of prime minister, might well account for his small share in the frame of the education bill. More than this, however, his private interest in public education did not amount to zeal, and it was at bottom the interest of a churchman. Mr. Gladstone afterwards wrote to Lord Granville (June 14, '74), 'I have never made greater personal concessions of opinion than I did on the Education bill to the united representations of Ripon and Forster.' His share in the adjustments of the Act was, as he said afterwards, a very simple one, and he found no occasion either to differ from departmental colleagues, or to press upon them any proposals of his own. If they had been dealing with an untouched case, he would have preferred the Scotch plan, which allowed the local school board to prescribe whatever religious education pleased it best. Nor did he object to a

strict limitation of all teaching paid for in schools aided or provided out of public money, whether rate or tax, to purely secular instruction. In that case, however, he held strongly that subject to local consent, the master who gave the secular teaching should be allowed to give religious teaching also at other times, even within the school-house.<sup>1</sup>

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What Mr. Gladstone cared for was the integrity of religious instruction. What he disliked or dreaded was, in his own language, the invasion of that integrity 'under cover of protecting exceptional consciences.' The advance of his ideas is rather interesting. So far back as 1843,<sup>2</sup> in considering the education clauses of the Factory bill of that year, he explained to Lord Lyttelton that he was not prepared to limit church teaching in the schools to the exposition of scripture. Ten years later, he wrote to his close friend, Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury:—

I am not friendly to the idea of constraining by law either the total or the partial suppression of conscientious differences in religion, with a view to fusion of different sects whether in church or school. I believe that the free development of conviction is upon the whole the system most in favour both of truth and of charity. Consequently you may well believe that I contemplate with satisfaction the state of feeling that prevails in England, and that has led all governments to adopt the system of separate and independent subsidies to the various religious denominations.

As for the government bill of that year (1853), he entirely repudiated the construction put upon some of its clauses, namely, 'that people having the charge of schools would be obliged to admit children of all religious creeds, as well as that having admitted them, they would be put under control as to the instruction to be given.' Ten years later still, we find him saying, 'I deeply regret the aversion to "conscience clauses," which I am convinced it would be most wise for the

<sup>1</sup> Article on Mr. Forster, *Nineteenth Century*, September 1888.

<sup>2</sup> In 1843 the government of Sir R. Peel, with a majority of 90, introduced an Education bill, rather large, and meant to provide for the factory districts. The nonconformists at large

took up arms against it, and after full consideration in the cabinet (one of my first acts in cabinet), they withdrew it rather than stir up the religious flame.'—*Mr. Gladstone to Herbert Gladstone, May 7, 1896.*

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1870. church to adopt. As far back as 1838 I laboured hard to get the National Society to act upon this principle permissively; and if I remember right, it was with the approval of the then Bishop of London.' In 1865 he harps on the same string in a letter to Lord Granville:—

. . . Suppose the schoolmaster is reading with his boys the third chapter of St. John, and he explains the passage relating to baptism in the sense of the prayer book and articles—the dissenters would say this is instruction in the doctrine of the church of England. Now it is utterly impossible for you to tell the church schoolmaster or the clergyman that he must not in the school explain any passage of scripture in a sense to which any of the parents of the children, or at least any sect objects; for *then you would in principle entirely alter the character of the religious teaching for the rest of the scholars, and in fact upset the whole system.* The dissenter, on the other hand, ought (in my opinion) to be entitled to withdraw his child from the risk (if he considers it such) of receiving instruction of the kind I describe.

Mr. Gladstone had therefore held a consistent course, and in cherishing along with full freedom of conscience the integrity of religious instruction, he had followed a definite and intelligible line. Unluckily for him and his government this was not the line now adopted.

## II

When the cabinet met in the autumn of 1869, Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord de Grey (afterwards Ripon) (Nov. 4):—

I have read Mr. Forster's able paper, and I follow it very generally. On one point I cannot very well follow it. . . . Why not adopt frankly the principle that the State or the local community should provide the secular teaching, and either leave the option to the ratepayers to go beyond this *sine quâ non*, if they think fit, within the limits of the conscience clause, or else simply leave the parties themselves to find Bible and other religious education from voluntary sources?

Early in the session before the introduction of the bill, Mr. Gladstone noted in his diary, 'Good hope that the principal matters at issue may be accommodated during the session.

but great differences of opinion have come to the surface, and much trouble may arise.' In fact trouble enough arose to shake his ministry to its foundations. What would be curious if he had not had the Land bill on his hands, is that he did not fight hard for his own view in the cabinet. He seems to have been content with stating it, without insisting. Whether he could have carried it in the midst of a whirlwind of indeterminate but vehement opinions, may well be doubted.

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The Education bill was worked through the cabinet by Lord de Grey as president of the council, but its lines were laid and its provisions in their varying forms defended in parliament, by the vice-president, who did not reach the cabinet until July 1870. Mr. Forster was a man of sterling force of character, with resolute and effective power of work, a fervid love of country, and a warm and true humanity. No orator, he was yet an excellent speaker of a sound order, for his speaking, though plain and even rough in style, abounded in substance; he always went as near to the root of the matter as his vision allowed, and always with marked effect for his own purposes. A quaker origin is not incompatible with a militant spirit, and Forster was sturdy in combat. He had rather a full share of self-esteem, and he sometimes exhibited a want of tact that unluckily irritated or estranged many whom more suavity might have retained. Then, without meaning it, he blundered into that most injurious of all positions for the parliamentary leader, of appearing to care more for his enemies than for his friends. As Mr. Gladstone said of him, 'destiny threw him on the main occasions of his parliamentary career into open or qualified conflict with friends as well as foes, perhaps rather more with friends than foes.' A more serious defect of mind was that he was apt to approach great questions—Education, Ireland, Turkey—without truly realising how great they were, and this is the worst of all the shortcomings of statesmanship. There was one case of notable exception. In all the stages and aspects of the American civil war, Forster played an admirable part.

The problem of education might have seemed the very

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simplest. After the extension of the franchise to the workmen, everybody felt, in a happy phrase of that time, that 'we must educate our masters.' Outside events were supposed to hold a lesson. The triumphant North in America was the land of the common school. The victory of Prussians over Austrians at Sadowa in 1866 was called the victory of the elementary school teacher. Even the nonconformists had come round. Up to the middle of the sixties opinion among them was hostile to the intervention of the state in education. They had resisted Graham's proposals in 1843, and Lord John Russell's in 1847; but a younger generation, eager for progress, saw the new necessity that change of social and political circumstance imposed. The business in 1870 was to provide schools, and to get the children into them.<sup>1</sup>

It is surprising how little serious attention had been paid even by speculative writers in this country to the vast problem of the relative duties of the State and the Family in respect of education. Mill devoted a few keen pages to it in his book upon political economy. Fawcett, without much of Mill's intellectual power or any of his sensitive temperament, was supposed to represent his principles in parliament; yet in education he was against free schools, while Mill was for them. All was unsettled; important things were even unperceived. Yet the questions of national education, answer them as we will, touch the moral life and death of nations. The honourable zeal of the churches had done something, but most of the ground remained to be covered. The question was whether the system about to be created should merely supplement those sectarian, private, voluntary schools, or should erect a fabric worthy of the high name of national.

<sup>1</sup> In 1869 about 1,300,000 children were being educated in state-aided schools, 1,000,000 in schools that received no grant, were not inspected, and were altogether inefficient, and 2,000,000 ought to have been, but were not at school at all. The main burden of national education fell on the shoulders of 200,000 persons whose voluntary subscriptions supported the schools. 'In other words, the

efforts of a handful out of the whole nation had accomplished the fairly efficient education of about one-third of the children, and had provided schools for about one-half; but the rest either went to inefficient schools, or to no school at all, and for them there was no room even had the power to compel their attendance existed.'—See Sir Henry Craik's *The State in its Relation to Education*, pp. 84, 85.



The churchman hoped, but did not expect, the first. The nonconformist (broadly speaking), the academic liberal, and the hard-grit radical, were keen for the second, and they were all three well represented in the House of Commons.

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What the government proposed was that local boards should be called into existence to provide schools where provision was inadequate and inefficient, these schools to be supported by the pence of the children, the earned grant from parliament, and a new rate to be levied upon the locality. The rate was the critical element. If the boards chose, they could make bye-laws compelling parents to send their children to school; and they could (with a conscience clause) settle what form of religious instruction they pleased. The voluntary men were to have a year of grace in which to make good any deficiency in supply of schools, and so keep out the boards. The second reading was secured without a division, but only on assurances from Mr. Gladstone that amendments would be made in committee. On June 16, the prime minister, as he says, 'explained the plans of the government to an eager and agitated house.'

Two days before, the cabinet had embarked upon a course that made the agitation still more eager. Mr. Gladstone wrote the pregnant entry: '*June 14. Cabinet; decided on making more general use of machinery supplied by voluntary schools, avoidance of religious controversy in local boards.*' This meant that the new system was in no way to supersede the old non-system, but to supplement it. The decision was fatal to a national settlement. As Mr. Forster put it, their object was 'to complete the voluntary system and to fill up gaps.' Lord Ripon used the same language in the Lords. Instead of the school boards being universal, they should only come into existence where the ecclesiastical party was not strong enough in wealth, influence, and liberality, to keep them out. Instead of compulsory attendance being universal, that principle could only be applied where a school board was found, and where the school board liked to apply it. The old parliamentary grant to the denominational schools was to be doubled. This last provision was Mr. Gladstone's own. Forster had told him that it was impos-

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sible to carry a proposal allowing school boards to contribute to denominational schools, and the only compensation open was a larger slice of the grant from parliament.

### III

The storm at once began to rage around the helmsman's ears. Some days earlier the situation had been defined by Mr. Brand, the whip, for his leader's guidance. The attempt, he said, made by Fawcett, Dilke, and others, to create a diversion in favour of exclusively secular education has signally failed; the opinion of the country is clearly adverse. On the other hand, while insisting on the religious element, the country is just as strongly opposed to dogmatic teaching in schools aided by local rates. 'You ask me,' said Mr. Gladstone to Mr. Brand (May 24), 'to solve the problem in the words "to include religion, and to exclude dogma," which, as far as I know, though it admits of a sufficient practical handling by individuals acting for themselves, has not yet been solved by any state or parliament.' Well might he report at Windsor (June 21) that, though the auspices were favourable, there was a great deal of crude and indeterminate opinion on the subject in the House as well as elsewhere, and 'the bill, if carried, would be carried by the authority and persistence of the government, aided by the acquiescence of the opposition.' It was this carrying of the bill by the aid of the tory opposition that gave fuel to the liberal flame, and the increase of the grant to the sectarian schools made the heat more intense. The most critical point of the bill, according to Mr. Gladstone, was a proposal that now seems, singularly worded, to the effect that the teaching of scriptures in rate schools should not be in favour of, or opposed to, tenets of any denomination. This was beaten by 251 to 130. 'The minority was liberal, but more than half of the liberal party present voted in the majority.'

'We respect Mr. Forster,' cried Dale of Birmingham, 'we honour Mr. Gladstone, but we are determined that England shall not again be cursed with the bitterness and strife from which we had hoped that we had for ever escaped, by the

abolition of the church rate.<sup>1</sup> Writing to a brother nonconformist, he expresses his almost unbounded admiration for Mr. Gladstone, 'but it is a bitter disappointment that his government should be erecting new difficulties in the way of religious equality.' Under the flashing eye of the prime minister himself the nonconformist revolt reared its crest. Miall, the veteran bearer of the flag of disestablishment, told Mr. Gladstone (July 22) that he was leading one section of the liberal party through the valley of humiliation. 'Once bit, twice shy. We can't stand this sort of thing much longer,' he said. In a flame of natural wrath Mr. Gladstone replied that he had laboured not to gain Mr. Miall's support, but to promote the welfare of the country. 'I hope my hon. friend will not continue his support to the government one moment longer than he deems it consistent with his sense of right and duty. For God's sake, sir, let him withdraw it the moment he thinks it better for the cause he has at heart that he should do so.' The government, he said, had striven to smooth difficulties, to allay passions, to avoid everything that would excite or stimulate, to endeavour to bring men to work together, to rise above mere sectional views, to eschew all extremes, and not to make their own narrow choice the model of the measure they were presenting to parliament, but to admit freely and liberally into its composition those great influences which were found swaying the community. Forster wrote to a friend, 'it does not rest with me now whether or no the state should decree against religion—decree that it is a thing of no account. Well, with my assent the state shall not do this, and I believe I can prevent it.'<sup>2</sup> Insist, forsooth, that religion was not a thing of no account against men like Dale, one of the most ardent and instructed believers that ever fought the fight and kept the faith; against Bright, than whom no devouter spirit breathed, and who thought the Education Act 'the worst Act. passed by any liberal parliament since 1832.'

The opposition did not show deep gratitude, having secured as many favours as they could hope, and more

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of Dale*, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Forster*, i. p. 497.

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than they had anticipated. A proposal from the government (July 14) to introduce secret voting in the election of local boards was stubbornly contested, in spite, says Mr. Gladstone, 'of the unvarying good temper, signal ability and conciliatory spirit of Mr. Forster,' and it was not until after fourteen divisions that a few assuaging words from Mr. Gladstone brought the handful of conservative opposition to reason. It was five o'clock before the unflinching prime minister found his way homewards in the broad daylight.

It is impossible to imagine a question on which in a free government it was more essential to carry public opinion with the law. To force parents to send children to school, was an enterprise that must break down if opinion would not help to work it. Yet probably on no other question in Mr. Gladstone's career as law-maker was common opinion so hard to weigh, to test, to focus and adjust. Of the final settlement of the question of religious instruction, Mr. Gladstone said to Lord Lyttelton when the battle was over (Oct. 25, '70):—

. . . I will only say that it was in no sense my choice or that of the government. Our first proposition was by far the best. But it received no active support even from the church, the National Society, or the opposition, while divers bishops, large bodies of clergy, the Education Union, and earliest of all, I think, Roundell Palmer in the House of Commons, threw overboard the catechism. We might then have fallen back upon the plan of confining the application of the rate to secular subjects; but this was opposed by the church, the opposition, most of the dissenters, and most of our own friends. As it was, I assure you, the very utmost that could be done was to arrange the matter as it now stands, where the exclusion is limited to the formulary, and to get rid of the popular imposture of undenominational instruction.

At bottom the battle of the schools was not educational, it was social. It was not religious but ecclesiastical, and that is often the very contrary of religious. In the conflicts of the old centuries whence Christian creeds emerged, disputes on dogma constantly sprang from rivalries of race and acci-

dents of geography. So now quarrels about education and catechism and conscience masked the standing jealousy between church and chapel—the unwholesome fruit of the historic mishaps of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that separated the nation into two camps, and invested one of them with all the pomp and privilege of social ascendancy. The parent and the child, in whose name the struggle raged, stood indifferent. From the point of party strategy, the policy of this great statute was fatal. The church of England was quickened into active antagonism by Irish disestablishment, by the extinction of sectarian tests at Oxford and Cambridge, and by the treatment of endowed schools. This might have been balanced by the zeal of nonconformists. Instead of zeal, the Education Act produced refrigeration and estrangement.

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We may be sure that on such a subject Mr. Gladstone looked further than strategies of party, 'I own to you,' said he to a correspondent before the battle was quite over, 'that the history of these last few months leaves upon my mind some melancholy impressions, which I hope at some fancied period of future leisure and retirement to study and interpret.' He soon saw how deep the questions went, and on what difficult ground the state and the nation would be inevitably drawn. His notions of a distinctive formula were curious. Forster seems to have put some question to him on the point whether the three creeds were formularies within the Act. It appears to me, Mr. Gladstone answered (October 17, 1870):—

It is quite open to you at once to dispose of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds and to decline inquiring whether they are distinctive, upon the ground that they are not documents employed in the instruction of young children. . . . Obviously no one has a right to call on you to define the distinctive character of a formulary such as the Thirty-nine Articles, or of any but such as are employed in schools. With respect to the Apostles' Creed, it appears to me not to be a distinctive formulary in the sense of the Act. Besides the fact that it is acknowledged by the great bulk of all Christendom, it is denied or rejected by no portion of the Christian community; and, further, it is not controversial in its

BOOK VI. form, but sets forth in the simplest shape a series of the leading facts on which Christianity, the least abstract of all religions, is based.  
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Manning plied him hard (September, October, November, 1871). The state of Paris (Commune blazing that year, Tuileries and Hôtel de Ville in ashes, and the Prussian spiked helmets at the gates) was traceable to a godless education—so the archbishop argued. In England the Christian tradition was unbroken. It was only a clique of doctrinaires, Huxley at the head of them, who believing nothing trumpeted secular education. ‘Delighted to see Mr. Forster attacked as playing into the hands of the clergy.’ Mr. Gladstone should stimulate by every agency in his power the voluntary religious energies of the three kingdoms. ‘The real crisis is in the formation of men. They are as we make them, and they make society. The formation of men is the work you have given to the school boards. God gave it to the parents. Neither you nor Mr. Forster meant this; you least of all men on your side of the House. Glad to see you lay down the broad and intelligible line that state grants go to secular education, and voluntary efforts must do the rest. Let us all start fair in this race. Let every sect, even the Huxleyites, have their grant if they fulfil the conditions. As for the school-rate conscience, it is a mongrel institution of quakerism.’ How Mr. Gladstone replied on all these searching issues, I do not find.

## IV

The passing of the Act did not heal the wound. The nonconformist revolt was supported in a great conference at Manchester in 1872, representing eight hundred churches and other organizations. Baptist unions and congregational unions were unrelenting. We may as well finish the story. It was in connection with this struggle that Mr. Chamberlain first came prominently into the arena of public life—bold, intrepid, imbued with the keen spirit of political nonconformity, and a born tactician. The issue selected for the attack was the twenty-fifth section of the Education Act, enabling school boards to pay in denomina-

tional schools the fees of parents who, though not paupers, were unable to pay them. This provision suddenly swelled into dimensions of enormity hitherto unsuspected. A caustic onlooker observed that it was the smallest ditch in which two great political armies ever engaged in civil war. Yet the possibility under cover of this section, of a sectarian board subsidising church schools was plain, and some cases, though not many, actually occurred in which appreciable sums were so handed over. The twenty-fifth section was a real error, and it made no bad dag for an assault upon a scheme of error.

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Great things were hoped from Mr. Bright's return to the government in the autumn of 1873. The correspondence between Mr. Gladstone and him sheds some interesting light upon the state into which the Education Act, and Mr. Forster's intractable bearing in defence of it, had brought important sections of the party:—

*Mr. Bright to Mr. Gladstone.*

*Aug. 12, 1873.*—So far as I can hear, there is no intention to get up an opposition at Birmingham, which is a comfort, as I am not in force to fight a contested election. I am anxious not to go to the election, fearing that I shall not have nerve to speak to the 5000 men who will or may crowd the town hall. Before I go, if I go, I shall want to consult you on the difficult matter—how to deal frankly and wisely with the education question. I cannot break with my 'noncon.' friends, the political friends of all my life; and unless my joining you can do something to lessen the mischief now existing and *still growing*, I had better remain as I have been since my illness, a spectator rather than an actor on the political field. . . . I hope you are better, and that your troubles, for a time, are diminished. I wish much you could have announced a change in the education department; it would have improved the tone of feeling in many constituencies.

Mr. Gladstone himself had touched 'the watchful jealousy' of Bright's nonconformist friends by a speech made at the time at Hawarden. This speech he explained in writing to Bright from Balmoral (Aug. 21):—

The upshot, I think, is this. My speech could not properly have

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been made by a man who thinks that boards and public rates ought to be used for the purpose of putting down as quickly as may be the voluntary schools. But the recommendation which I made might have been consistently and properly supported by any one whose opinions fell short of this, and did not in the least turn upon any preference for voluntary over compulsory means.<sup>1</sup>

As he said afterwards to Lord Granville, 'I personally have no fear of the secular system; but I cannot join in measures of repression against voluntary schools.'

'There is not a word said by you at Hawarden,' Bright replied (Aug. 25), 'that would fetter you in the least in considering the education question; but at present the general feeling is against the idea of any concession on your part. . . . What is wanted is some definite willingness or resolution to recover the goodwill and confidence of the nonconformist leaders in the boroughs; for without this, reconstruction is of no value. . . . Finance is of great moment, and people are well pleased to see you in your old office again; but no budget will heal the soreness that has been created—it is not of the pocket, but of the feelings. . . . I want you just to know where I am and what I feel; but if I could talk to you, I could say what I have to say with more precision, and with a greater delicacy of expression. I ask you only to put the best construction on what I write.'

If Forster could only have composed himself to the same considerate spirit, there might have been a different tale to tell. Bright made his election speech at Birmingham, and Forster was in trouble about it. 'I think,' said the orator to Mr. Gladstone, 'he ought rather to be thankful for it; it will enable him to get out of difficulties if he will improve the occasion. There is no question of changing the policy of the government, but of making minor concessions. . . . I would willingly change the policy of irritation into one of soothing and conciliation.' Nothing of great importance in the way even of temporary reconciliation was effected by Mr. Bright's return. The ditch of the twenty-fifth

<sup>1</sup> For the rest of the letter see Appendix.



clause still yawned. The prime minister fell back into the position of August. The whole situation of the ministry had become critical in every direction. 'Education must be regarded as still to a limited extent an open question in the government.'

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When the general election came, the party was still dis-united. Out of 425 liberal candidates in England, Scotland, and Wales, 300 were pledged to the repeal of the 25th clause. Mr. Gladstone's last word was in a letter to Bright (Jan. 27, 1874):—

The fact is, it seems to me, that the noncons. have not yet as a body made up their minds whether they want unsectarian religion, or whether they want simple secular teaching, so far as the application of the rate is concerned. I have never been strong against the latter of these two which seems to me impartial, and not, if fairly worked, of necessity in any degree unfriendly to religion. The former is in my opinion glaringly partial, and I shall never be a party to it. But there is a good deal of leaning to it in the liberal party. Any attempt to obtain definite pledges now will give power to the enemies of both plans of proceeding. We have no rational course as a party but one, which is to adjourn for a while the solution of the grave parts of the education problem; and this I know to be in substance your opinion.

V

The same vigorous currents of national vitality that led to new endeavours for the education of the poor, had drawn men to consider the horrid chaos, the waste, and the abuses in the provision of education for the directing classes beyond the poor. Grave problems of more kinds than one came into view. The question, What is education? was nearly as hard to answer as the question of which we have seen so much, What is a church? The rival claims of old classical training and the acquisition of modern knowledge were matters of vivacious contest. What is the true place of classical learning in the human culture of our own age? Misused charitable trusts, and endowments perverted by the fluctuations of time, by lethargy, by selfishness, from the objects of pious founders, touched wakeful jealousies in the privileged sect, and called into action that adoration of

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the principle of property which insists upon applying all the rules of individual ownership to what rightfully belongs to the community. Local interests were very sensitive, and they were multitudinous. The battle was severely fought, and it extended over several years, while commission upon commission explored the issues.

In a highly interesting letter (1861) to Lord Lyttelton Mr. Gladstone set out at length his views upon the issue between ancient and modern, between literary training and scientific, between utilitarian education and liberal. The reader will find this letter in an appendix, as well as one to Sir Stafford Northcote.<sup>1</sup> While rationally conservative upon the true basis of attainments in 'that small proportion of the youth of any country who are to become in the fullest sense educated men,' he is rationally liberal upon what the politics of the time made the burning question of the sacrosanctity of endowments. 'It is our habit in this country,' he said, 'to treat private interests with an extravagant tenderness. The truth is that all laxity and extravagance in dealing with what in a large sense is certainly public property, approximates more or less to dishonesty, or at the least lowers the moral tone of the persons concerned.'

The result of all this movement, of which it may perhaps be said that it was mainly inspired and guided by a few men of superior energy and social weight like Goldwin Smith, Temple, Jowett, Liddell, the active interest of the classes immediately concerned being hardly more than middling—was one of the best measures in the history of this government of good measures (1869). It dealt with many hundreds of schools, and with an annual income of nearly six hundred thousand pounds. As the Endowed Schools bill was one of the best measures of the government, so it was Mr. Forster's best piece of legislative work. That it strengthened the government can hardly be said; the path of the reformer is not rose-strewn.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> In 1874 the conservative government brought in a bill restoring to the church of England numerous schools in cases where the founder had recognised the authority of a bishop, or had directed attendance

in the service of that church, or had required that the masters should be in holy orders. Mr. Gladstone protested against the bill as 'inequitable, unusual and unwise,' and it was largely modified in committee.

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In one region Mr. Gladstone long lagged behind. He had done a fine stroke of national policy in releasing Oxford from some of her antique bonds in 1854;<sup>1</sup> but the principle of a free university was not yet admitted to his mind. In 1863 he wrote to the vice-chancellor how entirely the government concurred in the principle of restricting the governing body of the university and the colleges to the church. The following year he was willing to throw open the degree; but the right to sit in convocation he guarded by exacting a declaration of membership of the church of England.<sup>2</sup> In 1865 Mr. Goschen—then beginning to make a mark as one of the ablest of the new generation in parliament, combining the large views of liberal Oxford with the practical energy of the city of London, added to a strong fibre given him by nature—brought in a bill throwing open all lay degrees. Mr. Gladstone still stood out, conducting a brisk correspondence with dissenters. ‘The whole controversy,’ he wrote to one of them, ‘is carried on aggressively, as if to disturb and not to settle. Abstract principles urged without stint or mercy provoke the counter-assertion of abstract principles in return. There is not power to carry Mr. Goschen’s speech either in the cabinet, the parliament, or the country. Yet the change in the balance of parties effected by the elections will cast upon the liberal majority a serious responsibility. I would rather see Oxford level with the ground, than its religion regulated in the manner which would please Bishop Colenso.’

Year by year the struggle was renewed. Even after the Gladstone government was formed, Coleridge, the solicitor-general, was only allowed in a private capacity to introduce a bill removing the tests. When he had been two years at the head of administration, Mr. Gladstone warned Coleridge: ‘For me individually it would be beyond anything

<sup>1</sup> See vol i., book iv., chap. iv. By the act of 1854 a student could proceed to the bachelor’s degree without the test of subscribing to the Thirty-nine Articles. Cambridge was a shade more liberal. At both

universities dissenters were shut out from college fellowships, unless willing to make a declaration of conformity.

<sup>2</sup> Speech on Mr. Dodson’s bill, March 16, 1864.

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odious, I am almost tempted to say it would be impossible, after my long connection with Oxford, to go into a new controversy on the basis of what will be taken and alleged to be an absolute secularisation of the colleges; as well as a reversal of what was deliberately considered and sanctioned in the parliamentary legislation of 1854 and 1856. I incline to think that this work is work for others, not for me.'

It was not until 1871 that Mr. Gladstone consented to make the bill a government measure. It rapidly passed the Commons and was accepted by the Lords, but with amendments. Mr. Gladstone when he had once adopted a project never loitered; he now resolutely refused the changes proposed by the Lords, and when the time came and Lord Salisbury was for insisting on them, the peers declined by a handsome majority to carry the fight further. It is needless to add that the admission of dissenters to degrees and endowments did not injuriously affect a single object for which a national university exists. On the other hand, the mischiefs of ecclesiastical monopoly were long in disappearing.

## VII

We have already seen how warmly the project of introducing competition into the civil service had kindled Mr. Gladstone's enthusiasm in the days of the Crimean war.<sup>1</sup> Reform had made slow progress. The civil service commission had been appointed in 1855, but their examinations only tested the quality of candidates sent before them on nomination. In 1860 a system was set up of limited competition among three nominated candidates, who had first satisfied a preliminary test examination. This lasted until 1870. Lowe had reform much at heart. At the end of 1869, he appealed to the prime minister: 'As I have so often tried in vain, will you bring the question of the civil service before the cabinet to-day? Something must be decided. We cannot keep matters in this discreditable state of abeyance. If the cabinet will not entertain the idea of open competition, might we not at any rate require a

<sup>1</sup> Above p. 509.

larger number of competitors for each vacancy? five or seven or ten?' CHAP.  
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Resistance came from Lord Clarendon and, strange to say, from Mr. Bright. An ingenious suggestion of Mr. Gladstone's solved the difficulty. All branches of the civil service were to be thrown open where the minister at the head of the department approved. Lowe was ready to answer for all the departments over which he had any control,—the treasury, the board of works, audit office, national debt office, paymaster-general's office, inland revenue, customs and post-office. Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Childers, Mr. Goschen, and Lord de Grey were willing to do the same, and finally only Clarendon and the foreign office were left obdurate. It was true to say of this change that it placed the whole educated intellect of the country at the service and disposal of the state, that it stimulated the acquisition of knowledge, and that it rescued some of the most important duties in the life of the nation from the narrow class to whom they had hitherto been confided. ÆT. 61.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

(1870)

OF all the princes of Europe, the king of England alone seemed to be seated upon the pleasant promontory that might safely view the tragic sufferings of all his neighbours about him, without any other concernment than what arose from his own princely heart and Christian compassion, to see such desolation wrought by the pride and passion and ambition of private persons, supported by princes who knew not what themselves would have.—CLARENDON.

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DURING the years in which England had been widening the base of her institutions, extending her resources of wealth and credit, and strengthening her repute in the councils of Christendom, a long train of events at which we have glanced from time to time, had slowly effected a new distribution of the force of nations, and in Mr. Gladstone's phrase had unset every joint of the compacted fabric of continental Europe. The spirit in which he thought of his country's place in these transactions is to be gathered from a letter addressed by him to General Grey, the secretary of the Queen, rather more than a year before the outbreak of the Franco-German war. What was the immediate occasion I cannot be sure, nor does it matter. The letter itself is full of interest, for it is in truth a sort of charter of the leading principles of Mr. Gladstone's foreign policy at the moment when he first incurred supreme responsibility for our foreign affairs:—

*Mr. Gladstone to General Grey.*

*April 17, 1869.*— . . . Apart from this question of the moment, there is one more important as to the tone in which it is to be desired that, where matter of controversy has arisen on the

continent of Europe, the diplomatic correspondence of this country should be carried on. This more important question may be the subject of differences in the country, but I observe with joy that her Majesty approves the general principle which Lord Clarendon sets forth in his letter of the 16th. I do not believe that England ever will or can be unfaithful to her great tradition, or can forswear her interest in the common transactions and the general interests of Europe. But her credit and her power form a fund, which in order that they may be made the most of, should be thriftily used.

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The effect of the great revolutionary war was to place England in a position to rely upon the aid of her own resources. This was no matter of blame to either party; it was the result of a desperate struggle of over twenty years, in which every one else was down in his turn, but England was ever on her feet; in which it was found that there was no ascertained limit either to her means, or to her disposition to dispense them; in which, to use the language of Mr. Canning, her flag was always flying 'a signal of rallying to the combatant, and of shelter to the fallen.' The habit of appeal and of reliance thus engendered by peculiar circumstances, requires to be altered by a quiet and substantial though not a violent process. For though Europe never saw England faint away, we know at what a cost of internal danger to all the institutions of the country, she fought her way to the perilous eminence on which she undoubtedly stood in 1815.

If there be a fear abroad that England has forever abjured a resort to force other than moral force, is that fear justified by facts? In 1853, joining with France, we made ourselves the vindicators of the peace of Europe; and ten years later, be it remembered, in the case of Denmark we offered to perform the same office, but we could get no one to join us. Is it desirable that we should go further? Is England so uplifted in strength above every other nation, that she can with prudence advertise herself as ready to undertake the general redress of wrongs? Would not the consequence of such professions and promises be either the premature exhaustion of her means, or a collapse in the day of performance? Is *any* Power at this time of day warranted in assuming this comprehensive obligation? Of course,

the answer is, No. But do not, on the other hand, allow it to be believed that England will never interfere. For the eccentricities of other men's belief no one can answer; but for any reasonable belief in such an abnegation on the part of England, there is no ground whatever. As I understand Lord Clarendon's ideas, they are fairly represented by his very important diplomatic communications since he has taken office. They proceed upon such grounds as these:—That England should keep entire in her own hands the means of estimating her own obligations upon the various states of facts as they arise; that she should not foreclose and narrow her own liberty of choice by declarations made to other Powers, in their real or supposed interests, of which they would claim to be at least joint interpreters; that it is dangerous for her to assume alone an advanced, and therefore an isolated position, in regard to European controversies; that, come what may, it is better for her to promise too little than too much; that she should not encourage the weak by giving expectations of aid to resist the strong, but should rather seek to deter the strong by firm but moderate language, from aggressions on the weak; that she should seek to develop and mature the action of a common, or public, or European opinion, as the best standing bulwark against wrong, but should beware of seeming to lay down the law of that opinion by her own authority, and thus running the risk of setting against her, and against right and justice, that general sentiment which ought to be, and generally would be, arrayed in their favour. I am persuaded that at this juncture opinions of this colour being true and sound, are also the only opinions which the country is disposed to approve. But I do not believe that on that account it is one whit less disposed than it has been at any time, to cast in its lot upon any fitting occasion with the cause it believes to be right. . . . I therefore hope and feel assured her Majesty will believe that Lord Clarendon really requires no intimation from me to ensure his steadily maintaining the tone which becomes the foreign minister of the Queen.

Heavy banks of cloud hung with occasional breaks of brighter sky over Europe; and all the plot, intrigue, conspiracy, and subterranean scheming, that had been incessant ever since the Crimean war disturbed the old European



system, and Cavour first began the recasting of the map, was but the repulsive and dangerous symptom of a dire conflict in the depths of international politics. The Mexican adventure, and the tragedy of Maximilian's death at Queretaro, had thrown a black shadow over the iridescent and rotten fabric of Napoleon's power. Prussian victory over Austria at Sadowa had startled Europe like a thunderclap. The reactionary movement within the catholic fold, as disclosed in the Vatican council, kindled many hopes among the French clericals, and these hopes inspired a lively antagonism to protestant Prussia in the breast of the Spanish-born Empress of the French. Prussia in 1866 had humiliated one great catholic power when she defeated the Austrian monarchy on the battlefields of Bohemia. Was she to overthrow also the power that kept the pope upon his temporal throne in Rome? All this, however, was no more than the fringe, though one of the hardest things in history is to be sure where substance begins and fringe ends. The cardinal fact for France and for Europe was German unity. Ever since the Danish conflict, as Bismarck afterwards told the British government,<sup>1</sup> the French Emperor strove to bring Prussia to join him in plans for their common aggrandizement. The unity of Germany meant, besides all else, a vast extension of the area from which the material of military strength was to be drawn; and this meant the relative depression of the power of French arms. Here was the substantial fact, feeding the flame of national pride with solid fuel. The German confederation of the Congress of Vienna was a skilful invention of Metternich's, so devised as to be inert for offence, but extremely efficient against French aggression. A German confederation under the powerful and energetic leadership of Prussia gave France a very different neighbour.

In August 1867, the French ambassador at Berlin said to the ambassador of Great Britain, 'We can never passively permit the formation of a German empire; the position of the Emperor of the French would become untenable.' The British ambassador in Paris was told by the foreign minister there, that 'there was no wish for aggrandizement in the Emperor's mind, but a solicitude for the safety

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<sup>1</sup> July 23, 1870.

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of France.' This solicitude evaporated in what Bismarck disdainfully called the policy of *pourboires*, the policy of tips and pickings—scraps and slips of territory to be given to France under the diplomatic name of compensation. For three years it had been no secret that peace was at the mercy of any incident that might arise.

The small Powers were in trepidation, and with good reason. Why should not France take Belgium, and Prussia take Holland? The Belgian press did not conceal bad feeling, and Bismarck let fall the ominous observation that if Belgium persisted in that course, 'she might pay dear for it.' The Dutch minister told the British ambassador in Vienna that in 1865 he had a long conversation with Bismarck, and Bismarck had given him to understand that without colonies Prussia could never become a great maritime nation; he coveted Holland less for its own sake, than for her wealthy colonies. When reminded that Belgium was guaranteed by the European Powers, Bismarck replied that 'a guarantee was in these days of little value.' This remark makes an excellent register of the diplomatic temperature of the hour.

Then for England. The French Emperor observed (1867), not without an accent of complaint, that she seemed 'little disposed to take part in the affairs of the day.' This was the time of the Derby government. When war seemed inevitable on the affair of Luxemburg, Lord Stanley, then at the foreign office, phlegmatically remarked (1867) that England had never thought it her business to guarantee the integrity of Germany. When pressed from Prussia to say whether in the event of Prussia being forced into war by France, England would take a part, Lord Stanley replied that with the causes of that quarrel we had nothing to do, and he felt sure that neither parliament nor the public would sanction an armed interference on either side. Belgium, he added, was a different question. General non-intervention, therefore, was the common doctrine of both our parties.

After Mr. Gladstone had been a year in power, the chance of a useful part for England to perform seemed to rise on the horizon, but to those who knew the racing currents, the

interplay of stern forces, the chance seemed but dim and faint. Rumour and gossip of a pacific tenour could not hide the vital fact of incessant military preparation on both sides—steadfast and scientific in Prussia, loose and ill-concerted in France. Along with the perfecting of arms, went on a busy search by France for alliances. In the autumn of 1869 Lord Clarendon had gone abroad and talked with important personages. Moltke told him that in Prussia they thought war was near. To Napoleon the secretary of state spoke of the monster armaments, the intolerable burden imposed upon the people, and the constant danger of war that they created. The Emperor agreed—so Lord Clarendon wrote to Mr. Gladstone (Sept. 18, '69)—but went on to say that during the King of Prussia's life, and as long as the present Prussian system lasted, he thought no change of importance could be effected. Still the seed by and by appeared to have fallen on good ground. For in January 1870, in a conversation with the British ambassador, the French foreign minister (Daru) suggested that England might use her good offices with Prussia, to induce a partial disarmament in order that France might disarm also. The minister, at the same time, wrote a long despatch in the same sense to the French ambassador at St. James's. Lord Clarendon perceived the delicacy of opening the matter at Berlin, in view of the Prussian monarch's idolatry of his army. He agreed, however, to bring it before the king, not officially, but in a confidential form. This would compromise nobody. The French ambassador in London agreed, and Lord Clarendon wrote the draft of a letter to Loftus in Berlin. He sent the draft to Mr. Gladstone (Jan. 31, 1870) for 'approval and criticism.' Mr. Gladstone entered eagerly into Lord Clarendon's benevolent correspondence:—

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*Mr. Gladstone to Lord Clarendon.*

31 Jan. 1870.—The object of your letter on disarmament is noble, and I do not see how the terms of the draft can be improved. I presume you will let the Queen know what you are about, and possibly circumstances might arrive in which she could help!

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7 *Feb.*.—The answer to your pacific letter as reported by Loftus throws, I think, a great responsibility on the King of Prussia.

12 *Feb.*.—I hope, with Daru, that you will not desist from your efforts, whatever be the best mode of prosecuting the good design. I thought Bismarck's case, on Loftus's letter, a very bad one. I do not think Lyons's objections, towards the close of his letter, apply in a case where you have acted simply as a friend, and not in the name and on behalf of France.

18 *Feb.*.—I return Bismarck's confidential letter on disarmament. As the matter appears to me, the best that can be said for this letter is that it contains matter which might be used with more or less force in a conference on disarmament, by way of abating the amount of relative call on Prussia. As an argument against entertaining the subject, it is futile, and he ought at any rate to be made to feel his responsibility,—which, I daresay, you will contrive while acknowledging his civility.

9 *April.*.—I presume you have now only in the matter of disarmament. to express your inability to recede from your opinions, and your regret at the result of the correspondence. If inclined to touch the point, you might with perfect justice say that while our naval responsibilities for our sea defence have no parallel or analogue in the world, we have taken not far short of two millions off our estimates, and have not announced that the work of reduction is at an end: which, whether satisfactory or not, is enough to show that you do not preach wholly without practising.

It is a striking circumstance, in view of what was to follow, that at this moment when Mr. Gladstone first came into contact with Bismarck,—the genius of popular right and free government and settled law of nations, into contact with the genius of force and reason of state and blood and iron—the realist minister of Prussia seemed to be almost as hopeful for European peace as the minister of England. 'The political horizon,' Bismarck wrote (Feb. 22), 'seen from Berlin appears at present so unclouded that there is nothing of interest to report, and I only hope that no unexpected

event will render the lately risen hope of universal peace questionable.<sup>1</sup> The unexpected event did not tarry, and Bismarck's own share in laying the train is still one of the historic enigmas of our time.

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## II

Ever since 1868 the statesmen of revolutionary Spain had looked for a prince to fill their vacant throne. Among others they bethought themselves of a member of a catholic branch of the house of Hohenzollern, and in the autumn of 1869 an actual proposal was secretly made to Prince Leopold. The thing lingered. Towards the end of February, 1870, Spanish importunities were renewed, though still under the seal of strict secrecy, even the Spanish ambassador in Paris being kept in the dark.<sup>2</sup> Leopold after a long struggle declined the glittering bait. The rival pretenders were too many, and order was not sure. Still his refusal was not considered final. The chances of order improved, he changed his mind, and on June 23 the Spanish emissary returned to Madrid with the news that the Hohenzollern prince was ready to accept the crown. The King of Prussia, not as king, but as head of the house, had given his assent. That Bismarck invented the Hohenzollern candidature the evidence is not conclusive. What is undoubted is that in the late spring of 1870 he took it up, and was much discontented at its failure in that stage.<sup>3</sup> He had become aware that France was striving to arrange alliances with Austria, and even with Italy, in spite of the obnoxious presence of the French garrison at Rome. It was possible that on certain issues Bavaria and the South might join France against Prussia. All the hindrances to German unity, the jealousies of the minor states, the hatred of the Prussian military system, were likely to be aggravated

<sup>1</sup> *Reminiscences of the King of Roumania*. Edited from the original by Sydney Whitman. 1899. P. 92.

<sup>2</sup> King William wrote to Bismarck (Feb. 20, 1870) that the news of the Hohenzollern candidature had come upon him like a thunderbolt, and that they must confer about it. *Kaiser Wilhelm I. und Bismarck*, i. p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> The story of a ministerial council at Berlin on March 15, at which the question was discussed between the king, his ministers, and the Hohenzollern princes, with the result that all decided for acceptance, is denied by Bismarck.—*Recollections*, ii. p. 89.

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by time, if France, while keeping her powder dry, were to persevere in a prudent abstention. Bismarck believed that Moltke's preparations were more advanced than Napoleon's. It was his interest to strike before any French treaties of alliance were signed. The Spanish crown was an occasion. It might easily become a pretext for collision if either France or Germany thought the hour had come. If the Hohenzollern candidate withdrew, it was a diplomatic success for France and a humiliation to Germany; if not, a king from Prussia planted across the Pyrenees, after the aggrandizements of north German power in 1864 and 1866, was enough to make Richelieu, Mazarin, Louis XIV., Bonaparte, even Louis Philippe, turn in their graves.

On June 27, 1870, Lord Clarendon died, and on July 6 Lord Granville received the seals of the foreign department from the Queen at Windsor. The new chief had visited his office the day before, and the permanent under-secretary coming into his room to report, gave him the most remarkable assurance ever received by any secretary of state on first seating himself at his desk. Lord Granville told the story in the House of Lords on July 11, when the crash of the fiercest storm since Waterloo was close upon them:—

The able and experienced under-secretary, Mr. Hammond, at the foreign office told me, it being then three or four o'clock, that with the exception of the sad and painful subject about to be discussed this evening [the murders by brigands in Greece] he had never during his long experience known so great a lull in foreign affairs, and that he was not aware of any important question that I should have to deal with. At six o'clock that evening I received a telegram informing me of the choice that had been made by the provisional government of Spain of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, and of his acceptance of the offer. I went to Windsor the following day, and had the honour of receiving the seals of the foreign office from her Majesty. On my return I saw the Marquis de Lavalette, who informed me of the fact which I already knew, and in energetic terms remarked on the great indignity thus offered to France, and expressed the determination of the government of the Emperor not to permit

the project to be carried out. M. Lavalette added that he trusted that her Majesty's government, considering its friendly relations with France and its general desire to maintain peace, would use its influence with the other parties concerned. I told M. de Lavalette that the announcement had taken the prime minister and myself entirely by surprise.<sup>1</sup>

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Yet two days before Mr. Hammond told Lord Granville that he was not aware of anything important to be dealt with at the foreign department, a deputation had started from Madrid with an invitation to Prince Leopold. At the moment when this singular language was falling from our under-secretary's lips, the Duc de Gramont, the French foreign minister, was telling Lord Lyons at Paris that France would not endure the insult, and expressing his hope that the government of the Queen would try to prevent it. After all, as we have seen, Bismarck in February had used words not very unlike Mr. Hammond's in July.

On July 5, the Emperor, who was at St. Cloud, sent for Baron Rothschild (of Paris), and told him that as there was at that moment no foreign minister in England, he wished to send through him a message to Mr. Gladstone. He wanted Mr. Gladstone to be informed, that the council of ministers at Madrid had decided to propose Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern for the Spanish throne, that his candidature would be intolerable to France, and that he hoped Mr. Gladstone would endeavour to secure its withdrawal. The message was telegraphed to London, and early on the morning of July 6, the present Lord Rothschild deciphered it for his father, and took it to Carlton House Terrace. He found Mr. Gladstone on the point of leaving for Windsor, and drove with him to the railway station. For a time Mr. Gladstone was silent. Then he said he did not approve of the candidature, but he was not disposed to interfere with the liberty of the Spanish people to choose their own sovereign.

Lord Granville put pressure on the provisional government at Madrid to withdraw their candidate, and on the

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, July 11, 1870.

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government at Berlin 'effectually to discourage a project fraught with risks to the best interests of Spain.' The draft of this despatch was submitted by Lord Granville to Mr. Gladstone, who suggested a long addition afterwards incorporated in the text. The points of his addition were an appeal to the magnanimity of the King of Prussia; an injunction to say nothing to give ground for the supposition that England had any business to discuss the abstract right of Spain to choose her own sovereign; that the British government had not admitted Prince Leopold's acceptance of the throne to justify the immediate resort to arms threatened by France; but that the secrecy with which the affair had been conducted was a ground for just offence, and the withdrawal of the prince could alone repair it.<sup>1</sup> Austria made energetic representations at Berlin to the same effect. In sending this addition to Lord Granville, Mr. Gladstone says (July 8), 'I am doubtful whether this despatch should go till it has been seen by the cabinet, indeed I think it should not, and probably you mean this. The Queen recollects being told something about this affair by Clarendon—without result—last year. I think Gramont exacts too much. It would never do for us to get up a combination of Powers in this difficult and slippery matter.'

Events for a week—one of the great critical weeks of the century—moved at a dizzy speed towards the abyss. Peace unfortunately hung upon the prudence of a band of statesmen in Paris, who have ever since, both in their own country and everywhere else, been a byword in history for blindness and folly. The game was delicate. Even in the low and broken estate into which the moral areopagus of Europe had fallen in these days, it was a disadvantage to figure as the aggressor. This disadvantage the French Empire heedlessly imposed upon itself. Of the diplomacy on the side of the government of France anterior to the war, Mr. Gladstone

<sup>1</sup> The despatch is dated July 6 in the blue-book (C. 167, p. 3), but it was not sent that day, as the date of Mr. Gladstone's letter shows. No cabinet seems to have been held before July 9. The despatch was laid before the cabinet, and was sent to Berlin by special messenger that evening. The only other cabinet meeting during this critical period was on July 14.



said that it made up 'a chapter which for fault and folly taken together is almost without a parallel in the history of nations.'<sup>1</sup>

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On July 6 the French ministers made a precipitate declaration to their Chambers, which was in fact an ultimatum to Prussia. The action of Spain was turned into Prussian action. Prussia was called to account in a form that became a public and international threat, as Bismarck put it, 'with the hand on the sword-hilt.' These rash words of challenge were the first of the French disasters. On July 8 the Duc de Gramont begged her Majesty's government to use all their influence to bring about the voluntary renunciation by Prince Leopold of his pretensions. This he told Lord Lyons would be 'a most fortunate solution' of the question. Two days later he assured Lord Lyons that 'if the Prince of Hohenzollern should, on the advice of the King of Prussia, withdraw his acceptance of the crown the whole affair would be at an end.'

On July 10 Lord Granville suggests to Mr. Gladstone: 'What do you think of asking the Queen whether there is any one to whom she could write confidentially with a view to persuade Hohenzollern to refuse?' Mr. Gladstone replies:—

1. I should think you could not do wrong in asking the Queen, as you propose, to procure if she can a refusal from Hohenzollern, through some private channel. 2. I suppose there could be no objection to sounding the Italian government as to the Duke of Aosta. 3. If in the meantime you have authentic accounts of military movements in France, would it not be right formally to ask their suspension, if it be still the desire of the French government that you should continue to act in the sense of procuring withdrawal?

The ambassador at Paris was instructed to work vigorously in this sense, and to urge self-possession and measure upon the Emperor's council. On July 12, however, the prospects of peace grew more and more shadowy. On that day it became known that Prince Leopold had spontaneously

<sup>1</sup> *Gleanings*, iv. p. 222. Modern French historians do not differ from Mr. Gladstone.

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renounced the candidature, or that his father had renounced it on his behalf. The French ministers made up their minds that the defeat of Prussia must be more direct. Gramont told Lyons (July 12) that the French government was in a very embarrassing position. Public opinion was so much excited that it was doubtful whether the ministry would not be overthrown, if it went down to the Chamber and announced that it regarded the affair as finished, without having obtained some more complete satisfaction from Prussia. So the Emperor and his advisers flung themselves gratuitously under Bismarck's grinding wheels by a further demand that not only should the candidature be withdrawn, but the King should pledge himself against its ever being at any time revived. Mr. Gladstone was not slow to see the fatal mischief of this new development.

*Mr. Gladstone to Lord Granville.*

July 12, 11.30 P.M.—I have seen, since Rothschild's telegram,<sup>1</sup> that of Lyons, dated 7.55 P.M. It seems to me that Lyons should be supplied with an urgent instruction by telegram before the council of ministers to-morrow. France appealed to our support at the outset. She received it so far as the immediate object was concerned. It was immediately and energetically given. It appears to have been named by the French minister in public inclusively with that of other Powers. Under these circumstances it is our duty to represent the immense responsibility which will rest upon France, if she does not at once accept as satisfactory and conclusive, the withdrawal of the candidature of Prince Leopold.

The substance of this note was despatched to Paris at 2.30 A.M. on the morning of July 13. It did not reach Lord Lyons till half-past nine, when the council of ministers had already been sitting for half an hour at St. Cloud. The telegram was hastily embodied in the form of a tolerably emphatic letter and sent by special messenger to St. Cloud, where it was placed in M. de Gramont's hand, at the table at which he and the other ministers were still sitting in council in the presence of the Emperor and the Empress.<sup>2</sup> At the

<sup>1</sup> The Rothschild telegram was:—  
The Prince has given up his candidature. The French are satisfied.

<sup>2</sup> No. 39. Correspondence respecting the negotiations preliminary to the war between France and Prussia, 1870.

same time Lord Granville strongly urged M. de Lavalette in London, to impress upon his government that they ought not to take upon themselves the responsibility of pursuing the quarrel on a matter of form, when they had obtained what Gramont had assured Lord Lyons would put an end to the dispute. Though Mr. Disraeli afterwards imputed want of energy to the British remonstrances, there is no reason to suppose that Lord Lyons was wanting either in directness or emphasis. What warnings were likely to reach the minds of men trembling for their personal popularity and for the dynasty, afraid of clamour in the streets, afraid of the army, ignorant of vital facts both military and diplomatic, incapable of measuring such facts even if they had known them, committed by the rash declaration of defiance a week before to a position that made retreat the only alternative to the sword? At the head of them all sat in misery, a sovereign reduced by disease to a wavering shadow of the will and vision of a man. They marched headlong to the pit that Bismarck was digging for them.

On July 14 Mr. Gladstone again writes to Lord Granville, suggesting answers to questions that might be asked that night in parliament. Should they say that the candidature was withdrawn, and that with this withdrawal we had a right to hope the whole affair would end, but that communications were still continued with Prussia? In duty to all parties we were bound to hope that the subject of complaint having disappeared, the complaint itself and the danger to the peace of Europe would disappear also. Then he proceeds:—'What if you were to telegraph to Lyons to signify that we think it probable questions may be asked in parliament to-day; that having been called in by France itself, we cannot affect to be wholly outside the matter; and that it will be impossible for us to conceal the opinion that the cause of quarrel having been removed, France ought to be satisfied. While this might fairly pass as a friendly notice, it might also be useful as admonition. Please to consider. The claim in the telegrams for more acknowledgment of the conduct of Prussia in parliament, seems to me to deserve consideration.'

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On July 13 Gramont asked Lord Lyons whether he could count upon the good offices of England in obtaining the prohibition of any future candidature, at the same time giving him a written assurance that this would terminate the incident. Lord Lyons declined to commit himself, and referred home for instructions. The cabinet was hastily summoned for noon on the 14th. It decided that the demand could not be justified by France, and at the same time took a step of which Gramont chose to say, that it was the one act done by the English government in favour of peace. They suggested to Bismarck that as the King of Prussia had consented to the acceptance by Prince Leopold of the Spanish crown, and had thereby, in a certain sense, become a party to the arrangement, so he might with perfect dignity communicate to the French government his consent to the withdrawal of the acceptance, if France waived her demand for an engagement covering the future. This suggestion Bismarck declined (July 15) to bring before the King, as he did not feel that he could recommend its acceptance. As he had decided to hold France tight in the position in which her rulers had now planted her, we can understand why he could not recommend the English proposal to his master. Meanwhile the die was cast.

### III

The King of Prussia was taking the waters at Ems. Thither Benedetti, the French ambassador to his court, under instructions followed him. The King with moderation and temper told him (July 11) he had just received a telegram that the answer of Prince Leopold would certainly reach him the next day, and he would then at once communicate it. Something (some say Bismarck) prevented the arrival of the courier for some hours beyond the time anticipated. On the morning of the 13th the King met Benedetti on the promenade, and asked him if he had anything new to say. The ambassador obeyed his orders, and told the King of the demand for assurances against a future candidature. The King at once refused this new and unexpected concession, but in parting from Benedetti said they would resume their conversation in the

afternoon. Meanwhile the courier arrived, but before the courier a despatch came from Paris conveying the suggestion that the King might write an apologetic letter to the French Emperor. This naturally gave the King some offence, but he contented himself with sending Benedetti a polite message by an aide-de-camp that he had received in writing from Prince Leopold the intelligence of his renunciation. 'By this his Majesty considered the question as settled.' Benedetti persevered in seeking to learn what answer he should make to his government on the question of further assurances. The King replied by the same officer that he was obliged to decline absolutely to enter into new negotiations; that what he had said in the morning was his last word in the matter. On July 14, the King received Benedetti in the railway carriage on his departure for Berlin, told him that any future negotiations would be conducted by his government, and parted from him with courteous salutations. Neither king nor ambassador was conscious that the country of either had suffered a shadow of indignity from the representative of the other.

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Bismarck called upon the British ambassador in those days, and made what, in the light of later revelations, seems a singular complaint. He observed that Great Britain 'should have forbidden France to enter on the war. She was in a position to do so, and her interests and those of Europe demanded it of her.'<sup>1</sup> Later in the year he spoke in the same sense at Versailles: 'If, at the beginning of the war, the English had said to Napoleon, "There must be no war," there would have been none.'<sup>2</sup> What is certain is that nobody would have been more discomfited by the success of England's prohibition than Count Bismarck. The sincerity and substance of his reproach are tested by a revelation made by himself long after. Though familiar, the story is worth telling over again in the biography of a statesman who stood for a type alien to policies of fraud.

Bismarck had hurried from Varzin to Berlin on July 12, in profound concern lest his royal master should subject his

<sup>1</sup> *The Diplomatic Reminiscences of Lord Augustus Loftus*. Second series, i. p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Busch, i. p. 312.

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country and his minister to what, after the menace of Gramont and Ollivier on July 6, would be grave diplomatic defeat. He had resolved to retire if the incident should end in this shape, and the chief actor has himself described the strange sinister scene that averted his design. He invited Moltke and Roon to dine with him alone on July 13. In the midst of their conversation, 'I was informed,' he says, 'that a telegram from Ems in cipher, if I recollect rightly, of about 200 "groups" was being deciphered. When the copy was handed me it showed that Abeken had drawn up and signed the telegram at his Majesty's command, and I read it out to my guests, whose dejection was so great that they turned away from food and drink. On a repeated examination of the document I lingered upon the authorisation of his Majesty, which included a command, immediately to communicate Benedetti's fresh demand and its rejection to our ambassadors and to the press. I put a few questions to Moltke as to the extent of his confidence in the state of our preparations, especially as to the time they would still require in order to meet this sudden risk of war. He answered that if there was to be war he expected no advantage to us by deferring its outbreak. . . . Under the conviction that war could be avoided only at the cost of the honour of Prussia, I made use of the royal authorisation to publish the contents of the telegram; and in the presence of my two guests I reduced the telegram by striking out words, but without adding or altering, to the following form: "After the news of the renunciation of the hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern had been officially communicated to the imperial government of France by the royal government of Spain, the French ambassador at Ems further demanded of his Majesty the King that he would authorise him to telegraph to Paris that his Majesty the King bound himself for all future time never again to give his consent if the Hohenzollerns should renew their candidature. His Majesty the King thereupon decided not to receive the French ambassador again, and sent to tell him through the aide-de-camp on duty that his Majesty had nothing further to communicate to the ambassador." The difference in the

effect of the abbreviated text of the Ems telegram, as compared with that produced by the original was not the result of stronger words but of the form, which made this announcement appear decisive, while Abeken's version would only have been regarded as a fragment of a negotiation still pending and to be continued at Berlin. After I had read out the concentrated edition to my two guests, Moltke remarked: "Now it has a different ring; it sounded before like a parley; now it is like a flourish in answer to a challenge." I went on to explain: "If in execution of his Majesty's order I at once communicate this text, which contains no alteration in or addition to the telegram, not only to the newspapers, but also by telegraph to all our embassies, it will be known in Paris before midnight, and not only an account of its contents, but also an account of the manner of its distribution, will have the effect of a red rag upon the Gallic bull. Fight we must, if we do not want to act the part of the vanquished without a battle. Success, however, essentially depends upon the impression which the origination of the war makes upon us and others; it is important that we should be the party attacked, and that we fearlessly meet the public threats of France." This explanation brought about in the two generals a revulsion to a more joyous mood, the liveliness of which surprised me. They had suddenly recovered their pleasure in eating and drinking, and spoke in a more cheerful vein. Roon said: "Our God of old lives still, and will not let us perish in disgrace."<sup>1</sup>

The telegram devised at the Berlin dinner-party soon

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck: His Reflections and Reminiscences*, 1898, ii. pp. 95-101. As I have it before me, the reader will perhaps care to see the telegram as Bismarck received it, drawn up by Abeken at the King's command, handed in at Ems, July 13, in the afternoon, and reaching Berlin at six in the evening:—"His Majesty writes to me: "Count Benedetti spoke to me on the promenade, in order to demand from me, finally in a very importunate manner, that I should authorise him to telegraph at once that I bound myself for all future time never again to give my consent if the Hohenzollerns should renew

their candidature. I refused at last somewhat sternly, as it is neither right nor possible to undertake engagements of this kind *à tout jamais*. Naturally I told him I had as yet received no news, and as he was earlier informed about Paris and Madrid he could clearly see that my government once more had no hand in the matter." His Majesty has since received a letter from the Prince. His Majesty having told Count Benedetti that he was awaiting news from the Prince, has decided, with reference to the above demand, upon the representation of Count Eulenburg and myself, not to receive

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reached Paris. For a second time the 14th day of July was to be a date of doom in French history. The Emperor and his council deliberated on the grave question of calling out the reserves. The decisive step had been pressed by Marshal Lebœuf the night before without success. He now returned to the charge, and this time his proposal was resolved upon. It was about four o'clock. The marshal had hardly left the room before new scruples seized his colleagues. The discussion began over again, and misgivings revived. The Emperor showed himself downcast and worn out. Towards five o'clock somebody came to tell them it was absolutely necessary that ministers should present themselves before the Chambers. Gramont rose and told them that if they wished an accommodation, there was still one way, an appeal to Europe. The word congress was no sooner pronounced than the Emperor, seized by extraordinary emotion at the thought of salvation by his own favourite chimera, was stirred even to tears. An address to the Powers was instantly drawn up, and the council broke off. At six o'clock Lebœuf received a note from the Emperor, seeming to regret the decision to call out the reserves. On Lebœuf's demand the council was convoked for ten o'clock that night. In the interval news came that the Ems telegram had been communicated to foreign governments. As Bismarck had calculated, the affront of the telegram was aggravated by publicity. At ten o'clock the council met, and mobilisation was again considered. By eleven it was almost decided that mobilisation should be put off. At eleven o'clock a foreign office despatch arrived, and was read at the council. What was this despatch, is not yet known—perhaps from the French military agent at Berlin, with further news of Prussian preparations. It was of such a kind that it brought about an instant reaction. The orders for mobilisation were maintained.<sup>1</sup>

Count Benedetti again, but only to let him be informed through an aide-de-camp: That his Majesty has now received from the Prince confirmation of the news which Benedetti had already received from Paris, and has nothing further to say to the ambassador. His Majesty leaves it to your

excellency whether Benedetti's fresh demand and its rejection should not be at once communicated both to our ambassadors and to the press.' (ii. p. 96).

<sup>1</sup> See Sorel, *Hist. diplomatique de la guerre franco-allemande* (1875), I. pp. 169-71.



An inflammatory appeal was made to the Chambers. When a parliamentary committee was appointed, a vital document was suppressed, and its purport misrepresented. Thus in point of scruple, the two parties to the transaction were not ill-matched, but Bismarck had been watchful, provident, and well informed, while his opponents were men, as one of them said, 'of a light heart,' heedless, uncalculating, and ignorant and wrong as to their facts.<sup>1</sup>

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On July 15 Mr. Gladstone reported to the Queen:—

Mr. Disraeli made inquiries from the government respecting the differences between France and Prussia, and in so doing expressed opinions strongly adverse to France as the apparent aggressor. Mr. Gladstone, in replying, admitted it to be the opinion of the government that there was no matter known to be in controversy of a nature to warrant a disturbance of the general peace. He said the course of events was not favourable, and the decisive moment must in all likelihood be close at hand.

'At a quarter past four,' says a colleague, 'a cabinet box was handed down the treasury bench to Gladstone. He opened it and looking along to us, said—with an accent I shall never forget—"War declared against Prussia."'<sup>2</sup> 'Shall I ever forget,' says Archbishop Tait, 'Gladstone's face of earnest care when I saw him in the lobby?''<sup>3</sup>

The British cabinet made a final effort for peace. Lord Granville instructed our ambassadors to urge France and Prussia to be so far controlled by the treaty of Paris that before proceeding to extremities they should have recourse to the good offices of some friendly Power, adding that his government was ready to take any part that might be desired in the matter. On the 18th Bismarck replied by throwing the onus of acceptance on France. On the 19th France declined the proposal.

<sup>1</sup> In the Reichstag, on July 20, Bismarck reproached the French ministers for not yielding to the pressure of the members of the opposition like Thiers and Gambetta, and producing the document, which would have overthrown the base on which the declaration of war was founded. Yet he had prepared this document for the very purpose of tempting France into a declaration of war.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Duff's *Diaries*, ii. p. 153. The technical declaration of war by France was made at Berlin on July 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Life*, ii. p. 78.

Just as Bismarck said that England ought to have prevented the war, Frenchmen also said that we ought to have held the Emperor back. With what sanction could Mr. Gladstone have enforced peremptory counsel? Was France to be made to understand that England would go to war on the Prussian side? Short of war, what more could she have done? Lord Granville had told Gramont that he had never in despatch or conversation admitted that after the French had received satisfaction in substance, there was a case for a quarrel on pure form. The British cabinet and their ambassador in Paris had redoubled warning and remonstrance. If the Emperor and his advisers did not listen to the penetrating expostulations of Thiers, and to his vigorous and instructed analysis of the conditions of their case, why should they listen to Lord Granville? Nor was there time, for their precipitancy had kindled a conflagration before either England or any other Power had any chance of extinguishing the blaze.<sup>1</sup>

To Michel Chevalier Mr. Gladstone wrote a few days later:—

I cannot describe to you the sensation of pain, almost of horror, which has thrilled through this country from end to end at the outbreak of hostilities, the commencement of the work of blood. I suppose there was a time when England would have said, 'Let our neighbours, being, as they are, our rivals, waste their energies, their wealth, their precious irrevocable lives, in destroying one another: they will be the weaker, we shall be relatively the stronger.' But we have now unlearned that bad philosophy; and the war between France and Prussia saddens the whole face of society, and burdens every man with a personal grief. We do not pretend to be sufficient judges of the merits: I now mean by 'we' those who are in authority, and perhaps in a condition to judge least ill. We cannot divide praise and blame

<sup>1</sup> 'Il fallait donner à l'Europe le temps d'intervenir, ce qui n'empêchait pas que vos armements continuassent, et il ne fallait pas se hâter, de venir ici dans le moment où la susceptibilité française devait être la plus exigeante, des faits qui devaient causer une irritation dangereuse. . . Ce n'est pas pour l'intérêt essentiel de la France, c'est par la faute du

cabinet que nous avons la guerre.'—*Thiers*, in the Chamber, July 15, 1870. For this line of contention he was called an 'unpatriotic trumpet of disaster,' and other names commonly bestowed on all men in all countries who venture to say that what chances for the hour to be a popular war is a blunder.

as between parties. I hope you do not think it unkind that I should write thus. Forgive the *rashness* of a friend. One of the purposes in life dear to my heart has been to knit together in true amity the people of my own country with those of your great nation. That web of concord is too tender yet, not to suffer under the rude strain of conflicts and concussions even such as we have no material share in. I think that even if I err, I cannot be without a portion of your sympathy: now when the knell of the brave begins to toll. As for us, we have endeavoured to cherish with both the relations of peace and mutual respect. May nothing happen to impair them!

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Though good feeling prevented Mr. Gladstone from dividing praise and blame between the two governments, his own judgment was clear. The initial declaration of July 6, followed by the invention of a second demand by France upon Prussia after the first had been conceded, looked to him, as it did to England generally, like a fixed resolution to force a quarrel. In September he wrote of the proceedings of the French government:—

Wonder rises to its climax when we remember that this feverish determination to force a quarrel was associated with a firm belief in the high preparation and military superiority of the French forces, the comparative inferiority of the Germans, the indisposition of the smaller states to give aid to Prussia, and even the readiness of Austria, with which from his long residence at Vienna the Duc de Gramont supposed himself to be thoroughly acquainted, to appear in arms as the ally of France. It too soon appeared that, as the advisers of the Emperor knew nothing of public rights and nothing of the sense of Europe, so they knew nothing about Austria, and the mind of the German states, and less than nothing about not only the Prussian army, but even their own.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cleanings, iv. p. 222.

## CHAPTER V

### NEUTRALITY AND ANNEXATION

(1870)

THE immediate purpose with which Italians and Germans effected the great change in the European constitution was unity, not liberty. They constructed not securities but forces. Machiavelli's time had come.—ACTON.

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'THE war is a grievous affair,' Mr. Gladstone said to Brand, 'and adds much to our cares, for to maintain our neutrality in such a case as this, will be a most arduous task. On the face of the facts France is wrong, but as to personal trustworthiness the two moving spirits on the respective sides, Napoleon and Bismarck, are nearly on a par.' His individual activity was unsparing. He held almost daily conferences with Lord Granville at the foreign office; criticised and minuted despatches; contributed freely to the drafts. 'There has not, I think,' he wrote to Bright (Sept. 12), 'been a single day on which Granville and I have not been in anxious communication on the subject of the war.' When Lord Granville went to Walmer he wrote to Mr. Gladstone, 'I miss our discussions here over the despatches as they come in very much.' 'I hope I need not say that while you are laid up with gout at Walmer,' Mr. Gladstone wrote in October, 'I am most ready to start at a few hours' notice at any time of day or night, to join you upon any matter which you may find to require it. Indeed I could not properly or with comfort remain here upon any other terms.' Details of this agitating time, with all its convulsions and readjustments, belong to the history of Europe. The part taken by Mr. Gladstone and his cabinet was for several months in pretty close harmony with the humour of the country. It will be enough for us to mark their action at decisive moments.

On July 16 he wrote to Cardwell at the war office:—

If, unhappily, which God forbid, we have to act in this war, it will not be with six months', nor three months', nor even one month's notice. The real question is, supposing an urgent call of honour and of duty in an emergency for 15,000 or 20,000 men, what would you do? What answer would the military authorities make to this question, those of them especially who have brains rather than mere position? Have you no fuller battalions than those of 500? At home or in the Mediterranean? If in the latter, should they not be brought home? Childers seemed to offer a handsome subscription of marines, and that the artillery would count for much in such a case is most probable. What I should like is to study the means of sending 20,000 men to Antwerp with as much promptitude as at the Trent affair we sent 10,000 to Canada.

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The figures of the army and navy were promptly supplied to the prime minister, Cardwell adding with a certain shrillness that, though he had no wish to go either to Antwerp or anywhere else, he could not be responsible for sending an expedition abroad, unless the army were fitted for that object by measures taken now to increase its force.

I entirely agree with you, Mr. Gladstone replied, that *when* it is seriously intended to send troops to Antwerp or elsewhere abroad, 'immediate measures must be taken to increase our force.' I feel, however, rather uneasy at what seems to me the extreme susceptibility on one side of the case of some members of the cabinet. I hope it will be balanced by considering the effect of any forward step by appeal to parliament, in compromising the true and entire neutrality of our position, and in disturbing and misdirecting the mind of the public and of parliament. I am afraid I have conveyed to your mind a wrong impression as to the state of my own. It is only a far outlook which, in my opinion, brings into view as a possibility the sending a force to Antwerp. Should the day arrive, we shall then be on the very edge of war, with scarcely a hope of not passing onward into the abyss.

Cardwell sent him a paper by a high military authority, on which Mr. Gladstone made two terse ironic comments.

BOOK VI. 1870. 'I think the paper,' he said, 'if it proves anything proves (1) That generals and not ministers are the proper judges of those weights in the political scales which express the likelihood of war and peace; (2) That there is very little difference between absolute neutrality and actual war. I advise that Granville should see it.'

On July 25 the *Times* divulged the text of a projected agreement in 1869 (it was in truth 1867) between the French and Prussian governments in five articles, including one that the incorporation of Belgium by France would not be objected to by Prussia. The public was shocked and startled, and many were inclined to put down the document for a forgery and a hoax. As a matter of fact, in substance it was neither. The Prussian ambassador a few days before had informed Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville personally and in strict secrecy, that the draft of such a project existed in the handwriting of M. Benedetti. This private communication was taken by Mr. Gladstone to have been made with the object of prompting him to be the agent in producing the evil news to the world, and thus to prejudice France in the judgment of Europe. He thought that no part of his duty, and took time to consider it, in the expectation that it was pretty sure to find its way into print by some other means, as indeed soon happened. 'For the sake of peace,' Bismarck explained to Lord Granville (July 28, 1870), 'I kept the secret, and treated the propositions in a dilatory manner.' When the British ambassador on one occasion had tried to sound him on the suspected designs of France, Bismarck answered, 'It is no business of mine to tell French secrets.'

There were members of the cabinet who doubted the expediency of England taking any action. The real position of affairs, they argued, was not altered: the draft treaty only disclosed what everybody believed before, namely that France sought compensation for Prussian aggrandizement, as she had secured it for Italian aggrandizement by taking Savoy and Nice. That Prussia would not object, provided the compensations were not at the expense of people who spoke German, had all come out at the time of the Luxemburg affair. If France and Prussia agreed, how could we help

Belgium, unless indeed Europe joined? But then what chance was there of Russia and Austria joining against France and Prussia for the sake of Belgium, in which neither of them had any direct interest. At the same time ministers knew that the public in England expected them to do something, though a vote for men and money would probably suffice. The cabinet, however, advanced a step beyond a parliamentary vote. On July 30 they met and took a decision to which Mr. Gladstone then and always after attached high importance. England proposed a treaty to Prussia and France, providing that if the armies of either violated the neutrality of Belgium, Great Britain would co-operate with the other for its defence, but without engaging to take part in the general operations of the war. The treaty was to hold good for twelve months after the conclusion of the war. Bismarck at once came into the engagement. France loitered a little, but after the battle of Wörth made no more difficulty, and the instrument was signed on August 9.

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The mind of the government was described by Mr. Gladstone in a letter to Bright (August 1):—

Although some members of the cabinet were inclined on the outbreak of this most miserable war to make military preparations, others, Lord Granville and I among them, by no means shared that disposition, nor I think was the feeling of parliament that way inclined. But the publication of the treaty has altered all this, and has thrown upon us the necessity either of doing something fresh to secure Belgium, or else of saying that under no circumstances would we take any step to secure her from absorption. This publication has wholly altered the feeling of the House of Commons, and no government could at this moment venture to give utterance to such an intention about Belgium. But neither do we think it would be right, even if it were safe, to announce that we would in any case stand by with folded arms, and see actions done which would amount to a total extinction of public right in Europe.

The idea of engagements that might some day involve

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resort to force made Bright uneasy, and Mr. Gladstone wrote to him again (August 4):—

It will be a great addition to the domestic portion of the griefs of this most unhappy war, if it is to be the cause of a political severance between you and the present administration. To this I know you would justly reply that the claims of conviction are paramount. I hope, however, that the moment has not quite arrived. . . . You will, I am sure, give me credit for good faith when I say, especially on Lord Granville's part as on my own, who are most of all responsible, that we take this step in the interest of peace. . . . The recommendation set up in opposition to it generally is, that we should simply declare *we* will defend the neutrality of Belgium by arms in case it should be attacked. Now the sole or single-handed defence of Belgium would be an enterprise which we incline to think Quixotic; if these two great military powers combined against it—that combination is the only serious danger; and this it is which by our proposed engagements we should I hope render improbable to the very last degree. I add for myself this confession of faith. If the Belgian people desire, on their own account, to join France or any other country, I for one will be no party to taking up arms to prevent it. But that the Belgians, whether they would or not, should go 'plump' down the maw of another country to satisfy dynastic greed, is another matter. The accomplishment of such a crime as this implies, would come near to an extinction of public right in Europe, and I do not think we could look on while the sacrifice of freedom and independence was in course of consummation.

## II

By the end of the first week of August the storm of war had burst upon the world. 'On the 2nd of August, in the insignificant affair of Saarbrück, the Emperor of the French assumed a feeble offensive. On the 4th, the Prussians replied energetically at Wissemburg. And then what a torrent, what a deluge of events! In twenty-eight days ten battles were fought. Three hundred thousand men were sent to the hospitals, to captivity, or to the grave. The German enemy had penetrated into the interior of France, over a distance of a



hundred and fifty miles of territory, and had stretched forth everywhere as he went the strong hand of possession. The Emperor was a prisoner, and had been deposed with general consent; his family wanderers, none knew where; the embryo at least of a republic, born of the hour, had risen on the ruins of the empire, while proud and gorgeous Paris was awaiting with divided mind the approach of the conquering monarch and his countless host.<sup>1</sup> This was Mr. Gladstone's description of a marvellous and shattering hour.

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Talleyrand was fond in the days of 1815 at Vienna, of applying to any diplomatist who happened to agree with him the expression, 'a good European.' He meant a statesman who was capable of conceiving the state-system of the western world as a whole. The events of August made the chief minister of Austria now exclaim, 'I see no longer any Europe.' All the notions of alliance that had so much to do with the precipitation of the war were dissipated. Italy, so far from joining France, marched into Rome. Austria ostentatiously informed England that she was free from engagements. The Czar of Russia was nephew of the Prussian king and German in his leanings, but Gortchakoff, his minister, was jealous of Bismarck, and his sympathies inclined to France, and Czar and minister alike nursed designs in the Black Sea. With such materials as these Mr. Pitt himself with all his subsidies could not have constructed a fighting coalition. Even the sons of stricken France after the destruction of the empire were a divided people. For side by side with national defence against the invader, republican and monarchic propagandism was at work, internecine in its temper and scattering baleful seeds of civil war.

'Many,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to Chevalier in September, 'seem so over-sanguine as to suppose that it is in our power at any moment, by friendly influence of reasoning, to solve the problem which has brought together in the shock of battle the two greatest military powers of Europe. . . . I do not see that it is an offence on our part not to interfere when the belligerents differ so widely, when we have not the

<sup>1</sup> *Gleanings*, iv. p. 197.

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hope of bringing them together, and when we cannot adopt without reserve the language and claims of either.' Material responsibility and moral responsibility both pointed to a rigid equity between the combatants, and to strict neutrality. The utmost to be done was to localise the war; and with this aim, the British cabinet induced Italy, Austria, Russia, and smaller powers to come to a common agreement that none of them would depart from neutrality without a previous understanding with the rest. This league of the neutrals, though negative, was at least a shadow of collective action, from which good might come if the belligerents should some day accept or invite mediation. To this diplomatic neutrality the only alternative was an armed neutrality, and armed neutrality has not always served pacific ends.

To the German contention at one stage after the overthrow of the empire, that the Empress was still the only authority existing legally for France, Mr. Gladstone was energetically opposed. 'It embodied,' he said, 'the doctrine that no country can have a new government without the consent of the old one.' 'Ought we,' he asked Lord Granville (Sept. 20), 'to witness in silence the promulgation of such a doctrine, which is utterly opposed to the modern notions of public right, though it was in vogue fifty years back, and though it was acted on with most fatal consequences by the Prussians of eighty years back.' Then as for mediation, whether isolated or in common, he saw no hope in it. He said to the Duke of Argyll (Sept. 6), 'I would not say a word ever so gently. I believe it would do great mischief. As at present advised, I see but two really safe grounds for mediation, (1) a drawn battle; (2) the request of both parties.' Ever since 1862, and his error in the American war—so he now wrote to Lord Granville,—'in forming and expressing an opinion that the Southerners had virtually established their independence, I have been very fearful of giving opinions with regard to the proper course for foreign nations to pursue in junctures, of which, after all, I think they have better means of forming a judgment than foreigners can possess.'

had very sensibly written to him some weeks before (Dec. 8, 1870):—

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I am afraid our whole success has been owing to the belief that we would go to war, and to tell the truth, I think that war in some shape or other, sooner or later, was a possible risk after our note. In any case, I would reassure nobody now. Promising peace is as unwise as to threaten war. A sort of instinct that the bumps of combativeness and destructiveness are to be found somewhere in your head, has helped us much during the last five months.

### III

Having undertaken to propose a conference, Bismarck did the best he could for it. The British cabinet accepted on condition that the conference was not to open with any previous assumption of Gortchakoff's declaration, and they objected to Petersburg as the scene of operations. Mr. Gladstone in some notes prepared for the meeting of his colleagues (Nov. 26), was very firm on the first and main point, that 'Her Majesty's government could enter into no conference which should assume any portion of the treaty to have been already abrogated by the discretion of a single Power, and it would be wholly out of place for them, under the present circumstances, to ask for a conference, as they were not the parties who desire to bring about any change in the treaty.' Russia made difficulties, but Bismarck's influence prevailed. The conference assembled not at Petersburg but in London, and subject to no previous assumption as to its results.<sup>1</sup>

The close of a negotiation is wont to drop the curtain over embarrassments that everybody is glad to forget;<sup>2</sup> but the obstacles to an exact agreement were not easily overcome. Lord Granville told Mr. Gladstone that no fewer than thirteen or fourteen versions of the most important protocol were tried before terms were reached. In the end Lord Granville's conclusion was that, as no just rights had been sacrificed, it was a positive advantage that Russia should be gratified by the removal of restraints naturally galling to her pride.

<sup>1</sup> Russell to Lord Granville, c. 245, No. 78, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Sorel's *Guerre Franco-Allemande*, ii. chap. 4.

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The conference opened at the foreign office on Dec. 17, and held its final meeting on March 13. Delay was caused by the difficulty of procuring the attendance of a representative of France. Jules Favre was appointed by the government at Bordeaux, but he was locked up in Paris, and he and Bismarck could not agree as to the proper form of safe-conduct. What was even more important, the governing men in France could not agree upon his instructions; for we must remember that all this time along with the patriotic struggle against the Prussians, there went on an internal struggle only a degree less ardent between republicans and monarchists. It was not until the final meeting of the conference that the Duc de Broglie was accredited as representative of his country.<sup>1</sup> At the first formal meeting a special protocol was signed recording it as "an essential principle of the law of nations that no Power can liberate itself from the engagements of a treaty, nor modify the stipulations thereof, unless with the consent of the contracting Powers by means of an amicable arrangement."

To give a single signatory Power the right of forbidding a change desired by all the others, imposes a kind of perpetuity on treaty stipulations, that in practice neither could nor ought to be insisted upon. For instance it would have tied fast the hands of Cavour and Victor Emmanuel in the Italian transactions which Mr. Gladstone had followed and assisted with so much enthusiasm, for Austria would never have assented. It is, moreover, true that in the ever recurring eras when force, truculent and unabashed, sweeps aside the moral judgments of the world, the mere inscription of a pious opinion in a protocol may seem worth little trouble. Yet it is the influence of good opinion, tardy, halting, stumbling, and broken, as it must ever be, that upholds and quickens the growth of right. The good rules laid down in conferences and state-papers may look tame in the glare of the real world of history as it is. Still, if we may change the figure, they help to dilute the poisons in the air.

<sup>1</sup> That this failure to take advantage of the conference was an error on the part of France is admitted by modern French historians. Hanotaux, *France Contemporaine*, i. p. 108; Sorel, ii. pp. 216-7. Lord Granville had himself pointed out how a discussion upon the terms of peace might have been raised.

The ground taken by him in the cabinet was as follows:— CH.  
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A matter of this kind cannot be regarded as in principle a question between the two belligerents only, but involves considerations of legitimate interest to all the Powers of Europe. It appears to bear on the Belgian question in particular. It is also a principle likely to be of great consequence in the eventual settlement of the Eastern question. Quite apart from the subject of mediation, it cannot be right that the neutral Powers should remain silent, while this principle of consulting the wishes of the population is trampled down, should the actual sentiment of Alsace and Lorraine be such as to render that language applicable. The mode of expressing any view of this matter is doubtless a question requiring much consideration. The decision of the cabinet was that the time for it had not yet come. Any declaration in the sense described would, Mr. Gladstone thought, entail, in fairness, an obligation to repudiate the present claim of France to obtain peace without surrendering 'either an inch of her territory or a stone of her fortresses.'

Mr. Bright did not agree with him, but rather favoured the principle of inviolability. In November Mr. Gladstone prepared a still more elaborate memorandum in support of a protest from the neutral Powers. The Duke of Argyll put what was perhaps the general view when he wrote to Mr. Gladstone (Nov. 25, 1870), 'that he had himself never argued in favour of the German annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, but only against our having any right to oppose it otherwise than by the most friendly dissuasion.' The Duke held that the consent of populations to live under a particular government is a right subject to a great many qualifications, and it would not be easy to turn such a doctrine into the base of an official remonstrance. After all, he said, the instincts of nations stand for something in this world. The German did not exceed the ancient acknowledged right of nations in successful wars, when he said to Alsace and Lorraine, 'Conquest in a war forced upon me by the people of which you form a part, gives me the *right* to annex, if on other

BOOK VI grounds I deem it expedient, and for strategic reasons I do so deem it.'

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Mr. Gladstone, notwithstanding his cabinet, held to his view energetically expressed as follows:—

If the contingency happen, not very probable, of a sudden accommodation which shall include the throttling of Alsace and part of Lorraine, without any voice previously raised against it, it will in my opinion be a standing reproach to England. There is indeed the Russian plan of not recognising that in which we have had no part; but it is difficult to say what this comes to.

On December 20 he says to Lord Granville what we may take for a last word on this part of the case:—'While I more and more feel the deep culpability of France, I have an apprehension that this violent laceration and transfer is to lead us from bad to worse, and to be the *beginning* of a new series of European complications.'

While working in the spirit of cordial and even eager loyalty to the prime minister, Lord Granville disagreed with him upon the question of diplomatic action against annexation. Palmerston, he said to Mr. Gladstone in October, 'wasted the strength derived by England in the great war by his brag. I am afraid of our wasting that which we at present derive from moral causes, by laying down general principles when nobody will attend to them, and when in all probability they will be disregarded. My objection to doing at present what you propose is, that it is impossible according to my views to do so without being considered to throw our weight into the French scale against Germany, with consequent encouragement on one side and irritation on the other.'

Like Thiers, Mr. Gladstone had been leaning upon the concurrence of the neutral Powers, and active co-operation at St. Petersburg. Russian objects were inconsistent with the alienation of Germany, and they made a fatal bar to all schemes for lowering the German terms. This truth of the situation was suddenly brought home to England in no palatable way.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BLACK SEA

(1870-1871)

'You are always talking to me of principles. As if your public law were anything to me; I do not know what it means. What do you suppose that all your parchments and your treaties signify to me?'

ALEXANDER I. TO TALLEYRAND.

At the close of the Crimean war in 1856 by the provisions of the treaty of Paris, Russia and Turkey were restrained from constructing arsenals on the coast of the Euxine, and from maintaining ships of war on its waters. No serious statesman believed that the restriction would last, any more than Napoleon's restraint on Prussia in 1808 against keeping up an army of more than forty-two thousand men could last. Palmerston had this neutralisation more at heart than anybody else, and Lord Granville told the House of Lords what durability Palmerston expected for it:—

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General Ignatieff told me that he remarked to Lord Palmerston, 'These are stipulations which you cannot expect will last long,' and Lord Palmerston replied, 'They will last ten years.' A learned civilian, a great friend of mine, told me he heard Lord Palmerston talk on the subject, and say, 'Well, at all events they will last my life.' A noble peer, a colleague of mine, an intimate friend of Lord Palmerston, says Lord Palmerston told him they would last seven years.<sup>1</sup>

In 1856 Mr. Gladstone declared his opinion, afterwards often repeated, that the neutralisation of the Black Sea, popular as it might be in England at the moment, was far from being a satisfactory arrangement.<sup>2</sup> Were the time to

<sup>1</sup> House of Lords, Feb. 14, 1871. impossible.' 'The most inept conclusions of the peace of Paris.'—Bismarck, *Reflections*, ii. p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> The stipulations 'were politically absurd, and therefore in the long run

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870. come, he said, when Russia might resume aggressive schemes on Turkey, he believed that neutralisation would mean nothing but a series of pitfalls much deeper than people expected.<sup>1</sup> These pitfalls now came into full view. On the last day of October Prince Gortchakoff addressed a circular to the Powers, announcing that his imperial master could 'no longer consider himself bound to the terms of the treaty of March 1856, in so far as these limit his rights of sovereignty in the Black Sea.' On the merits there was very little real dispute in Europe. As Lord Granville once wrote to Mr. Gladstone: 'There was no doubt about Germany having at Paris, and subsequently, always taken the Russian view. France made an intimation to the same effect very soon after the conclusion of the treaty. And Austria later. Italy did the same, but not in so decided a manner. . . . I have frequently said in public that with the exception of ourselves and the Turks, all the co-signatories of the treaty of Paris had expressed views in favour of modifying the article, previous to Prince Gortchakoff's declaration.'<sup>2</sup>

To have a good case on the merits was one thing, and to force it at the sword's point was something extremely different. As Mr. Gladstone put it in a memorandum that became Lord Granville's despatch, 'the question was not whether any desire expressed by Russia ought to be carefully examined in a friendly spirit by the co-signatory powers, but whether they are to accept from her an announcement that by her own act, without any consent from them, she has released herself from a solemn covenant.'<sup>3</sup> Mr. Gladstone, not dissenting on the substance of the Russian claim, was outraged by the form. The only parallel he ever found to Gortchakoff's proceedings in 1870 was a certain claim, of which we shall soon see something, made by America in 1872. 'I have had half an idea,' he wrote to Lord Granville, 'that it might be well I should see Brunnow

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, May 6, 1856. See also May 24, 1855, and Aug. 3, 1855.

<sup>2</sup> Bismarck, in his *Reflections*, takes credit to himself for having come to an understanding with Russia on this

question at the outbreak of the Franco-German war.

<sup>3</sup> 'The whole pith of the despatch was yours.'—Granville to Mr. Gladstone, Nov. 18, 1870.



[the Russian ambassador] either with you or alone. All know the mischief done by the Russian idea of Lord Aberdeen, and the opposition are in the habit of studiously representing me as his double, or his heir in pacific traditions. This I do not conceive to be true, and possibly I might undeceive Brunnow a little.'

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In this country, as soon as the news of the circular was made known, the public excitement was intense. Consols instantly dropped heavily. Apart from the form of the Russian claim, the public still alert upon the eastern question, felt that the question was once more alive. As Mr. Gladstone had said to Lord Granville (Oct. 4, 1870), 'Everybody at a time like this looks out for booty; it will be hard to convince central Europe that Turkey is not a fair prize.' From France Lord Lyons wrote to Mr. Gladstone (Nov. 14) that the Russian declaration was looked upon with complacency, because it might lead to a congress, and at all events it might, by causing a stir among the neutrals, give a check to Prussia as well as to Russia.

Lord Granville wrote to Mr. Gladstone, who was at Hawarden (Nov. 21):—

I am very sorry to hear that you are not well. Of course, you must run no risk, but as soon as you can you will, I hope, come up and have a cabinet. Childers has been here. He tells me there is a perfect howl about ministers not meeting. He is more quiet in his talk than I hear some of our colleagues are. But he says if there is to be war, every day lost is most injurious. I have told him that it is impossible to say that we may not be driven into it by Russia, or by other foreign powers, or by our own people; that we must take care of our dignity; but if there ever was a cabinet which is bound not to drift into an unnecessary war, it is ours.

Mr. Gladstone replied next day:—

I will frankly own that I am much disgusted with a good deal of the language that I have read in the newspapers within the last few days about immediate war with Russia. I try to put a check on myself to prevent the reaction it engenders. Your observation on drifting into war is most just: though I always

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thought Clarendon's epithet in this one case inapplicable as well as unadvisable. I know, however, nothing more like drifting into war than would be a resort to any military measures whatever, except with reference either to some actual fact or some well defined contingency. . .

## II

The courses open to the British Government in the face of the circular were these. They might silently or with a protest acquiesce. Or they might declare an offensive war (much deprecated by Turkey herself) against a nation that had peculiar advantages for defence, and for an object that every other signatory power thought in itself a bad object. Third, they might, in accordance with a wonderfully grand scheme suggested to ministers, demand from Germany, all flushed as she was with military pride, to tell us plainly whether she was on our side or Russia's; and if the German answer did not please us, then we should make an offensive alliance with France, Austria, Italy, and Turkey, checking Russia in the east and Germany in the west. A fourth plan was mutely to wait, on the plea that whatever Russia might have said, nothing had been done. The fifth plan was a conference. This was hardly heroic enough to please everybody in the cabinet. At least it saved us from the insanity of a war that would have intensified European confusion, merely to maintain restraints considered valuable by nobody. The expedient of a conference was effectively set in motion by Bismarck, then pre-occupied in his critical Bavarian treaty and the siege of Paris. On November 12, Mr. Odo Russell left London for Versailles on a special mission to the Prussian king. The intrepidity of our emissary soon secured a remarkable success, and the episode of Bismarck's intervention in the business was important.

Mr. Odo Russell had three hours' conversation with Count Bismarck on November 21. Bismarck told him that the Russian circular had taken him by surprise; that though he had always thought the treaty of 1856 too hard upon Russia, he entirely disapproved both of the manner and time chosen for forcing on a revision of it; that he could not

interfere nor even answer the circular, but to prevent the outbreak of another war he would recommend conferences at Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> The conversation broke off at four o'clock in the afternoon, with this unpromising cast. At ten in the evening it was resumed; it was prolonged until half an hour beyond midnight. 'I felt I knew him better,' Mr. Russell in an unofficial letter tells Lord Granville (Nov. 30), 'and could express more easily all that I had determined to say to convince him that unless he could get Russia to withdraw the circular, we should be compelled with or without allies to go to war.' Bismarck remained long obstinate in his professed doubts of England going to war; but he gradually admitted the truth of the consequences to which a pacific acceptance of 'the Russian kick must inevitably lead. And so he came round to the British point of view, and felt that in our place he could not recede.'

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It was not hard to see Bismarck's interests. The mischief to Germany of another European war before Paris had fallen; the moral support to be derived by the Tours government from a revival of the old Anglo-French alliance; the chances of Beust and other persons fishing in the troubled waters of an extended European conflict; the vital importance of peace to the reconstruction of Germany—these were the disadvantages to his own country and policy, of a war between England and Russia; these worked the change in his mind between afternoon and midnight, and led him to support the cause of England and peace against Gortchakoff and his circular. Characteristically, at the same time he strove hard to drive a bargain with the English agent, and to procure some political advantages in exchange for his moral support. 'In politics,' he said, 'one hand should wash the other.'

<sup>1</sup> Bismarck's private opinion was this:—'Gortchakoff is not carrying on in this matter a real Russian policy (that is, one in the true interests of Russia), but rather a policy of violent aggression. People still believe that Russian diplomats are particularly crafty and clever, full of artifices and stratagems, but that is not the case. If the people at St. Petersburg were clever they would not make any

declaration of the kind but would quietly build men-of-war in the Black Sea and wait until they were questioned on the subject. Then they might reply they knew nothing about it, but would make inquiries and so let the matter drag on. That might continue for a long time, and finally people would get accustomed to it.'—Busch, *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*, i. pp. 312-13.

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(*eine Hand die andere waschen muss*). In Mr. Odo Russell, however, he found a man who talked the language, kept the tone and was alive to all the arts of diplomatic business, and no handwashing followed. When Mr. Russell went to his apartment in the Place Hoche at Versailles that night, he must have felt that he had done a good day's work.

In the following year, papers were laid before Parliament, and attention was drawn to the language used by Mr. Russell to Bismarck, in the pregnant sentence about the question being of a nature in its present state to compel us with or without allies, to go to war with Russia.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone, when directly challenged, replied (Feb. 16) that the agent had used this argument without specific authority or instruction from the government, but that the duty of diplomatic agents required them to express themselves in the mode in which they think they can best support the proposition of which they wish to procure acceptance. Mr. Odo Russell explained to Mr. Gladstone (Feb. 27) that he was led to use the argument about England being compelled to go to war with or without allies by these reasons: that we were bound by a definite treaty to regard any retractation of the stipulations of March 30, 1856, as a cause of war;<sup>2</sup> that Gortchakoff's assumption of a right to renounce provisions directly touching Russian interests seemed to carry with it the assumption of a right to renounce all the rest of the treaty; that Mr. Gladstone's government had declared (Nov. 10) that it was impossible to sanction the course announced by Gortchakoff; that, therefore, France being otherwise engaged, and Austria being unprepared, we might be compelled by our joint and several obligations under the tripartite treaty, to go to war with Russia for proceedings that we pronounced ourselves unable to sanction; finally, that he had never been instructed to state to Prussia, that the question was not one compelling us ever to go to war, notwithstanding our treaty engagements. What was Mr. Gladstone's reply to this I do not find, but Lord Granville

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence respecting the treaty of March 30, 1856, No. 76, pp. 44, 45, c. 245.

<sup>2</sup> The tripartite treaty of England, France, Austria, of April 15, 1856.

In the middle of September Thiers, in the course of his valiant mission to European courts, reached London. 'Yesterday,' Mr. Gladstone writes (Sept. 14), 'I saw Thiers and had a long conversation with him; he was very clear and touching in parts. But the purpose of his mission is vague. He seems come to do just what he can.' The vagueness of Thiers did but mirror the distractions of France. Not even from his ingenious, confident, and fertile mind could men hope for a clue through the labyrinth of European confusions. Great Britain along with four other powers recognised the new government of the Republic in France at the beginning of February 1871.

It was about this time that Mr. Gladstone took what was for a prime minister the rather curious step of volunteering an anonymous article in a review, upon these great affairs in which his personal responsibility was both heavy and direct.<sup>1</sup> The precedent can hardly be called a good one, for as anybody might have known, the veil was torn aside in a few hours after the *Edinburgh Review* containing his article appeared. Its object, he said afterwards, was 'to give what I thought needful information on a matter of great national importance, which involved at the time no interest of party whatever. If such interests had been involved, a rule from which I have never as a minister diverted would have debarred me from writing.' Lord Granville told him that, 'It seemed to be an admirable argument, the more so as it is the sort of thing Thiers ought to have said and did not.' The article made a great noise, as well it might, for it was written with much eloquence, truth, and power, and was calculated to console his countrymen for seeing a colossal European conflict going on, without the privilege of a share in it. One passage about happy England—happy especially that the wise dispensation of Providence had cut her off by the streak of silver sea from continental dangers—rather irritated than convinced. The production of such an article under such circumstances

<sup>1</sup> To be found in *Gleanings*, iv. In republishing it, Mr. Gladstone says, 'This article is the only one ever written by me, which was meant for the time to be in substance, as well as in form, anonymous.' That was in 1878. Two years later he contributed an anonymous article, 'The Conservative Collapse,' to the *Fortnightly Review* (May 1880).

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was a striking illustration of Mr. Gladstone's fervid desire—the desire of a true orator's temperament—to throw his eager mind upon a multitude of men, to spread the light of his own urgent conviction, to play the part of missionary with a high evangel, which had been his earliest ideal forty years before. Everybody will agree that it was better to have a minister writing his own articles in a respectable quarterly, than doctoring other people's articles with concomitants from a reptile fund.

### III

On the vital question of the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, Mr. Gladstone's view was easy to anticipate. He could not understand how the French protests turned more upon the inviolability of French soil, than on the attachment of the people of Alsace and North Lorraine to their country. The abstract principle he thought peculiarly awkward in a nation that had made recent annexations of her own. Upon all his correspondents at home and abroad, he urged that the question ought to be worked on the basis of the sentiments of the people concerned, and not upon the principle of inviolability. He composed an elaborate memorandum for the cabinet, but without effect. On the last day of September, he records:—'*Sept. 30: Cabinet 2½-6. I failed in my two objects. 1. An effort to speak with the other neutral Powers against the transfer of Alsace and Lorraine without reference to the populations. 2. Immediate release of Fenian prisoners.'*

To Mr. Bright, who was still prevented by illness from attending cabinets, and who had the second of the two objects much at heart, he wrote the next day:—

I send for your private perusal the inclosed mem. which I proposed to the cabinet yesterday, but could not induce them to adopt. It presupposes the concurrence of the neutral Powers. They agreed in the opinions, but did not think the expression of them timely. My opinion certainly is that the transfer of territory and inhabitants by mere force calls for the reprobation of Europe, and that Europe is entitled to utter it, and can utter it with good effect.

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In England opinion veered round after Sedan. The disappearance of the French empire had effectively dispelled the vivid suspicions of aggression. The creation of the empire of a united Germany showed a new Europe. The keen word of an English diplomatist expressed what was dawning in men's minds as a new misgiving. 'Europe,' he said, 'has lost a mistress and got a master.' Annexation wore an ugly look. Meetings to express sympathy with France in her struggle were held in London and the provinces. Still on the whole the general verdict seemed to be decisively in favour of a resolute neutrality, for in fact, nobody who knew anything of the state of Europe could suggest a policy of British intervention that would stand an hour of debate.

One proposal favoured by Mr. Gladstone, and also, I remember, commended by Mill, was the military neutralisation of Alsace and Lorraine, and the dismantling of the great border fortresses, without withdrawing the inhabitants from their French allegiance. The idea was worked out in a pamphlet by Count Gasparin. On this pamphlet Mr. Max Müller put what Mr. Gladstone called the fair question, whether its author was likely to persuade the European powers to guarantee border neutrality. 'I will try to give you a fair answer,' Mr. Gladstone said (Jan. 30, 1871). 'You will not think it less fair because it is individual and unofficial; for a man must be a wretch indeed, who could speak at this most solemn juncture, otherwise than from the bottom of his heart. First then, I agree with you in disapproving the declaration, or reputed declaration, of Lord Derby (then Stanley) in 1867, about the Luxemburg guarantee. I have in parliament and in my present office, declined or expressly forborne to recognise that declaration.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, as to the main question. It

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Stanley on the Luxemburg Guarantee, June 14, 1867.*—The guarantee now given is collective only. That is an important distinction. It means this, that in the event of a violation of neutrality, all the powers who have signed the treaty

may be called upon for their collective action. No one of those powers is liable to be called upon to act singly or separately. It is a case so to speak of 'limited liability.' We are bound in honour—you cannot put a legal construction upon it—to see

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is great. It is difficult. But I should not despair. I may add I should desire to find it practicable; for I think it would be a condition fair to both parties, and one on which Germany would have an absolute title to insist. 'Some of the most excusable errors ever committed,' he said, in closing the letter, 'have also been the most ruinous in their consequences. The smallest in the forum of conscience, they are the greatest in the vast theatre of action. May your country, justly indignant and justly exultant, be preserved from committing one of these errors.' Three months later, when all was at an end, he repeated the same thought:—

The most fatal and in their sequel most gigantic errors of men are also frequently the most excusable and the least gratuitous. They are committed when a strong impetus of right carries them up to a certain point, and a residue of that impetus, drawn from the contact with human passion and infirmity, pushes them beyond it. They vault into the saddle; they fall on the other side. The instance most commonly present to my mind is the error of England in entering the Revolutionary war in 1793. Slow sometimes to go in, she is slower yet to come out, and if she had then held her hand, the course of the revolution and the fate of Europe would in all likelihood have been widely different. There might have been no Napoleon. There might have been no Sedan.

The changes in the political map effected by these dire months of diplomacy and war were almost comparable in one sense to those of the treaty of Münster, or the treaty of the Pyrenees, or the treaties of Vienna, save that those great instruments all left a consolidated Europe. Italy had crowned her work by the acquisition of Rome. Russia had wiped out the humiliation of 1856. Prussia, after three wars in six years, had conquered the primacy of a united Germany. Austria had fallen as Prussia rose. France had fallen, but she had shaken off a government that had no root in the noblest qualities of her people.

in concert with others that these arrangements are maintained. But if the other powers join with us, it is certain that there will be no violation of neutrality. If they, situated exactly as we are, decline to join, we are not bound single-handed to make up the deficiencies of the rest.



## CHAPTER VII

### 'DAY'S WORK OF A GIANT'

(1870-1872)

WE have not been an idle government. We have had an active life, and that is substantially one of the conditions of a happy life. . . . I am thankful to have been the leader of the liberal party at a period of the history of this country, when it has been my privilege and my duty to give the word of advance to able coadjutors and trusty and gallant adherents.—GLADSTONE.

THE most marked administrative performance of Mr. Gladstone's great government was the reform and reorganization of the army. In Mr. Cardwell he was fortunate enough to have a public servant of the first order; not a political leader nor a popular orator, but one of the best disciples of Peel's school; sound, careful, active, firm, and with an enlightened and independent mind admirably fitted for the effective despatch of business. Before he had been a month at the war office, the new secretary of state submitted to Mr. Gladstone his ideas of a plan that would give us an effective force for defence at a greatly reduced cost. The reorganization of the army was one of the results of that great central event, from which in every direction such momentous consequences flowed—the victory of Prussian arms at Sadowa. The victory was a surprise, for even Lord Clyde, after a close inspection of the Prussian army, had found no more to report than that it was a first-rate militia. Sadowa disclosed that a soldier, serving only between two and three years with the colours, could yet show himself the most formidable combatant in Europe. The principle of Cardwell's plan was that short enlistment is essential to a healthy organization of the army, and this reform it was that produced an efficient reserve, the necessity for which had

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been one of the lessons of the Crimean war. A second, but still a highly important element, was the reduction of the whole force serving in the colonies from fifty thousand men to less than half that number.<sup>1</sup> 'To this change,' said Mr. Cardwell, 'opposition will be weak, for the principle of colonial self-reliance is very generally assented to.' The idea, as Lord Wolseley says, that a standing army during peace should be a manufactory for making soldiers rather than either a costly receptacle for veterans, or a collection of perfectly trained fighters, 'had not yet taken hold of the military mind in England.'<sup>2</sup> The details do not concern us here, and everybody knows the revolution effected by the changes during Mr. Gladstone's great administration in the composition, the working, and the professional spirit of the army.

Army reform first brought Mr. Gladstone into direct collision with reigning sentiment at court. In spite of Pym and Cromwell and the untoward end of Charles I. and other salutary lessons of the great rebellion, ideas still lingered in high places that the sovereign's hand bore the sword, and that the wearer of the crown through a commander-in-chief had rights of control over the army, not quite dependent on parliament and secretary of state. The Queen had doubted the policy of disestablishing the church in Ireland, but to disestablish the commander-in-chief came closer home, and was disliked as an invasion of the personal rights of the occupant of the throne. This view was rather firmly pressed, and it was the first of a series of difficulties—always to him extremely painful, perhaps more painful than any other—that Mr. Gladstone was called upon in his long career to overcome. The subject was one on which the temper of a reforming parliament allowed no compromise, even if the prime minister himself had been inclined to yield. As it was, by firmness, patience, and that tact which springs not from courtiership but from right feeling, he succeeded, and in the June of 1870 the Queen approved an

<sup>1</sup> The number of men was reduced from 49,000 in 1868 to 20,941 in 1870; at the same time the military expenditure on the colonies was reduced from £3,388,023 to £1,905,638.

<sup>2</sup> *Reign of Queen Victoria*, edited by T. H. Ward (1887), i. p. 211.

order in council that put an end to the dual control of the army, defired the position of the commander-in-chief, and removed him corporeally from the horse guards to the war office in Pall Mall.<sup>1</sup> This, however, by no means brought all the military difficulties to an end.

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One particular incident has a conspicuous place on the political side of Mr. Gladstone's life. Among the elements in the scheme was the abolition of the practice of acquiring military rank by money purchase. Public opinion had been mainly roused by Mr. Trevelyan, who now first made his mark in that assembly where he was destined to do admirable work and achieve high eminence and popularity. An Act of George III. abolished selling of offices in other departments, but gave to the crown the discretion of retaining the practice in the army, if so it should seem fit. This discretion had been exercised by the issue of a warrant sanctioning and regulating that practice; commissions in the army were bought and sold for large sums of money, far in excess of the sums fixed by the royal warrant; and vested interests on a large scale grew up in consequence. The substitution, instead of this abusive system, of promotion by selection, was one of the first steps in army reform. No effective reorganization was possible without it. As Mr. Gladstone put it, the nation must buy back its own army from its own officers. No other proceeding in the career of the ministry aroused a more determined and violent opposition. It offended a powerful profession with a host of parliamentary friends; the officers disliked liberal politics, they rather disdained a civilian master, and they fought with the vigour peculiar to irritated caste.

The first question before parliament depended upon the Commons voting the money to compensate officers who had acquired vested interests. If that was secure, there was nothing to hinder the crown, in the discretion committed to it by the statute, from cancelling the old warrant. Instead of this, ministers determined to abolish purchase by bill. Obstruction was long and sustained. The principle of the bill was debated and re-debated on every amendment in

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, Feb. 21 and March 23, 1871.

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committee, and Mr. Gladstone reported that 'during his whole parliamentary life, he had been accustomed to see class interests of all kinds put themselves on their defence under the supposition of being assailed, yet he had never seen a case where the modes of operation adopted by the professing champions were calculated to leave such a painful impression on the mind.' Credible whispers were heard of the open hostility of high military personages. In one of the debates of this time upon the army (Mar. 23, 1871), speakers freely implied that the influence of what was called the horse guards was actively adverse to reform. Mr. Gladstone, taking this point, laid it down that 'military authorities without impairing in the slightest degree the general independence of their political opinions, should be in full harmony with the executive as to the military plans and measures which it might propose; and that only on this principle could the satisfactory working of our institutions be secured.'

The correspondence with the Queen was copious. In one letter, after mentioning that parliament had been persuaded to extend the tenure of the commander-in-chief's office beyond five years, and to allow the patronage and discipline of the army to be vested in him, though the secretary of state was responsible, Mr. Gladstone proceeds:—

It would have been impossible to procure the acquiescence of parliament in these arrangements, unless they had been accompanied with the declaration of Mr. Cardwell, made in the name of the cabinet, and seen and approved by your Majesty, that 'it is of course necessary for the commander-in-chief to be in harmony with the government of the day' (Feb. 21, 1871), and with a similar declaration of Mr. Gladstone on March 23, 1871, also reported to and approved by your Majesty, that while all political action properly so called was entirely free, yet the military plans and measures of the government must always have the energetic co-operation of the military chiefs of the army.

The end was of course inevitable.<sup>1</sup> The bill at last passed

<sup>1</sup> At the end of the second volume, remarks by Mr. Gladstone on these the reader will find some interesting points. See Appendix.

the Commons, and then an exciting stage began. In the Lords it was immediately confronted by a dilatory resolution. In view of some such proceeding, Mr. Gladstone (July 15) wrote to the Queen as to the best course to pursue, and here he first mentioned the step that was to raise such clamour:—

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As the government judge that the illegality of over-regulation prices cannot continue, and as they can only be extinguished by putting an end to purchase, what has been chiefly considered is how to proceed with the greatest certainty and the smallest shock, and how to secure as far as may be for the officers all that has hitherto been asked on their behalf. With this view, the government think the first step would be to abolish the warrant under which prices of commissions are fixed. As the resolution of the House of Lords states the unwillingness of the House to take part in abolishing purchase until certain things shall have been done, it would not be applicable to a case in which, without its interposition, purchase would have been already abolished.

Two days later (July 17) the Lords passed what Sir Roundell Palmer called 'their ill-advised resolution.' On July 18 the cabinet met and resolved to recommend the cancelling of the old warrant regulating purchase, by a new warrant abolishing purchase. It has been said or implied that this proceeding was forced imperiously upon the Queen. I find no evidence of this. In the language of Lord Halifax, the minister in attendance, writing to Mr. Gladstone from Osborne (July 19, 1871), the Queen 'made no sort of difficulty in signing the warrant' after the case had been explained. In the course of the day she sent to tell Lord Halifax, that as it was a strong exercise of her power in apparent opposition to the House of Lords, she should like to have some more formal expression of the advice of the cabinet than was contained in an ordinary letter from the prime minister, dealing with this among other matters. Ministers agreed that the Queen had a fair right to have their advice on such a point of executive action on her part, recorded in a formal and deliberate submission of their opinion. The advice was at once clothed in the definite form of a minute.

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On July 20 Mr. Gladstone announced to a crowded and anxious House the abolition of purchase by royal warrant. The government, he said, had no other object but simplicity and despatch, and the observance of constitutional usage. Amid some disorderly interruptions, Mr. Disraeli taunted the government with resorting to the prerogative of the crown to get out of a difficulty of their own devising. Some radicals used the same ill-omened word. After a spell of obstruction on the ballot bill, the bitter discussion on purchase revived, and Mr. Disraeli said that what had occurred early in the evening was 'disgraceful to the House of Commons,' and denounced 'the shameful and avowed conspiracy of the cabinet' against the House of Lords. The latter expression was noticed by the chairman of committee and withdrawn, though Mr. Gladstone himself thought it the more allowable of the two.

In a letter to his brother-in-law, Lord Lyttelton, Mr. Gladstone vindicated this transaction as follows:—

*July 26, '71.*—I should like to assure myself that you really have the points of the case before you. 1. Was it not for us an indispensable duty to extinguish a gross, wide-spread, and most mischievous illegality, of which the existence had become certain and notorious? 2. Was it not also our duty to extinguish it in the best manner? 3. Was not the best manner that which, (*a*) made the extinction final; (*b*) gave the best, i.e. a statutory, title for regulation prices; (*c*) granted an indemnity to the officers; (*d*) secured for them compensation in respect of over-regulation prices? 4. Did not the vote of the House of Lords stop us in this best manner of proceeding? 5. Did it absolve us from the duty of putting an end to the illegality? 6. What method of putting an end to it remained to us, except that which we have adopted?

Sir Roundell Palmer wrote, 'I have always thought and said that the issuing of such a warrant was within the undoubted power of the crown. . . . It did and does appear to me that the course which the government took was the least objectionable course that could be taken under the whole circumstances of the case.'<sup>1</sup> I can find nothing more clearly

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials, Personal and Political*, vol. i. pp. 193, 194.

and more forcibly said upon this case than the judgment of Freeman, the historian—a man who combined in so extraordinary a degree immense learning with precision in political thought and language, and added to both the true spirit of manly citizenship:—

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I must certainly protest against the word 'prerogative' being used, as it has so often been of late, to describe Mr. Gladstone's conduct with regard to the abolition of purchase in the army. By prerogative I understand a power not necessarily contrary to law, but in some sort beyond law—a power whose source must be sought for somewhere else than in the terms of an act of parliament. But in abolishing purchase by a royal warrant Mr. Gladstone acted strictly within the terms of an act of parliament, an act so modern as the reign of George III. He in truth followed a course which that act not only allowed but rather suggested. . . . I am not one of those who condemn Mr. Gladstone's conduct in this matter; still I grant that the thing had an ill look. The difference I take to be this. Mr. Gladstone had two courses before him: he might abolish purchase by a royal warrant—that is, by using the discretion which parliament had given to the crown; or he might bring a bill into parliament to abolish purchase. . . . What gave the thing an ill look was that, having chosen the second way and not being able to carry his point that way, he then fell back on the first way. I believe that it was better to get rid of a foul abuse in the way in which it was got rid of, than not to get rid of it at all, especially as the House of Commons had already decided against it. Still, the thing did not look well.<sup>1</sup> It might seem that by electing to bring a bill into parliament Mr. Gladstone had waived his right to employ the royal power in the matter. . . . I believe that this is one of those cases in which a strictly conscientious man like Mr. Gladstone does things from which a less conscientious man would shrink. Such a man, fully convinced of his own integrity, often thinks less than it would be wise to think of mere appearances, and so lays himself open to the imputation of motives poles asunder from the real ones.<sup>1</sup>

These last words undoubtedly explain some acts and tendencies that gave a handle to foes and perplexed friends.

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Freeman, in *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 12, 1874.

Next let us turn to reform in a different field. All the highest abstract arguments were against secret voting. To have a vote is to have power; as Burke said, 'liberty is power, when men act in bodies'; but the secret vote is power without responsibility. The vote is a trust for the commonwealth; to permit secrecy makes it look like a right conferred for a man's own benefit. You enjoin upon him to give his vote on public grounds; in the same voice you tell him not to let the public know how he gives it. Secrecy saps the citizen's courage, promotes evasion, tempts to downright lying. Remove publicity and its checks, then all the mean motives of mankind—their malice, petty rivalries, pique, the prejudices that men would be ashamed to put into words even to themselves—skulk to the polling booth under a disguising cloak. Secrecy, again, prevents the statesman from weighing or testing the forces in character, stability, persistency, of the men by whom a majority has been built up, and on whose fidelity his power of action must depend. This strain of argument was worked out by J. S. Mill<sup>1</sup> and others, and drew from Mr. Bright, who belonged to a different school of liberals, the gruff saying, that the worst of great thinkers is that they so often think wrong.

Though the abstract reasoning might be unanswerable, the concrete case the other way was irresistible. Experience showed that without secrecy in its exercise the suffrage was not free. The farmer was afraid of his landlord, and the labourer was afraid of the farmer; the employer could tighten the screw on the workman, the shopkeeper feared the power of his best customers, the debtor quailed before his creditor, the priest wielded thunderbolts over the faithful. Not only was the open vote not free; it exposed its possessor to so much bullying, molestation, and persecution, that his possession came to be less of a boon than a nuisance.

For forty years this question had been fought. The ballot actually figured in a clause of an early draft of the Reform bill of 1832. Grote, inspired by James Mill whose vigorous

<sup>1</sup> *Representative Government*, chap. x.



pleas for the ballot in his well-known article in 1830 were the high landmark in the controversy, brought it before parliament in an annual motion. When that admirable man quitted parliament to finish his great history of Greece, the torch was still borne onwards by other hands. Ballot was one of the five points of the charter. At nearly every meeting for parliamentary reform between the Crimean war and Disraeli's bill of 1867, the ballot was made a cardinal point. General opinion fluctuated from time to time, and in the sixties journals of repute formally dismissed it as a dead political idea. The extension of the franchise in 1867 brought it to life again, and Mr. Bright led the van in the election of 1868 by declaring in his address that he regarded the ballot as of the first importance. 'Whether I look,' he said, 'to the excessive cost of elections, or to the tumult which so often attends them, or to the unjust and cruel pressure which is so frequently brought to bear upon the less independent class of voters, I am persuaded that the true interest of the public and of freedom will be served by the system of secret and free voting.' J. S. Mill had argued that the voter should name his candidate in the polling booth, just as the judge does his duty in a court open to the public eye. No, replied Bright, the jury-room is as important as the judge's bench, and yet the jury-room is treated as secret, and in some countries the verdict is formally given by ballot. Some scandals in the way of electoral intimidation did much to ripen public opinion. One parliamentary committee in 1868 brought evidence of this sort to light, and another committee recommended secret voting as the cure.

Among those most ardent for the change from open to secret voting, the prime minister was hardly to be included. 'I am not aware,' he wrote to Lord Shaftesbury (Dec. 11, 1871), 'of having been at any time a vehement opponent of the ballot. I have not been accustomed to attach to it a vital importance, but at any time, I think, within the last twenty or twenty-five years I should have regarded it as the legitimate complement of the present suffrage.'<sup>1</sup> In the first speech he made as prime minister at Greenwich (Dec.

<sup>1</sup> The reader may remember his stripling letters.—above p. 99.

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21, 1868) he said that there were two subjects that could not be overlooked in connection with the representation of the people. 'One of them is the security afforded by the present system for perfect freedom in the giving of the vote, which vote has been not only not conferred as a favour, but imposed as a duty by the legislature on the members of the community. I have at all times given my vote in favour of open voting, but I have done so before, and I do so now, with an important reservation, namely, that whether by open voting or by whatsoever means, free voting must be secured.'

A bill providing for vote by ballot, abolishing public nominations and dealing with corrupt practices in parliamentary elections was introduced by Lord Hartington in 1870. Little progress was made with it, and it was eventually withdrawn. But the government were committed to the principle, and at the end of July Mr. Gladstone took the opportunity of explaining his change of opinion on this question, in the debate on the second reading of a Ballot bill brought in by a private member. Now that great numbers who depended for their bread upon their daily labour had acquired the vote, he said, their freedom was threatened from many quarters. The secret vote appeared to be required by the social conditions under which they lived, and therefore it had become a necessity and a duty to give effect to the principle.

Yet after the cabinet had decided to make the ballot a ministerial measure, the head of the cabinet makes a rather pensive entry in his diary:—'*July 27, 1870.*—H. of C. Spoke on ballot, and voted in 324-230 with mind satisfied, and as to feeling, a lingering reluctance.' How far this reluctance was due to misgivings on the merits of the ballot, how far to the doubts that haunt every ministerial leader as to the possibilities of parliamentary time, we do not know. The bill, enlarged and reintroduced next year, was entrusted to the hands of Mr. Forster—himself, like Mr. Gladstone, a latish convert to the principle of secret voting—and by Forster's persistent force and capacity for hard and heavy labour after some eighteen days in committee, it passed through the House of Commons.

After obstruction had been at last broken down, other well-known resources of civilisation remained, and the Lords threw out the bill.<sup>1</sup> It was novel, they said; it was dangerous, it had not been considered by the country or parliament (after eighteen days of committee and forty years of public discussion), it was incoherent and contradictory, and to enact vote by ballot was inevitably to overthrow the monarchy. Even the mightiest of American orators had said as much. 'Above all things,' Daniel Webster had adjured Lord Shaftesbury, 'resist to the very last the introduction of the ballot; for as a republican, I tell you that the ballot can never co-exist with monarchical institutions.'

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The rejection by the Lords stimulated popular insistence. At Whitby in the autumn (Sept. 2), Mr. Gladstone said the people's bill had been passed by the people's House, and when it was next presented at the door of the House of Lords, it would be with an authoritative knock. He told Lord Houghton that he was sorry to see the agitation apparently rising against the House of Lords, though he had a strong opinion about the imprudence of its conduct on the Army bill, and especially on the Ballot bill. 'There is no Duke of Wellington in these days. His reputation as a domestic statesman seems to me to rest almost entirely on his leadership of the peers between 1832 and 1841.'

The bill was again passed through the Commons in 1872. Mr. Gladstone was prepared for strong measures. The cabinet decided that if the House of Lords should hold to what the prime minister styled 'the strange provision for optional secrecy,' the government would withdraw the bill and try an autumn session, and if the Lords still hardened their hearts, 'there would remain nothing but the last alternative to consider,'—these words, I assume, meaning a dissolution. Perhaps the opposition thought that a dissolution on the ballot might give to the ministerial Antæus fresh energy. This time the Lords gave way, satisfied that the measure had now at last been more adequately discussed,—the said discussion really consisting in no more than an

<sup>1</sup> In the House of Lords only 48 peers voted for the bill against 97. Many of the whigs abstained.

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adequate amount of violent language out of doors against the principle of a hereditary legislature.<sup>1</sup>

The results of the general election two years later as they affected party, are an instructive comment on all this trepidation and alarm. In one only of the three kingdoms the ballot helped to make a truly vital difference; it dislodged the political power of the Irish landlord. In England its influence made for purity, freedom, and decency, but it developed no new sources of liberal strength. On this aspect of things the first parliamentary precursor of the ballot made remarks that are worth a few lines of digression. 'You will feel great satisfaction,' his wife said to Grote one morning at their breakfast, 'at seeing your once favourite measure triumph over all obstacles.' 'Since the wide expansion of the voting element,' the historian replied, 'I confess that the value of the ballot has sunk in my estimation. I don't, in fact, think the elections will be affected by it one way or another, as far as party interests are concerned.' 'Still,' his interlocutor persisted, 'you will at all events get at the genuine preference of the constituency.' 'No doubt; but then, again, I have come to perceive that the choice between one man and another among the English people, signifies less than I used formerly to think it did. The English mind is much of one pattern, take whatsoever class you will. The same favourite prejudices, amiable and otherwise; the same antipathies, coupled with ill-regulated though benevolent efforts to eradicate human evils, are well-nigh universal. A House of Commons cannot afford to be above its own constituencies in intelligence, knowledge, or patriotism.'<sup>2</sup> In all this the element of truth is profound enough. In every change of political machinery the reformer promises and expects a new heaven and a new earth; then standing forces of national tradition, character, and institution assert their strength, our millennium lags, and the chilled enthusiast sighs. He is unreasonable, as are all those who expect more from life and the world than life and

<sup>1</sup> The first parliamentary election by ballot in England was the return of Mr. Childers at Pontefract (Aug. 15, 1872) on his acceptance of the duchy.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Grote*, pp. 312, 313.

the world have to give. Yet here at least the reformer has not failed. The efficacy of secret voting is negative if we will, but it averts obvious mischiefs alike from old privileged orders in states and churches and from new.

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## III

In finance the country looked for wonders. Ministers were called the cabinet of financiers. The cabinet did, in fact, contain as many as five men who were at one time or another chancellors of the exchequer, and its chief was recognised through Europe as the most successful financier of the age. No trailing cloud of glory, as in 1853 or 1860, attended the great ministry, but sound and substantial results were achieved, testifying to a thrifty and skilful management, such as might have satisfied the ambition of a generation of chancellors. The head of the new government promised retrenchment as soon as the government was formed. He told his constituents at Greenwich (Dec. 21, 1868) that he was himself responsible for having taken the earliest opportunity of directing the public mind to the subject of expenditure at an opening stage of the late election; for 'although there may be times when the public mind may become comparatively relaxed in regard to the general principles of economy and thrift, it is the special duty of public men to watch the very beginnings of evil in that department. It is a very easy thing to notice these mischiefs when they have grown to a gigantic size; but it commonly happens that when financial error has arisen to those dimensions, the case has become too aggravated for a remedy.' He reminded them of the addition that had been made to the standing charges of the country in the ordinary and steadily recurring annual estimates presented to parliament. He said that he knew no reason why three millions should have been added during the two years of tory government to the cost of our establishments:—

It is one thing, I am very well aware, to put on three millions; it is another thing to take them off. When you put three millions on to the public expenditure, you create a number of new relations, a number of new offices, a number of new claims, a number of new

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expectations. And you can't, and what is more, you ought not to, destroy all these in a moment. And, therefore, the work of retrenchment must be a well-considered and a gradual work. But I ask you to look at the names of the men who have been placed in charge of the great spending departments of the country. The study, the idea that has governed the formation of the present administration has been to place able and upright men in charge of the public purse—men of administrative experience, men of proved ability, men, lastly, holding their seats in the House of Commons, and, therefore, immediately responsible to the representatives of the people. It would not become me to promise what we can do; but this I can tell you, that my friends connected with the various departments most concerned in the public expenditure have, even before the early moment at which I speak, directed their very first attention to this subject, and that I, for one, shall be as deeply disappointed as you can be, if in the estimates which it will be our duty to present in February you do not already perceive some results of their opening labours.

One of Mr. Gladstone's first letters to a colleague was addressed to Mr. Lowe, containing such hints and instructions upon treasury administration as a veteran pilot might give about lights, buoys, channels, currents, to a new captain. 'No man wants so much sympathy,' he said, 'as the chancellor of the exchequer, no man gets so little. Nor is there any position so lamentable for him as to be defeated in proposing some new charge on the public conceived or adopted by himself. He is like an ancient soldier wounded in the back. Whereas even defeat in resisting the raids of the House of Commons, on the public purse is honourable, and always turns out well in the end.' He sent Mr. Lowe a list of the subjects that he had tried in parliament without success, and of those that he had in his head but was not able to take in hand. They make a fine example of an active and reforming mind.<sup>1</sup> 'What commonly happened, in cases of this kind, in my time, was as follows:—The opposition waited for a development of discontent and resistance among some small fraction of liberal members.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

When this was compact in itself, or was at all stimulated by constituencies, they sent out habitually strong party whips, and either beat me, or forced me to withdraw in order to avoid beating, or exposing our men to local disadvantage. This game, I hope, will not be quite so easy now.' CHAP.  
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The first two of Mr. Lowe's budgets were on the lines thus traced beforehand. The shilling duty on a quarter of corn was abolished—'an exceeding strong case,' as Mr. Gladstone called it—taxes on conveyances were adjusted, and the duty on fire insurance was removed. The only notable contribution to the standing problem of widening the base of taxation was the proposal to put a tax on matches.<sup>1</sup> This was a notion borrowed from the United States, and much approved by Mr. Wells, the eminent free-trade financier of that country. In England it was greeted with violent disfavour. It was denounced as reactionary, as violating the first principles of fiscal administration, and as the very worst tax that had been proposed within recent memory, for is not a match a necessary of life, and to tax a necessary of life is to go against Adam Smith and the books. The money, it was said, ought to have been got either by raising the taxes on tea and sugar, or else by putting the shilling duty back on corn again, though for that matter, tea, sugar, and corn are quite as much necessities of life as, say, two-thirds of the matches used.<sup>2</sup> No care, however, was given to serious argument; in fact, the tax was hardly argued at all. Some hundreds of poor women employed at a large match factory in the east end of London trooped to protest at Westminster, and the tax was quickly dropped. It was perhaps unlucky that the proposal happened to be associated with Mr. Lowe, for his uncomplimentary criticisms on the working class four or five years before were neither forgotten nor forgiven. A Latin pun that he meant to print on the proposed halfpenny match stamp, *ex luce lucellum*, 'a little gain out of a little

<sup>1</sup> Writing to Mr. Lowe on his budget proposals, Mr. Gladstone says (April 11, 1871):—'The lucifer matches I hope and think you would carry, but I have little information, and that old. I advise that on this

in the House of Commons. I am sceptical as to the ultimate revenue of one million.'  
<sup>2</sup> See *The Match Tax: a Problem in Finance*. By W. Stanley Jevons (London: Stanford, 1871). A searching defence of the impost.

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On the other side of the national account Mr. Gladstone was more successful. He fought with all his strength for a reduction of the public burdens, and in at least one of these persistent battles with colleagues of a less economising mind than himself, he came near to a breach within the walls of his cabinet. In this thankless region he was not always zealously seconded. On Dec. 14, 1871, he enters in his diary: 'Cabinet, 3-7. For two and a half hours we discussed army estimates, mainly on reduction, and the chancellor of exchequer did not speak one word.' The result is worth recording. When Mr. Gladstone was at the exchequer the charge on naval, military, and civil expenditure had been reduced between 1860 and 1865 from thirty-eight millions to thirty-one. Under the Derby-Disraeli government the figure rose in two or three years to thirty-four millions and three-quarters. By 1873 it had been brought down again to little more than thirty-two millions and a quarter.<sup>1</sup> That these great reductions were effected without any sacrifice of the necessary strength and efficiency of the forces, may be inferred from the fact that for ten years under successive administrations the charge on navy and army underwent no substantial augmentation. The process had been made easier, or made possible, by the necessity under which the German war laid France, then our only rival in naval force, to reduce her expenditure upon new ships. The number of seamen was maintained, but a reduction was effected in the inefficient vessels in the foreign squadrons; two costly and almost useless dockyards were suppressed (much to the disadvantage of Mr. Gladstone's own constituents), and great abuses were remedied in the dockyards that were left. In the army reduction was made possible without lessening the requisite strength, by the withdrawal of troops from Canada, New Zealand, and the Cape. This was due to the wise policy of Lord Granville and Mr. Gladstone. In spite of the increased cost of education, of army purchase, of the

<sup>1</sup> See a speech in the House of Commons by Mr. Childers, April 24, 1873.



rise of prices, and all the other causes that swell estimates, the country was still spending no more in 1873 than when Mr. Gladstone took office in 1868.<sup>1</sup> To this story we have to add that nearly thirty millions of debt were paid off in the five years. Well might men point to such a record, as the best proof that the promises of economy made at the hustings had been seriously kept.<sup>2</sup>

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When the time came for him to take stock of his own performances, Mr. Lowe, who was apt to be cleverer than he was wise, made a speech at Sheffield, in September 1873, that almost recalls the self-laudation of Cicero over the immortal glories of his consulate. He disclaimed any share of the admirable genius for finance that had been seen in Pitt, Peel, or Gladstone, but he had read in the Latin grammar that economy was a great revenue, and he thought that he could at least discharge the humble task of hindering extravagance. 'The first thing I did as chancellor of the exchequer,' he said, 'was to issue an order that no new expenditure whatever would be allowed without my opinion first being taken upon it. . . . In an evil hour for my own peace and quietness I took upon myself—I believe it was never taken upon himself by any chancellor of the exchequer before—the duty of protecting the revenue, instead of leaving it to be done by an inferior official.' After reciting his figures, he wound up with a resounding pæan: 'So far as I am aware, up to the present time there is no one who can challenge comparison with what has been done during these years. Sir R. Peel and Mr. Gladstone routed out protection in your trade, a measure that conferred immortal honour on them, but so far as relieving you from taxation is concerned, I believe you would seek in vain in British history for anything like what has been done during these last four years.' This strange vein was more than a little distasteful to the prime minister, as a letter to Lord Granville upon it shows (Sept. 9, 1873):—

Lowe's speech at Sheffield is really too bad, and free as it is

<sup>1</sup> The estimates of 1874-5 were £5,492,000. See Lord Welby's letter to Mr. Lowe in *Life of Lord Sherbrooke*, ii. pp. 383, 384.

<sup>2</sup> *Economist*, Feb. 8, 1873.

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from all evil intention, it illustrates the invariable solecisms of his extraordinary mind. . . . He says no chancellor of the exchequer before did treasury business, but left it to a subordinate official. . . . Some have done more, some less. No one, probably, as much as Lowe, but some almost as much. I did less, perhaps much less. But I hold that the first duties of the chancellor of the exchequer are outside the treasury. One of them is to look after and control the great expenditures and estimates. In this duty I am sorry to say he was wretchedly deficient; yet he coolly takes to himself the credit of army and navy reductions, which is due to Cardwell and Childers (who, in his admirable speech, did not say a word, I think, for himself), and with which every member of the cabinet had almost as much to do as he had. I can speak from experience, for I know what it has been to have had cast upon my shoulders the most important and most offensive duty of the financial minister. . . . He has ample merit to stand on, in a great amount of labour done, and generally well done, and with good results for the public. Much of the unpopularity is unjust; a little patience would set all right.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AUTUMN OF 1871. DECLINE OF POPULARITY

(1871-1872)

For the present at least the reformation will operate against the reformers. Nothing is more common than for men to wish, and call loudly too, for a reformation, who when it arrives do by no means like the severity of its aspect. Reformation is one of those pieces which must be put at some distance in order to please. Its greatest favourers love it better in the abstract than in the substance.

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In July, 1871, Mr. Gladstone paid a Sunday visit to Tennyson among the Surrey hills. They had two interesting days, 'with talk ranging everywhere.' The poet read the *Holy Grail*, which Mr. Gladstone admired. They discussed the Goschen parish council plan, and other social reforms; Lacordaire and liberal collectivism; politics and the stormy times ahead. Mr. Gladstone assured them that he was a conservative, and feared extreme measures from the opposition. 'A very noble fellow,' Tennyson called him, 'and perfectly unaffected.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone, for his part, records in his diary that he found 'a characteristic and delightful abode. In Tennyson are singularly united true greatness, genuine simplicity, and some eccentricity. But the latter is from habit and circumstance, the former is his nature. His wife is excellent, and in her adaptation to him wonderful. His son Hallam is most attractive.'

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After a laborious and irksome session, 'in which we have sat, I believe, 150 hours after midnight,' the House rose (Aug. 21). Mr. Gladstone spent some time at Whitby with his family, and made a speech to his eldest son's constituents (Sept. 2) on the ballot, and protesting against

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Tennyson*, ii. p. 108.

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the spirit of 'alarmism.' Towards the end of the month he went on to Balmoral. On September 26 he was presented with the freedom of Aberdeen, and made a speech on Irish home rule, of which, as we shall see, he heard a great deal fifteen years later:—

*To Mrs. Gladstone.*

*Balmoral, Sept. 28.*—The time is rolling on easily at this quiet place. . . . We breakfast six or eight. The Prince and Princess Louis of Hesse dine most days. To-day I walked with her and her party. She is quick, kind, and well informed. I got her to-day on the subject of the religious movement in the Roman catholic church in Germany. She is imbued with her father's ideas, and, I think, goes beyond them. She quoted Strauss to me, as giving his opinion that the movement would come to nothing. She said the infallibility was the legitimate development of the Roman system. I replied that the Roman system had grown up by a multitude of scarcely perceptible degrees out of the earliest form of Christianity, and if we adopted this notion of legitimate development, we ran a risk of making Saint Paul responsible for the Vatican council. She talked much about the hospitals, in which she worked so hard while nursing her baby, a very fine one, whom she introduced to me, with two flourishing elder children. She hates war; and is not easy as to the future.

*Sept. 29.*—I have had a twelve-miles stretch to-day, almost all on wild ground, and so solitary! not a living creature except three brace of grouse all the way. I am glad to report that I came in very fresh. . . . What a mess the Bishop of Winchester has made of this Glengarry kirk business.

*Sept. 30.*—Last night we dined ten at Abergeldie. The Prince of Wales had his usual pleasant manners. He is far lighter in hand than the Duke of Edinburgh. After dinner he invited me to play whist. I said, 'For love, sir?' He said, 'Well, shillings and half-a-crown on the rubber,' to which I submitted. Ponsonby and I against the Prince and Brasseur, a charming old Frenchman, his tutor in the language. The Prince has apparently an immense whist memory, and plays well accordingly. To-day the Queen was to have seen me at six, but sent to postpone it till

to-morrow on account of expecting the Princess of Wales, who was to come over and pay her a visit from Abergeldie. I think she is nervous, and shrinks from talk; but I do not mean to say a word that would give her trouble, as there would be no good in it at this moment.

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*Oct. 3.*—I have seen the Queen again this morning. She conversed longer, near an hour, and was visibly better and stronger, and in good spirits. She told me much about her illness. . . . She wished me a pleasant journey.

*Ballater, Oct. 4.*—Here am I ensconced in the station-master's box at Ballater, after a 15 or 16 mile walk round through the hills, the regular train being postponed for an hour or more to let the couple from Mar Lodge go off special. They had two carriages laden with luggage, besides their own carriage! I hope to be at Colwyn soon after six. These solitary walks among the hills, I think, refresh and invigorate me more than anything else. To-day the early part of the day was glorious, and the wind most bracing as it came over the mass of mountains. I bade farewell reluctantly to Balmoral, for it is as homelike as any place away from home can be, and wonderfully safe from invasions. I had all the grand mountains in view at once, with their snow caps; the lowest, about the same as Snowdon. I came by the falls of the Muich, which, after the rain, were very fine. I had an interesting conversation with Princess Louise about the Queen this morning.

*Oct. 4.*—Nothing sets me up in mind and body like a mountain solitude, not even, perhaps, the sea. Walked from Balmoral to Ballater, 15 miles, in 4 hrs. 5 m. 6.—Walked 20 miles in 5 hrs. and 45 minutes. 7.—Walked 15 miles.—(*Diary*).

*To Mrs. Gladstone.*

*Ainslie Place, Edinburgh, Oct. 8, 1871.*—I got here last night before seven, and had the most affectionate welcome from the dean that you can conceive; a dinner-party followed, and now I have for the first time since the government was formed had a holiday of two whole days. Last night the lord advocate tried to talk to me about the Scotch endowed schools and I refused to have anything to say to him. I have no time to write about

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my walk, beyond this, that it was quite successful. The dean [Ramsay] preached at St. John's this morning about Ruth. The sermon was beautiful, and the voice and manner with his venerable age made it very striking. He put an astonishing energy into it, and his clear melodious tones rang through and through as they did when I first heard him 43½ years ago. It was altogether most touching, and he told me afterwards that he had wished to preach to me once more before he died. But I rejoice to say his life seems a very good one. I would not have missed the occasion for much.

*London, Oct. 27.*—Went to Sir R. Murchison's funeral, the last of those who had known me or of me from infancy. And so a step towards the end is made visible. It was a great funeral. 28.—My expedition to Greenwich, or rather, Blackheath. I spoke 1 h. 50 m.; too long, yet really not long enough for a full development of my points. Physically rather an excess of effort. All went well, thank God!—(*Diary.*)

This speech at Blackheath was a fine illustration both of Mr. Gladstone's extraordinary power, and of the sure respect of a British audience for manful handling and firm dealing in a minister, if only the appeal be high enough. It was one of the marked scenes of his life. In the cold mist of the October afternoon he stood bareheaded, pale, resolute, before a surging audience of many thousands, few of them enthusiastically his friends, a considerable mass of them dockyard workmen, furious at discharge or neglect by an economising government. He was received with loud and angry murmurs ominous of storm, but curiosity, interest, and a sense that even a prime minister should have fair play prevailed. His rich tones and clear articulation—and Mr. Gladstone had studied all the arts for husbanding vocal resources—carried his words beyond the five or six thousand persons that are commonly understood to be the limit of possible hearers in the open air. After half an hour of struggle he conquered a hold upon them that became more intense as he went on—touching topic after topic, defending all that had been done for the reform and efficiency of the army, denouncing extreme opinions on the Education Act,

vindicating the ballot bill, laughing at various prescriptions of social quackery—until at the close of a speech nearly two hours long, he retired amid sustained hurricanes of earnest applause. Well might he speak of rather an excess of physical effort, to say nothing of effort of mind.

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On his return to Hawarden he had a visit from Mr. Bright, whom he earnestly hoped to bring back into the cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

*Nov. 13.*—Hawarden. Two long conversations with Mr. Bright, who arrived at one. *14.*—Some five hours in conversation with Mr. Bright; also I opened my proposal to him, which he took kindly though cautiously. My conversation with him yesterday evening kept me awake till four. A most rare event; but my brain assumes in the evening a feminine susceptibility, and resents any unusual strain, though, strange to say, it will stand a debate in the H. of C. *15.*—Forenoon with Bright, who departed, having charmed everybody by his gentleness. Began the cutting of a large beech.

*To Lord Granville.*

*Nov. 15, 1871.*—Bright has been here for forty-eight hours, of which we passed I think more than a fourth in conversation on public affairs. Everything in and everything out of the cabinet I told him as far as my memory would serve, and I think we pretty well boxed the political compass. On the whole I remained convinced of two things: first, that his heart is still altogether with us; secondly, that his health, though requiring great care, is really equal to the moderate demands we should make upon him. The truth is I was quite as much knocked up with our conversation as he was, but then I had the more active share. In the whole range of subjects that we travelled over, we came to no point of sharp difference, and I feel confident that he could work with the cabinet as harmoniously and effectually as before. In saying this I should add that I told him, with respect to economy, that I thought we should now set our faces in that direction. I told him that we should not expect of him ordinary night attendance in the House of Commons, and that his attendance in the cabinet

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bright had retired from the cabinet on account of ill-health in December 1870.

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was the main object of our desire. He was pleased and touched with our desire, and he has not rejected the proposal. He has intimated doubts and apprehensions, but he reserves it for consideration, and seemed decidedly pleased to learn that the question *might* be held open until the meeting of parliament in case of need. . . . I did not think it fair to put to him the request by which I endeavoured to hold him in December 1868, viz. : that he would not determine in the matter without seeing me again; but I begged and pressed that he should in no case refuse without taking the opinion of a first-rate London physician, as these are the people whose wide experience best enables them to judge in such cases. Altogether my experience of him was extremely pleasant, and he was popular beyond measure in the house, where the guests were one or two ladies and four gentlemen, Sir G. Prevost, a high church (but most excellent) archdeacon, John Murray, the tory publisher, and Hayward—whom to describe it needs not. One and all were charmed with Bright. In his character the mellowing process has continued to advance, and whatever he may have been thirty years ago, he is now a gentle and tender being. Yesterday he had five hours of conversation with me and much with others, also an hour and a half walk in the rain, which seemed to do him no harm whatever. I will add but one word. He was deeply impressed with the royalty question. . . . Details I will report to the cabinet.

Mr. Bright did not yet feel able to return, and an important year, the third of the administration, drew to its close.

## II

Two stubborn and noisy scuffles arose in the autumn of 1871, in consequence of a couple of appointments to which Mr. Gladstone as prime minister was a party. One was judicial, the other was ecclesiastical.

Parliament, authorising the appointment of four paid members of the judicial committee of the privy council, had restricted the post to persons who held at the date of their appointment, or had previously held, judicial office in this country or in India.<sup>1</sup> Difficulty arose in finding a

<sup>1</sup> 34 and 35, Vict. c. 91, sect. 1.



fourth member of the new court from the English bench. The appointment being a new one, fell to the prime minister, but he was naturally guided by the chancellor. The office was first offered by Mr. Gladstone to Lord Penzance, who declined to move. Application was then made to Willes and to Bramwell. They also declined, on the ground that no provision was made for their clerks. Willes could not abandon one who had been 'his officer, he might say friend, for thirty years.' Bramwell spoke of the pecuniary sacrifice that the post would involve, 'for I cannot let my clerks, who between them have been with me near half a century, suffer by the change.' The chancellor mentioned to Mr. Gladstone a rumour that there was 'an actual strike among the judges' in the matter. Nobody who knew Bramwell would impute unreasonable or low-minded motives to him, and from their own point of view the judges had a sort of case. It was ascertained by the chancellor that Blackburn and Martin had said expressly that they should decline. Mr. Gladstone felt, as he told Lord Hatherley, that 'it was not right to hawk the appointment about,' and he offered it to Sir Robert Collier, then attorney-general. Collier's claim to the bench, and even to the headship of a court, was undisputed; his judicial capacity was never at any time impugned; he acquired no additional emolument. In accepting Mr. Gladstone's offer, (Oct. 1871) he reminded him: 'You are aware that in order to qualify me it will be necessary first to make me a common law judge.' Three days later, the chancellor told Mr. Gladstone, 'It would hardly do to place the attorney-general on the common law bench and then promote him.' Still under the circumstances he thought it would be best to follow the offer up, and Collier was accordingly made a judge in the common pleas, sat for a few days, and then went on to the judicial committee. The proceeding was not taken without cabinet authority, for Lord Granville writes to Mr. Gladstone:—'Nov. 12, '71: The cabinet completely assented to the arrangement. Sufficient attention was perhaps not given to the technical point. For technical it only is. . . . I think you said at the cabinet that Collier

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wished to have three months' tenure of the judgeship, and that we agreed with you that this would have been only a sham.'

Cockburn, the chief justice of the Queen's bench, opened fire on Mr. Gladstone (Nov. 10) in a long letter of rather over-heroic eloquence, protesting that a colourable appointment to a judgeship for the purpose of getting round the law seriously compromised the dignity of the judicial office, and denouncing the grievous impropriety of the proceeding as a mere subterfuge and evasion of the statute. Mr. Gladstone could be extremely summary when he chose, and he replied in three or four lines, informing the chief justice that as the transaction was a joint one, and as 'the completed part of it to which you have taken objection, was the official act of the lord chancellor,' he had transmitted the letter for his consideration. That was all he said. The chancellor for his part contented himself with half a dozen sentences, that his appointment of Collier to the puisne judgeship had been made with a full knowledge of Mr. Gladstone's intention to recommend him for the judicial committee; that he thus 'acted advisedly and with the conviction that the arrangement was justified as regards both its fitness and its legality'; and that he took upon himself the responsibility of thus concurring with Mr. Gladstone, and was prepared to vindicate the course pursued. This curt treatment of his Junius-like composition mortified Cockburn's literary vanity, and no vanity is so easily stung as that of the amateur.

Collier, when the storm was brewing, at once wrote to Mr. Gladstone (Nov. 13) proposing to retain his judgeship to the end of the term, then to resign it, and act gratuitously in the privy council. He begged that it might not be supposed he offered to do this merely as matter of form. 'Though I consider the objection to my appointment wholly baseless, still it is not pleasant to me to hold a salaried office, my right to which is questioned.' 'I have received your letter,' Mr. Gladstone replied (Nov. 14), 'which contains the offer that would only be made by a high-spirited man, impatient of suspicion or reproval, and determined to place himself beyond it. . . . I have not a grain of inclination

to recede from the course marked out, and if you had proposed to abandon the appointment, I should have remonstrated.' CHAP.  
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What Mr. Gladstone called 'a parliamentary peppering' followed in due course. It was contended that the statute in spirit as in letter exacted judicial experience, and that formal passing through a court was a breach of faith with parliament. As usual, lawyers of equal eminence were found to contend with equal confidence that a fraud had been put upon the law, and that no fraud had been put upon it; that the law required judicial status not experience, and on the other hand that what it required was experience not status. Lord Hatherley and Roundell Palmer were all the virtues, whether public or private, personified; they were at the top of the legal ladder; and they agreed in Palmer's deliberate judgment, that—after other judges with special fitness had declined the terms offered by parliament—in nominating the best man at the bar who was willing to take a vacant puisne judgeship upon the understanding that he should be at once transferred to the judicial committee, the government were innocent of any offence against either the spirit or substance of the law.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the escape was narrow. The government only missed censure in the Lords by a majority of one. In the Commons the evening was anxious. You will see,' says Mr. Bruce (Feb. 20, 1872), 'that we got but a small majority last night. The fact is that our victory in the Lords made men slack about coming to town, and Glyn got very nervous in the course of the evening. However, Palmer's and Gladstone's speeches, both of which were excellent, improved the feeling, and many who had announced their intention to go away without voting, remained to support us.' At one moment it even looked as if the Speaker might have to give a casting vote, and he had framed it on these lines:—'I have concluded that the House while it looks upon the course taken by government as impolitic and injudicious, is not prepared at the present juncture to visit their conduct with direct parliamentary censure.'<sup>2</sup> In the end, ministers had a

<sup>1</sup> Selborne's *Memorials*, i. p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Brand papers*.

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 1871. in the morning with reasonably light hearts.

## III

The ecclesiastical case of complaint against Mr. Gladstone was of a similar sort. By an act of parliament passed in 1871 the Queen was entitled to present to the rectory of Ewelme, but only a person who was a member of convocation of the university of Oxford. This limitation was inserted by way of compensation to the university for the severance of the advowson of the rectory from a certain chair of divinity. The living fell vacant, and the prime minister offered it (June 15) to Jelf of Christ Church, a tory and an evangelical. By Jelf it was declined. Among other names on the list for preferment was that of Mr. Harvey, a learned man who had published an edition of Irenæus, a work on the history and theology of the three creeds, articles on judaism, jansenism, and jesuitism, and other productions of merit. As might perhaps have been surmised from the nature of his favourite pursuits, he was not a liberal in politics, and he had what was for the purposes of this preferment the further misfortune of being a Cambridge man. To him Mr. Gladstone now offered Ewelme, having been advised that by the process of formal incorporation in the Oxford convocation the requirement of the statute would be satisfied. Mr. Harvey accepted. He was told that it was necessary that he should become a member of convocation before he could be appointed. A little later (Aug. 1) he confessed to the prime minister his misgivings lest he should be considered as an 'interloper in succeeding to the piece of preferment that parliament had appropriated to bona-fide members of the university of Oxford.' These scruples were set aside, he was incorporated as a member of Oriel in due form, and after forty-two days of residence was admitted to membership of convocation, but whether to such plenary membership as the Ewelme statute was taken to require, became matter of dispute. All went forward, and the excellent man was presented and instituted to his rectory in regular course. There was no secret about

operations at Oxford; the Oriel men were aware of his motive in seeking incorporation, and the vice-chancellor and everybody else concerned knew all about it. Mr. Gladstone, when squalls began to blow, wrote to Mr. Harvey (Feb. 26, '72) that he was advised that the presentation was perfectly valid.

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The attack in parliament was, as such attacks almost always are, much overdone. Mr. Gladstone, it appeared, was far worse than Oliver Cromwell and the parliament of the great rebellion; for though those bad men forced three professors upon Oxford between 1648 and 1660, still they took care that the intruders should all be men trained at Oxford and graduates of Oxford. Who could be sure that the prime minister would not next appoint an ultramontane divine from Bologna, or a Greek from Corfu? Such extravagances did as little harm as the false stories about Mr. Harvey being jobbed into the living because he had been at Eton with Mr. Gladstone and was his political supporter. As it happened he was a conservative, and Mr. Gladstone knew nothing of him except that a number of most competent persons had praised his learning. In spite of all this, however, and of the technical validity of the appointment, we may wish that the rector's doubts had not been overruled. A worthy member regaled the House by a story of a gentleman staying in the mansion of a friend; one morning he heard great noise and confusion in the yard; looking out he saw a kitchen-maid being put on a horse, and so carried round and round the yard. When he went downstairs he asked what was the matter, and the groom said, 'Oh, sir, 'tis only that we're going to take the animal to the fair to sell, and we want to say he has carried a lady.' The apologue was not delicate, but it conveyed a common impression. 'Gladstone spoke,' says Mr. Bruce (March 9, 1872), 'with great vigour and eloquence on the Ewelme case; but I think that, with the best possible intentions, he had placed himself in a wrong position.'

IV

In 1872 the wide popularity of the government underwent a marked decline. The award at Geneva caused lively

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irritation. The most active nonconformists were in active revolt. The Licensing bills infuriated the most powerful of all trade interests. The Collier case and the Ewelme case seemed superfluous and provoking blunders. A strong military section thirsted for revenge on the royal warrant. Mr. Goschen's threatened bill on local rating spread vague terrors. Individual ministers began to excite particular odium.

As time went on, the essentially composite character of a majority that was only held together by Mr. Gladstone's personality, his authority in the House, and his enormous strength outside, revealed itself in awkward fissures. The majority was described by good critics of the time as made up of three sections, almost well defined enough to deserve the name of three separate parties. First were the whigs, who never forgot that the prime minister had been for half his life a tory; who always suspected him, and felt no personal attachment to him, though they valued his respect for property and tradition, and knew in any case that he was the only possible man. Then came the middle-class liberals, who had held predominance since 1832, who were captivated by Mr. Gladstone's genius for finance and business, and who revered his high moral ideals. Third, there was the left wing, not strong in parliament but with a certain backing among the workmen, who thought their leader too fond of the church, too deferential to the aristocracy, and not plain enough and thorough enough for a reforming age. The murmurs and suspicions of these hard and logical utilitarians of the left galled Mr. Gladstone as ungrateful. Phillimore records of him at this moment:—

*Feb. 21, 1872.*—Gladstone in high spirits and in rather a conservative mood. 29.—Gladstone sees that the time is fast coming when he must sever himself from his extreme supporters. He means to take the opportunity of retiring on the fair plea that he does not like to oppose those who have shown such great confidence in him, or to join their and his opponents. The plea seems good for retirement, but not for refraining in his individual

capacity from supporting a government which is liberal and conservative.

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Here is a sketch from the *Aberdare* papers of the temper and proceedings of the session :—

*April 19.*—We have had a disastrous week—three defeats, of which much the least damaging was that on local taxation, where we defended the public purse against a dangerous raid. There is no immediate danger to be apprehended from them. But these defeats lower prestige, encourage the discontented and envious, and animate the opposition. I think that Gladstone, who behaved yesterday with consummate judgment and temper, is personally very indifferent at the result. He is vexed at the ingratitude of men for whom he has done such great things which would have been simply impossible without him, and would not be unwilling to leave them for a while to their own guidance, and his feeling is shared by many of the ministry. Our measures must for the most part be taken up by our successors, and we should of course be too happy to help them. But I don't see the end near, although, of course, everybody is speculating.

Yet business was done. Progress of a certain kind was made in the thorny field of the better regulation of public houses, but Mr. Gladstone seems never to have spoken upon it in parliament. The subject was in the hands of Mr. Bruce, the home secretary, an accomplished and amiable man of the purest public spirit, and he passed his bill; but nothing did more to bring himself and his colleagues into stern disfavour among the especially pagan strata of the population. Another or two from Mr. Bruce's papers will suffice to show Mr. Gladstone's attitude:—

*Home Office, Dec. 9, 1869.*—I am just returned from the cabinet, where my Licensing bill went through with flying colours. I was questioned a great deal as to details, but was ready, and I think that Gladstone was very well pleased.

*Jan. 16, 1871.*—I called upon Gladstone yesterday evening. He was in high spirits and full of kindness. He said that he had told Cardwell that I must be at the bottom of the abuse the press was pouring upon him, as I had contrived to relieve myself

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of it. 'Some one minister,' he added, 'is sure to be assailed. You caught it in the autumn, and now poor Cardwell is having a hard time of it.' I went with him afterwards to the Chapel Royal, which he never fails to attend.

*Dec. 14.*—We have a cabinet to-day, when I hope to have my Licensing bill in its main principles definitely settled. Unfortunately Gladstone cares for nothing but 'free trade' [in the sale of liquor], which the House won't have, and I cannot get him really to interest himself in the subject.

This is Speaker Brand's account of the general position:—

Throughout the session the opposition, ably led by Disraeli, were in an attitude of watchfulness. He kept his eye on the proceedings of the government day by day on the Alabama treaty. Had that treaty failed, no doubt Disraeli would have taken the sense of the House on the conduct of the government. For the larger part of the session the Alabama question hung like a cloud over the proceedings, but as soon as that was settled, the sky cleared. It has been a good working session. . . . Of the two leading men, Gladstone and Disraeli, neither has a strong hold on his followers. The radicals below the right gangway are turbulent and disaffected, and the same may be said of the independent obstructives below the left gangway. . . . B., E., H., L. avowedly obstruct all legislation, and thus bring the House into discredit.

It was now that Mr. Disraeli discerned the first great opportunity approaching, and he took the field. At Manchester (April 3) he drew the famous picture of the government, one of the few classic pieces of the oratory of the century:—

Extravagance is being substituted for energy by the government. The unnatural stimulus is subsiding. Their paroxysms end in prostration. Some take refuge in melancholy, and their eminent chief alternates between a menace and a sigh. As I sit opposite the treasury bench, the ministers remind me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers upon a single pallid crest. But the situation



is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumblings of the sea.

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On midsummer day he essayed at the Crystal Palace a higher flight, and first struck the imperialist note. He agreed that distant colonies could only have their affairs administered by self-government. 'Self-government, when it was conceded, ought to have been conceded as part of a great policy of imperial consolidation. It ought to have been accompanied by an imperial tariff, by securities for the people of England, for the enjoyment of the unappropriated lands which belonged to the sovereign as their trustee, and by a military code which should have precisely defined the means and the responsibilities by which the colonies should have been defended, and by which, if necessary, this country should call for aid from the colonies themselves. It ought further to have been accompanied by the institution of some representative council in the metropolis which would have brought the colonies into constant and continuous relations with the home government.' He confessed that he had himself at one time been so far caught by the subtle views of the disintegrationists, that he thought the tie was broken. Opinion in the country was at last rising against disintegration. The people had decided that the empire should not be destroyed. 'In my judgment,' he said, 'no minister in this country will do his duty who neglects any opportunity of reconstructing as much as possible our colonial empire, and of responding to those distant sympathies which may become the source of incalculable strength and happiness to this land.' Toryism now sought three great objects: 'the maintenance of our institutions, the preservation of our empire, and the improvement of the condition of the people.' The time was at hand when England would have to decide between national and cosmopolitan principles, and the issue was no mean one. 'You must remember,' he concluded, 'that in fighting against liberalism or the continental system, you are fighting against those who have the advantage of power—against those who have been high in place for nearly half a century. You have nothing to trust to but your own energy and the sublime instinct of an ancient people.'

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Disraeli's genius, at once brooding over conceptions and penetrating in discernment of fact, had shown him the vast tory reserves that his household suffrage of 1867 would rally to his flag. The same genius again scanning the skies read aright the signs and characteristics of the time. Nobody would seriously have counselled intervention in arms between France and Germany, yet many felt a vague humiliation at a resettlement of Europe without England. Nobody seriously objected to the opening of the Black Sea, yet many were affected by a restive consciousness of diplomatic defeat. Everybody was glad that—as I am about to describe in the following chapter—we had settled the outstanding quarrel with America, yet most people were sore at the audacity of the indirect claims, followed by the award of swingeing damages. National pride in short was silently but deeply stirred; the steady splendour of the economic era for a season paled in uncalculating minds. This coming mood the tory leader, with his rare faculty of wide and sweeping forecast, confidently divined, and he found for it the oracle of a party cry in phrases about Empire and Social Reform. When power fell into his hands, he made no single move of solid effect for either social reform or imperial unity. When Mr. Gladstone committed himself to a policy, he brought in bills to carry it out. Forecast without a bill is interesting, but not to be trusted.

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