

# Lord George Bentinck

A Political Biography

Earl of Beaconsfield Benjamin Disraeli

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# **LORD GEORGE BENTINCK**

# **A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY**

**By Benjamin Disraeli**

**‘He left us the legacy of heroes:  
the memory of his great name  
and the inspiration of his great example.’**



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**TO**

**LORD HENRY BENTINCK,**

IS INSCRIBED This Political Biography ONE FOR WHOM HE ENTERTAINED A DEEP AFFECTION, AND WHOSE TALENTS AND VIRTUES HE SHARES.

# **LORD GEORGE BENTINCK**

## **A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY**

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## CHAPTER I.

*The Man*

THE political career of Lord George Bentinck was peculiar. He had, to use his own expression, 'sate in eight Parliaments without having taken part in any great debate,' when remarkable events suddenly impelled him to advance and occupy not only a considerable but a leading position in our public affairs. During three years, under circumstances of great difficulty, he displayed some of the highest qualities of political life: courage and a lofty spirit; a mastery of details which experience usually alone confers; a quick apprehension and a clear intelligence; indomitable firmness; promptness, punctuality, and perseverance which never failed; an energy seldom surpassed; and a capacity for labour which was perhaps never equalled. At the very moment when he had overcome many contrarities and prejudices; when he had been most successful in the House of Commons, and, sustained only by his own resources, had considerably modified the legislation of the government which he opposed on a measure of paramount importance; when the nation, which had long watched him with interest, began to congratulate itself on the devotion of such a man to the business of the country, he was in an instant taken from us. Then it was that, the memory of the past and the hope of the future blending together, all men seemed to mourn over this untimely end, and there was that pang in the public heart which accompanies the unexpected disappearance of a strong character.

What manner of man this was, who thus on a sudden in the middle term of life relinquished all the ease and pleasure of a patrician existence to work often eighteen hours daily, not for a vain and brilliant notoriety, which was foreign alike both to his tastes and his turn of mind, but for the advancement of principles, the advocacy of which in the chief scene of his efforts was sure to obtain for him only contention and unkindly feelings; what were his motives, purposes and opinions; how and why did he labour; what were the whole scope and tendency of this original, vigorous, and self-schooled intelligence; these would appear to be subjects not unworthy of contemplation, and especially not uninteresting to a free and political community.

The difficulty of treating cotemporary characters and events has been ever acknowledged; but it may be doubted whether the difficulty is diminished when we would commemorate the men and things that have preceded us. The cloud of passion in the first instance, or in the other the mist of time, may render it

equally hard and perplexing to discriminate.

It should not be forgotten that the most authentic and interesting histories are those which have been composed by actors in the transactions which they record. The cotemporary writer who is personally familiar with his theme has unquestionably a great advantage; but it is assumed that his pen can scarcely escape the bias of private friendship or political connection. Yet truth, after all, is the sovereign passion of mankind; nor is the writer of these pages prepared to relinquish his conviction that it is possible to combine the accuracy of the present with the impartiality of the future.

Lord George Bentinck had sat for eighteen years in Parliament, and, before he entered it, had been for three years private secretary to Mr. Canning, who had married the sister of the Duchess of Portland. Such a post would seem a happy commencement of a public career; but whether it were the untimely death of his distinguished relative, or a natural indisposition, Lord George—though he retained the seat for King's Lynn, in which he had succeeded his uncle, the late governor-general of India—directed his energies to other than parliamentary pursuits. For some time he had followed his profession, which was that of arms, but of late years he had become absorbed in the pastime and fortunes of the turf, in which his whole being seemed engrossed, and which he pursued on a scale that perhaps has never been equalled.

Lord George had withdrawn his support from the government of the Duke of Wellington, when the friends of Mr. Canning quitted that administration; and when in time they formed not the least considerable portion of the cabinet of Lord Grey, he resumed his seat on the ministerial benches. On that occasion an administrative post was offered him and declined; and on subsequent occasions similar requests to him to take office were equally in vain. Lord George, therefore, was an original and hearty supporter of the Reform Bill, and he continued to uphold the Whigs in all their policy until the secession of Lord Stanley, between whom and himself there subsisted warm personal as well as political sympathies. Although he was not only a friend to religious liberty, as we shall have occasion afterwards to remark, but always viewed with great sympathy the condition of the Roman Catholic portion of the Irish population, he shrank from the taint of the ultra-montane intrigue. Accompanying Lord Stanley, he became in due time a member of the great Conservative opposition, and, as he never did anything by halves, became one of the most earnest, as he certainly was one of the most enlightened, supporters of Sir Robert Peel. His trust in that minister was indeed absolute, and he has subsequently stated in conversation that when, towards the end of the session of '45, a member of the Tory party

ventured to predict and denounce the impending defection of the minister, there was no member of the Conservative party who more violently condemned the unfounded attack, or more readily impugned the motives of the assailant.

He was not a very frequent attendant in the House. He might be counted on for a party division, and when, towards the termination of the Melbourne ministry, the forces were very nearly balanced, and the struggle became very close, he might have been observed, on more than one occasion, entering the House at a late hour, clad in a white great-coat, which softened, but did not conceal, the scarlet hunting-coat.

Although he took no part in debate, and attended the House rather as a club than as a senate, he possessed a great and peculiar influence in it. He was viewed with interest, and often with extraordinary regard, by every sporting man in the House. With almost all of these he was acquainted; some of them, on either side, were his intimate companions and confederates.

His eager and energetic disposition; his quick perception, clear judgment, and prompt decision; the tenacity with which he clung to his opinions; his frankness and love of truth; his daring and speculative spirit; his lofty bearing, blended as it was with a simplicity of manner very remarkable; the ardour of his friendships, even the fierceness of his hates and prejudices—all combined to form one of those strong characters who, whatever may be their pursuit, must always direct and lead.

Nature had clothed this vehement spirit with a material form which was in perfect harmony with its noble and commanding character. He was tall and remarkable for his presence; his countenance almost a model of manly beauty; the face oval, the complexion clear and mantling; the forehead lofty and white; the nose aquiline and delicately moulded; the upper lip short. But it was in the dark-brown eye, which flashed with piercing scrutiny, that all the character of the man came forth: a brilliant glance, not soft, but ardent, acute, imperious, incapable of deception or of being deceived.

Although he had not much sustained his literary culture, and of late years, at any rate, had not given his mind to political study, he had in the course of his life seen and heard a great deal, and with profit. Nothing escaped his observation; he forgot nothing and always thought. So it was that on all the great political questions of the day he had arrived at conclusions which guided him. He always took large views and had no prejudices about things, whatever he might indulge in as to persons. He was always singularly anxious to acquire the truth, and would spare no pains for that purpose; but when once his mind was made up, it was impossible to influence him.

In politics, he was a Whig of 1688, which became him, modified, however, by all the experience of the present age. He wished to see our society founded on a broad basis of civil and religious liberty. He retained much of the old jealousy of the court, but had none of popular franchises. He was for the Established Church, but for nothing more, and was very repugnant to priestly domination. As for the industrial question, he was sincerely opposed to the Manchester scheme, because he thought that its full development would impair and might subvert our territorial constitution, which he held to be the real security of our freedom, and because he believed that it would greatly injure Ireland, and certainly dissolve our colonial empire.

He had a great respect for merchants, though he looked with some degree of jealousy on the development of our merely foreign trade. His knowledge of character qualified him in a great degree to govern men. and if some drawbacks from this influence might be experienced in his too rigid tenacity of opinion, and in some quickness of temper, which, however, always sprang from a too sensitive heart, great compensation might be found in the fact that there probably never was a human being so entirely devoid of conceit and so completely exempt from selfishness. Nothing delighted him more than to assist and advance others. All the fruits of his laborious investigations were always at the service of his friends without reserve or self-consideration. He encouraged them by making occasions for their exertions, and would relinquish his own opportunity without a moment's hesitation, if he thought the abandonment might aid a better man.

## CHAPTER II.

### *The Protection Problem*

THERE was at this time a metropolitan society for the protection of agriculture, of which the Duke of Richmond was chairman, and which had been established to counteract the proceedings of the Manchester confederation. It was in communication with the local Protection societies throughout the country; and although the adhesion to its service by the parliamentary members of the old Conservative party had been more limited than might have been expected, nevertheless many county members were enrolled in its ranks, and a few of the most eminent were actively engaged in its management. In this they were assisted by an equal number of the most considerable tenant-farmers. In the present state of affairs, the council of the Protection Society afforded the earliest and readiest means to collect opinion and methodize action; and it was therefore resolved among its managers to invite all members of Parliament who sympathized with their purpose, though they might not be members of their society, to attend their meeting and aid them at the present crisis with their counsel.

A compliance with this request occasioned the first public appearance of Lord George Bentinck, as one of the organizers of a political party,—for he aspired to no more. The question was, whether a third political party could be created and sustained,—a result at all times and under any circumstances difficult to achieve, and which had failed even under the auspices of accomplished and experienced statesmen. In the present emergency, was there that degree of outraged public feeling in the country, which would overcome all obstacles and submit to any inconveniences, in order to ensure its representation in the House of Commons? It was the opinion of Lord George Bentinck that such was the case; that if for the moment that feeling was inert and latent, it was an apathy which arose from the sudden shock of public confidence, and the despair which under such circumstances takes possession of men; that if it could be shown to the country, that the great bulk of the Conservative party were true to their faith, and were not afraid, even against the fearful odds which they would have to encounter, to proclaim it, the confidence and the courage of the country would rally, and the party in the House of Commons would find external sympathy and support.

With these views it became of paramount importance that the discussion on the government measure should be sustained on the part of the Protectionists

with their utmost powers. They must prove to the country, that they could represent their cause in debate, and to this end all their energies must be directed. It would be fatal to them if the discussion were confined to one or two nights, and they overborne by the leading and habitual speakers. They must bring forward new men; they must encourage the efforts of those now unrecognized and comparatively unknown; they must overcome all reserve and false shame, and act as became men called upon to a critical and leading part, not by their arrogance or ambition, but by the desertion and treachery of those to whose abilities they had bowed without impatience and reluctance. There was a probability of several vacancies immediately taking place in counties where the seats were filled by converts, but men of too scrupulous an honour to retain the charge which they had sought and accepted as the professors of opinions contrary to those which now received their mournful adhesion. The result of these elections would greatly depend upon the spirit and figure of the party in the House of Commons, in their first encounter with the enemy.

These views, so just and so spirited, advanced with high-bred earnestness by one rarely met in political turmoils, and enforced with a freshness and an affable simplicity which were very winning, wonderfully encouraged those to whom they were addressed. All seemed touched by the flame which burned in the breast of that man, so lofty in his thoughts but so humble in his ambition, who counselled ever the highest deeds, and was himself ever prepared to undertake the humblest duties.

The business of this day was notable. Calculations were made of those who might be fairly counted on to take a part in debate; some discussion even ensued as to who should venture to reply late at night to the minister; a committee was appointed to communicate with all members on either side supposed to be favourable to the principle of Protection to the labour of the country; a parliamentary staff was organized, not only to secure the attendance of members, but to guard over the elections; finally, the form of the amendment to the government measure was discussed and settled, and it was agreed that, if possible, it should be moved by Mr. Philip Miles, the member for the city of Bristol, and who had the ear of the House not merely from the importance of his constituency, and seconded by Sir William Heathcote, the member for the county of Hampshire, a country gentleman of great accomplishments, and so highly considered by both sides that he was very generally spoken of as a probable successor to the chair.

All was furnished by this lately forlorn party except a leader, and even then many eyes were turned and some hopeful murmurs addressed towards Lord

George Bentinck, who in the course of this morning had given such various proofs of his fitness and such evidence of his resource. But he shook his head with a sort of suppressed smile, a faint blush, and an air of proud humility that was natural to him: 'I think,' he said, 'we have had enough of leaders; it is not in my way; I shall remain the last of the rank and file.'

So little desirous, originally, was Lord George Bentinck to interfere actively in that great controversy in which ultimately he took so leading a part, that before the meeting of Parliament in 1846 he begged a gentleman whom he greatly esteemed, a member of the legal profession, and since raised to its highest honours, to call upon him at Harcourt House, when he said that he had taken great pains to master the case of the protective system; that he was convinced its abrogation would ultimately be very injurious to this country; but although, both in point of argument and materials, he feared no opponent, he felt constitutionally so incapable of ever making a speech, that he wished to induce some eminent lawyer to enter the House of Commons, and avail himself of his views and materials, which he had, with that object, reduced to writing. He begged, therefore, that his friend, although a free-trader, would assist him, by suggesting a fitting person for this office.

Accordingly, the name of a distinguished member of the bar, who had already published a work of merit, impugning the principles of the new commercial system, was mentioned, and this learned gentleman was applied to, and was not indisposed to accept the task. A mere accident prevented this arrangement being accomplished. Lord George then requested his friend to make some other selection; but his adviser very sensibly replied, that although the House of Commons would have listened with respect to a gentleman who had given evidence of the sincerity of his convictions by the publication of a work which had no reference to Parliament, they would not endure the instance of a lawyer brought into the House merely to speak from his brief; and that the attempt would be utterly fruitless. He earnestly counselled Lord George himself to make the effort; but Lord George, with characteristic tenacity, clung for some time to his project, though his efforts to accomplish it were fortunately not successful.

Some of the friends of Lord George Bentinck, remembering his inexperience in debate, aware of the great length at which he must necessarily treat the theme, and mindful that he was not physically well-qualified for controlling popular assemblies, not having a strong voice, or, naturally, a very fluent manner, were anxious that he should not postpone his speech until an hour so late; that an audience, jaded by twelve nights' discussion, would be ill-attuned to statistical arguments and economical details. But still clinging to the hope that some

accident might yet again postpone the division, so that the Protectionists might gain the vote of Mr. Hildyard, who had been returned that day for South Notts, having defeated a cabinet minister, Lord George remained motionless until long past midnight. Mr. Cobden having spoken on the part of the confederation, the closing of the debate was felt to be inevitable. Even then, by inducing a Protectionist to solicit the Speaker's eye, Lord George attempted to avert the division; but no supporter of the government measure, of any colour, advancing to reply to this volunteer, Bentinck was obliged to rise. He came out like a lion forced from his lair. And so it happened, that after all his labours of body and mind, after all his research and unwearied application and singular vigilance, after having been at his post for a month, never leaving the House, even for refreshment, he had to undertake the most difficult enterprise in which a man can well embark, with a concurrence of every disadvantage which could ensure failure and defeat. It would seem that the audience, the subject, and the orator, must be equally exhausted; for the assembly had listened for twelve nights to the controversy, and he who was about to address them had, according to his strange habit, taken no sustenance the whole day; it being his custom to dine after the House was up, which was very often long after midnight, and this, with the exception of a slender breakfast, rigidly restricted to dry toast, was his only meal in the four-and-twenty hours.

He had been forced to this regimen, from food exercising a lethargic influence over him; so that, in addition to some constitutional weakness in his organ, he usually laboured, when he addressed the House, under the disadvantage of general exhaustion. And this was, no doubt, a principal cause of that over-excitement and apparently unnecessary energy in his manner of speaking, of which he was himself perfectly, and even painfully, conscious. He was wont to say, that before he could speak he had to make a voice, and, as it were, to pump it from the very core of his frame. One who took a great interest in his success once impressed on him the expediency of trusting entirely to his natural voice and the interest and gravity of his matter, which, combined with his position as the recognized leader of a great party, would be adequate to command the attention of his audience; and he subsequently endeavoured very often to comply with this suggestion. He endeavoured also very much to control his redundancy of action and gesture, when that peculiarity was pointed out to him with the delicacy, but the sincerity, of friendship. He entirely freed himself from a very awkward feature of his first style of speaking, namely, the frequent repetition of a sentence, which seemed at first a habit inveterate with him; but such was his force of will, that when the necessity of ridding himself of this drawback was



properly pointed out to him, he achieved the desired result. No one bore criticism more gently and kindly, so long as it was confined to his personal and intellectual characteristics, for he was a man absolutely without vanity or conceit, who thought very humbly of himself, in respect of abilities, and deemed no labour too great to achieve even a slight improvement. But though in these respects the very child of simplicity, he was a man of almost unexampled pride, and chafed under criticism, when his convictions or his conduct were questioned. He was very tenacious of his opinion, almost inexorable; and it required a courage nearly equal to his own, combined with a serene temper, successfully to impugn his conclusions.

Not, therefore, excited by vanity, but sustained by self-respect, by an overpowering feeling that he owed it to himself and the opinions he held, to show to the world that they had not been lightly adopted and should not be lightly laid aside, Bentinck rose, long past the noon of night, at the end of this memorable debate, to undertake an office from which the most successful and most experienced rhetoricians of Parliament would have shrunk with intuitive discretion. But duty scorns prudence, and criticism has few terrors for a man with a great purpose. Unshaken by the adverse hour and circumstances, he proceeded to accomplish the object which he had long meditated, and for which he was fully prepared.

Reminding the House, while he appealed to their indulgence, that, though he had had the honour of a seat for eight parliaments, he had never once ventured to trespass on its time on any subject of great debate, he at once took a clear and comprehensive ground of objection to the government scheme. He opposed it not only because he objected to the great change contemplated with respect to the agricultural interest, but, on principle, to the entire measure, 'a great commercial revolution, which we are of opinion that the circumstances of the country do not by any means require.'

Noticing the observation of the Secretary at War, that the agricultural interest, in submitting to this great change, might now accept it with honour, instead of its being eventually extorted by force, he happily retorted, that vicious as he thought the measure, he should feel it deprived of half its vice if it could be carried without loss of honour, damage to reputation, and forfeiture of public character to a vast number of gentlemen now present. And he proceeded to show among other testimonies, by an appeal to the distinct language of the speech from the throne on the dissolution of 1841, that 'every member who occupied a seat in this House was returned pledged either to oppose or maintain the principle of protection to national industry.'

Adverting to the new position, that the experience of the last three years justified the reversal of the system which the existing administration had been summoned to office to uphold, he wisely remarked, that 'the country will not be satisfied with three years' experience of any system. Three years' experience is not sufficiently extensive to afford a proper criterion by which we may decide the failure or success of any description of policy whatsoever.'

Noticing that the minister had more especially founded 'his present belief in doctrines contrary to those which he had heretofore uniformly maintained,' by the assumption that the price of corn would not be more reduced than the price of cattle and other commodities affected by the tariff of 1842, and also by the results of previous experiments in the instances of silk and wool, Lord George 'accepted his challenge' on these grounds, and proceeded in great detail to investigate these examples.

The House listened with great attention for full two hours, during which he treated these subjects. This attention no doubt was generally accorded because it was felt due to the occasion, and, under the circumstances, to the speaker; but those who, however contrary might be the results at which they had arrived, had themselves deeply entered into these investigations, recognized very soon that Bentinck was master of his subject. Sir Robert Peel looked round very often with that expression of appreciation which it was impossible for his nature to refuse to parliamentary success, even when the ability displayed was hostile to his projects. The minister, with reference to the wool trade, had dwelt on the year 1842, when prices were much depressed, while they had greatly rallied in 1844, when the importation of foreign wool had risen from forty-five to sixty-five millions of pounds; and he had drawn a triumphant inference that the increase of importation and the increase of price were in consequence of the reduction of the duty. This instance had produced a great effect; but Lord George showed the House, by a reference to the tables of 1836, that the importation of foreign wool had then risen to sixty-five millions of pounds, and that large foreign importation was consistent with high prices to the domestic grower. Nor was he less successful about the foreign cattle. He reminded his friends on the Treasury bench how strenuously, previously to the introduction of the tariff of 1842, they had urged upon their agricultural friends that no foreign cattle could enter under their regulations, and that the whole object of the change was to strengthen the hands of the agricultural interest, as regarded more essential protection, by removing the odium of a nominal protection: 'Convinced by my right honourable friends, in 1842, that their tariff would be as inoperative as it has proved, I gave my cordial support to the measure.'

Perceiving that the House began to be wearied with the details of the silk trade, which he had investigated with extraordinary zeal, he postponed until the specific vote in committee his objections to the reduction of the timber duties. The fact is, he had so thoroughly mastered all these topics, that his observations on each of them would have themselves formed a speech of sufficient length and interest. But he successfully checked any interruption by what may be fairly styled his dignified diffidence.

‘I trust the House will recollect that I am fighting the battle of a party whose leaders have deserted them; and though I cannot wield my weapons with the skill of the right honourable gentleman on the Treasury bench, I trust the House will remember the emergency which has dragged me out to intrude upon their indulgence.’

And again, when he announced that he was now about to investigate the pretext of ‘famine in the land,’ and some impatience was exhibited, he drew up and said, ‘I think, having sat eighteen years in this house, and never once having trespassed on its time before in any one single great debate, I may appeal to the past as a proof that I duly weigh the measure of my abilities, and that I am painfully conscious of my proper place in this house.’

It was impossible to resist such appeals from such a person, even at three o’clock in the morning; and diffident, but determined, he then entered into what was, perhaps, the most remarkable portion of his speech—an investigation of what was the real position of the country with respect to the supply of food in the past autumn and at the present moment. Having shown from the trade circulars that, far from there being at present ‘a wheat famine,’ the stocks in the granaries in bond were more than double in amount to what they were in the year 1845, ‘a year admitted by all to be a year of extraordinary abundance,’ he proceeded to the Irish part of the question: ‘I beg leave to say, that though this debate has now continued for three weeks, I am the first gentleman who has at all entered into the real state of the case as regards the allegation of a potato famine in Ireland, upon which, be it remembered, is founded the sole case of her Majesty’s ministers for a repeal of the corn laws.’

And this was very true. The fact is, though the Protectionist party had made a most unexpected and gallant defence, no one was really prepared for the contest except Bentinck. Between the end of November and the meeting of Parliament, he had thrown all the energies of his passionate mind into this question. He had sought information on all points and always at the fountain-head. He had placed himself in immediate communication with the ablest representatives of every considerable interest attacked, and being ardent and indefatigable, gifted with a

tenacious memory and a very clear and searching spirit, there was scarcely a detail or an argument connected with his subject which was not immediately at his command. No speeches in favour of the protective system have ever been made in the House of Commons compared with his in depth and range of knowledge; and had there been any member not connected with the government, who had been able to vindicate the merits of British agriculture as he did when the final struggle occurred, the impression which was made by the too-often unanswered speeches of the Manchester confederation would never have been effected. But the great Conservative party, exhausted by the labours of ten years of opposition, thought that after the triumph of '41 it might claim a furlough. The defence of their cause was left entirely to the ministers of their choice; and ministers, distracted with detail and wearied with official labour, are not always the most willing or the most efficient champions of the organic principles of a party.

Sir Robert Peel, with respect to the disease in the Irish potato, had largely referred to the statements of the inspectors of police. Lord George wanted to know why the reports of the lieutenants of the Irish counties were not given. Being well-informed upon this head, he asked the government to produce the report of Lord Duncannon, the lord lieutenant of Carlow; especially that of his noble father, the earl of Besborough, lord lieutenant of Kilkenny. 'Is there any man in England or in Ireland whose opinion, from his business-like habits, his great practical knowledge, and the warm and affectionate interest which for a long period of years he has taken in everything which concerns the interests of Ireland, especially of the Irish peasantry—is there any man whose opinion would have greater weight? The opinion of Lord Besborough on an Irish subject, the lieutenant of an Irish county, and himself long a cabinet minister? Well, sir, I am assured that, having taken the utmost pains to investigate this matter, Lord Besborough has made an elaborate report to the Irish government. Well, then, I desire to know why Lord Besborough's report to the Irish government is suppressed? Is it because that report would not assist the present policy of her Majesty's government?'

He alleged the names of many other individuals of high station who had officially reported on the subject to the government: of Lord Castlereagh, the lieutenant of Down, a member of the House; of Lord de Vesci, whose son was sitting for the Queen's County, over which his father presided in the name of the queen. A murmur ran round the House, that it would have been as well if these reports had been produced.

The last portion of this argumentative harangue referred to the most important

division of the subject. Bentinck met it boldly, without evasion; nor was there any portion of his address more interesting, more satisfactory, and more successful. 'I now come,' he said, 'to the great challenge, which is ever and anon put forth by the Anti-Corn Law League, and now by their disciples, her Majesty's ministers. How are we, they ask, with our limited extent of territory, to feed a population annually and rapidly increasing at the rate of three hundred thousand a-year, as generally stated by the member for Stockport—a rate increased by my noble friend, the member for the West Riding, to a thousand a day, or three hundred and sixty-five thousand a year?'

He first proved in a complete manner that, from the year 1821 to the year 1844, the population of the country had increased at the rate of less than thirty-two per cent., while the growth of wheat during the same period had increased no less than sixty-four per cent. He then proceeded to inquire why, with such an increased produce, we were still, as regards bread corn, to a certain extent, an importing nation? This he accounted for by the universally improved condition of the people, and the enlarged command of food by the working classes. He drew an animated picture, founded entirely on the representations of writers and public men adverse to the Protective System, of the superior condition of the people of 'England, happy England,' to that of other countries: how they consumed much more of the best food, and lived much longer. This was under Protection, which Lord John Russell had stigmatized, in his letter, 'the bane of agriculture.' 'In the history of my noble friend's illustrious family,' he continued, 'I should have thought that he would have found a remarkable refutation of such a notion.' And then he drew a lively sketch of the colossal and patriotic works of the Earls and Dukes of Bedford, 'whereby they had drained and reclaimed three hundred thousand acres of land drowned in water, and brought them into cultivation, and thus converted into fertile fields a vast morass extending over seven counties in England.' Could the system which had inspired such enterprise be justly denounced as baneful?

To show the means of the country to sustain even a much-increasing population, and that those means were in operation, he entered into one of the most original and interesting calculations that was perhaps ever offered to the House of Commons. Reminding the House that in the preceding year (1845) the farmers of England, at a cost of two millions sterling, had imported two hundred and eighty thousand tons of guano, he proceeded to estimate what would be the effect on the productive powers of the land of that novel application. Two hundred thousand tons, or, in other words, four million hundred-weight, were expended on the land in 1845. Half of these, he assumed, would be applied to the

growth of wheat, and the other half to the growth of turnips preparatory to the wheat crop of the ensuing year. According to the experiments tried and recorded in the Royal Agricultural Journal, it would seem that by the application of two hundred-weight of guano to an acre of wheat land, the produce would be increased by one quarter per acre. At this rate, one hundred thousand tons, or two million hundred-weight of guano would add one million quarters of wheat to the crop, or bread for one year for one million of people. But as he was very careful never to over-state a case, Lord George assumed, that it would require three hundred hundredweight of guano to an acre to produce an extra quarter of wheat. According to this estimate, one hundred thousand tons of guano, applied to the land in 1845, must have added six hundred and sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty-six quarters of grain to the wheat crop, or, in other words, bread for six hundred and sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty-six additional mouths. 'And now for turnips,' he continued. The Norfolk authorities whom he quoted have in like manner proved that two hundred-weight of guano will add ten tons per acre to the turnip crop. But again, for fear of exaggeration, he supposed that three hundred-weight would be requisite to create such increased fertility. In this case, two million hundredweight of guano would add six million six hundred and sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty tons to the natural unmanured produce of the crop. Now it is generally considered that one ton of Swedes would last twenty sheep three weeks, and that each sheep should gain half a pound of meat per week, or one pound and a half in three weeks; thus twenty sheep feeding on one ton of turnips in three weeks should in the aggregate make, as the graziers say, thirty pounds of mutton. But to be safe in his estimate, he would assume that one ton of turnips makes only half this quantity. 'Multiply, then,' exclaimed Bentinck with the earnest air of a crusader, 'six million six hundred and sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty by fifteen, and you have no less than ninety-nine million nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand and nine hundred pounds of mutton as the fruits of one hundred thousand tons of guano; which, at ninety-two pounds per man—the average Englishman's allowance—affords meat for one million eight hundred and sixty thousand nine hundred and fifty-five—nearly two million of her Majesty's subjects.'

This is a specimen of those original and startling calculations to which the House was soon to become accustomed from his lips. They were received at first with astonishment and incredulity; but they were never impugned. The fact is, he was extremely cautious in his data, and no man was more accustomed ever to impress upon his friends the extreme expediency of not over-stating a case. It should also be remarked of Lord George Bentinck, that in his most complicated

calculations he never sought aid from notes.

We have necessarily only noticed a few of the traits of this remarkable performance. Its termination was impressive.

‘We have heard in the course of these discussions a good deal about an ancient monarchy, a reformed House of Commons, and a proud aristocracy. Sir, with regard to our ancient monarchy, I have no observation to make; but, if so humble an individual as myself might be permitted to whisper, a word in the ear of that illustrious and royal personage who, as he stands nearest, so is he justly dearest, to her who sits upon the throne, I would take leave to say, that I cannot but think he listened to ill advice, when, on the first night of this great discussion, he allowed himself to be seduced by the first minister of the crown to come down to this House to usher in, to give *Ã©clat*, and as it were by reflection from the queen, to give the semblance of the personal sanction of her Majesty to a measure which, be it for good or for evil, a great majority at least of the landed aristocracy of England, of Scotland, and of Ireland, imagine fraught with deep injury, if not ruin, to them

—a measure which, not confined in its operation to this great class, is calculated to grind down countless smaller interests engaged in the domestic trades and, interests of the empire, transferring the profits of all these interests—English, Scotch, Irish, and Colonial

—great and small alike, from Englishmen, from Scotchmen, and from Irishmen, to Americans, to Frenchmen, to Russians, to Poles, to Prussians, and to Germans. Sir, I come now to the reformed House of Commons; and as one who was a party to that great measure, I cannot but feel a deep interest in its success, and more especially in that portion of it which extended the franchise to the largest and the most respectable body in the kingdom—I mean the landed tenantry of England; and deeply should I regret should any large proportion of those members who have been sent to Parliament to represent them in this House, prove to be the men to bring lasting dishonour upon themselves, their constituencies, and this House, by an act of tergiversation so gross as to be altogether unprecedented in the annals of any reformed or unreformed House of Commons. Sir, lastly, I come to the “proud aristocracy.” We are a proud aristocracy, but if we are proud, it is that we are proud in the chastity of our honour. If we assisted in ‘41 in turning the Whigs out of office, because we did not consider a fixed duty of eight shillings a quarter on foreign corn a sufficient protection, it was with honesty of purpose and in single-mindedness we did so; and as we were not before the fact, we will not be accomplices after the fact in the fraud by which the Whig ministers were expelled from power. If we are a

proud aristocracy, we are proud of our honour, inasmuch as we never have been guilty, and never can be guilty, of double-dealing with the farmers of England—of swindling our opponents, deceiving our friends, or betraying our constituents.’

The division was called. The West-India interest, notwithstanding the amendment was moved by the member for Bristol, deserted the Protectionists. Deaf to the appeals, and the remonstrances, and the warnings of Lord George, one of their leading members replied, with a smile of triumphant content, that ‘they had made a satisfactory arrangement for themselves.’ How satisfactory did the West-Indians find it four months subsequently? All the shipping interest deserted the land. They were for everything free, except navigation; there was no danger of that being interfered with; ‘it rested on quite distinct grounds—national grounds.’ They were warned, but they smiled in derisive self-complacency. Lord George Bentinck lived to have the West-India interest and the shipping interest on their knees to him, to defend their perilled or to restore their ruined fortunes; and with characteristic generosity and proud consistency, he undertook the task, and sacrificed his life in the attempt.

Notwithstanding these terrible defalcations, when the numbers were announced, at nearly four o’clock in the morning, the majority had not reached those three magical figures supposed necessary, under the circumstances, to success. In a house of five hundred and eighty-one members present, the amendment of the Protectionists was defeated only by ninety-seven; and two hundred and forty-two gentlemen, in spite of desertion, difficulty, and defeat, still maintained the ‘chastity of their honour.’



## **CHAPTER III.**

IN THE meantime, besides the prolonged and unforeseen resistance of the Protectionists, there were other and unexpected causes at work which equally, or perhaps even more powerfully tended to the fulfilment of the scheme of delay, which Lord George Bentinck had recommended his friends to adopt and encourage.

In the latter months of the year 1845, there broke out in some of the counties of Ireland one of those series of outrages which have hitherto periodically occurred in districts of that country. Assassination and crimes of violence were rife: men on the queen's highway were shot from behind hedges, or suddenly torn from their horses and beaten to death with clubs; houses were visited in the night by bodies of men, masked and armed—their owners dragged from their beds, and, in the presence of their wives and children, maimed and mutilated; the administration of unlawful oaths, with circumstances of terror, indicated the existence of secret confederations, whose fell intents, profusely and ostentatiously announced by threatening letters, were frequently and savagely perpetrated.

These barbarous distempers had their origin in the tenure of land in Ireland, and in the modes of its occupation. A combination of causes, political, social, and economical, had for more than a century unduly stimulated the population of a country which had no considerable resources except in the soil. That soil had become divided into minute allotments, held by a pauper tenantry, at exorbitant rents, of a class of middlemen, themselves necessitous, and who were mere traders in land. A fierce competition raged amid the squalid multitude for these strips of earth which were their sole means of existence. To regulate this fatal rivalry, and restrain this emulation of despair, the peasantry, enrolled in secret societies, found refuge in an inexorable code. He who supplanted another in the occupation of the soil was doomed by an occult tribunal, from which there was no appeal, to a terrible retribution. His house was visited in the night by whitefeet and ribbonmen—his doom was communicated to him, by the post, in letters, signed by Terry Alt, or Molly M'Guire, or he was suddenly shot, like a dog, by the orders of Captain Rock. Yet even these violent inflictions rather punished than prevented the conduct against which they were directed. The Irish peasant had to choose between starving and assassination. If, in deference to an anonymous mandate, he relinquished his holding, he and those who depended on him were outcasts and wanderers; if he retained or accepted it, his life might be the forfeit, but subsistence was secured; and in poor and lawless countries, the means of living are more valued than life. Those who have treated of the

agrarian crimes of Ireland have remarked, that the facility with which these outrages have been committed has only been equalled by the difficulty of punishing them. A murder, perpetrated at noonday, in the sight of many persons, cannot be proved in a court of justice. The spectators are never witnesses; and it has been inferred from this, that the outrage is national, and that the heart of the populace is with the criminal. But though a chief landlord, or a stipendiary magistrate, may occasionally be sacrificed, the great majority of victims are furnished by the humblest class. Not sympathy, but terror, seals the lip and clouds the eye of the bystander. And this is proved by the fact that while those who have suffered have almost always publicly declared that they were unable to recognize their assailants, and believed them to be strangers, they have frequently, in confidence, furnished the police with the names of the guilty.

Thus, there is this remarkable characteristic of the agrarian anarchy of Ireland which marks it out from all similar conditions of other countries: it is a war of the poor against the poor.

Before the rapid increase of population had forced governments to study political economy and to investigate the means of subsisting a people, statesmen had contented themselves by attributing to political causes these predial disturbances, and by recommending for them political remedies. The course of time, which had aggravated the condition of the Irish peasantry, had increased the numbers, the wealth, and the general importance of those of the middle classes of Ireland who professed the Roman Catholic faith. Shut out from the political privileges of the constitution, these formed a party of discontent that was a valuable ally to the modern Whigs, too long excluded from that periodical share of power which is the life-blood of a parliamentary government and the safeguard of a constitutional monarchy. The misgovernment of Ireland became therefore a stock topic of the earlier Opposition of the present century; and advocating the cause of their clients, who wished to become mayors, and magistrates, and members of the legislature, they argued that in the concession of those powers and dignities, and perhaps in the discreet confiscation of the property of the Church, the only cures could be found for threatening notices, robbery of arms, administering of unlawful oaths, burglary, murder, and arson.

Yet if these acts of violence were attributable to defective political institutions, why, as was usually the case, were they partial in their occurrence? Why were they limited to particular districts? If political grievances were the cause, the injustice would be as sharp in tranquil Wexford as in turbulent Tipperary. Yet out of the thirty-two counties of Ireland, the outrages prevailed usually in less than a third. These outrages were never insurrectionary: they were not directed against

existing authorities; they were stimulated by no public cause or clamour; it was the private individual who was attacked, and for a private reason. This was their characteristic.

But as time elapsed, two considerable events occurred: the Roman Catholic restrictions were repealed, and the Whigs became ministers. Notwithstanding these great changes, the condition of the Irish peasantry remained the same; the tenure of land was unchanged, the modes of its occupation were unaltered, its possession was equally necessary and equally perilous. The same circumstances produced the same consequences. Notwithstanding even that the Irish Church had been remodelled, and its revenues not only commuted but curtailed; notwithstanding that Roman Catholics had not only become members of Parliament but even Parliament had been reformed; Irish outrage became more flagrant and more extensive than at any previous epoch—and the Whigs were ministers.

Placed in this responsible position, forced to repress the evil, the causes of which they had so often explained, and which with their cooperation had apparently been so effectually removed, the Whig government were obliged to have recourse to the very means which they had so frequently denounced when recommended by their rivals, and that, too, on a scale of unusual magnitude and severity. They proposed for the adoption of Parliament one of those measures which would suspend the constitution of Ireland, and which are generally known by the name of Coercion Acts.

The main and customary provisions of these Coercion Acts were of severe restraint, and scarcely less violent than the conduct they were constructed to repress. They invested the lord lieutenant with power to proclaim a district as disturbed, and then to place its inhabitants without the pale of the established law; persons out of their dwellings between sunset and sunrise were liable to transportation; and to secure the due execution of the law, prisoners were tried before military tribunals, and not by their peers, whose verdicts, from sympathy or terror, were usually found to baffle justice.

These Coercion Acts were effectual; they invariably obtained their end, and the proclaimed districts became tranquil. But they were an affair of police, not of government; essentially temporary, their effect was almost as transient as their sway, and as they were never accompanied with any deep and sincere attempt to cope with the social circumstances which produced disorder, the recurrence of the chronic anarchy was merely an affair of time. Whether it were that they did not sufficiently apprehend the causes, or that they shrank from a solution which must bring them in contact with the millions of a surplus population, there seems

always to have been an understanding between the public men of both parties, that the Irish difficulty should be deemed a purely political, or at the utmost a religious one. And even so late as 1846, no less a personage than the present chief secretary, put forward by his party to oppose an Irish Coercion Bill which themselves had loudly called for, declared that he could not sanction its penal enactments unless they were accompanied by the remedial measures that were necessary, to wit, an Irish Franchise Bill, and a Bill for the amendment of municipal corporations!

When Sir Robert Peel, in 1841, after a memorable opposition of ten years, acceded to office, sustained by all the sympathies of the country, his Irish policy, not sufficiently noticed amid the vast and urgent questions with which he had immediately to deal, was, however, to the political observer significant and interesting. As a mere matter of party tactics, it was not for him too much to impute Irish disturbances to political and religious causes, even if the accumulated experience of the last ten years were not developing a conviction in his mind, that the methods hitherto adopted to ensure the tranquillity of that country were superficial and fallacious. His cabinet immediately recognized a distinction between political and predial sources of disorder. The first, they resolved into a mere system of agitation, no longer justifiable by the circumstances, and this they determined to put down. The second, they sought in the conditions under which land was occupied, and these they determined to investigate. Hence, on the one hand, the O'Connell prosecution: on the other, the Devon commission.

This was the bold and prudent policy of a minister who felt he had the confidence of the country and was sustained by great parliamentary majorities; and when the summoner of monster meetings was convicted, and the efficient though impartial manner in which the labours of the land commission were simultaneously conducted came to be bruited about, there seemed at last some prospect of the system of political quackery of which Ireland had been so long the victim being at last subverted. But there is nothing in which the power of circumstances is more evident than in politics. They baffle the forethought of statesmen, and control even the apparently inflexible laws of national development and decay.

Had the government of 1841 succeeded in its justifiable expectation of terminating the trade of political agitation in Ireland, armed with all the authority and all the information with which the labours of the land commission would have furnished them, they would in all probability have successfully grappled with the real causes of Irish misery and misrule. They might have thoroughly

reformed the modes by which land is holden and occupied; have anticipated the spontaneous emigration that now rages by an administrative enterprise scarcely more costly than the barren loan of '47, and which would have wafted native energies to imperial shores; have limited under these circumstances the evil of the potato famine, even if the improved culture of the interval might not have altogether prevented that visitation; while the laws which regulated the competition between home and foreign industry in agricultural produce might have been modified with so much prudence, or, if necessary, ultimately repealed with so much precaution, that those rapid and startling vicissitudes that have so shattered the social fabric of Ireland might altogether have been avoided.

But it was decreed that it should be otherwise. Having achieved the incredible conviction of O'Connell, by an Irish jury, the great culprit baffled the vengeance of the law by a quirk which a lawyer only could have devised. As regards his Irish policy, Sir Robert Peel never recovered this blow, the severity of which was proportionably increased by its occurrence at a moment of unprecedented success. Resolute not to recur to his ancient Orangeism, yet desperate after his discomfiture of rallying a moderate party around his ministry, his practical mind, more clear-sighted than foreseeing, was alarmed at the absence of all influences for the government of Ireland. The tranquillity which might result from a reformed tenure of the soil, must, if attainable, be a distant blessing, and at present he saw only the obstacles to its fulfilment—prejudiced landlords, and the claims and necessities of pauper millions. He shrank from a theory which might be an illusion. He required a policy for the next post and the next division. There was in his view only one course to take, to outbid his predecessors as successfully in Irish politics as he was doing in taxes and tariffs. He resolved to appropriate the liberal party of Ireland, and merge it into the great Conservative confederation which was destined to destroy so many things. He acted with promptitude and energy, for Sir Robert Peel never hesitated when he had made up his mind. His real character was very different from his public reputation. Far from being timid and wary, he was audacious and even headstrong. It was his cold and constrained demeanour that misled the public. There never was a man who did such rash things in so circumspect a manner. He had been fortunate in early disembarassing himself of the Orange counsellors who had conducted his Irish questions when in opposition; vacant judgeships had opportunely satisfied the recognized and respectable claims of Mr. Serjeant Jackson and Mr. Lefroy; and so Sir Robert Peel, without a qualm, suddenly began to govern Ireland by sending it 'messages of peace.'

They took various forms; sometimes a Charitable Bequests Act virtually

placed the Roman Catholic hierarchy in friendly equality with the prelates of the Established Church; sometimes a 'godless college' called forth a moan from alarmed and irritated Oxford; the endowment of Maynooth struck wider and deeper, and the middle-classes of England, roused from their religious lethargy, called in vain to the rescue of a Protestantism betrayed. But the minister was unshaken. Successful and self-sufficient, impressed with a conviction that his government in duration would rival that of a Walpole or a Pitt, and exceed both in lustre, he treated every remonstrance with imperious disdain. He had even accustomed his mind to contemplate an ecclesiastical adjustment of Ireland which would have allied in that country the Papacy with the State, and have terminated the constitutional supremacy of the Anglican Church, when suddenly, in the very heat of all this arrogant fortune, the mighty fabric of delusion shivered and fell to the ground.

An abused and indignant soil repudiated the ungrateful race that had exhausted and degraded its once exuberant bosom. The land refused to hold those who would not hold the land on terms of justice and of science. All the economical palliatives and political pretences of long years seemed only to aggravate the suffering and confusion. The poor-rate was levied upon a community of paupers, and the 'godless colleges' were denounced by Rome as well as Oxford.

After a wild dream of famine and fever, imperial loans, rates in aid, jobbing public works, confiscated estates, constituencies self-disfranchised, and St. Peter's bearding St. James's in a spirit becoming Christendom rather than Europe, time topped the climax of Irish misgovernment; and by the publication of the census of 1851, proved that the millions with whose evils no statesmen would sincerely deal, but whose condition had been the pretext for so much empiricism, had disappeared, and nature, more powerful than politicians, had settled the 'great difficulty.'

Ere the publication of that document, the mortal career of Sir Robert Peel had closed, and indeed several of the circumstances to which we have just alluded did not occur in his administration; but the contrast between his policy and its results was nevertheless scarcely less striking. It was in '45 that he transmitted his most important 'message of peace' to Ireland, to be followed by an autumnal visit of her Majesty to that kingdom, painted in complacent and prophetic colours by her prime minister. The visit was not made. In the course of that autumn, ten counties of Ireland were in a state of anarchy; and, mainly in that period, there were 136 homicides committed, 138 houses burned, 483 houses attacked, and 138 fired into; there were 544 cases of aggravated assault, and 551

of robbery of arms; there were 89 cases of bands appearing in arms; there were more than 200 cases of administering unlawful oaths; and there were 1,944 cases of sending threatening letters. By the end of the year, the general crime of Ireland had doubled in amount and enormity compared with the preceding year.



## CHAPTER IV.

### *The Cure for Irish Ills*

LORD GEORGE BENTINCK had large but defined views as to the policy which should be pursued with respect to Ireland. He was a firm supporter of the constitutional preponderance allotted to the land in our scheme of government, not from any jealousy or depreciation of the other great sources of public wealth, for his sympathy with the trading classes was genuine, but because he believed that constitutional preponderance, while not inconsistent with great commercial prosperity, to be the best security for public liberty and the surest foundation of enduring power. But as reality was the characteristic of his vigorous and sagacious nature, he felt that a merely formal preponderance, one not sustained and authorized by an equivalent material superiority, was a position not calculated to endure in the present age, and one especially difficult to maintain with our rapidly increasing population. For this reason he was always very anxious to identify the policy of Great Britain with that of Ireland, the latter being a country essentially agricultural; and he always shrank from any proposition which admitted a difference in the interests of the two kingdoms.

Liberal politicians, who some years ago were very loud for justice to Ireland, and would maintain at all hazards the identity of the interests of the two countries, have of late frequently found it convenient to omit that kingdom from their statistical bulletins of national prosperity. Lord George Bentinck, on the contrary, would impress on his friends, that if they wished to maintain the territorial constitution of their country, they must allow no sectarian considerations to narrow the basis of sympathy on which it should rest; and in the acres and millions of Ireland, in its soil and its people, equally neglected, he would have sought the natural auxiliaries of our institutions. To secure for our Irish fellow-subjects a regular market for their produce; to develop the resources of their country by public works on a great scale; and to obtain a decent provision for the Roman Catholic priesthood from the land and not from the consolidated fund, were three measures which he looked upon as in the highest degree conservative.

When the project of the cabinet of 1846 had transpired, Lord George at once declared, and was in the habit of reiterating his opinion, that 'it would ruin the 500,000 small farmers of Ireland,' and he watched with great interest and anxiety the conduct of their representatives in the House of Commons. It was with great

difficulty that he could bring himself to believe, that political liberalism would induce the members for the south and west of Ireland to support a policy in his opinion so fatal to their countrymen as the unconditional repeal of the corn laws; and, indeed, before they took that step, which almost all of them have since publicly regretted and attempted to compensate for by their subsequent votes in the House of Commons, the prospect of their conduct frequently and considerably varied.

The Earl of St. Germans, the chief secretary of the Lord Lieutenant, introduced the Coercion Bill to the House of Lords on the 24th of February, and, considering the exigency, and the important reference to it in the speech from the throne, this step on the part of the government was certainly not precipitate. It was observed that the strongest supporters of the measure in the House of Lords on this occasion were the leaders of the Whig party. Lord Lansdowne, 'so far from complaining of the Government for bringing forward the measure at so early a period of the session, was ready to admit, that after the declaration of her Majesty, a declaration unhappily warranted by facts known to many of their lordships, every day was lost in which an effectual remedy was not at least attempted to put an end to a state of society so horrible.' Lord Clanricarde 'gave his ready assent to the bill;' and even Lord Grey, 'though he regretted the necessity for this measure, was of opinion that the chief secretary had established a sufficient case for arming the executive government with some additional powers.' When, therefore, at the end of the month of March, Lord George Bentinck was invited to attend a meeting of his friends, held at the house of Mr. Bankes, to consider the course which should be adopted by the Protectionist party with respect to the Coercion Bill, it was assumed, as a matter of course, that the coalition of the government and the Whigs must secure the passing of the measure, even if the Protectionists were disposed, for the chance of embarrassing the ministry, to resist it; and of course there was no great tendency in that direction. Men are apt to believe that crime and coercion are inevitably associated. There was abundance of precedent for the course, which seemed also a natural one.

In less than a century there had been seventeen coercive acts for Ireland, a circumstance which might make some ponder whether such legislation were as efficacious as it was violent. However, assassination rife, Captain Rock and Molly M'Guire out at night, Whigs and Tories all agreed, it was easy to catch at a glance the foregone conclusion of the meeting. One advantage of having a recognized organ of a political party is, that its members do not decide too precipitately. They listen before they determine, and if they have a doubt, they

will grant the benefit of it to him whose general ability they have acknowledged, and to whom they willingly give credit for having viewed the question at issue in a more laborious and painful manner than themselves. Without a leader, they commit themselves to opinions carelessly and hastily adopted. This is fatal to a party in debate; but it often entails very serious consequences when the mistakes have been committed in a less public and responsible scene than the House of Commons.

In the present case, there was only one individual who took any considerable lead in the management of the party who ventured to suggest the expediency of pausing before they pledged themselves to support an unconstitutional measure, proposed by a government against which they were arrayed under circumstances of urgent and unusual opposition. The support of an unconstitutional measure may be expedient, but it cannot be denied that it is the most indubitable evidence of confidence. This suggestion, though received with kindness, elicited little sympathy, and Lord George Bentinck, who had not yet spoken, and who always refrained at these meetings from taking that directing part which he never wished to assume, marking the general feeling of those present, and wishing to guide it to a practical result advantageous to their policy, observed that the support of the Coercion Bill by the Protectionists, ought to be made conditional on the government proving the sincerity of their policy by immediately proceeding with their measure; that if life were in such danger in Ireland as was officially stated, and as he was bound to believe, no Corn or Customs' Bill could compete in urgency with the necessity of pressing forward a bill, the object of which was to arrest wholesale assassination. He was, therefore, for giving the government a hearty support, provided they proved they were in earnest in their determination to put down murder and outrage in Ireland, by giving a priority in the conduct of public business to the measure in question.

This view of the situation, which was certainly adroit, for it combined the vindication of order with an indefinite delay of the measures for the repeal of the protective system, seemed to please every one; there was a murmur of approbation, and when one of the most considerable of the country gentlemen expressed the prevalent feeling, and added that all that was now to be desired was that Lord George Bentinck would kindly consent to be the organ of the party on the occasion, and state their view to the House, the cheering was very hearty. It came from the hearts of more than two hundred gentlemen, scarcely one of whom had a personal object in this almost hopeless struggle beyond the maintenance of a system which he deemed advantageous to his country; but they wished to show their generous admiration of the man who, in the dark hour of

difficulty and desertion, had proved his courage and resource, had saved them from public contempt, and taught them to have confidence in themselves. And after all, there are few rewards in life which equal such sympathy from such men. The favour of courts and the applause of senates may have their moments of excitement and delight, but the incident of deepest and most enduring gratification in public life is to possess the cordial confidence of a high-spirited party, for it touches the heart as well as the intellect, and combines all the softer feelings of private life with the ennobling consciousness of public duty.

Lord George Bentinck, deeply moved, consented to become the organ of the Protectionists in this matter; but he repeated in a marked manner his previous declaration, that his duty must be limited to the occasion: he would serve with them, but he could not pretend to be the leader of a party. In that capacity, however, the government chose to recognize him, and there occurred in consequence, very shortly after this meeting, a scene in the House of Commons, which occasioned at the time a great deal of surprise and scandal. The Secretary of the Treasury, in pursuance of one of his principal duties, which is to facilitate by mutual understanding the conduct of public business in the House of Commons, applied to Lord George Bentinck, confessedly at the request of Sir Robert Peel, to 'enter into some arrangement' as to the conduct of public business before Easter. The arrangement suggested was, that if the Protectionists supported the Coercion Bill, which it was the wish of Sir Robert Peel should be read a first time before Easter, the third reading of the Bill for the Repeal of the Corn Laws should be postponed until after Easter. The interview by appointment took place in the Vote Office, where the Secretary of the Treasury 'called Lord George aside' and made this proposition. Lord George stated in reply, 'what he believed to be the views of the party with whom he served,' and they were those we have already intimated. The 'arrangement' was concluded, and it was at the same time agreed that certain questions, of which notice had been given by Lord John Russell, relative to the progress of these very measures, should be allowed by the Protectionists to pass *sub silentio*. This 'pledge,' made by the noble lord for himself and his friends, was 'scrupulously observed.' Nevertheless, after all this, a letter arrived from the Secretary of the Treasury, addressed to the noble lord, stating that the secretary 'had not been authorized in saying as much as he had said,' and requesting that the conversation which had taken place might be considered private. Upon this, Lord George Bentinck drew up a statement, 'setting forth all that had passed,' and forwarded it to the secretary as his reply. Subsequently, he met that gentleman, who admitted that 'every word in that statement, as respected the conversation which had passed, was perfectly

correct.'

This being the state of the case, on the second night of the debate on Mr. Eliot Yorke's amendment, which we have noticed, and after the adjournment had been moved and carried, the government proceeded with some motions of form, which indicated their intention to secure, if possible, the third reading of the Corn Bill before Easter. Upon this, Lord George Bentinck, after a hurried and apparently agitated conversation with the Secretary of the Treasury and others connected with the government, rose to move the adjournment of the House. He then gave as his reason the circumstances which we have briefly conveyed. A scene of considerable confusion occurred; the Secretary of the Treasury admitted the correctness of the statement; the First Lord of the Treasury rejected the alleged authority of the secretary. Mr. Tuffnell, on the part of the Whigs, intimated that public business could not be carried on if the recognized organs were repudiated by their chief. The feeling of all parties coincided with Mr. Tuffnell; finally, an Irish repealer rose and announced that the government were bartering their Corn Bill to secure coercion to Ireland. Lord George Bentinck said the Coercion Bill was 'a second Curfew Act,' that nothing but necessity could justify it, and if it were necessary it must be immediate. Sir Robert remained irritated and obstinate. He would not give up a stage either of the Corn Bill or the Coercion Bill; he wanted to advance both before Easter. The mere division of the House between Free-traders and Protectionists had already ceased; there were breakers ahead, and it was not difficult from this night to perceive that the course of the government would not be so summary as they had once expected.

This strange interlude occurred after midnight on the 26th of March. On Friday, the 27th, the House divided on the amendment of Mr. Eliot Yorke, and the Corn Bill was read for the second time. On the reassembling of the House on Monday, the 30th, an extraordinary scene took place.

It appears that the cabinet, after painful deliberation, had arrived at the conclusion that, notwithstanding the importance of sending up the Corn Bill to the House of Lords before Easter, it was absolutely necessary to proceed at once with the Coercion Bill; and it was resolved that the Secretary of State should on this evening lay before the House the facts and reasons which 'induce the Government to believe in the necessity of the measure.' Mr. O'Connell and his followers had already announced their intention of opposing the first reading of the bill, an allowable but very unusual course. It is competent to the House of Commons to refuse a first reading to any bill sent down to it; but the journals afford few examples of the exercise of such a privilege. A member of the House

of Lords may lay on the table, as a matter of pure right, any bill which he thinks proper to introduce, and it is read a first time as a matter of course; the orders of the House of Commons are different, and a member must obtain permission before he introduces a bill. This permission is occasionally refused; but when a bill comes from the House of Lords, the almost invariable custom is to read it for the first time without discussion. There are, however, as we have observed, instances to the contrary, and the Irish Coercion Bill of '33 was one of them. So pregnant a precedent could not be forgotten on the present occasion. The government therefore were prepared for an opposition to the first reading of their bill; but trusting to the strength of their case and the assumed support of the Whig party, they believed that this opposition would not be stubborn, more especially as there were numerous stages of the measure on which the views of its opponents might be subsequently expressed, and as they themselves were prepared to engage that they would not proceed further than this first reading until the Corn Bill had passed the House of Commons. The consternation, therefore, of the government could scarcely be concealed, when they found on Monday night that they had to encounter a well-organized party opposition, headed by Sir William Somerville, and sanctioned and supported in debate by Lord John Russell and Sir George Grey.

It would seem indeed a difficult and somewhat graceless office for the Whigs to oppose the first reading of a government bill, concerning, too, the highest duties of administration, which had received such unqualified approval from all the leading members of their party in the House of Lords, who had competed in declarations of its necessity and acknowledgments of its moderation, while they only regretted the too tardy progress of a measure so indispensable to the safety of the country and the security of her Majesty's subjects. A curious circumstance, however, saved them from this dilemma, which yet in the strange history of faction they had nevertheless in due time to encounter.

As the Coercion Bill coming from the Lords appeared on the paper of the day in the form of a notice of motion, the Secretary of State, this being a day on which orders have precedence, had to move that such orders of the day should be postponed, so that he might proceed with the motion on the state of Ireland, of which notice had been given. The strict rule of the House is, that on Mondays and Fridays, orders of the day should have precedence of notices of motion, so that it was impossible for the Secretary of State to make his motion, that a certain bill (the Protection of Life—Ireland—Bill) should be read a first time without permission of the House, a permission always granted as a matter of course on such nights to the government, since the business which can be

brought forward, whether in the shape of orders or motions, is purely government business, and thus the interests and privilege of no independent member of Parliament can be affected by a relaxation of the rules which the convenience of a ministry and the conduct of public business occasionally require. However, on this night, no sooner had the Secretary of State made, in a few formal words, this formal request, than up sprang Sir William Somerville to move an amendment, that the orders of the day should not be postponed, which he supported in a spirited address, mainly on the ground of the great inconvenience that must be suffered from the postponement of the Corn Bill. The motion of the Secretary of State would produce a long, exciting, and exasperating debate. Time would be lost—for what? To advance one stage of a measure which it was avowedly not the intention of the government to press at the present moment. Sir William concluded with a very earnest appeal to Lord George Bentinck and his friends, who might at no very distant period have the government of Ireland entrusted to them, not, for the sake of a momentary postponement of the Corn Bill, to place themselves, by voting for this measure of coercion, in collision with the Irish nation.’ He called upon Lord George Bentinck to weigh the position in which he was placed.

This amendment was seconded by Mr. Smith O’Brien, the member for the county of Limerick, who warned the government that they ‘were entering on a contest which would continue for months.’ He taunted the minister with governing the country without a party. What chance was there of reconciliation with his estranged friends? After the treatment of that ‘disavowed plenipotentiary,’ the Secretary of the Treasury, who would be again found willing to undertake the mission of patching up a truce? He was not present when the terms of the treaty were exposed: but he understood, that if the government introduced this Coercion Bill before Easter, then that Lord George Bentinck would deem it wise, proper, and expedient; but if after Easter, then the complexion and character of the bill were, in the noble lord’s judgment, utterly transformed, and it was declared to be quite untenable and unconstitutional. Was that the kind of support on which the government calculated for passing this measure?

The Secretary of State made a dexterous, conciliatory, almost humble address, in reply to the taunts of Mr. Smith O’Brien. He said that he was well aware of the fact of which he had been just reminded, that, in the present state of parties, the declared adherents of the government were a small minority; he even, while excusing the delay in the progress of the Irish measure, reminded the House of the curious fact, that since the meeting of Parliament, two successive Irish

secretaries had lost their seats in the House of Commons in consequence of supporting the administration of which they were members.

The case of the government was really so good and clear, that for a moment it seemed the opposition could hardly persist in their unusual proceeding: but this was a night of misfortunes.

There had been for some time a smouldering feud between the secretary and the Recorder of Dublin. The learned gentleman had seized the occasion which the present state of parties afforded, and in the course of the recent debate on the second reading of the Corn Bill, had declared that the asserted famine in Ireland was, on the part of the government, 'a great exaggeration.' The secretary had addressed himself particularly to this observation in his speech on the 27th, the night of the division, and had noticed it in a tone of acerbity. He had even intimated that it might have been used by one who was a disappointed solicitor for high office, and whom the government had declined to assist in an unwarrantable arrangement of the duties and salary of the judicial post he at present occupied. The learned Recorder, justly indignant at this depreciating innuendo, resolved to make an opportunity on the following Monday for his vindication and retort. He rose, therefore, immediately after the skilful and winning appeal of the secretary, and pronounced an invective against the right honourable gentleman which was neither ill-conceived nor ill-delivered. It revived the passions that for a moment seemed inclined to lull, and the Protectionists, who on this occasion were going to support the government, forgot the common point of union, while the secretary was described as 'the evil genius of the cabinet.'

After this, it was impossible to arrest the course of debate. Mr. O'Connell, who appeared to be in a state of great debility, made one of those acute points for which he was distinguished. He said the government complained of the threat held out by those who opposed the bill, that they would avail themselves of the forms of the House to give it every opposition in their power. But what did the government do themselves? Why, they were trying to trample upon one of the sessional orders and to abrogate the forms of the House in order to coerce the Irish people. Lord George Bentinck said, that 'the chief minister had told them, that this was a bill to put down murder and assassination; in that case, if this bill were delayed, the blood of every man murdered in Ireland was on the head of her Majesty's ministers.' Sir George Grey followed, and avoiding any discussion of the state of Ireland, in which Lord George had entered, supported the amendment of Sir William Somerville, on the broad ground that the bill for the repeal of the corn laws ought not to be for a moment delayed. 'The debates on



that measure had continued several weeks; and all who had any lengthened parliamentary experience must be convinced, that if the further progress of the Corn Bill was postponed until after Easter, they would have much longer and protracted debates in its future stages, than if the bill were pushed *de die in diem*. As he had understood, the government had intended that this bill should have gone up to the House of Lords before Easter, when it would have been printed, and the second reading could have taken place at an early day after the holidays; but if it were put off until after Easter, he would defy any man to show any reasonable expectation of its getting to a second reading in the other House before June, or July, or even August.' This was encouraging, and the plot seemed to thicken. The Secretary at War was put up by the government to neutralize the effect of the speech of Sir George Grey, and he said, 'I speak not only as a cabinet minister, but also as a considerable Irish proprietor.' He said, 'that anything so horrible as the state of demoralization and crime in which many parts of Ireland were plunged, anything so perfect as the suspension of the law in those parts of the country, anything, in short, so complete as the abrogation of liberty that obtained there, was, perhaps never known.' He thought that, 'no man and no minister could, under these circumstances, decline to admit that every and any measure ought to be postponed until a division had been taken, at least upon the principle of a measure which had for its object the suppression of these horrors.' After such a declaration it was clear the government were in a false position when by the same organ it had to state, 'that in asking to read this bill to-night, they only intended to postpone the Corn Bill for one night.'

Lord John Russell following, admitted, that 'in voting for the motion of Sir William Somerville it was not to be supposed, that if the Secretary of State made out a case, he would not support the government bill;' yet how the secretary was ever to find an opportunity of making out his case, if the amendment of Sir William Somerville was carried, was not very apparent. Sir Robert Peel, who was disquieted by the whole proceedings connected with the Coercion Bill, irritated by the episode of 'the disavowed plenipotentiary,' from which he did not for some time recover, and really alarmed at the indefinite prospect of delay in passing his all-important measures which now began to open, could not conceal his vexation in the remarks which he offered, and speaking of the amendment as one 'of a frivolous character,' indignant cries of 'No, no,' from his usual admirers, obliged him to withdraw the expression. His feelings were not soothed when, later in the evening, even Mr. Cobden rose to deplore the conduct of that minister whom he otherwise so much admired. 'He certainly regarded it as a great calamity. Something had actuated the government which he could not

understand. He had a perfect belief in the sincerity of the prime minister, but in all human probability the Corn Bill would not now enter the House of Lords before the beginning or middle of May; and when it would come out again, heaven only knew!’

The House now divided, and being supported by all the Protectionists present, the government had a majority of thirty-nine, so the standing order was for that night rescinded; and, although the hour was late for such a statement, the secretary proceeded with the official exposition. Notwithstanding the depressing circumstances of the previous debate, the speech of Sir James Graham was distinguished by all that lucid arrangement of details and that comprehensive management of his subject which distinguished him. The statement made a great impression upon the House and the country; but, unfortunately for the government, the more necessary they made the measure appear, the more unjustifiable was their conduct in not immediately and vehemently pursuing it. They had, indeed, in the speech from the throne at the commencement of this memorable session, taken up a false position for their campaign; and we shall see, as we pursue this narrative of these interesting events, that the fall of Sir Robert Peel was perhaps occasioned not so much by his repeal of the corn laws as by the mistake in tactics which this adroit and experienced parliamentary commander so strangely committed.

On this night of the 30th the government made no advance; immediately after the secretary had finished, the followers of Mr. O’Connell moved the adjournment of the House, and persisted in this line notwithstanding the almost querulous appeal of the first minister.

## CHAPTER V.

*The Passing of O'Connell.*

LORD GEORGE wrote the next morning (Tuesday, March 31st) to a friend, who had not been able to attend the debate: 'I look upon last night as the most awkward night the government have had yet; I believe they would have given their ears to have been beaten. We have now fairly set them and the tail at loggerheads, and I cannot see how they are to get another stage of either the tariff or Corn Bill before next Tuesday at any rate. I doubt if they will do anything before Easter.'

It was understood that the House would adjourn for the Easter recess on the 8th instant. There were therefore only two nights remaining for government business before the holidays. On the first of these (Friday, April the 3rd), Mr. O'Connell had announced that he should state his views at length on the condition of Ireland, and the causes of these agrarian outrages. Accordingly, when the order of the day for resuming the adjourned debate was read, he rose at once to propose an amendment to the motion. He sat in an unusual place—in that generally occupied by the leader of the opposition—and spoke from the red box, convenient to him from the number of documents to which he had to refer. His appearance was of great debility, and the tones of his voice were very still. His words, indeed, only reached those who were immediately around him and the ministers sitting on the other side of the green table, who listened with that interest and respectful attention which became the occasion.

It was a strange and touching spectacle to those who remembered the form of colossal energy and the clear and thrilling tones that had once startled, disturbed, and controlled senates. Mr. O'Connell was on his legs for nearly two hours, assisted occasionally in the management of his documents by some devoted aide-de-camp. To the House generally it was a performance in dumb show, a feeble old man muttering before a table; but respect for the great parliamentary personage kept all as orderly as if the fortunes of a party hung upon his rhetoric; and though not an accent reached the gallery, means were taken that next morning the country should not lose the last and not the least interesting of the speeches of one who had so long occupied and agitated the mind of nations.

This remarkable address was an abnegation of the whole policy of Mr. O'Connell's career. It proved, by a mass of authentic evidence ranging over a

long term of years, that Irish outrage was the consequence of physical misery, and that the social evils of that country could not be successfully encountered by political remedies. To complete the picture, it concluded with a panegyric of Ulster and a patriotic quotation from Lord Clare.

Lord John Russell, who, as an experienced parliamentary leader, had already made more than one effort to extricate the Whigs from the consequences of the hearty support given to the government measures in the other House by Lords Lansdowne and Clanricarde, and even by Lord Grey, ventured to-night even to say that if he should agree that the House would do well to assent to the first reading of this bill, he thought he was bound to state also that in the future stages of it, he should have 'objections to offer, going to the foundations of some of its principal provisions.'

His speech was curious, as perhaps the last considerable manifesto of Whig delusion respecting Ireland. Coercion Bills might be occasionally necessary; no doubt of it; Lord Grey had once a Coercion Bill, and Lord John Russell had voted for it; but then remedial measures ought to be introduced with coercive ones: the evil should be repressed, but also cured. Thus, Lord Althorp, when the government introduced their great Coercion Bill, introduced also a measure which, besides making a great reform in the Protestant Church of Ireland, exempted the whole Catholic community of Ireland from the payment of church cess, which had previously been felt as a very great grievance. On another day Lord Althorp declared his intention of pressing through Parliament a Jury Bill, which had been brought into the House the previous session, but which was allowed to drop in the House of Lords.

Again, there was another declaration which Lord Althorp had made, which, somehow or other, seemed to have been forgotten; it was a declaration with respect to the municipal corporations of Ireland. Lord Althorp said it was exceedingly desirable that the institutions of the two countries should be assimilated as much as possible; and that, as a general rule, the corporate bodies of Ireland should be the same as England. Mr. O'Connell had said on that occasion that there was no greater grievance in Ireland than the existence of corporations in their then shape. Lord John contrasted this language of Lord Althorp, 'simple, plain, emphatic, and decided,' with the language of the government of Sir Robert Peel; and held up to admiration the Whig policy of 1833, certainly coercive, but with remedial measures—a measure for the abolition of church cess, introduced ten days before the Coercion Bill, and a promise of municipal reform made simultaneously with the proclamation of martial law. This was real statesmanship and touching the root of the evil.

Whereas 'Sir Robert Peel had only consented to passing the Municipal Bill in a crippled state, and only now (in 1846) promised, that the corporations of Ireland should be placed on the same footing as the corporations of England.' Who could be surprised that such a policy-should end in famine and pestilence?

The followers of Mr. O'Connell again succeeded in adjourning the debate until Monday the 6th. On that day Sir Robert Peel made 'an earnest appeal' to extricate himself from the almost perilous position in which he found his administration suddenly involved. In case the division on the first reading of the Irish Bill should not take place that night, he endeavoured to prevail on those members who had notices on the paper for the following night (Tuesday the 7th), the last night before the holidays, to relinquish their right and to permit the Irish debate to proceed and conclude. 'He had no wish to interfere with the due discussion of the measure; but he believed that the Irish members, if they permitted the House to proceed with the Corn Bill, by concluding the discussion on the Irish Bill, would be rendering an essential service to their country.'

But this earnest appeal only influenced still more the fiery resolves of Mr. Smith O'Brien and his friends. They threw the responsibility for delay of the Corn Bill on the government. The inconvenience which the country suffered was occasioned by the minister, not by the Irish members. He ought, on Friday last, to have adjourned the discussion on the Coercion Bill until after Easter. He and other members who were on the paper for to-morrow would willingly relinquish their right of priority in favour of the Corn Bill, or of any measure of a remedial kind, but not in favour of a Coercion Bill. He did not wish to have any concealment with the minister as to the course which the Irish members would pursue. It was their bounden duty to take care that *pari passu* with the discussion of the Coercion Bill there should be discussions as to the misgovernment of Ireland; and that, in the absence of any remedial measures of the government, they should have an opportunity of suggesting such as they thought advisable for removing those evils which they utterly denied that the measure now before the House would remove.

In vain Sir Robert, in his blandest tones and with that remarkable command of a temper not naturally serene which distinguished him, acknowledged to a certain degree the propriety of the course intimated by Mr. Smith O'Brien; but suggested at the same time that it was compatible with allowing the Irish bill to be now read for a first time, since on its subsequent stages Mr. O'Brien and his friends would have the full opportunity which they desired, of laying before the House the whole condition of the country. All was useless. No less a personage than Mr. John O'Connell treated the appeal with contempt, and lectured the first

minister on the 'great mistake' which he had made. Little traits like these revealed the true parliamentary position of the once omnipotent leader of the great Conservative party. With the legions of the Protectionists watching their prey in grim silence, while the liberal sections were united in hostile manouvres against the government, it was recognised at once that the great minister had a staff without an army; not a reconnoitring could take place without the whole cabinet being under orders, and scarcely a sharpshooter sallied from the opposite ranks without the prime minister returning his fire in person.

Sir Robert Peel mournfully observed that he 'did not wish to provoke a recriminatory discussion,' and he resigned himself to his fate. Immediately the third night of the adjourned debate on the Irish bill commenced, and was sustained principally by the Irish members until a late hour. It had not been the intention of Lord George Bentinck to have spoken on this occasion, though he had never been absent for a moment from his seat, and watched all that occurred with that keen relish which was usual with him when he thought things were going right; but having been personally and not very courteously appealed to by the late Mr. Dillon Browne, and deeming also the occasion, just before the holidays, a not unhappy one, he rose and concluded the debate. His speech was not long, it was not prepared, and it was very animated.

Recapitulating himself the main features of the disturbed district, he said: 'It is because of these things, sir, that I am prepared to support at least the first reading of a bill, which I freely admit to be most unconstitutional in itself.'

Noticing a speech made in the course of the evening by Lord Morpeth, who had himself once been chief secretary of the Lord Lieutenant, Lord George thought it discreet to remind the House of the unequivocal support given to this bill by the Whig leaders in another place: 'Sir, I think when we see all the great leaders of the Whig party supporting the measure elsewhere, we cannot be justly impugned for doing as they do.' Lord Morpeth had referred to 'remedial measures which he thinks should be introduced for Ireland: to measures for the extension of the municipal, and also of the parliamentary, franchise of that country; and he expressed his desire to see those franchises put on the same footing as the franchises of England.' 'For the life of me,' exclaimed Lord George, 'I confess, I cannot see in what way the extension of political franchises of any description in Ireland would afford a remedy for the evils which this measure aims to suppress. I think, sir, it is impossible not to perceive that there is a connection between agrarian outrage and the poverty of the people.'

After noticing the inadequate poor-law which then existed in Ireland, he added: 'There is also another point immediately connected with this subject to

which I must refer. I allude, sir, to the system of absenteeism. I cannot disguise from myself the conviction, that many of the evils of Ireland arise from the system of receiving rents by absentee landlords who spend them in other countries. I am well aware that, in holding this doctrine, I am not subscribing to the creed of political economists. I am well aware that Messrs. Senior and M'Culloch hold that it makes no difference whether the Irish landlord spends his rents in Dublin, on his Irish estates, in London, in Bath, or elsewhere. I profess, sir, I cannot understand that theory. I believe that the first ingredient in the happiness of a people is, that the gentry should reside on their native soil, and spend their rents among those from whom they receive them. I cannot help expressing a wish that some arrangement may be made connected with the levying of the poor-rate in Ireland, by which absentee landlords may be made to contribute in something like a fair proportion to the wants of the poor in the district in which they ought to reside. There is an arrangement in the hop-growing districts in England in respect to tithe, which might, I think, afford a very useful suggestion. There are two tithes: the one, the ordinary tithe; the other, extraordinary; which is levied only so long as the land is cultivated in hops. I think if there were two poor-rates introduced into Ireland, the one applying to all occupiers of land, and the other to all those who did not spend a certain portion of the year on some portion of their estates in Ireland, it would prove useful. I think, that by thus appealing to their interests, it might induce absentee landlords to reside much more in Ireland, than is now unfortunately the case.

'But, sir, I think there are other remedial measures. Some days ago, the Secretary of State told the member for Stroud (Mr. Poulett Scrope), when he suggested some such measure, that he was treading on dangerous ground, and that the doctrines he was advocating might be written in letters of blood in Ireland; but, notwithstanding all this, I still say that I think measures might be introduced for improving the relations between landlord and tenant in Ireland. I do not think that some guarantee might and ought to be given to the tenantry of Ireland for the improvements they make upon their farms.

'Sir, the Secretary of State, in introducing this measure, maintained a doctrine which, I think, much more likely to be written in letters of blood, for he bound up the question of the corn laws with the present one. He said, that unless he could, have prevailed on his colleagues to accede to his free-trade measures as regards corn, he would not have introduced this bill. Why, sir, far from giving food to the people of Ireland, in my opinion the measures of her Majesty's ministers will take away from the people of Ireland their food, by destroying the

profits of their only manufacture—the manufacture of corn—and injuring their agriculture; depriving them of employment; in fact, by taking away from them the very means of procuring subsistence. Sir, I cannot see how the repeal of those laws affecting corn can be in any way connected with the suppression of outrage and the protection of life. What is this but to say, that unless we have a free trade in corn, we must be prepared to concede a free trade in agrarian outrage—a free trade in maiming and houghing cattle—a free trade in incendiarism—a free trade in the burning and sacking of houses—a free trade in midnight murder, and in noon-day assassination? What is this but telling the people of Ireland, that assassination, murder, incendiarism, are of such light consideration in the eyes of the Secretary of State, that their sanction or suppression by the minister of the crown hinges upon the condition of the corn market and the difference in the price of potatoes?

‘Sir, what has the potato disease to do with the outrages in Ireland? Some think a great deal. I have taken the trouble of looking into the matter. I have examined into the state of crime in at least five counties—Tipperary, Roscommon, Limerick, Leitrim, and Clare—and I find, that during the three months prior to the first appearance of the potato disease, and when in fact food was as cheap in Ireland as at almost any former period—when plenty abounded in all quarters of the empire, that the amount of crime exceeded that in the three months immediately following. Now, those who doubt this statement will have an opportunity of ascertaining the correctness of my figures, for I will not deal in general assertions. Well then, sir, I find in the three months, May, June, and July last, that the number of crimes committed in the five counties I have mentioned amounted to no less than 1,180, while in the three months immediately after the potato disease, or famine as it is called, the amount of crime committed in the same three months was not 1,180, but 870. I should like to know, therefore, what this agrarian outrage has to do with the potato famine; and where is the justification for a minister coming down to this House, and declaring that unless we pass a free-trade measure, we are not to obey her Majesty’s commands by passing a measure for the protection of life in Ireland. Why, sir, I think when this language reaches the people of Ireland—coming, too, as it does from the Treasury, above all, from the Secretary of State for the Home Department—there is indeed danger to be apprehended that such a doctrine may be written in letters of blood in that country. Why, sir, if we are to hear such language as this from that minister of the crown charged with the peace of the country, we may just as well have Captain Rock established as lord lieutenant in the castle of Dublin, a Whitefoot for chief secretary, and Molly M’Guire installed at Whitehall with the



seals of the home department.'

And afterwards he remarked, 'I have been taunted that when I may be entrusted with the government of Ireland, I should perhaps then learn that Tyrone was an Orange county. Sir, in answer to that taunt, I must take leave to ask what expression of mine, either in this house or out of it, justifies any such remark? When or where can it be said that I have ever permitted myself to know any distinction between an Orangeman and a Catholic; when, in the whole course of my parliamentary career, have I ever given a vote or uttered a sentiment hostile or unfriendly to the Roman Catholics, either of England or Ireland?' This speech, though delivered generally in favour of the Irish bill, attracted very much the attention, and, as it appeared afterwards, the approbation of those Irish members, who, although sitting on the Liberal benches, did not acknowledge the infallible authority of Mr. O'Connell, and was the origin of a political connection between them and Lord George Bentinck, which, on more than one subsequent occasion, promised to bring important results.

Two successive motions were now made for the adjournment of the debate, and Sir Robert Peel at length said, that he 'saw it was useless to persist.' He agreed to the adjournment until the next day, with the understanding that if it did come on, he would name the time to which it should be postponed after the holidays.

Upon this, Sir William Somerville made one more appeal to the minister to postpone the further discussion of the Irish bill altogether until the Corn Bill had passed the Commons. He intimated that unless the government at once adopted this resolution, they would find themselves after Easter in the same perplexity which now paralyzed them. They would not be permitted to bring on this measure except upon government nights, and the discussion might then last weeks.

The minister, exceedingly embarrassed, would not, however, relent. On the following day, when he moved the adjournment of the House for the holidays, he reduced the vacation three days, in order to obtain Friday, a government night, which otherwise would have been absorbed in the holidays, and he announced the determination of the government again to proceed on that night with the Irish bill in preference to the Corn Bill. The Irish members glanced defiance, and the Protectionists could scarcely conceal their satisfaction. The reputation of Sir Robert Peel for parliamentary management seemed to be vanishing; never was a government in a more tottering state; and the Whigs especially began to renew their laments that the Edinburgh letter and its consequences had prevented the settlement of the corn question from devolving to the natural arbitrator in the

great controversy, their somewhat rash but still unrivalled leader, Lord John Russell.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *A Third Party*

THE members of the Protectionist opposition returned to their constituents with the sanguine feelings which success naturally inspires. Their efforts had surprised, not displeased, the country; the elections were in their favour; the government business halted; the delay in the calculated arrival of the famine had taken the edge off the necessity which it was supposed would have already carried the Corn Bill through the Commons; while the twin measure which the throes of Ireland had engendered had developed elements of opposition which even the calmest observer thought might possibly end in overthrow. Above all, that seemed to have happened which the most experienced in parliamentary life had always deemed to be impracticable; namely, the formation of a third party in the House of Commons.

How completely this latter and difficult result was owing to the abilities and energies of one man, and how anomalous was the position which he chose to occupy in not taking the formal lead of a party which was entirely guided by his example, were convictions and considerations that at this juncture much occupied men's minds. And it was resolved among the most considerable of the country gentlemen to make some earnest and well-combined effort, during the recess, to induce Lord George Bentinck to waive the unwillingness he had so often expressed of becoming their avowed and responsible leader.

When Lord George Bentinck first threw himself into the breach, he was influenced only by a feeling of indignation at the manner in which he thought the Conservative party had been trifled with by the government and Lord Stanley, his personal friend and political leader, deserted by a majority of the cabinet. As affairs developed, and it became evident that the bulk of the Conservative party throughout the country had rallied round his standard, Lord George could not conceal from himself the consequences of such an event, or believe that it was possible that the party in the House of Commons, although Lord Stanley might eventually think fit to guide it by his counsels, and become, if necessary, personally responsible for its policy, could be long held together unless it were conducted by a leader present in the same assembly, and competent under all circumstances to represent its opinions in debate. Lord George, although a very proud man, had no vanity or self-conceit. He took a very humble view of his own powers, and he had at the same time a very exalted one of those necessary

to a leader of the House of Commons. His illustrious connection, Mr. Canning, was his standard. He had been the private secretary of that minister in his youth, and the dazzling qualities of that eminent personage had influenced the most susceptible time of life of one who was very tenacious of his impressions. What Lord George Bentinck appreciated most in a parliamentary speaker was brilliancy: quickness of perception, promptness of repartee, clear and concise argument, a fresh and felicitous quotation, wit and picture, and, if necessary, a passionate appeal that should never pass the line of high-bred sentiment. Believing himself not to be distinguished by these rhetorical qualities, he would listen with no complacency to those who would urge in private that the present period of parliamentary life was different from the days of Mr. Canning, and that accumulated facts and well-digested reasoning on their bearing, a command of all the materials of commercial controversy, and a mastery of the laws that regulate the production and distribution of public wealth, combined with habits of great diligence and application, would ensure the attention of a popular assembly, especially when united to a high character and great social position. This might be urged; but he would only shake his head, with a ray of humour twinkling in his piercing eyes, and say, in a half-drawling tone, 'If Mr. Canning were alive, he could do all this better than any of them, and be not a whit less brilliant.'

There was also another reason why Lord George Bentinck was unwilling to assume the post of leader of the Conservative party, and this very much influenced him. Sprung from a great Whig house, and inheriting all the principles and prejudices of that renowned political connection which had expelled the Stuarts, he had accepted, in an unqualified sense, the dogma of religious liberty. This principle was first introduced into active politics in order to preserve the possessions of that portion of the aristocracy which had established itself on the plunder of the Church. It was to form the basis of a party which should prevent reaction and restitution of church lands. Whether the principle be a true one, and whether its unqualified application by any party in the state be possible, are questions yet unsettled. It is not probable, for example, that the worship of Juggernaut, which Lord Dalhousie permits in Orissa, would be permitted even by Lord John Russell at Westminster. Even a papist procession is forbidden, and wisely. The application of the principle, however, in Lord George Bentinck's mind, was among other things associated with the public recognition of the Roman Catholic hierarchy by the state, and a provision for its maintenance in Ireland in accordance with the plan of Mr. Pitt. What had happened, with respect to the vote on the endowment of Maynooth in 1845, had

convinced him that his opinions on this subject presented an insuperable barrier to his ever becoming the leader of a party which had contributed three-fourths of the memorable minority on that occasion. It was in vain that it was impressed upon him by those most renowned for their Protestant principles, and who were at the same time most anxious to see Lord George Bentinck in his right position, that the question of Maynooth was settled, and there was now no prospect of future measures of a similar character. This was not the opinion of Lord George Bentinck. He nursed in his secret soul a great scheme for the regeneration and settlement of Ireland, which he thought ought to be one of the mainstays of a Conservative party; and it was his opinion that the condition of the Roman Catholic priesthood must be considered.

It was in vain, in order to assist in removing these scruples, that it was represented to him by others that endowment of a priesthood by the state was a notion somewhat old-fashioned, and opposed to the spirit of the age which associated true religious freedom with the full development of the voluntary principle. He listened to these suggestions with distrust, and even with a little contempt. Mr. Canning had been in favour of the endowment of the Irish priesthood—that was sufficient for that particular; and as for the voluntary principle, he looked upon it as priestcraft in disguise; his idea of religious liberty being that all religions should be controlled by the state.

Besides these two prominent objections to accepting the offered post, namely, his unaffected distrust in his parliamentary abilities and his assumed want of concordance with his followers on a great principle of modern politics, we must also remember that his compliance with the request involved no ordinary sacrifice of much which renders life delightful. He was to relinquish pursuits of noble excitement to which he was passionately attached, and to withdraw in a great degree from a circle of high-spirited friends, many of them of different political connection from himself, by whom he was adored. With all his unrivalled powers of application when under the influence of a great impulse, he was constitutionally indolent and even lethargic. There was nothing, therefore, in his position or his temper to prick him on in '46; it was nothing but his strong will acting upon his indignation which sustained him. It is not, therefore, marvellous that he exhibited great reluctance to commit irretrievably his future life. At a subsequent period, indignation had become ambition, and circumstances of various kinds had made him resolve to succeed or die.

On the adjournment, Lord George had gone down to Newmarket, which he greatly enjoyed after his exhausting campaign. Here some letters on the subject of the leadership passed, but nothing was definitely arranged till some time after

the re-assembling of Parliament. For convenience we mention here the result. The wish of the party was repeatedly and personally urged by the popular and much-esteemed member for Dorsetshire, and at last Lord George consented to their wishes, on these conditions: that he should relinquish his post the moment the right man was discovered, who, according to his theory, would ultimately turn up; and secondly, that his responsible post was not to restrict or embarrass him on any questions in which a religious principle was involved.

Before, however, this negotiation was concluded, and while yet at Newmarket, he wrote to a friend, the day before the House met (April 16th).

‘I think there is no doubt, but that the Irish will take care of Friday (tomorrow) night. I have not much hope of their keeping up the debate beyond Friday.

‘It is quite clear from O’Connell’s language at Dublin that we have no hope from the Irish tail.

‘I still think myself, that delay affords a great chance of something turning up in our favour; already the rejection of any reciprocity by M. Guizot has provided us with a grand weapon, which, I trust, you drive well home into \* \* \* \*’s vitals; a very short delay would probably bring over similar intelligence from the United States and their Congress. I trust we shall have an important deputation over from Canada, representing that the inevitable results of these free-trade measures in corn and timber will be to alienate the feelings of our Canadian colonists, and to induce them to follow their sordid interests, which will now, undoubtedly, be best consulted and most promoted by annexation to the United States.

‘Lord———’s intended tergiversation has been, I believe, some time known; he admits that all farmers without capital, in short, all little men, must be sacrificed. What a barbarous and odious policy, that goes upon the principle that none but capitalists are henceforth to be allowed to live, as farmers at least. We must turn the tables upon Lord———and all such heartless doctrinaires!

‘I fear the majority in the Lords will be greater than was expected; I am told that we must endeavour to put ministers in a minority two or three times before the bill gets to its second reading in the Lords, no matter upon what question. I hear there are many peers whose votes depend entirely upon their notions, whether or not Peel can, by hook or by crook, carry on.’

## CHAPTER VII.

### *Railroads for Ireland*

IF WE take a general view of the career of Lord George Bentinck during the last year—from the time indeed when he was trying to find a lawyer to convey his convictions to the House of Commons until the moment when her Majesty prorogued her Parliament, the results will be found to be very remarkable. So much was never done so unexpectedly by any public man in the same space of time. He had rallied a great party which seemed hopelessly routed; he had established a parliamentary discipline, in their ranks which old political connections, led by experienced statesmen, have seldom surpassed; he had brought forward from those ranks, entirely through his discrimination and by his personal encouragement, considerable talents in debate; he had himself proved a master in detail and in argument of all the great questions arising out of the reconstruction of our commercial system; he had made a vindication of the results of the Protective principle as applied to agriculture, which certainly, so far as the materials are concerned, is the most efficient plea that ever was urged in the House of Commons in favour of the abrogated law; he had exhibited similar instances of investigation in considerable statements with respect to the silk trade and other branches of our industry; he had asserted the claims of the productive classes in Ireland, and in our timber and sugar producing colonies, with the effect which results from a thorough acquaintance with a subject; he had promulgated distinct principles with regard to our financial as well as to our commercial system; he had maintained the expediency of relieving the consumer by the repeal of excise in preference to customs' duties, and of establishing fiscal reciprocity as a condition of mercantile exchange. On subjects of a more occasional but analogous nature he had shown promptitude and knowledge, as in the instances of the urgent condition of Mexico and of our carrying trade with the Spanish colonies, both of which he brought forward in the last hours of the session, but the importance of which motions was recognized by all parties. Finally, he had attracted the notice, and in many instances obtained the confidence, of large bodies of men in the country, who recognized in him a great capacity of labour combined with firmness of character and honesty of purpose.

At the close of the session (August 28), Lord George visited Norfolk, where he received an entertainment from his constituents at King's Lynn, proud of their member, and to whom he vindicated the course which he had taken, and offered

his views generally as to the relations which should subsist between the legislation of the country and its industry. From Norfolk he repaired to Belvoir Castle, on a visit to the Duke of Rutland, and was present at a banquet given by the agriculturists of Leicestershire to his friend and supporter the Marquis of Granby. After this he returned to Welbeck, where he seems to have enjoyed a little repose. Thus he writes to a friend from that place on the 22nd September:

‘Thanks for your advice, which I am following, having got Lord Malmesbury’s Diary; but I am relapsing into my natural dawdling, lazy, and somnolent habits, and can with difficulty get through the leaders even of the “Times.”

\* \* \* \* ‘The vehemence of the farmers is personal against Peel; it is quite clear that the rising price of wheat has cured their alarm. The railway expenditure must keep up prices and prosperity, both of which would have been far greater without free trade; but in face of high prices, railway prosperity, and potato famine, depend upon it we shall have an uphill game to fight.

‘O’Connell talks of Parliament meeting in November, to mend the Irish Labour-rate Act. Do you believe this?’

The Labour-rate Act, passed at the end of the session (‘46), was one by which the Lord Lieutenant was enabled to require special barony sessions to meet in order to make presentments for public works for the employment of the people, the whole of the money requisite for their construction to be supplied by the imperial treasury, though to be afterwards repaid. The machinery of this act did not work satisfactorily, but the government ultimately made the necessary alterations on their own responsibility, and obtained an indemnity from Parliament when it met in ‘47. The early session, therefore, talked of by Mr. O’Connell, became unnecessary. As the only object of this Labour-rate Act was to employ the people, and as it was supposed there were no public works of a reproductive nature which could be undertaken on a sufficient scale to ensure that employment, the Irish people were occupied, towards the end of the autumn of ‘46, mainly in making roads, which, as afterwards described by the first minister, ‘were not wanted.’ In the month of September more than thirty thousand persons were thus employed; but when the harvest was over, and it was ascertained that its terrible deficiency had converted pauperism into famine, the numbers on the public works became greatly increased, so that at the end of November the amount of persons engaged was four hundred thousand, receiving wages at the rate of nearly five millions sterling per annum. These immense amounts went on increasing every week, and when Parliament met in February, 1847, five hundred thousand persons were employed on these public works,



which could bring no possible public advantage, at an expense to the country of between £700,000 and £800,000 per month. No Board of Works could efficiently superintend such a multitude, or prevent flagrant imposition, though the dimensions of that department appeared almost proportionably to have expanded. What with commissioners, chief clerks, check clerks, and pay clerks, the establishment of the Board of Works in Ireland, at the end of '46, consisted of more than eleven thousand persons.

Always intent upon Ireland, this condition of affairs early and earnestly attracted the attention of Lord George Bentinck. So vast an expenditure in unproductive labour dismayed him. He would not easily assent to the conclusion that profitable enterprise under the circumstances was impossible. Such a conclusion seemed to him unnatural, and that an occasion where we commenced with despair justified a bold and venturesome course. The field is legitimately open to speculation where all agree that all is hopeless. The construction of harbours, the development of fisheries, the redemption of waste lands, were resources which had been often canvassed, and whatever their recommendations, with the exception of the last, they were necessarily very limited; and the last, though it might afford prompt, could hardly secure profitable, employment. Prompt and profitable employment was the object which Lord George wished to accomplish. Where millions were to be expended by the state, something more advantageous to the community should accrue than the temporary subsistence of the multitude.

Lord George had always been a great supporter of railway enterprise in England, on the ground that, irrespective of all the peculiar advantages of those undertakings, the money was spent in the country; and that if our surplus capital were not directed to such channels, it would go, as it had gone before, to foreign mines and foreign loans, from which in a great degree no return would arrive. When millions were avowedly to be laid out in useless and unprofitable undertakings, it became a question whether it were not wiser even somewhat to anticipate the time when the necessities of Ireland would require railways on a considerable scale; and whether by embarking in such enterprises, we might not only find prompt and profitable employment for the people, but by giving a new character to the country and increasing its social relations and the combinations of its industry, might not greatly advance the period when such modes of communication would be absolutely requisite.

Full of these views, Lord George, in the course of the autumn, consulted in confidence some gentlemen very competent to assist him in such an inquiry, and especially Mr. Robert Stephenson, Mr. Hudson, and Mr. Laing. With their advice

and at their suggestion, two engineers of great ability, Mr. Bidder and Mr. Smith, were despatched to Ireland, personally to investigate the whole question of railroads in that country.

Meditating over the condition of Ireland, a subject very frequently in his thoughts, and of the means to combat its vast and inveterate pauperism, Lord George was frequently in the habit of reverting to the years '41-42 in England, when there were fifteen hundred thousand persons on the parish rates; eighty-three thousand able-bodied men, actually confined within the walls of the workhouse, and more than four hundred thousand able-bodied men receiving out-door relief. What changed all this and restored England in a very brief space to a condition of affluence hardly before known in her annals? Not certainly the alterations in the tariff which were made by Sir Robert Peel at the commencement of his government, prudent and salutary as they were. No one would pretend that the abolition of the slight duty (five-sixteenths of a penny) on the raw material of the cotton manufacturer, or the free introduction of some twenty-seven thousand head of foreign cattle, or even the admission of foreign timber at reduced duties, could have effected this. Unquestionably it was the railway enterprise which then began to prevail that was the cause of this national renovation. Suddenly, and for several years, an additional sum of thirteen millions of pounds sterling a year was spent in the wages of our native industry; two hundred thousand able-bodied labourers received each upon an average twenty-two shillings a week, stimulating the revenue both in excise and customs by their enormous consumption of malt and spirits, tobacco and tea. This was the main cause of the contrast between the England of '41 and the England of '45.

Was there any reason why a proportionate application of the same remedy to Ireland should not proportionately produce a similar result? Was there anything wild or unauthorized in the suggestion? On the contrary: ten years before (1836), the subject had engaged the attention of her Majesty's government, and a royal commission had been issued to inquire into the expediency of establishing railway communication in Ireland. The commissioners, men of great eminence, recommended that a system of railways should be established in Ireland, and by the pecuniary assistance of government. They rested their recommendation mainly on the abundant evidence existing of the vast benefits which easy communication had accomplished in Ireland, and of the complete success which had attended every Parliamentary grant for improving roads in that country.

The weakness of the government, arising from the balanced state of parties, rendered it impossible at that time for them to prosecute the measures recommended by the royal commissioners, though they made an ineffectual

attempt in that direction. Could it be suspected that the recommendation of the commissioners had been biased by any political consideration? Was it a Whig commission attempting to fulfil a Whig object? Another commission, more memorable, at the head of which was the Earl of Devon, was appointed by a Tory government some years afterwards, virtually to consider the condition of the people of Ireland, and the best means for their amelioration. The report of the Devon commission confirmed all the recommendations of the railway commissioners of '36, and pointed to these new methods of communication, by the assistance of loans from the government, as the best means of providing employment for the people.

When Mr. Smith of Deanston was examined by a Parliamentary committee, and asked what measure of all others would be the one most calculated to improve the agriculture and condition of Ireland, he did not reply, as some might have anticipated, that the most efficient measure would be to drain the bogs; but his answer was, 'advance the construction of railways, and then agricultural improvement will speedily follow.'

To illustrate the value of railways to an agricultural population, Mr. Smith, of Deanston, said, 'that the improvement of the land for one mile only on each side of the railway so constructed would be so great, that it would pay the cost of the whole construction.' He added, that there were few districts in Ireland, in which railway communication could be introduced, where the value of the country through which the railway passed would not be raised to an extent equal to the whole cost of the railway.

Arguing on an area of six hundred and forty acres for every square mile, after deducting the land occupied by fences, roads, and buildings, Mr. Smith, of Deanston, entered into a calculation of the gain deliverable from the mere carriage of the produce of the land, and the back carriage of manure, coals, tiles, bricks, and other materials, and estimated the saving through those means on every square mile to more than £300, or something above £600 on 1,280 acres abutting each mile of railway, this being the difference of the cost of carriage under the old mode of conveyance as compared with the new. Following up this calculation, he showed that fifteen hundred miles of railway would improve the land through which it passed to the extent of nearly two million acres at the rate of a mile on each side; and, taken at twenty-five years' purchase, would equal twenty-four millions sterling in the permanent improvement of the land.

The ground, therefore, was sound on which Lord George cautiously, and after due reflection, ventured to place his foot.

And now, after the reports of these two royal commissions, what was the state of railway enterprise in Ireland in the autumn of '46, when a vast multitude could only subsist by being employed by the government, and when the government had avowedly no reproductive or even useful work whereon to place them; but allotted them to operations which were described by Colonel Douglas, the inspector of the government himself, 'as works which would answer no other purpose than that of obstructing the public conveyances?'

In '46, acts of Parliament were in existence authorizing the construction of more than fifteen hundred miles of railway in Ireland, and some of these acts had passed so long as eleven years previously, yet at the end of '46 only one hundred and twenty-three miles of railway had been completed, and only one hundred and sixty-four were in the course of completion, though arrested in their progress from want of funds. Almost in the same period, two thousand six hundred miles of railway had been completed in England, and acts of Parliament had passed for constructing five thousand four hundred miles in addition: in the whole, eight thousand miles.

What then was the reason of this debility in Ireland in prosecuting these undertakings? Were they really not required; were the elements of success wanting? The first element of success in railway enterprise, according to the highest authorities, is population; property is only the second consideration. Now, Ireland in '46 was more densely inhabited than England. A want of population could not therefore be the cause. But a population so impoverished as the Irish could not perhaps avail themselves of the means of locomotion; and yet it appeared from research that the rate of passengers on the two Irish railways that were open greatly exceeded in number that of the passengers upon English and Scotch railways. The average number of passengers on English and Scotch railways was not twelve thousand per mile per annum, while on the Ulster railway the number was nearly twenty-two thousand, and on the Dublin and Drogheda line the number exceeded eighteen thousand.

The cause of the weakness in Ireland to prosecute these undertakings was the total want of domestic capital for the purpose, and the unwillingness of English capitalists to embark their funds in a country whose social and political condition they viewed with distrust, however promising and even profitable the investment might otherwise appear. This was remarkably illustrated by the instance of the Great Southern and Western Railway of Ireland, one of the undertakings of which the completion was arrested by want of funds, yet partially open. Compared with a well-known railway in Great Britain, the Irish railway had cost in its construction  $\hat{\text{£}}15,000$  per mile, and the British upwards of  $\hat{\text{£}}26,000$  per

mile; the weekly traffic on the two railways, allowing for some difference in their extent, was about the same on both, in amount varying from £1,000 to £1,300 per week; yet the unfinished British railway was at £40 premium in the market, and the incomplete Irish railway at £2 discount. It was clear, therefore, that the commercial principle, omnipotent in England, was not competent to cope with the peculiar circumstances of Ireland.

Brooding over the suggestions afforded by the details which we have slightly indicated, Lord George Bentinck, taking into consideration not merely the advantage that would accrue to the country from the establishment of a system of railroads, but also remembering the peculiar circumstances of the times, the absolute necessity of employing the people, and the inevitable advance of public money for that purpose, framed a scheme with reference to all these considerations, and which he believed would meet all the conditions of the case. He spared no thought, or time, or labour, for his purpose. He availed himself of the advice of the most experienced, and prosecuted his researches ardently and thoroughly. When he had matured his scheme, he had it thrown into the form of a parliamentary bill by the ablest hands, and then submitted the whole to the judgment and criticism of those who shared his confidence and counsels. Towards the end of November he was at Knowsley, from whence he communicated with the writer of these pages. ‘I am here hatching secret plans for the next session; and now, if you have not quite abjured politics, as you threatened for the next three months to do, devoting yourself to poetry and romance, I think I ought to have a quiet day with you, in order that we may hold council together and talk over all our policy. I shall be at Harcourt House on the 30th. I shall stay there till the 3rd of December, for a meeting on that day of the Norfolk Estuary Company, of which I am chairman. Would that evening suit you—or Friday—or Wednesday? I am not well acquainted with the geography of Buckinghamshire, but presume you are accessible either by rail or road in less than twelve hours.

‘The activity in the dockyard must be in preparation to interfere in Portugal, to keep King Leopold upon the Portuguese throne: it cannot be for Mexico, for our friend the “Times” formally abandoned Mexico in his leader some days ago.

\*\*\*\* has been entertaining Lord \*\*\*\* in Ireland, and writes: “How Peel must chuckle at the Whig difficulties.” I dare say he does, but in Ireland it seems to me Lord Besborough is putting the fate Irish government to shame, whilst the rupture of the *entente cordiale*, the conquest of California and New Mexico, and the complications in the river Plata,—are complete inheritances from Lord Aberdeen.

‘Eaton has come to life again: else there was a prospect of George Manners quietly succeeding him in Cambridgeshire. I fear we shall do no good in Lincolnshire, notwithstanding the industry of our dear friend the “Morning Post,” in getting hold of Lord Ebrington’s and Lord Rich’s letters to Lord Yarborough. I suppose there is no mistake in Lord Dalhousie (“the large trout”) going out to Bombay with the reversion of Bengal.

‘The duchy of Lancaster is to be put in commission, Lord \* \* \* \* to be one of the commissioners, *but unpaid*. He has begun, I presume, to overcome the false delicacy which prevented his acceptance of office under the Whigs in July. S \* \* \* \* thought G \* \* \* \* was to be another of the Board, but that turns out a mistake, but Lord H \* \* \* \* is to be.

‘The manufacturers are working short time, and reducing wages in all directions, John Bright and Sons at Rochdale among the rest. The Zollverein increasing their import duties on cotton and linen yarn, and putting export duties of 25 per cent. (some of the states at least) on grain.’

We must not omit to record, that in the autumn of this year, at Goodwood races, the sporting world was astounded by hearing that Lord George Bentinck had parted with his racing stud at an almost nominal price. Lord George was present, as was his custom, at this meeting, held in the demesne of one who was among his dearest friends. Lord George was not only present but apparently absorbed in the sport, and his horses were very successful. The world has hardly done justice to the great sacrifice which he made on this occasion to a high sense of duty. He not only parted with the finest racing stud in England, but he parted with it at a moment when its prospects were never so brilliant; and he knew this well. We may have hereafter to notice on this head an interesting passage in his life.

He could scarcely have quitted the turf that day without a pang. He had become the lord paramount of that strange world, so difficult to sway, and which requires for its government both a stern resolve and a courtly breeding. He had them both; and though the blackleg might quail before the awful scrutiny of his piercing eye, there never was a man so scrupulously polite to his inferiors as Lord George Bentinck. The turf, too, was not merely the scene of the triumphs of his stud and his betting-book. He had purified its practice and had elevated its character, and he was prouder of this achievement than of any other connected with his sporting life. Notwithstanding his mighty stakes and the keenness with which he backed his opinion, no one perhaps ever cared less for money. His habits were severely simple, and he was the most generous of men. He valued the acquisition of money on the turf, because there it was the test of success. He

counted his thousands after a great race as a victorious general counts his cannon  
and his prisoners.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *The Versatility of Lord George Bentinck*

THOSE who throw their eye over the debates of the session of '47, cannot fail to be struck by the variety of important questions in the discussion of which Lord George Bentinck took a leading or prominent part. And it must be borne in mind that he never offered his opinion on any subject which he had not diligently investigated and attempted to comprehend in all its bearings. His opponents might object to his principles or challenge his conclusions, but no one could deny that his conclusions were drawn from extensive information and that his principles were clear and distinct. He spared no pains to acquire by reading, correspondence, and personal research, the most authentic intelligence on every subject in debate. He never chattered. He never uttered a sentence in the House of Commons which did not convey a conviction or a fact. He was too profuse indeed with his facts: he had not the art of condensation. But those who have occasion to refer to his speeches and calmly to examine them, will be struck by the amplitude and the freshness of his knowledge, the clearness of his views, the coherence in all his efforts, and often—a point for which he never had sufficient credit—by his graphic idiom.

The best speech on the affairs of Cracow, for example, the most vigorous and the best informed, touching all the points with a thorough acquaintance, was that of Lord George Bentinck. The discussion on Cracow, which lasted several nights and followed very shortly after the defeat of his Irish bill, appeared to relate to a class of subjects which would not have engaged his attention; but on the contrary, he had given days and nights to this theme, had critically examined all the documents, and conferred with those qualified to supply him with any supplementary information requisite. He spoke several times this session on questions connected with our foreign affairs, and always impressed the House with a conviction that he was addressing it after a due study of his subject: as for example, his speech against our interference in Portugal, and the statement in which he brought forward the claims of the holders of Spanish bonds on the government of Spain before the House of Commons. In the instance of Portugal, a motion of censure on the conduct of ministers had been introduced by Mr. Hume, and the government were only saved from a minority by the friendly interposition of Mr. Duncombe, who proposed an amendment to the motion of Mr. Hume which broke the line of the liberal force. Lord George Bentinck in this



case followed Mr. Macaulay, whose speech, as was his wont, had been rich in historical illustration. ‘The right honourable and learned member for Edinburgh,’ Lord George replied, ‘had entered into a very interesting history of various interferences which had taken place in the affairs of Portugal; but in making that statement he forgot to mention one circumstance which had occurred in that history, and it was this

—that when Philip II. of Spain sought to conquer Portugal, the method he had recourse to for that purpose was one which he thought her Majesty’s ministers had successfully practised on the present occasion

—he persuaded the leaders in Portugal to mix sand with the powder of their troops. And so, on this occasion, her Majesty’s ministers had prevailed on the member for Finsbury, and those other members who were so ready to profess a love of liberty, to mix sand with their powder.’

In a previous chapter we have treated at some length of the means proposed or adopted by the Parliament for the sustenance and relief of the people of Ireland. The new poor law for that country also much engaged the attention of both Houses this session. Lord George Bentinck took a very active part in these transactions, and moved the most important of all the amendments to the government measure, namely, an attempt to assimilate the poor law of Ireland as much as possible to that of England, and make the entire rates be paid by the occupying tenant. His object, he said, was to ‘prevent lavish expenditure and encourage profitable employment to the people.’ This amendment was only lost by a majority of four.

On the 26th of March, on the government bringing forward their bill on the rum duties, Lord George Bentinck brought before the House the case of the British and Irish distillers, not with any preference or partiality towards English, Scotch, or Irish distillers over the colonial producer. ‘I am no advocate of any monopoly whatever. I desire only equal and exact justice between both parties; and the only way in which that end can, in my opinion, be properly attained, is in a select committee upstairs, consisting of impartial members of this house.’

He often used to say that no subject ever gave him more trouble thoroughly to master than the spirit duties; and he noticed the character of the theme at the beginning of his speech. He said he required, not only the most especial indulgence, but even the toleration of the House, ‘for of all the dry and dull subjects which could possibly be introduced, the question which it is now my misfortune to bring under the consideration of the House is the driest and the dullest. If this question had been one merely of pounds, shillings, and pence, it would have been dull and complicated enough; but this is a question in which

are concerned not pounds and shillings, but pence, and halfpence, and farthings.’

The Whitsuntide holidays occurred at the end of May. It had originally been the intention of Lord George Bentinck, at the request of leading merchants and manufacturers of all parties and opinions, to have brought forward the question of the Bank Act after these holidays, and to move a resolution that some discretionary power should be established as to the issue of notes. He thus alludes to this point in a letter to Mr. Wright, of the 24th of May:—

‘I return you No. 1019, of the “Bankers’ Circular,” with many thanks.

‘This delightful and timely change in the weather will do wonders for the country, and by producing an abundant and seasonable harvest, will save the country, and *may save the Bank Charter Act*; but it is pretty well settled that I am to give notice immediately after the holidays, of a resolution very much in the spirit of the memorial contained in the paper I am returning to you.

‘Things are better in the City and at Liverpool, and with this weather will continue to improve; but it seems to me any reverse in the weather, such as would occasion a late and deficient harvest, could not fail to bring the commerce of the country to a dead lock.

‘The opinion is gaining ground, that in the present state not only of Ireland, but of many districts in England, the government will not venture upon a general election till after the harvest, and not then, unless the harvest should prove favourable.

‘I am glad to read your opinion in opposition to Lord Ashburton’s, that railways keep the gold in the country, and do not send it out. Glyn gave strong evidence last year to this effect before the railway committee.’

Neither of the prospects in this letter was realised. The commercial and manufacturing interest, after the Whitsun recess, thought it advisable for reasons of great weight that Lord George Bentinck should postpone for a month or six weeks his intended motion on the Bank Charter, and the ministers resolved to dissolve Parliament before the harvest: thus it happened that the merchants and manufacturers lost their chance of relief from the yoke, and experienced the reign of terror in the autumn, the terrible events of which ultimately occasioned the assembling of the new Parliament in November.

Anticipating the immediate dissolution of Parliament, Sir Robert Peel had issued an address to the electors of Tamworth, justifying his commercial policy. In the opinion of Lord George Bentinck it set forth a statement as to the effect and operation of those financial measures which had taken place in the course of the last six years, which, if left altogether unrefuted, might have a dangerous

tendency at the coming elections. The general effect of that statement was, that by the reduction of duties to a large extent, it was possible to relieve the people of this country of burdens amounting to more than seven millions and a half sterling with little or no loss whatever to the revenue. But the truth was, Sir Robert Peel in his reductions had dealt only with little more than ten millions sterling of the revenue of the country, and had left the remaining thirty-seven millions untouched. Now on that portion of the revenue with which alone he had dealt, there was a deficiency, through his changes, to the amount of five millions sterling, which loss was compensated by the increase on those very articles which Sir Robert had left untouched. It was the opinion of Lord George Bentinck that the conclusion which Sir Robert Peel had drawn from the comparatively barren results of the increased duties on imports carried by the Whigs in 1840, viz., that indirect taxation had reached its limit, and which was indeed the basis of his new system, was a fallacy, and that the anticipated increase of import duties had not accrued in 1840 in consequence of our having had three successive bad harvests, 'and a bad cotton crop to boot,' all of which had checked the consuming power of the community. Sir Robert Peel had been favoured by three successive good harvests and nearly £100,000,000 invested in six years in domestic enterprise. 'The interposition of Providence,' said Lord George, 'is never a part of our debates.'

Under these circumstances, Lord George took occasion to review the commercial policy of Sir Robert Peel, on the 20th July, in the House of Commons, only three days before the prorogation, and in one of his most successful speeches. He was much assisted by the fact that the exports of all our staple manufactures had then greatly diminished, and of course he urged this point triumphantly. 'If we had been indemnified for the dead loss of £650,000 on cotton wool by any great impulse given to our manufacturers, it would be a consolation which unfortunately we could not enjoy.' He traced all the consumption to railway enterprise, and showed that it alone had compensated for the fruitless loss of revenue which we had incurred in vainly stimulating the exports of our manufactures, which had actually diminished. He was so impressed with the importance that, 'on the eve of a dissolution, such a statement as that of Sir Robert Peel should not go forth to the country uncontroverted, as in that case the necessary result would be that the people would come to the opinion that they might abolish taxes altogether and yet maintain the revenue,' that he sat up all night writing an address to his constituents, the electors of King's Lynn, which took up nearly two columns of the newspapers, in which he presented his refutation to the public of the

commercial manifesto of Tamworth, illustrated by the necessary tables and documents.

There is a sentence in this speech which, as a distinct expression of policy, should perhaps be quoted:

‘Sir, I am one of those who seek for the repeal of the malt tax and the hop duties. I am one of those who think that the excise duties ought to be taken off. But, sir, I do not pretend that you can repeal the malt tax or the hop duties, or remove the soap tax without commutation for other taxes. I will not delude the people by pretending that I could take off more than seven millions and a half of taxes without replacing them by others, and not leave the nation bankrupt. But I think these reforms of Sir Robert Peel have been in a mistaken direction; I think that revenue duties on all foreign imports ought to be maintained, and that a revenue equal to those excise duties which I have mentioned can be levied upon the produce of foreign countries and foreign industry, without imposing any greater tax than one which shall fall far short of Mr. Walker’s “perfect revenue standard of 20 per cent.” I say that by imposing a tax far less than 20 per cent. upon all articles of foreign import, a revenue might be derived far less burdensome to this country than that of excise, a revenue of which the burden would be largely shared in by foreign countries, and in many cases paid altogether by foreign countries.’

Lord George at this time watched with great interest a novel feature in our commercial transactions. He wrote on the 29th May (1847), to Mr. Burn, the editor of the ‘Commercial Glance,’ and an individual of whose intelligence, accuracy, and zeal he had a high and just opinion, ‘Can you inform me how the raw cotton purchased for exportation stands in the first three weeks of the present month of May, as compared with the corresponding periods of ‘46—5—4—3?’

‘I observe from a cotton circular sent to me the other day, that seven thousand five hundred bags of cotton had been purchased for exportation between the 1st and 21st of May. If with reduced stocks of raw cotton we are commencing a career of increased exportation, it appears to me to involve very serious consequences for our cotton manufactures as growing out of the existing monetary difficulties of the manufacturers.

‘If you could answer me these queries within the next three or four days, I should feel greatly obliged to you.’

Again, on the 22d of July, on the point of going down to his constituents, he was still pursuing his inquiries in the same quarter.’ I want particularly to

compare,' he says to Mr. Burn, 'the export of the last ten weeks of raw cotton with the corresponding ten weeks of '46 and '45, and at the same time to compare the importations and deliveries into the hands of the manufacturers during these same periods.

'Pray address me, Lynn, Norfolk, where I go on Saturday, and shall remain till after my election on Thursday.'

He writes again from Lynn, with great thanks for the information which had been accordingly forwarded to him there. 'Might I ask you to give me an account of the cotton wool imported weekly into Liverpool, and also the quantity sold to dealers, exporters, and speculators, in the three corresponding weeks of '45-46.

'This information by return of post would greatly oblige me.'

On the 23d of July, 1847, the last day of the second Parliament of Queen Victoria, Lord George went down to the House of Commons early, and took the opportunity of making a statement respecting the condition of our sugar-producing colonies, which were now experiencing the consequences of the unjustifiable legislation of the preceding year. He said there were appearances in the political horizon which betokened that he should not be able to obtain a select committee in the present session, and therefore, if he had the honour of a seat in the next Parliament, he begged to announce that he would take the earliest occasion to move for a committee to inquire into the present power of our colonies to compete with those countries which have still the advantage of the enforced labour of slaves. The returns just laid upon the table of the House could leave no doubt, he thought, on any man's mind on that point. Since the emancipation, the produce of sugar by the colonies, from '31 to '46, had been reduced one half, and of rum and coffee had been reduced to one fourth. When the act of last year which admitted slave-grown sugar was introduced, the allegation of the English colonies, that they could not compete with the labour of slaves, was denied. The proof of that allegation was, that they were already overwhelmed.

When one recalls all to which this speech led, the most memorable effort of that ardent, energetic life to which it was perhaps fatal, one can scarcely observe the origin of such vast exertions without emotion.

The Under Secretary of State replied to Lord George, making a cry of cheap sugar for the hustings which were before everybody's eyes, but making also this remarkable declaration, that 'the Island of Mauritius was in a state of the greatest prosperity.' While Lord George was speaking, the cannon were heard that

announced the departure of her majesty from the palace.

Then followed a motion of Mr. Bankes about the sale of bread, which led to some discussion. Mr. Bankes threatened a division. Lord Palmerston, who on this occasion was leading the House, said it would be acting like a set of schoolboys, if when Black Rod appeared they should be in the lobby instead of attending the Speaker to the other House. But as the members seemed very much inclined to act like schoolboys, the Secretary of State had to speak against time on the subject of baking. He analyzed the petition, which he said he would not read through, but the last paragraph was of great importance.

At these words, Black Rod knocked at the door, and duly making his appearance, summoned the House to attend the Queen in the House of Lords, and Mr. Speaker, followed by a crowd of members, duly obeyed the summons.

In about a quarter of an hour, Mr. Speaker returned without the mace, and standing at the table read her Majesty's speech to the members around, after which they retired, the Parliament being prorogued. In the course of the afternoon, the Parliament was dissolved by proclamation.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *The Great Panic*

THE general election of 1847 did not materially alter the position of parties in the House of Commons. The high prices of agricultural produce which then prevailed naturally rendered the agricultural interest apathetic, and although the rural constituencies, from a feeling of esteem, again returned those members who had been faithful to the protective principle, the farmers did not exert themselves to increase the number of their supporters. The necessity of doing so was earnestly impressed upon them by Lord George Bentinck, who warned them then that the pinching hour was inevitable; but the caution was disregarded, and many of those individuals who are now the loudest in their imprecations on the memory of Sir Robert Peel, and who are the least content with the temperate course which is now recommended to them by those who have the extremely difficult office of upholding their interests in the House of Commons, entirely kept aloof, or would smile when they were asked for their support with sarcastic self-complacency, saying, 'Well, Sir, do you think after all that free trade has done us so much harm?' Perhaps they think now, that if they had taken the advice of Lord George Bentinck and exerted themselves to return a majority to the House of Commons, it would have profited them more than useless execrations and barren discontent. But it is observable, that no individuals now grumble so much as the farmers who voted for free trader in 1847, unless indeed it be the shipowners, every one of whom for years, both in and out of Parliament, supported the repeal of the corn laws.

The Protectionists maintained their numbers, though they did not increase them, in the new Parliament. Lord George Bentinck however gained an invaluable coadjutor by the re-appearance of Mr. Herries in public life, a gentleman whose official as well as parliamentary experience, fine judgment, and fertile resource, have been of inestimable service to the Protectionist party. The political connection which gained most were the Whigs; they were much more numerous and compact, but it was in a great measure at the expense of the general liberal element, and partly at the cost of the following of Sir Robert Peel. The triumphant Conservative majority of 1841 had disappeared; but the government, with all shades of supporters, had not an absolute majority.

Had the general election been postponed until the autumn, the results might have been very different. That storm—which had been long gathering in the

commercial atmosphere—then burst like a typhoon. The annals of our trade afford no parallel for the widespread disaster and the terrible calamities. In the month of September, fifteen of the most considerable houses in the city of London stopped payment for between five and six millions sterling. The governor of the Bank of England was himself a partner in one of these firms; a gentleman who had lately filled that office, was another victim; two other Bank directors were included in the list. The failures were not limited to the metropolis, but were accompanied by others of great extent in the provinces. At Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow large firms were obliged to suspend payments. This shock of credit arrested all the usual accommodation, and the pressure in the money-market, so terrible in the spring, was revived. The excitement and the alarm in the city of London were so great that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer hurried up to town on the 1st of October, he found that the interest of money was at the rate of 60 per cent. per annum. The Bank Charter produced the same injurious effect as it had done in April; it aggravated the evil by forcing men to hoard. In vain the commercial world deplored the refusal of the government to comply with the suggestion made by Lord George Bentinck and Mr. Thomas Baring in the spring; in vain they entreated them at least now to adopt it, and to authorize the Bank of England to enlarge the amount of their discounts and advances on approved security, without reference to the stringent clause of the charter. The government, acting, it is believed, with the encouragement and sanction of Sir Robert Peel, were obstinate, and three weeks then occurred during which the commercial credit of this country was threatened with total destruction. Nine more considerable mercantile houses stopped payment in the metropolis, the disasters in the provinces were still more extensive. The Royal Bank of Liverpool failed; among several principal establishments in that town, one alone stopped payment for upwards of a million sterling. The havoc at Manchester was also great. The Newcastle bank and the North and South Wales bank stopped. Consols fell to 79 1/4, and exchequer bills were at last at 35 per cent, discount. The ordinary rate of discount at the Bank of England was between 8 and 9 per cent., but out of doors accommodation was not to be obtained. In such a state of affairs, the small houses of course gave way. From their rising in the morning until their hour of retirement at night, the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were employed in seeing persons of all descriptions, who entreated them to interfere and preserve the community from universal bankruptcy. ‘Perish the world, sooner than violate a principle,’ was the philosophical exclamation of her Majesty’s ministers, sustained by the sympathy and the sanction of Sir Robert Peel. At last, the governor and the deputy-governor of the Bank of England waited on Downing



Street, and said it could go on no more. The Scotch banks had applied to them for assistance. The whole demand for discount was thrown upon the Bank of England. Two bill-brokers had stopped; two others were paralyzed. The Bank of England could discount no longer. Thanks to the Bank Charter, they were safe and their treasury full of bullion, but it appeared that everybody else must fall, for in four-and-twenty hours the machinery of credit would be entirely stopped. The position was frightful, and the government gave way. They did that on the 25th of October, after houses had fallen to the amount of fifteen millions sterling, which they had been counselled to do by Lord George Bentinck on the 25th of April. It turned out exactly as Mr. Thomas Baring had foretold. It was not want of capital or deficiency of circulation which had occasioned these awful consequences. It was sheer panic, occasioned by an unwisely stringent law. No sooner had the government freed the Bank of England from that stringency, than the panic ceased. The very morning the letter of license from the government to the Bank of England appeared, thousands and tens of thousands of pounds sterling were taken from the hoards, some from boxes deposited with bankers, although the depositors would not leave the notes in their bankers' hands. Large parcels of notes were returned to the Bank of England cut into halves, as they had been sent down into the country, and so small was the real demand for an additional quantity of currency, that the whole amount taken from the Bank, when the unlimited power of issue was given, was under £400,000, and the Bank consequently never availed itself of the privilege which the government had accorded it. The restoration of confidence produced an ample currency, and that confidence had solely been withdrawn from the apprehension of the stringent clauses of the Bank Charter Act of 1844.

These extraordinary events had not occurred unnoticed by Lord George Bentinck. The two subjects that mostly engaged his attention after the general election were the action of the Bank Charter and the state of our sugar colonies. Perhaps it would be best to give some extracts from his correspondence at this period. He was a good letter-writer, easy and clear. His characteristic love of details also rendered this style of communication interesting. It is not possible to give more than extracts, and it is necessary to omit all those circumstances which generally in letter-reading are most acceptable. His comments on men and things were naturally free and full, and he always endeavoured, for the amusement of his correspondents, to communicate the social gossip of the hour. But although all this must necessarily be omitted, his letters may afford some illustrations of his earnestness and energy, the constancy of his aim, and the untiring vigilance with which he pursued his object—especially those which are addressed to

gentlemen engaged in commercial pursuits who cooperated with him in his investigations.

TO A FRIEND.

Harcourt House, August 30, 1847.

An answer is come out to my address to my constituents at King's Lynn, and to my speech in answer to Peel's manifesto. Pray read it. At first I thought I could swear to its being \* \* \* \*, I now think I can swear to its being \* \* \* \*; the servility to Peel, and the official red-tape style would equally do for either; but the no-poper page, I think, fixes it on \* \* \* \*.

I think it wretchedly weak, and have written some notes on the margin, showing up the principal points. The nine months' famine of 1846-47, as contrasted with Peel's famine, shows a difference of between £6,000,000 and £7,000,000; that is to say, on the balance in the nine months 1845-46, Ireland exported about three millions' worth of breadstuffs, and not a soul died of famine. In the nine months 1846-47, she imported three millions' sterling worth of bread-stuffs, which insufficed to prevent one million—or say half a million—of the people from dying of starvation.

At present I have seen no notice of the pamphlet in any of the newspapers: if it is either \* \* \* \*'s, or \* \* \* \*'s, or \* \* \* \*'s we shall see it reviewed in 'Times,' 'Chronicle,' and 'Spectator.'

The Bank of England has raised the interest on \* \* \* \*'s mortgage one-third per cent., making an additional annual charge of £1,500 a year to him. I am very sorry for him, but I know nothing so likely to rouse the landed aristocracy from their apathy, and to weaken their idolatry of Peel so much as this warning note of the joint operation of his free trade and restrictive currency laws.

TO A FRIEND.

Harcourt House, September 2, 1847.

I think it is \* \* \* \*. The trickster, I observe, has carefully reduced the pounds of cotton to cwts., in the hopes of concealing a great fraud to which he has condescended; taking, in the Whig year of 1841, the home consumption of cotton, whilst in Peel's year he gives entire importation as the home consumption, representing both as home consumption.

In Peel's year, 1846, officially we have only the gross importation; but in the Whig year, 1841, the entire importation and the home consumption are given separately: the importation exceeding the home consumption by fifty million pounds. Burn's 'Glance,' however, gives the importation and home consumption

for both years; unfortunately, however, not in lbs. or cwts., but in bags. \* \* \* \*s fraud, however, is not the less apparent.

He selects a Whig year when the home consumption was 220,000 bags under the importation, and a year for Peel when the importation exceeded the home consumption by 280,000 bags, and claps down the figures as alike describing the home consumption.

None of the Peel papers have taken up the subject: if they should, the 'Morning Post' will answer the pamphlet; but I should like to have mine back again, in order that I may furnish them with the notes.

\* \* \* \* was with me this morning, and called my attention to the circumstance that the author starts with 'We,' but drops into the singular number; \* \* \* \* fancies it is Peel himself, but the page on endowment fixes it on \* \* \* \*.

Lord L \* \* \* \* means, I presume, that Peel's savage hatred is applied to the Protectionist portion of his old party, not of course to the janissaries and renegade portion.

The following letter was in reply to one of a friend who had sent him information, several days before they occurred, of the great failures that were about to happen in the city of London. The list was unfortunately quite accurate, with the exception indeed of the particular house respecting which Lord George quotes the opinion of Baron Rothschild.

TO A FRIEND.

Welbeck, September 17, 1847.

A thousand thanks for your letter, the intelligence in which created a great sensation at Doncaster.

As yet none of the houses appear to have failed except S \* \* \* \*. Baron Rothschild was at Doncaster. I talked with him on the subject; he seemed not to doubt the probable failure of any of the houses you named, except \* \* \* \*. He declared very emphatically 'that \* \* \* \* house was as sound as any house in London.'

Lord Fitzwilliam declares 'it is no free trade without free trade in money.'

Lord Clanricarde is here—laughs at the idea of Parliament meeting in October; but talks much of the difficulties of Ireland—says he does not see how the rates are to be paid.

Messrs. Drummond are calling in their mortgages. I expect to hear that this practice will be general; money dear, corn cheap, incumbrances enhanced, and rents depressed. What will become of the apathetic country gentlemen? I judge

from \* \* \* \* 's language, that Lord John Russell will stand or fall by the Bank Charter Act-but that he feels very apprehensive of being unable to maintain it.

I agree with Bonham, in thinking that the Protectionist party is smashed for the present Parliament; but I must say I think Protectionist principles and policy are likely to come into repute again far sooner than was expected; and though Peel's party be a compact body, and formidable in the House of Commons, I cannot think that there appears that in the working of his measures to make it likely that he should be soon again carried into power on the shoulders of the people. I think his political reputation must ebb further before it can rise again, if it should ever rise again. \* \* \* \* thought him 'broken and in low spirits,' when he met him at Longshaw; but Lord \* \* \* \*, who was there at the same time, came away more Peelite than ever, and told them at Bretby that Sir Robert said, 'That he was quite surprised at the number of letters he got every day from members returned to Parliament, saying they meant to vote with him.'

You may rely upon it the Peelites are very sanguine that they will be in power again almost directly. We must keep them out.

TO MR. BURN, EDITOR OF THE 'COMMERCIAL GLANCE.'

Welbeck, September 38, 1847. To the many courtesies you have already bestowed upon me, I will sincerely thank you to add that of informing me what have been the estimated cotton crops in the United States in each of the last four years. I would also thank you to inform me the comparative importation, home consumption, re-exportation, and stocks on hand of cotton of the first seven months of the current and three preceding years.

TO MR. BURN.

Welbeck, October 4, 1847.

Your statistics have reached me in the very nick of time, and are invaluable. I care nothing about 'outsides,' it is 'insides' I look to; give me a good 'heart,' and I don't care how rough the 'bark' is.

Anything so good I fear to spoil by suggesting the most trivial addition, else I should say it would be an interesting feature to classify the exports of cotton goods, etc., etc., under three heads:—

1st. To the British colonies and British possessions abroad.

2nd. To the northern states of Europe, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, etc., etc., the United States of America, and other countries having high tariffs.

3rd. To China, Turkey, Africa, and the Southern States of America, and countries with low tariffs.

I fear these failures of East and West India houses must entail great distress upon Manchester, and the manufacturing interests generally. You have given an account of the bankruptcies in the cotton trade during a long series of years till last year inclusive; are you able to say how the first nine months of the current year stands in comparison with its predecessors?

I so highly prize your new work, that I must ask for a dozen copies to distribute among my friends.

P. S. I have already parted with the copy you sent me; may I, therefore, beg another without waiting for any other binding?

TO A FRIEND.

Welbeck, October 5, 1847.

I shall go up to town on Friday evening, in my way to Newmarket, and shall be at Harcourt House all Saturday and Sunday, and shall be delighted to see you, and have a thorough good talk with you. Free trade seems working mischief faster than the most fearful of us predicted, and Manchester houses, as I am told, 'failing in rows,' ashamed to do penance in public, are secretly weeping in sackcloth and ashes, and heartily praying that Peel and Cobden had been hanged before they were allowed to ruin the country.

Money at Manchester is quoted one and a quarter per cent, for ten days: £45 12s. 6d. per cent. per annum!

TO A FRIEND.

Harcourt House, October 22, 1847. I have this moment got a note from Stuart, telling me that 'the Chancellor has this afternoon sent out his notice of the business to be taken in his own court during Michaelmas term, that is, from the 2nd of November till the 26th, and below it there is this notice—*except those days on which the Lord Chancellor may sit in the House of Lords!!!*'

Surely this must portend a November session.

TO A FRIEND.

Harcourt House, October 23, 1847. The fat banker's gossip is all stuff. Peel goes to Windsor today, I believe on an invitation of some standing. \* \* \* \* who had been dining at Palmerston's last night, tells me that he does not think that ministers mean calling Parliament together, and is confident they mean to maintain the Bank Charter Act. There have been some first-rate articles and letters in the 'Morning Chronicle' lately on this subject.

TO A FRIEND.

Harcourt House, November 6, 1847.

I will stay over Tuesday, that I may have the pleasure of a thorough talk with you.

I am told things are gradually getting better. I expect, however, a fresh reverse about six weeks or two months hence, when the returned lists of the stoppages in the East and West Indies, consequent upon the late failures here, come home. The Western Bank of Scotland is whispered about. If that were to fail, it might bring the canny Scots to their senses; but they are a headstrong race.

A committee on commercial distress having been appointed, the principal reason for the summoning of the new Parliament in the autumn had been satisfied, and an adjournment until a month after Christmas was in prospect. Before, however, this took place, a new and interesting question arose, which led to considerable discussion, and which ultimately influenced in no immaterial manner the parliamentary position of Lord George Bentinck.

The city of London at the general election had sent to the House of Commons, as a colleague of the first minister, a member who found a difficulty in taking one of the oaths appointed by the House to be sworn preliminarily to any member exercising his right of voting. The difficulty arose from this member being not only of the Jewish race, but unfortunately believing only in the first part of the Jewish religion.

## CHAPTER X.

### *The Jews*

THE relations that subsist between the Bedoueen race that, under the name of Jews, is found in every country of Europe, and the Teutonic, Sclavonian, and Celtic races which have appropriated that division of the globe, will form hereafter one of the most remarkable chapters in a philosophical history of man. The Saxon, the Slav, and the Celt have adopted most of the laws and many of the customs of these Arabian tribes, all their literature and all their religion. They are therefore indebted to them for much that regulates, much that charms, and much that solaces existence. The toiling multitude rest every seventh day by virtue of a Jewish law; they are perpetually reading, 'for their example,' the records of Jewish history, and singing the odes and elegies of Jewish poets; and they daily acknowledge on their knees, with reverent gratitude, that the only medium of communication between the Creator and themselves is the Jewish race. Yet they treat that race as the vilest of generations; and instead of logically looking upon them as the human family that has contributed most to human happiness, they extend to them every term of obloquy and every form of persecution.

Let us endeavour to penetrate this social anomaly that has harassed and perplexed centuries.

It is alleged that the dispersion of the Jewish race is a penalty incurred for the commission of a great crime: namely, the crucifixion of our blessed Lord in the form of a Jewish prince, by the Romans, at Jerusalem, and at the instigation of some Jews, in the reign of Tiberius Augustus Caesar. Upon this, it may be observed, that the allegation is neither historically true nor dogmatically sound.

I. *Not historically true.* It is not historically true, because at the time of the advent of our Lord, the Jewish race was as much dispersed throughout the world as at this present time, and had been so for many centuries. Europe, with the exception of those shores which are bathed by the midland sea, was then a primeval forest, but in every city of the great Eastern monarchies and in every province of the Roman empire, the Jews had been long settled. We have not precise authority for saying that at the advent there were more Jews established in Egypt than in Palestine, but it may unquestionably be asserted that at that period there were more Jews living, and that too in great prosperity and honour,

at Alexandria than at Jerusalem. It is evident from various Roman authors, that the Jewish race formed no inconsiderable portion of the multitude that filled Rome itself, and that the Mosaic religion, undisturbed by the state, even made proselytes. But it is unnecessary to enter into any curious researches on this head, though the authorities are neither scant nor uninteresting. We are furnished with evidence the most complete and unanswerable of the pre-dispersion by the sacred writings themselves. Not two months after the crucifixion, when the Third Person of the Holy Trinity first descended on Jerusalem, it being the time of the great festivals, when the Jews, according to the custom of the Arabian tribes pursued to this day in the pilgrimage to Mecca, repaired from all quarters to the central sacred place, the holy writings inform us that there were gathered together in Jerusalem 'Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.' And that this expression, so general but so precise, should not be mistaken, we are shortly afterwards, though incidentally, informed, that there were Parthians, Medes, and Persians at Jerusalem, professing the Mosaic faith; Jews from Mesopotamia and Syria, from the countries of the lesser and the greater Asia; Egyptian, Libyan, Greek, and Arabian Jews; and, especially, Jews from Rome itself, some of which latter are particularly mentioned as Roman proselytes. Nor is it indeed historically true that the small section of the Jewish race which dwelt in Palestine rejected Christ. The reverse is the truth. Had it not been for the Jews of Palestine, the good tidings of our Lord would have been unknown for ever to the northern and western races. The first preachers of the gospel were Jews, and none else; the historians of the gospel were Jews, and none else. No one has ever been permitted to write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, except a Jew. For nearly a century no one believed in the good tidings except Jews. They nursed the sacred flame of which they were the consecrated and hereditary depositaries. And when the time was ripe to diffuse the truth among the ethnics, it was not a senator of Rome or a philosopher of Athens who was personally appointed by our Lord for that office, but a Jew of Tarsus, who founded the seven churches of Asia. And that greater church, great even amid its terrible corruptions, that has avenged the victory of Titus by subjugating the capital of the Caesars, and has changed every one of the Olympian temples into altars of the God of Sinai and of Calvary, was founded by another Jew, a Jew of Galilee.

From all which it appears that the dispersion of the Jewish race, preceding as it did for countless ages the advent of our Lord, could not be for conduct which occurred subsequently to the advent, and that they are also guiltless of that subsequent conduct which has been imputed to them as a crime, since for Him and His blessed name, they preached, and wrote, and shed their blood 'as



witnesses.'

But, is it possible that that which is not historically true can be dogmatically sound? Such a conclusion would impugn the foundations of all faith. The followers of Jesus, of whatever race, need not however be alarmed. The belief that the present condition of the Jewish race is a penal infliction for the part which some Jews took at the crucifixion is not dogmatically sound.

2. *Not dogmatically sound.* There is no passage in the sacred writings that in the slightest degree warrants the penal assumption. The imprecation of the mob at the crucifixion is sometimes strangely quoted as a divine decree. It is not a principle of jurisprudence, human or inspired, to permit the criminal to ordain his own punishment. Why, too, should they transfer any portion of the infliction to their posterity? What evidence have we that the wild suggestion was sanctioned by Omnipotence? On the contrary, amid the expiating agony, a Divine Voice at the same time solicited and secured forgiveness. And if unforgiven, could the cry of a rabble at such a scene bind a nation?

But, dogmatically considered, the subject of the crucifixion must be viewed in a deeper spirit. We must pause with awe to remember what was the principal office to be fulfilled by the advent. When the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation was consummated, a Divine Person moved on the face of the earth in the shape of a child of Israel, not to teach but to expiate. True it is that no word could fall from such lips, whether in the form of profound parable, or witty retort, or preceptive lore, but to guide and enlighten; but they who, in those somewhat lax effusions which in these days are honoured with the holy name of theology, speak of the morality of the Gospel as a thing apart and of novel revelation, would do well to remember that in promulgating such doctrines they are treading on very perilous ground. There cannot be two moralities; and to hold that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity could teach a different morality from that which had been already revealed by the First Person of the Holy Trinity, is a dogma so full of terror that it may perhaps be looked upon as the ineffable sin against the Holy Spirit. When the lawyer tempted our Lord, and inquired how he was to inherit eternal life, the great Master of Galilee referred him to the writings of Moses. There he would find recorded 'the whole duty of man;' to love God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and his neighbour as himself. These two principles are embalmed in the writings of Moses, and are the essence of Christian morals.\*

\* 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.'  
—Leviticus xix. 18.

It was for something deeper than this, higher and holier than even Moses

could fulfil, that angels announced the Coming. It was to accomplish an event pre-ordained by the Creator of the world for countless ages. Born from the chosen house of the chosen people, yet blending in his inexplicable nature the Divine essence with the human elements, a sacrificial Mediator was to appear, appointed before all time, to purify with his atoning blood the myriads that had preceded and the myriads that will follow him. The doctrine embraces all space and time—nay, chaos and eternity; Divine persons are the agents, and the redemption of the whole family of man the result. If the Jews had not prevailed upon the Romans to crucify our Lord, what would have become of the Atonement? But the human mind cannot contemplate the idea that the most important deed of time could depend upon human will. The immolators were preordained like the victim, and the holy race supplied both. Could that be a crime which secured for all mankind eternal joy—which vanquished Satan, and opened the gates of Paradise? Such a tenet would sully and impugn the doctrine that is the corner-stone of our faith and hope. Men must not presume to sit in judgment on such an act. They must bow their heads in awe and astonishment and trembling gratitude.

But, though the opinion that the dispersion of the Jewish race must be deemed a penalty incurred for their connection with the crucifixion has neither historical nor doctrinal sanction, it is possible that its degrading influence upon its victims may have been as efficacious as if their present condition were indeed a judicial infliction. Persecution, in a word, although unjust, may have reduced the modern Jews to a state almost justifying malignant vengeance. They may have become so odious and so hostile to mankind, as to merit for their present conduct, no matter how occasioned, the obloquy and ill-treatment of the communities in which they dwell and with which they are scarcely permitted to mingle.

Let us examine this branch of the subject, which, though of more limited interest, is not without instruction.

In all the great cities of Europe, and in some of the great cities of Asia, among the infamous classes therein existing, there will always be found Jews. They are not the only people who are usurers, gladiators, and followers of mean and scandalous occupations, nor are they anywhere a majority of such, but considering their general numbers, they contribute perhaps more than their proportion to the aggregate of the vile. In this they obey the law which regulates the destiny of all persecuted races: the infamous is the business of the dishonoured; and as infamous pursuits are generally illegal pursuits, the persecuted race which has most ability will be most successful in combating the law. The Jews have never been so degraded as the Greeks were throughout the

Levant before the emancipation, and the degradation of the Greeks was produced by a period of persecution which, both in amount and suffering, cannot compare with that which has been endured by the children of Israel. This peculiarity, however, attends the Jews under the most unfavourable circumstances; the other degraded races wear out and disappear; the Jew remains, as determined, as expert, as persevering, as full of resource and resolution as ever. Viewed in this light, the degradation of the Jewish race is alone a striking evidence of its excellence, for none but one of the great races could have survived the trials which it has endured.

But, though a material organization of the highest class may account for so strange a consequence, the persecuted Hebrew is supported by other means. He is sustained by a sublime religion. Obdurate, malignant, odious, and revolting as the lowest Jew appears to us, he is rarely demoralized. Beneath his own roof his heart opens to the influence of his beautiful Arabian traditions. All his ceremonies, his customs, and his festivals are still to celebrate the bounty of nature and the favour of Jehovah. The patriarchal feeling lingers about his hearth. A man, however fallen, who loves his home is not wholly lost. The trumpet of Sinai still sounds in the Hebrew ear, and a Jew is never seen upon the scaffold, unless it be at an *auto da fÃ*.

But, having made this full admission of the partial degradation of the Jewish race, we are not prepared to agree that this limited degeneracy is any justification of the prejudices and persecution which originated in barbarous or mediÃval superstitions. On the contrary, viewing the influence of the Jewish race upon the modern communities, without any reference to the past history or the future promises of Israel; dismissing from our minds and memories, if indeed that be possible, all that the Hebrews have done in the olden time for man and all which it may be their destiny yet to fulfil, we hold that instead of being an object of aversion, they should receive all that honour and favour from the northern and western races, which, in civilized and refined nations, should be the lot of those who charm the public taste and elevate the public feeling. We hesitate not to say that there is no race at this present, and following in this only the example of a long period, that so much delights, and fascinates, and elevates, and ennobles Europe, as the Jewish.

We dwell not on the fact, that the most admirable artists of the drama have been and still are of the Hebrew race: or, that the most entrancing singers, graceful dancers, and exquisite musicians, are sons and daughters of Israel: though this were much. But these brilliant accessories are forgotten in the sublimer claim.

It seems that the only means by which in these modern times we are permitted to develop the beautiful is music. It would appear definitively settled that excellence in the plastic arts is the privilege of the earlier ages of the world. All that is now produced in this respect is mimetic, and, at the best, the skilful adaptation of traditional methods. The creative faculty of modern man seems by an irresistible law at work on the virgin soil of science, daily increasing by its inventions our command over nature, and multiplying the material happiness of man. But the happiness of man is not merely material. Were it not for music, we might in these days say, the beautiful is dead. Music seems to be the only means of creating the beautiful, in which we not only equal, but in all probability greatly excel, the ancients. The music of modern Europe ranks with the transcendent creations of human genius; the poetry, the statues, the temples, of Greece. It produces and represents as they did whatever is most beautiful in the spirit of man and often expresses what is most profound. And who are the great composers, who hereafter will rank with Homer, with Sophocles, with Praxiteles, or with Phidias? They are the descendants of those Arabian tribes who conquered Canaan, and who by favour of the Most High have done more with less means even than the Athenians.

Forty years ago—not a longer period than the children of Israel were wandering in the desert—the two most dishonoured races in Europe were the Attic and the Hebrew, and they were the two races that had done most for mankind. Their fortunes had some similarity: their countries were the two smallest in the world, equally barren and equally famous; they both divided themselves into tribes: both built a most famous temple on an acropolis; and both produced a literature which all European nations have accepted with reverence and admiration. Athens has been sacked oftener than Jerusalem, and oftener razed to the ground; but the Athenians have escaped expatriation, which is purely an Oriental custom. The sufferings of the Jews, however, have been infinitely more prolonged and varied than those of the Athenians. The Greek nevertheless appears exhausted. The creative genius of Israel, on the contrary, never shone so bright; and when the Russian, the Frenchman, and the Anglo-Saxon, amid applauding theatres or the choral voices of solemn temples, yield themselves to the full spell of a Mozart or a Mendelssohn, it seems difficult to comprehend how these races can reconcile it to their hearts to persecute a Jew.

We have shown that the theological prejudice against the Jews has no foundation, historical or doctrinal; we have shown that the social prejudice, originating in the theological but sustained by superficial observations, irrespective of religious prejudice, is still more unjust, and that no existing race

is so much entitled to the esteem and gratitude of society as the Hebrew. It remains for us to notice the injurious consequences to European society of the course pursued by the communities to this race; and this view of the subject leads us to considerations which it would become existing statesmen to ponder.

The world has by this time discovered that it is impossible to destroy the Jews. The attempt to extirpate them has been made under the most favourable auspices and on the largest scale; the most considerable means that man could command have been pertinaciously applied to this object for the longest period of recorded time. Egyptian Pharaohs, Assyrian kings, Roman emperors, Scandinavian crusaders, Gothic princes, and holy inquisitors have alike devoted their energies to the fulfilment of this common purpose. Expatriation, exile, captivity, confiscation, torture on the most ingenious, and massacre on the most extensive, scale, with a curious system of degrading customs and debasing laws which would have broken the heart of any other people, have been tried, and in vain. The Jews, after all this havoc, are probably more numerous at this date than they were during the reign of Solomon the Wise, are found in all lands, and, unfortunately, prospering in most. All of which proves that it is in vain for man to attempt to battle the inexorable law of nature, which has decreed that a superior race shall never be destroyed or absorbed by an inferior.

But the influence of a great race will be felt; its greatness does not depend upon its numbers, otherwise the English would not have vanquished the Chinese, nor would the Aztecs have been overthrown by Cortez and a handful of Goths. That greatness results from its organization, the consequences of which are shown in its energy and enterprise, in the strength of its will and the fertility of its brain. Let us observe what should be the influence of the Jews, and then ascertain how it is exercised. The Jewish race connects the modern populations with the early ages of the world, when the relations of the Creator with the created were more intimate than in these days, when angels visited the earth, and God himself even spoke with man. The Jews represent the Semitic principle; all that is spiritual in our nature. They are the trustees of tradition and the conservators of the religious element. They are a living and the most striking evidence of the falsity of that pernicious doctrine of modern times—the natural equality of man. The political equality of a particular race is a matter of municipal arrangement, and depends entirely on political considerations and circumstances; but the natural equality of man now in vogue, and taking the form of cosmopolitan fraternity, is a principle which, were it possible to act on it, would deteriorate the great races and destroy all the genius of the world. What would be the consequence on the great Anglo-Saxon republic, for example, were

its citizens to secede from their sound principle of reserve, and mingle with their negro and coloured populations? In the course of time they would become so deteriorated that their states would probably be reconquered and regained by the aborigines whom they have expelled, and who would then be their superiors. But though nature will never ultimately permit this theory of natural equality to be practised, the preaching of this dogma has already caused much mischief, and may occasion much more. The native tendency of the Jewish race, who are justly proud of their blood, is against the doctrine of the equality of man. They have also another characteristic, the faculty of acquisition. Although the European laws have endeavoured to prevent their obtaining property, they have nevertheless become remarkable for their accumulated wealth. Thus it will be seen that all the tendencies of the Jewish race are conservative. Their bias is to religion, property, and natural aristocracy: and it should be the interest of statesmen that this bias of a great race should be encouraged, and their energies and creative powers enlisted in the cause of existing society.

But existing society has chosen to persecute this race which should furnish its choice allies, and what have been the consequences?

They may be traced in the last outbreak of the destructive principle in Europe. An insurrection takes place against tradition and aristocracy, against religion and property. Destruction of the Semitic principle, extirpation of the Jewish religion, whether in the Mosaic or in the Christian form, the natural equality of man, and the abrogation of property, are proclaimed by the secret societies who form provisional governments, and men of Jewish race are found at the head of every one of them. The people of God cooperate with atheists; the most skilful accumulators of property ally themselves with communists; the peculiar and chosen race touch the hand of all the scum and low castes of Europe! And all this because they wish to destroy that ungrateful Christendom which owes to them even its name, and whose tyranny they can no longer endure.

When the secret societies, in February, 1848, surprised Europe, they were themselves surprised by the unexpected opportunity, and so little capable were they of seizing the occasion, that had it not been for the Jews, who of late years unfortunately have been connecting themselves with these unhallowed associations, imbecile as were the governments, the uncalled-for outbreak would not have ravaged Europe. But the fiery energy and the teeming resources of the children of Israel maintained for a long time the unnecessary and useless struggle. If the reader throw his eye over the provisional governments of Germany and Italy, and even of France, formed at that period, he will recognize everywhere the Jewish element. Even the insurrection, and defence, and

administration of Venice, which, from the resource and statesmanlike moderation displayed, commanded almost the respect and sympathy of Europe, were accomplished by a Jew—Manini—who, by the bye, is a Jew who professes the whole of the Jewish religion, and believes in Calvary as well as Sinai,—‘a converted Jew,’ as the Lombards styled him, quite forgetting, in the confusion of their ideas, that it is the Lombards who are the converts—not Manini.

Thus it will be seen, that the persecution of the Jewish race has deprived European society of an important conservative element, and added to the destructive party an influential ally. Prince Metternich, the most enlightened of modern statesmen, not to say the most intellectual of men, was, though himself a victim of the secret societies, fully aware of these premises. It was always his custom, great as were the difficulties which in so doing he had to encounter, to employ as much as possible the Hebrew race in the public service. He could never forget that Napoleon, in his noontide hour, had been checked by the pen of the greatest of political writers; he had found that illustrious author as great in the cabinet as in the study; he knew that no one had more contributed to the deliverance of Europe. It was not as a patron, but as an appreciating and devoted friend, that the High Chancellor of Austria appointed Frederick Gentz secretary to the Congress of Vienna—and Frederick Gentz was a child of Israel.

It is no doubt to be deplored that several millions of the Jewish race should persist in believing in only a part of their religion; but this is a circumstance which does not affect Europe, and time, with different treatment, may remove the anomaly which perhaps may be accounted for. It should be recollected, that the existing Jews are perhaps altogether the descendants of those various colonies and emigrations which, voluntary or forced, long preceded the advent. Between the vast carnage of the Roman wars, from Titus to Hadrian, and the profession of Christ by his countrymen, which must have been very prevalent, since the Christian religion was solely sustained by the Jews of Palestine during the greater part of its first century, it is improbable that any descendants of the Jews of Palestine exist who disbelieve in Christ. After the fall of Jerusalem and the failure of Barchochebas, no doubt some portion of the Jews found refuge in the desert, returning to their original land after such long and strange vicissitudes. This natural movement would account for those Arabian tribes, of whose resistance to Mohammed we have ample and authentic details, and who, if we are to credit the accounts which perplex modern travellers, are to this day governed by the Pentateuch instead of the Koran.

When Christianity was presented to the ancestors of the present Jews, it came from a very suspicious quarter, and was offered in a very questionable shape.

Centuries must have passed in many instances before the Jewish colonies heard of the advent, the crucifixion, and the atonement; the latter, however, a doctrine in perfect harmony with Jewish ideas. When they first heard of Christianity, it appeared to be a Gentile religion, accompanied by idolatrous practices, from which severe monotheists, like the Arabians, always recoil, and holding the Jewish race up to public scorn and hatred. This is not the way to make converts.

There have been two great colonies of the Jewish race in Europe; in Spain and in Sarmatia. The origin of the Jews in Spain is lost in the night of time. That it was of great antiquity we have proof. The tradition, once derided, that the Iberian Jews were a Phoenician colony has been favoured by the researches of modern antiquaries, who have traced the Hebrew language in the ancient names of the localities. It may be observed, however, that the languages of the Jews and the Philistines, or Phoenicians, were probably too similar to sanction any positive induction from such phenomena; while on the other hand, in reply to those who have urged the improbability of the Jews, who had no seaports, colonizing Spain, it may be remarked that the colony may have been an expatriation by the Philistines in the course of the long struggle which occurred between them and the invading tribes previous to the foundation of the Hebrew monarchy. We know that in the time of Cicero the Jews had been settled immemorially in Spain. When the Romans, converted to Christianity and acted on by the priesthood, began to trouble the Spanish Jews, it appears by a decree of Constantine that they were owners and cultivators of the soil, a circumstance which alone proves the antiquity and the nobility of their settlement, for the possession of the land is never conceded to a degraded race. The conquest of Spain by the Goths in the fifth and sixth centuries threatened the Spanish Jews, however, with more serious adversaries than the Romans. The Gothic tribes, very recently converted to their Syrian faith, were full of barbaric zeal against those whom they looked upon as the enemies of Jesus. But the Spanish Jews sought assistance from their kinsmen the Saracens on the opposite coast; Spain was invaded and subdued by the Moors, and for several centuries the Jew and the Saracen lived under the same benignant laws and shared the same brilliant prosperity. In the history of Spain during the Saracenic supremacy any distinction of religion or race is no longer traced. And so it came to pass that when at the end of the fourteenth century, after the fell triumph of the Dominicans over the Albigenses, the holy inquisition was introduced into Spain, it was reported to Torquemada that two-thirds of the nobility of Arragon, that is to say of the proprietors of the land, were Jews.

All that these men knew of Christianity was, that it was a religion of fire and



sword, and that one of its first duties was to avenge some mysterious and inexplicable crime which had been committed ages ago by some unheard of ancestors of theirs in an unknown land. The inquisitors addressed themselves to the Spanish Jews in the same abrupt and ferocious manner in which the monks saluted the Mexicans and the Peruvians. All those of the Spanish Jews, who did not conform after the fall of the Mohammedan kingdoms, were expatriated by the victorious Goths, and these refugees were the main source of the Italian Jews, and of the most respectable portion of the Jews of Holland. These exiles found refuge in two republics; Venice and the United Provinces. The Portuguese Jews, it is well known, came from Spain, and their ultimate expulsion from Portugal was attended by the same results as the Spanish expatriation.

The other great division of Jews in Europe are the Sarmatian Jews, and they are very numerous. They amount to nearly three millions. These unquestionably entered Europe with the other Sarmatian nations, descending the Borysthenes and ascending the Danube, and are according to all probability the progeny of the expatriations of the times of Tiglath-Pileser and Nebuchadnezzar. They are the posterity of those 'devout men,' Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, who were attending the festivals at Jerusalem at the time of the descent of the Holy Spirit. Living among barbarous pagans, who never molested them, these people went on very well, until suddenly the barbarous pagans, under the influence of an Italian priesthood, were converted to the Jewish religion, and then as a necessary consequence the converts began to harass, persecute, and massacre the Jews.

These people had never heard of Christ. Had the Romans not destroyed Jerusalem, these Sarmatian Jews would have had a fair chance of obtaining from civilized beings some clear and coherent account of the great events which had occurred. They and their fathers before them would have gone up in customary pilgrimage to the central sacred place, both for purposes of devotion and purposes of trade, and they might have heard from Semitic lips that there were good tidings for Israel. What they heard from their savage companions, and the Italian priesthood which acted on them, was, that there were good tidings for all the world except Israel, and that Israel, for the commission of a great crime of which they had never heard and could not comprehend, was to be plundered, massacred, hewn to pieces, and burnt alive in the name of Christ and for the sake of Christianity.

The Eastern Jews, who are very numerous, are in general the descendants of those who in the course of repeated captivities settled in the great Eastern monarchies, and which they never quitted. They live in the same cities and follow the same customs as they did in the days of Cyrus. They are to be found

in Persia, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor; at Bagdad, at Hamadan, at Smyrna. We know from the Jewish books how very scant was the following which accompanied Esdras and Nehemiah back to Jerusalem. A fortress city, built on a ravine, surrounded by stony mountains and watered by a scanty stream, had no temptations after the gardens of Babylon and the broad waters of the Euphrates. But Babylon has vanished and Jerusalem remains, and what are the waters of Euphrates to the brook of Kedron! It is another name than that of Jesus of Nazareth with which these Jews have been placed in collision, and the Ishmaelites have not forgotten the wrongs of Hagar in their conduct to the descendants of Sarah.

Is it therefore wonderful that a great portion of the Jewish race should not believe in the most important portion of the Jewish religion? As, however, the converted races become more humane in their behaviour to the Jews, and the latter have opportunity fully to comprehend and deeply to ponder over true Christianity, it is difficult to suppose that the result will not be very different. Whether presented by a Roman or Anglo-Catholic or Genevese divine, by pope, bishop, or presbyter, there is nothing, one would suppose, very repugnant to the feelings of a Jew when he learns that the redemption of the human race has been effected by the mediatorial agency of a child of Israel: if the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation be developed to him, he will remember that the blood of Jacob is a chosen and peculiar blood; and if so transcendent a consummation is to occur, he will scarcely deny that only one race could be deemed worthy of accomplishing it. There may be points of doctrine on which the northern and western races may perhaps never agree. The Jew like them may follow that path in those respects which reason and feeling alike dictate; but nevertheless it can hardly be maintained that there is anything revolting to a Jew to learn that a Jewess is the queen of heaven, or that the flower of the Jewish race are even now sitting on the right hand of the Lord God of Sabaoth.

Perhaps, too, in this enlightened age, as his mind expands, and he takes a comprehensive view of this period of progress, the pupil of Moses may ask himself, whether all the princes of the house of David have done so much for the Jews as that prince who was crucified on Calvary. Had it not been for Him, the Jews would have been comparatively unknown, or known only as a high Oriental caste which had lost its country. Has not He made their history the most famous in the world? Has not He hung up their laws in every temple? Has not He vindicated all their wrongs? Has not He avenged the victory of Titus and conquered the Caesars? What successes did they anticipate from their Messiah? The wildest dreams of their rabbis have been far exceeded. Has not Jesus

conquered Europe and changed its name into Christendom? All countries that refuse the cross wither, while the whole of the new world is devoted to the Semitic principle and its most glorious offspring the Jewish faith, and the time will come when the vast communities and countless myriads of America and Australia, looking upon Europe as Europe now looks upon Greece, and wondering how so small a space could have achieved such great deeds, will still find music in the songs of Sion and still seek solace in the parables of Galilee.

These may be dreams, but there is one fact which none can contest. Christians may continue to persecute Jews, and Jews may persist in disbelieving Christians, but who can deny that Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Son of the Most High God, is the eternal glory of the Jewish race?

## CHAPTER XI.

### *Jewish Disabilities*

IT WOULD seem to follow from the views expressed in the preceding chapter, that in communities professing a belief in our Lord, the Jewish race ought not to be subject to any legislative dishonour or disqualification. These views, however, were not those which influenced Lord George Bentinck in forming his opinion that the civil disabilities of those subjects of her Majesty who profess that limited belief in divine revelation which is commonly called the Jewish religion should be removed. He had supported a measure to this effect in the year 1833, guided in that conduct by his devoted attachment to the equivocal principle of religious liberty, the unqualified application of which principle seems hardly consistent with that recognition of religious truth by the state to which we yet adhere, and without which it is highly probable that the northern and western races, after a disturbing and rapidly degrading period of atheistic anarchy, may fatally recur to their old national idolatries, modified and mythically dressed up according to the spirit of the age. It may be observed that the decline and disasters of modern communities have generally been relative to their degree of sedition against the Semitic principle. Since the great revolt of the Celts against the first and second testament, at the close of the last century, France has been alternately in a state of collapse or convulsion. Throughout the awful trials of the last sixty years, England, notwithstanding her deficient and meagre theology, has always remembered Sion. The great Transatlantic republic is intensely Semitic, and has prospered accordingly. This sacred principle alone has consolidated the mighty empire of all the Russias. How omnipotent it is cannot be more clearly shown than by the instance of Rome, where it appears in its most corrupt form. An old man on a Semitic throne baffles the modern Attilas, and the recent invasion of the barbarians, under the form of red republicans, socialists, communists, all different phases which describe the relapse of the once converted races into their primitive condition of savagery. Austria would long ago have dissolved but for the Semitic principle, and if the north of Germany has never succeeded in attaining that imperial position which seemed its natural destiny, it is that the north of Germany has never at any time been thoroughly converted. Some perhaps may point to Spain as a remarkable instance of decline in a country where the Semitic principle has exercised great influence. But the fall of Spain was occasioned by the expulsion of her Semitic

population: a million families of Jews and Saracens, the most distinguished of her citizens for their industry and their intelligence, their learning and their wealth.

It appears that Lord George Bentinck had offended some of his followers by an opinion expressed in his address to his constituency in '47, that in accordance with the suggestion of Mr. Pitt, some provision should be made for the Roman Catholic priesthood of Ireland out of the land. Although this opinion might offend the religious sentiments of some, and might be justly looked upon by others as a scheme ill-suited to the character of an age adverse to any further religious endowments, it must be acknowledged that no member of the Protectionist party had any just cause of complaint against Lord George for the expression of an opinion which he had always upheld, and of his constancy to which he had fairly given his friends notice. This was so generally felt that the repining died away. The Jewish question, as it was called, revived these religious emotions. These feelings, as springing from the highest sentiment of our nature, and founded, however mistaken in their application, on religious truth, are entitled to deep respect and tenderness; but no one can indulge them by the compromise of the highest principles, or by sanctioning a course which he really believes to be destructive of the very object which their votaries wish to cherish.

As there are very few Englishmen of what is commonly called the Jewish faith, and as therefore it was supposed that political considerations could not enter into the question, it was hoped by many of the followers of Lord George Bentinck that he would not separate himself from his party on this subject, and very earnest requests and representations were made to him with that view. He was not insensible to them; he gave them prolonged and painful consideration; they greatly disquieted him. In his confidential correspondence he often recurs to the distress and anxiety which this question and its consequences as regarded his position with those friends to whom he was much attached occasioned him. It must not, therefore, be supposed that, in the line he ultimately took with reference to this question, he was influenced, as some have unkindly and unwarrantably fancied, by a self-willed, inexorable, and imperious spirit. He was no doubt, by nature, a proud man, inclined even to arrogance, and naturally impatient of contradiction; but two severe campaigns in the House of Commons had already mitigated these characteristics: he understood human nature, he was fond of his party, and, irrespective of other considerations, it pained his ardent and generous heart to mortify his comrades. It was therefore not in any degree from temper, but from principle,—from as pure, as high, and as noble a sense of duty as ever actuated a man in public life,—that Lord George Bentinck

ultimately resolved that it was impossible for him to refuse to vote for the removal of what are commonly called Jewish disabilities. He had voted in this particular cause shortly after his entrance into public life; it was in accordance with that general principle of religious liberty to which he was an uncompromising adherent; it was in complete agreement with the understanding which subsisted between himself and the Protectionist party, when at their urgent request he unwillingly assumed the helm. He was entreated not to vote at all; to stay away, which the severe indisposition under which he was then labouring warranted. He did not rudely repulse these latter representations, as has been circulated. On the contrary, he listened to them with kindness, and was not uninfluenced by them. Enfeebled by illness, he had nearly brought himself to a compliance with a request urged with affectionate importunity, but from which his reason and sense of duty held him aloof. After long and deep and painful pondering, when the hour arrived, he rose from his bed of sickness, walked into the House of Commons, and not only voted, but spoke in favour of his convictions. His speech remains, one of the best ever delivered on the subject, not only full of weighty argument, but touched with a high and even tender vein of sentiment.

This vote and speech of Lord George Bentinck no doubt mortified at the moment a considerable portion of his followers, and occasioned great dissatisfaction among a very respectable though limited section of them. This latter body must either have forgotten or they must have been strangely unacquainted with the distinct understanding on which Lord George had undertaken the lead of the party, or otherwise they could not have felt authorized in conveying to him their keen sense of disapprobation. Unfortunately he received this when the House had adjourned for the holidays, and when Mr. Bankes, who had been the organ of communication with him in '46, was in the country, and when the party was of course generally dispersed. Lord George did not take any pains to ascertain whether the representation which was made to him was that of the general feeling of a large party, or that only of a sincere, highly estimable, but limited section. He was enfeebled and exhausted by indisposition; he often felt, even when in health, that the toil of his life was beyond both his physical and moral energies; and though he was of that ardent and tenacious nature that he never would have complained, but have died at his post, the opportunity of release coming to him at a moment when he was physically prostrate was rather eagerly seized, and the world suddenly learnt at Christmas, with great astonishment, that the renowned leader of the Protectionist party had relinquished his trust.

The numerous communications which he received must have convinced him that the assumed circumstances under which he acted had not been accurately appreciated by him. He was implored to reconsider his course, as one very detrimental to the cause to which he was devoted, and which would probably tend to the triumph of those whose policy he had attempted to defeat, and whose personal conduct he had at least succeeded in punishing.

‘The prophesied time has come,’ he wrote to his friend Mr. Bankes, on the 23rd of December, 1847, ‘when I have ceased to be able to serve the party, the great cause of Protection, or my country, by any longer retaining the commission bestowed on me in the spring of 1846. You will remember, however, that when unfeignedly and honestly, but in vain, trying to escape from being raised to a position which I foresaw I must fail to maintain with advantage to you or honour to myself, I at last gave my consent, I only did so on the express understanding that my advancement should be held to be merely a pro tempore appointment, waiting till the country should have the opportunity of sending to Parliament other men better fitted to lead the country gentlemen of England. I have recalled these circumstances to your mind with no other purpose than that the party may feel how entirely free they are, without even the suspicion of doing an injustice to me or of showing me in this any disrespect, to remodel their arrangements, and to supersede my lieutenancy by the appointment of a superior and permanent commander.’

And again on Christmas-day, to the same gentleman, in reply to an acknowledgment of the preceding, he says, while thanking Mr. Bankes ‘for his warm-hearted letter as very grateful to his feelings,’—‘Confidentially I tell you, that far from feeling in the least annoyed, I shall feel greatly relieved by a restoration to privacy and freedom. I worked upon my spirit in ‘46 and ‘47; but I have learnt now that I have shaken my constitution to the foundation, and I seriously doubt my being able to work on much longer.’

He wrote on the 24th of December to one of his most intimate friends and warmest supporters, Mr. Christopher, the member for Lincolnshire, who had remonstrated with him as to his decision: ‘It is not in my nature to retain a station one moment after I get a hint even that any portion of those who raised me to it are wearied of seeing me there. The old members of the party will all recollect how clearly I foresaw and foretold that I should be found a very inconvenient as well as a very inefficient leader, so soon as the great Protection battle was brought to a close. I predicted all that has since occurred; and no one more cordially agrees than I do in the wisdom of the present decision, the spirit I presume of which is that no great party or large body of men can be successfully,

or to any good purpose, led except by a man who heart and soul sympathizes with them in all their feelings, partialities, and prejudices. Cold reason has a poor chance against such influences. There can be no *esprit de corps* and no zeal where there is not a union of prejudices as well as of commercial opinions. The election of a leader united with the great body of the party in these respects, will tend greatly to reunite its scattered particles, even on those questions where I shall be able to give my aid with all my wonted zeal, which will not be the less spirited because it will be free and independent.’

At a later period, acknowledging an address signed by the great body of the Protectionist party, and presented to him by the present Earl Talbot, then a member of the House of Commons, Lord George wrote, ‘The considerations which obliged me to surrender a post of honour which every independent and high-minded English gentleman has at all times prized above the highest rewards in the gift of the crown, “the leadership of the country gentlemen of England,” will never influence me to swerve from any endeavours of which my poor abilities and bodily energies are capable in the promotion of the prosperity of all classes in the British empire at home and in the colonies, any more than they can ever make me forget the attachment, the friendship, and the enthusiastic support of those who stood by me to the end of the death struggle for British interests and for English good faith and political honour, and to whose continued friendship and constancy I know I am indebted for this graceful and grateful compliment.’

If Lord George Bentinck was inexorable to the entreaties of his friends, it must not be supposed that he was influenced in the course which he pursued, as was presumed by many at the time not acquainted with the circumstances, by any feeling of pique or brooding sullenness. No high-spirited man under vexatious and distressing circumstances ever behaved with more magnanimity. In this he was actuated in a great degree by a sense of duty, but still more by that peculiar want of selfishness which was one of the most beautiful traits of his character. The moment he had at all recovered from the severe attack by which, to use his own language, he had been ‘struck down in the first week of the session,’ and from the effects of which it may be doubted whether he ever entirely recovered, he laboured zealously to induce some competent person to undertake the office which he had thought it expedient to resign, offering in several instances to serve in the ranks, and to assist with his utmost energies, both in and out of the House, the individual who would undertake the responsible direction in the Commons.

These efforts, though indefatigable, were not successful, for those who were



competent to the office cared not to serve under any one except himself. About this time, a personage of great station, and who very much admired Lord George Bentinck, wrote to him, and recommended him not to trouble himself about the general discipline of the party, but to follow his own course, and lead that body of friends who under all circumstances would adhere to him, instancing the case of Mr. Canning, under circumstances not altogether dissimilar. Lord George replied: 'As for my rallying a personal party round myself, as Mr. Canning did, I have no pretension to anything of the kind; when Mr. Canning did that, the House of Commons, and England too, acknowledged him to be the greatest orator who had survived Pitt and Fox; he had been Secretary of State for foreign affairs, and had taken a conspicuous part in rousing the country to carry on the war against France.'

The nature of the subject, dealing as it necessarily does with so many personal details, renders it impossible to make public the correspondence in which Lord George Bentinck was engaged at this time in his attempts to place the Protectionist party under the guidance of one who would unite all sympathies; but were that publication possible, it would place Lord George Bentinck in a very noble and amiable light, and prove a gentleness and softness in his nature for which those who were not very intimate with him did not give him credit. Not that it must be for a moment supposed that he was insensible to what was occurring. He was the most sensitive as well as the proudest of men. When the writer called at Harcourt House, to bid him farewell, before the Christmas holidays, and, conversing very frankly on the course which he was then pursuing, inquired as to his future proceedings, Lord George said with emotion: 'In this cause I have shaken my constitution and shortened my days, and I will succeed or die.' In the course of the year 1848, walking home, talking together, from the House of Commons, he twice recurred to this terrible alternative.

But all considerations were merged at this moment in the predominant one which was to keep the party together. He wrote to a friend at the end of January, who urged him, as the hour of work approached and the injurious inconveniences of his abdication would be more felt, to confer with his former followers and reconsider his position, that no personal feeling prevented his taking that course, but that he felt any resumption of responsibility on his part would not be pleasing to a section of those who formerly served with him, and that there would be a 'split' in the ranks. 'As far as I am personally concerned,' he added, 'I could submit to anything short of having my ears cut off and appearing as a "Croppy," to be free again. My pride cannot stand leading an unwilling party; I would just as soon thrust myself into a dinner-room where I

was at once an uninvited and an unwelcome guest.'

In the meantime, according to his custom, the moment that he had sufficiently recovered from his illness, he prepared with the utmost zeal for the coming struggle respecting the fate of our sugar colonies, in which subject he was soon absorbed.

Parliament reassembled on the 3rd of February, and on that night Lord George Bentinck brought forward his motion for 'a select committee to inquire into the present condition and prospects of the interests connected with and dependent on sugar and coffee planting in her Majesty's East and West Indian possessions and the Mauritius, and to consider whether any and what measures can be adopted by Parliament for their relief.' When he entered the House, Lord George walked up to the head of the second bench below the gangway, on the opposition side, and thus significantly announced that he was no longer the responsible leader of the Protectionist party. It was the wish of the writer of these pages, who had resolved to stand or fall by him, to have followed his example and to have abdicated the prominent seat in which the writer had been unwillingly and fortuitously placed; but by the advice, or rather at the earnest request, of Lord George Bentinck, this course was relinquished as indicative of schism, which he wished to discourage; and the circumstance is only mentioned as showing that Lord George was not less considerate at this moment of the interests of the Protectionist party than when he led them with so much confidence and authority. The session, however, was to commence without a leader, without any recognized organ of communication between parties, or any responsible representative of opinion in debate. All again was chaos. There is, however, something so vital in the Conservative party that it seems always to rally under every disadvantage.

Lord George spoke well to his resolution: the House soon recognized he was master of his case, and though few foresaw at the moment the important consequences to which this motion would lead, the House was interested from the first; and though there was no division, the debate lasted two days, and was sustained on both sides with great animation.

The mover vindicated himself very successfully for only proposing a committee of inquiry. 'It has been represented to me,' he said, 'by the colonies and by persons in this country who are interested in them, that the course which I am proposing is not consistent with the necessities of the case; that there is something pusillanimous in the motion which I am going to make; that in point of fact the interests connected with sugar and coffee planting are in extremis; and that while the question of their redress is being discussed in a committee above-stairs, these great interests will perish. They say to me that a committee of

inquiry will be to them of the nature of that comfort which,

*"Like cordials after death, come late; "*

and that before the committee shall have reported, the West-Indian interest will be altogether past recovery. But, sir, it is for me to consider what my power is to obtain any substantial relief by a direct vote of this House; and when I remember that in July, 1846, I moved a resolution the purport of which was, to maintain the protection for the West-Indian and the East-Indian free-labour colonies which they now seek, and that I had but one hundred and thirty gentlemen to support me, while two hundred and sixty-five votes were recorded in favour of the measure of the Government admitting slave-labour sugar, I feel that it is hopeless for me to endeavour in this House, where I have no reason to suppose any addition has been made to the members acquiescing in my views, to convert that minority into a majority; and more especially when I recollect that on that occasion but five gentlemen connected with the West-Indian and East-Indian interests recorded their votes with me, I think the West-Indian interest has not a good case against me when they blame me for not taking a more resolute step on this occasion.'

He was not, however, without hope from the course which he had decided to pursue. 'Looking, as I have done, at the deplorable state of the West Indies, the East Indies, and the Mauritius, and holding, as I do, in my hand a list of forty-eight great houses in England—twenty-six of the first commercial houses in London, sixteen in Liverpool, and six elsewhere—which have failed, and whose liabilities amount in the whole to £6,300,000 and upwards, none of which I believe would have fallen had it not been for the ruin brought upon them by the change in the sugar duties and the consequent reduction in the price of their produce,—I do hope, through the intervention of a committee of this House, I may be able to prevail upon the House to change its policy with regard to this great question.'

Lord George was supported in this debate by Mr. Thomas Baring, in one of the best speeches ever made in the House of Commons. Few more combine mastery of the case with parliamentary point than this gentleman. It is not impossible to find a man capable of addressing the House of Commons who understands the subject; it is not impossible to find a man who can convey his impressions on any subject to the House in a lively and captivating manner, though both instances are rarer than the world would imagine; but a man who at the same time understands a question and can handle it before a popular assembly in a popular style, who teaches without being pedantic, can convey an argument in an epigram, and instruct as the Mexicans did by picture, possesses a

talent for the exercise of which he is responsible to his sovereign and his country.

Mr. Baring said that he could not perfectly agree either with Lord John Russell or Lord George Bentinck, that Protection or Free Trade must be in what they called a circle, round which in their legislation they must always move; that they must either give protection to everything or free trade to everything. He could not say that because sugar claimed protection, coals must have protection also. Neither would he, on the other hand, apply free trade to every article. He acknowledged the advantage of competition as a stimulus: he thought that, placing things on equal grounds, competition was undoubtedly a great advantage. He could understand a competition to try the mutual speed of race-horses; but there could be no competition between a race-horse and a steam-engine, for the power of the animal could bear no comparison with that of the machine!

Mr. Baring could look back to no legislation more humiliating than the legislation regarding our colonies. No great interest was ever so much trifled with, so much sacrificed to the cry of the day; at one moment to no slavery and another to cheap sugar.

The committee was granted, and it was generally felt that the question was consequently quieted for the session.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *Leader Perforce*

DURING the first six weeks of this famous committee the attendance of its members was not very regular, and its labours attracted little attention. The evidence on the East-India part of the question was closed and reported to the House by the end of February; after that period the evidence was reported to the House every week or ten days. Towards the end of March, rumours began to circulate of the extraordinary vigour and ability with which this investigation was pursued, and of the novel, authentic, and striking evidence that had been elicited. The proceedings were talked of in the House of Commons and on the Royal Exchange; the City men who were examined went back to their companions with wondrous tales of the energy and acuteness of Harcourt House, and the order, method, and discipline of the committee-room at Westminster. As time elapsed, the hopes of the colonial interest again revived. It was generally felt that Lord George had succeeded in establishing an irresistible case. It was rumoured that the government could not withstand it. Those who had originally murmured at the course which he had adopted of moving for a committee of inquiry, instead of proposing a specific measure of relief, and had treated an investigation as a mere means of securing inaction, now recanted their rash criticism, and did justice to his prescience and superior judgment, as well as to his vast information and indefatigable exertions. The week during which the committee sat on their report was a very anxious one; the divisions were known every day in the House of Commons; the alternations of success and discomfiture, and the balanced numbers that so often called for the interposition of the chairman, were calculated to sustain the excitement; and when, on the 29th of May, it was known that the report was at length agreed to, and that a committee of free traders had absolutely recommended a differential duty of 10s. in favour of our own produce, one might have fancied from the effect visibly produced, that a government was changed.

A few days before—it was the day after the Derby, May 25th—the writer met Lord George Bentinck in the library of the House of Commons. He was standing before the book-shelves, with a volume in his hand, and his countenance was greatly disturbed. His resolutions in favour of the colonial interest after all his labours had been negatived by the committee on the 22nd, and on the 24th, his horse Surplice, whom he had parted with among the rest of

his stud, solely that he might pursue without distraction his labours on behalf of the great interests of the country, had won that paramount and Olympian stake, to gain which had been the object of his life. He had nothing to console him, and nothing to sustain him except his pride. Even that deserted him before a heart which he knew at least could yield him sympathy. He gave a sort of superb groan:—

‘All my life I have been trying for this, and for what have I sacrificed it!’ he murmured.

It was in vain to offer solace.

‘You do not know what the Derby is,’ he moaned out.

‘Yes, I do; it is the blue ribbon of the turf.’

‘It is the blue ribbon of the turf,’ he slowly repeated to himself, and sitting down at the table, he buried himself in a folio of statistics.

But on Monday, the 29th, when the resolution in favour of a 10s. differential duty for the colonies had at the last moment been carried, and carried by his casting vote, ‘the blue ribbons of the turf were all forgotten. Not for all the honours and successes of all the meetings, spring or autumn, Newmarket, Epsom, Goodwood, Doncaster, would he have exchanged that hour of rapture. His eye sparkled with fire, his nostril dilated with triumph, his brow was elate like a conqueror, his sanguine spirit saw a future of continued and illimitable success.

‘We have saved the colonies,’ he said,—‘saved the colonies. I knew it must be so. It is the knell of free trade.’

Notwithstanding the formal renunciation of the leadership of the Protectionist party by Lord George Bentinck, it was soon evident to the House and the country that that renunciation was merely formal. In these days of labour, the leader of a party must be the man who does the work, and that work cannot now be accomplished without the devotion of a life. Whenever a great question arose, the people out of doors went to Lord George Bentinck, and when the discussion commenced, he was always found to be the man armed with the authority of knowledge. There was, however, no organized debate and no party discipline. No one was requested to take a part, and no attendance was ever summoned. The vast majority sitting on the Protectionist benches always followed Bentinck, who, whatever might be his numbers in the lobby, always made a redoubtable stand in the House. The situation however, it cannot be denied, was a dangerous one for a great party to persevere in, but no permanent damage accrued, because almost every one hoped that before the session was over, the difficulty would

find a natural solution in the virtual chief resuming his formal and responsible post. Notwithstanding his labours on the two great committees of the year—those on colonial and commercial distress,—Lord George Bentinck found time to master the case of the shipping interest when the navigation laws were attacked, to impugn in a formal motion the whole of the commercial policy of Sir Robert Peel, even while the sugar and coffee planting committee was still sitting, and to produce, early in March, a rival budget. It was mainly through the prolonged resistance which he organized against the repeal of the navigation laws, that the government, in 1848, was forced to abandon their project. The resistance was led with great ability by Mr. Herries, and the whole party put forward their utmost strength to support him. But it is very difficult to convey a complete picture of the laborious life of Lord George Bentinck during the sitting of Parliament. At half-past nine o'clock there called upon him the commercial representatives of the question of the day; after these conferences came his elaborate and methodical correspondence, all of which he carried on himself in a handwriting clear as print, and never employing a secretary; at twelve or one o'clock he was at a committee, and he only left the committee-room to take his seat in the House of Commons, which he never quitted till the House adjourned, always long past midnight, and often at two o'clock in the morning. Here he was ready for all comers, never omitting an opportunity to vindicate his opinions, or watching with lynx-like vigilance the conduct of a public office. What was not his least remarkable trait is, that although he only breakfasted on dry toast, he took no sustenance all this time, dining at White's at half-past two o'clock in the morning. After his severe attack of the influenza he broke through this habit a little during the last few months of his life, moved by the advice of his physician and the instance of his friends. The writer of these observations prevailed upon him a little the last year to fall into the easy habit of dining at Bellamy's, which saves much time, and permits the transaction of business in conversation with a congenial friend. But he grudged it: he always thought that something would be said or done in his absence, which would not have occurred had he been there; some motion whisked through, or some return altered. His principle was that a member should never be absent from his seat.

The session of '48 had been one of unexampled length, having lasted ten months, and, as usual under such circumstances, the obstacles to the transaction of public business were sought everywhere except in the real quarter. The forms of the House and the propensity to unnecessary discussion among its members were chiefly denounced. Lord George Bentinck did not agree in the justness of these criminations; they were eagerly caught by the thoughtless and the

superficial, but it was his habit to investigate and analyze everything, and he found that these charges had no basis. The forms of the House of Commons are the result of accumulated experience and have rarely been tampered with successfully, while on the other hand a parliamentary government is by name and nature essentially a government of discussion. It is not at all difficult to conceive a mode of governing a country more expeditious than by a parliament; but where truth as well as strength is held to be an essential element of legislation, opinion must be secured an unrestricted organ. Superfluity of debate may often be inconvenient to a minister, and sometimes perhaps even distasteful to the community; but criticizing such a security for justice and liberty as a free-spoken parliament is like quarrelling with the weather because there is too much rain or too much sunshine. The casual inconvenience should be forgotten in the permanent blessing. Acting upon these false imputations a committee was even appointed, two years ago, of the most eminent members of the House of Commons, to investigate the subject and suggest remedies, and some votaries of the Transatlantic type recommended the adoption of the rules of Congress where each speaker is limited to an hour. But an hour from an uninteresting speaker would be a great infliction. The good sense and the good taste of the House of Commons will be found on the whole to be the best regulators of the duration of a debate.

The truth is that the delay in the conduct of parliamentary business which has been much complained of during the last few years, murmurs of which were especially rife in 1848, is attributable to the fact that the ministry, though formed of men inferior in point of ability to none who could be reasonably intrusted with administration, had not sufficient parliamentary strength. After all their deliberations and foresight,—after all their observations of the times and study of the public interest, their measures when launched from the cabinet into the House were not received by a confiding majority, firm in their faith in the statesmanlike qualities of the authors of these measures and in their sympathy with the general political system of which the ministry was the representative. On the contrary, the success of the measures depended on a\* variety of sections who in their aggregate exceeded in number and influence the party of the ministers. These became critics and took the ministerial measures in hand; the measures became, the measures, not of the cabinet, but of the House of Commons; and a purely legislative assembly became, in consequence of the weakness of the government, yearly more administrative. This was undoubtedly a great evil, and occasioned, besides great delay, many crude enactments, as will be the case where all are constructors and none are responsible, but the evil was



not occasioned by the forms of the House or the length of the speeches. Sir Robert Peel was unquestionably a very able administrator, but if he had not had a majority of ninety he would have fallen in as ill repute as has been too often the lot of Lord John Russell.

Lord George Bentinck was very anxious that there should be a parliamentary summary of this enormous and eventful session of '48, that the conduct of business by the ministry should be traced and criticized and the character of the House of Commons vindicated, and he appealed to the writer of these observations to undertake the task. But the writer was unwilling to accede to this suggestion, not only because at the end of August he shrank from a laborious effort, but principally because he did not hold that his position in the House of Commons warranted on his part such an interference, since, after all, he was only the comrade in arms of one who chose to be only an independent member of the House. He therefore unaffectedly stated that he thought the office was somewhat above his measure. But Lord George Bentinck would not listen to these representations. 'I don't pretend to know much,' he said, 'but I can judge of men and horses.' It is difficult to refuse those who are themselves setting a constant example of self-sacrifice, and therefore, so far as the labour was concerned, the writer would not have shrunk from the exertion even on the last day of the month of August, and when the particular wish of Lord George was found to be more general than the writer presumed to suppose, he accordingly endeavoured to accomplish the intention.

Three or four days after this, the writer, about to leave London, called at Harcourt House, to say farewell to his comrade in arms. He passed with Lord George the whole morning, rather indulging in the contemplation of the future than in retrospect. Lord George was serene, cheerful, and happy. He was content with himself, which was rarely the case, and remembered nothing of his career but its distinction, and the ennobling sense of having done his duty.

Any misunderstandings that may have for a moment irritated him seemed forgotten; he appeared conscious that he possessed the confidence and cordial regard of the great majority of the Protectionist party, although he chose to occupy a private post, and he was proud of the consciousness. He was still more sensible of the sympathy which he had created out of doors, which he greatly appreciated, and to which, though with his usual modesty, he more than once recurred. 'The thing is to get the people out of doors with you,' he repeated, 'men like the merchants; all the rest follow.' It was evident that the success of his colonial committee had greatly satisfied his spirit. He had received that day the vote of thanks of the West-India body for his exertions. He said more than once,

that with a weak government, a parliamentary committee properly worked might do wonders. He said he would have a committee on import duties next year, and have all the merchants to show what share the foreigners had obtained of the reductions that had been made of late years. He maintained, that, quite irrespective of the general arrangements of the new commercial system, Sir Robert Peel had thrown away a great revenue on a number of articles of very inferior importance, and he would prove this to the country. He said our colonial empire ought to be reconstructed by a total abolition of all duties on produce from her Majesty's dominions abroad.

All his ideas were large, clear, and coherent. He dwelt much on the vicissitudes which most attend all merely foreign trade, which, though it should be encouraged, ought not to be solely relied on, as was the fashion of this day. Looking upon war as occasionally inevitable, he thought a commercial system based upon the presumption of perpetual peace to be full of ruin. His policy was essentially imperial and not cosmopolitan.

About to part probably for many months, and listening to him as he spoke, according to his custom, with so much fervour and sincerity, one could not refrain from musing over his singular and sudden career. It was not three years since he had in an instant occupied the minds of men. No series of parliamentary labours had ever produced so much influence in the country in so short a time. Never was a reputation so substantial built up in so brief a period. All the questions with which he had dealt were colossal questions: the laws that should regulate competition between native and foreign labour; the interference of the state in the development of the resources of Ireland; the social and commercial condition of our tropical colonies; the principles upon which our revenue should be raised; the laws which should regulate and protect our navigation. But it was not that he merely expressed opinions upon these subjects; he came forward with details in support of his principles and policy, which it had before been believed none but a minister could command. Instead of experiencing the usual and almost inevitable doom of private members of Parliament, and having his statements shattered by official information, Lord George Bentinck on the contrary, was the assailant, and the successful assailant, of an administration on these very heads. He often did their work more effectually than all their artificial training enabled them to do it. His acute research, and his peculiar sources of information, roused the vigilance of all the public offices of the country. Since his time, there has been more care in preparing official returns, and in arranging the public correspondence placed on the table of the House of Commons.

When one remembered that in this room, not three years ago, he was trying to

find a lawyer who would make a speech for him in Parliament, it was curious to remember that no one in the period had probably addressed the House of Commons oftener. Though his manner, which was daily improving, was not felicitous in the House, the authority of his intellect, his knowledge, and his character, made him one of the great personages of debate; but with the country who only read his speeches he ranked high as an orator. It is only those who have had occasion critically to read and examine the long series of his speeches who can be conscious of their considerable merits. The information is always full and often fresh, the scope large, the argument close, and the style, though simple, never bald, but vigorous, idiomatic, and often picturesque. He had not credit for this in his day, but the passages which have been quoted in this sketch will prove the justness of this criticism. As a speaker and writer, his principal need was condensation. He could not bear that anything should remain untold. He was deficient in taste, but he had fervour of feeling, and was by no means void of imagination.

The writer, in his frequent communications with him of faithful and unbounded confidence, was often reminded of the character by Mr. Burke of my Lord Keppell.

The labours of Lord George Bentinck had been supernatural, and one ought perhaps to have felt then that it was impossible they could be continued on such a scale of exhaustion; but no friend could control his eager life in this respect; he obeyed the law of his vehement and fiery nature, being one of those men who in whatever they undertake know no medium, but will ‘succeed or die.’

But why talk here and now of death! He goes to his native county and his father’s proud domain, to breathe the air of his boyhood and move amid the parks and meads of his youth. Every breeze will bear health, and the sight of every hallowed haunt will stimulate his pulse. He is scarcely older than Julius CÆsar when he commenced his public career, he looks as high and brave, and he springs from a long-lived race.

He stood upon the *perron* of Harcourt House, the last of the great hotels of an age of stately dwellings with its wings, and court-yard, and carriage portal, and huge outward walls. He put forth his hand to bid farewell, and his last words were characteristic of the man—of his warm feelings and of his ruling passion: ‘God bless you; we must work, and the country will come round us.’

## CHAPTER XIII.

*The Curtain Falls*

THE heavens darken; a new character enters upon the scene.

They say that when great men arise they have a mission to accomplish and do not disappear until it is fulfilled. Yet this is not always true. After all his deep study and his daring action Mr. Hampden died on an obscure field, almost before the commencement of that mighty struggle which he seemed born to direct. In the great contention between the patriotic and the cosmopolitan principle which has hardly begun, and on the issue of which the fate of this island as a powerful community depends, Lord George Bentinck appeared to be produced to represent the traditionary influences of our country in their most captivating form. Born a natural leader of the people, he was equal to the post. Free from prejudices, his large mind sympathized with all classes of the realm. His courage and his constancy were never surpassed by man. He valued life only as a means of fulfilling duty, and truly it may be said of him, that he feared none but God.

A few days after the interview noticed in the last chapter, Lord George Bentinck returned to Welbeck. Some there were who thought him worn by the exertions of the session, and that an unusual pallor had settled upon that mantling and animated countenance. He himself never felt in better health or was ever in higher spirits, and greatly enjoyed the change of life, and that change to a scene so dear to him.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, after breakfasting with his family, he retired to his room, where he employed himself with some papers, and then wrote three letters, one to Lord Enfield, another to the Duke of Richmond, and the third to the writer of these pages. That letter is now at hand; it is of considerable length, consisting of seven sheets of note-paper, full of interesting details of men and things, and written not only in a cheerful but even a merry mood. Then, when his letters were sealed, about four o'clock he took his staff and went forth to walk to Thoresby, the seat of Lord Manvers, distant between five and six miles from Welbeck, where Lord George was to make a visit of two days. In consequence of this his valet drove over to Thoresby at the same time to meet his master. But the master never came. Hours passed on and the master never came. At length the anxious servant returned to Welbeck, and called up the groom who had driven him over to Thoresby and who was in bed, and inquired whether he had seen

anything of Lord George on the way back, as his lord had never reached Thoresby. The groom got up, and accompanied by the valet and two others took lanterns, and followed the footpath which they had seen Lord George pursuing as they themselves went to Thoresby.

About a mile from the Abbey, on the path which they had observed him following, lying close to the gate which separates a water meadow from the deer-park, they found the body of Lord George Bentinck. He was lying on his face; his arms were under his body, and in one hand he grasped his walking-stick. His hat was a yard or two before him, having evidently been thrown off in falling. The body was cold and stiff. He had been long dead.

A woodman and some peasants passing near the spot, about two hundred yards from the gate in question, had observed Lord George, whom at the distance they had mistaken for his brother the Marquis of Titchfield, leaning against this gate. It was then about half-past four o'clock, or it might be a quarter to five, so he could not have left his home much more than half an hour. The woodman and his companions thought 'the gentleman' was reading, as he held his head down. One of them lingered for a minute looking at the gentleman, who then turned round, and might have seen these passers-by, but he made no sign to them.

Thus it seems that the attack, which was supposed to be a spasm of the heart, was not instantaneous in its effects, but with proper remedies might have been baffled. Terrible to think of him in his death-struggle without aid, and so near a devoted hearth! For that hearth, too, what an impending future!

The terrible news reached Nottingham on the morning of the 22nd, at half-past nine o'clock, and, immediately telegraphed to London, was announced by a second edition of the 'Times' to the country. Consternation and deep grief fell upon all men. One week later, the remains arrived from Welbeck at Harcourt House, to be entombed in the family vault of the Bentincks, that is to be found in a small building in a dingy street, now a chapel of ease, but in old days the parish church among the fields of the pretty village of Marylebone.

The day of interment was dark, and cold, and drizzling. Although the last offices were performed in the most scrupulously private manner, the feelings of the community could not be repressed. From nine till eleven o'clock that day all the British shipping in the docks and the river, from London Bridge to Gravesend, hoisted their flags half-mast high, and minute guns were fired from appointed stations along the Thames. The same mournful ceremony was observed in all the ports of England and Ireland; and not only in these, for the flag was half-mast high on every British ship at Antwerp, at Rotterdam, and at

Havre.

Ere the last minute gun sounded, all was over. Followed to his tomb by those brothers who, if not consoled, might at this moment be sustained by the remembrance that to him they had ever been brothers not only in name but in spirit, the vault at length closed on the mortal remains of *George Bentinck*.

One who stood by his side in an arduous and unequal struggle, who often shared his councils and sometimes perhaps soothed his cares, who knew well the greatness of his nature and esteemed his friendship among the chief of worldly blessings, has stepped aside from the strife and passion of public life to draw up this record of his deeds and thoughts, that those who come after us may form some conception of his character and career, and trace in these faithful though imperfect pages the portraiture of an *English Worthy*.

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