The ENDLESS ADVENTURE

by

F. S. OLIVER

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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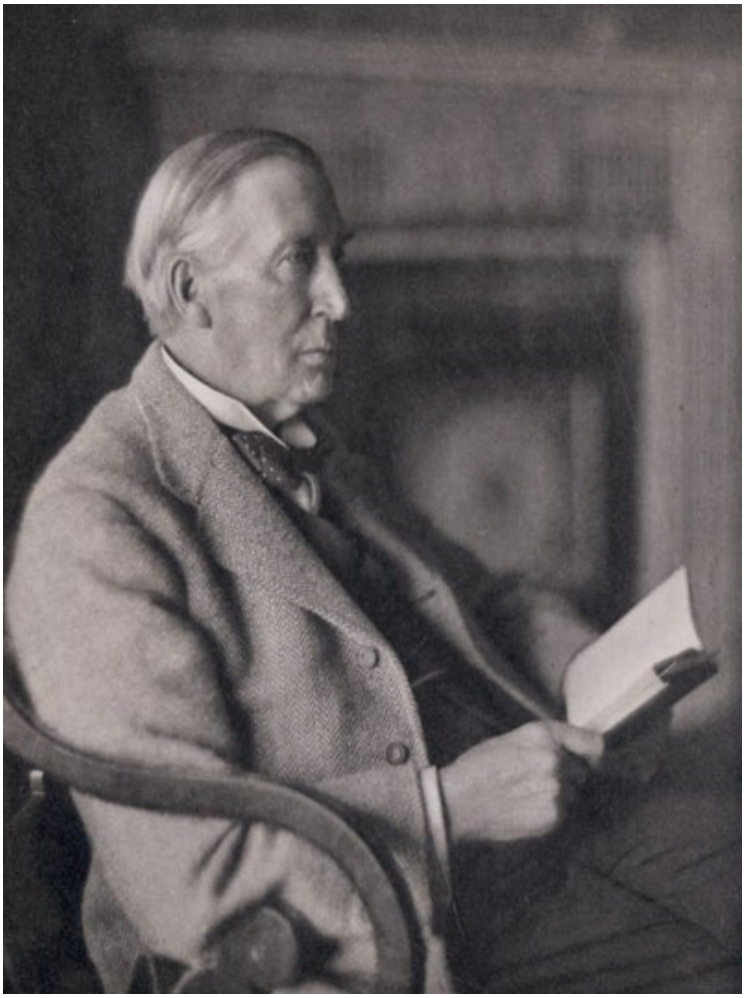

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NOTE

Readers of *The Endless Adventure* will remember that the second volume (1727-1735) was published in 1931. Mr. Oliver carried on his work continuously, though slowly, until his death in June 1934. Realising that owing to failing health he might not be able to finish the whole volume as he had planned it, the author decided to leave his main theme--the linking of his political philosophy to a review of Sir Robert Walpole's career--in order to place on record his conclusions. These are comprised in Book Ten, which he entitled 'A Political Testament,' adding a characteristically worded sub-title by way of explanation.[1]

The author intended to set down in this final book his mature reflections on the art of government, and, further, to illustrate these by an appraisement of English political leadership from Palmerston down to the present day. His plan is apparent from the list

of Chapter headings found amongst his papers; this is reproduced at the end of the volume.

The first nine Chapters of Book Ten, containing a general statement of his political faith, were printed and finally revised by him. Of the latter part, two chapters only--the studies of Palmerston and Disraeli--were left ready for printing; that on Gladstone was only partly carried through, and is printed as it was left--unfinished. Its fragmentary character will remind the reader that the book must not be judged as a work complete in form.

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[1] See page 141.

INTRODUCTION [1]

IN WHICH A COMMON READER LOOKS AT HISTORY

In which a common reader looks at history [3]

The historian is an artist to his finger-tips, whereas his fellow-workers--Smellfungus, Dryasdust and Monkbarns the antiquary--are only journeymen. Yet the historian does not shrink from doing journeyman's work himself, and is often to be seen in his shirt-sleeves.

Smellfungus, Dryasdust and Monkbarns are apt to be spoken of together, and too slightingly. They are an odd and awkward

trio, but the things they discover are often of considerable value to mankind.

Smellfungus is the least estimable of the three. He it is that hunts like a truffle-dog for old scandals, who lays bare and learnedly annotates the sordid amours of sinners who, for the most part, were persons of no particular importance. He delights in restoring scabrous passages which the discretion of bygone editors had omitted, and in supplying the names of offenders where the original letter-writer or diarist had left them in blank. Still, it would be pharisaical to put Smellfungus in the pillory, for he is no worse than a popular journalist who gives his clients what they want, be it edifying or the reverse. The most constant reader of Smellfungus' literature is probably the professed Puritan; but which of us is entirely free from the irkings of salacious curiosity? Smellfungus therefore has a place, though perhaps not a very honourable one, among the menials who serve in the Temple of History.

Dr. Jonas Dryasdust is a worthier character. He is dedicated body and soul to

his self-appointed task, miserably paid, but uncomplaining, for his work suffices. His highest worldly ambition rarely soars beyond an academic post, and this, owing to the keenness of competition, he too seldom obtains. Often a large part of his life is spent in the compilation of a *magnum opus* which, on publication, may win warm and well-deserved recognition in academic circles, though usually kicks are mingled with the ha'pence. His admirers, in their first enthusiasm, hasten to hail him historian; but when this claim is carried to the highest court of appeal, which consists of common readers, it invariably fails. For the common reader, consciously or unconsciously, judges the candidate by artistic standards and considers that the historian, like other artists, must aim at giving pleasure and not merely at imparting information.

Dr. Jonas Dryasdust was invented by Walter Scott in order that he might poke fun at himself. It is a name of very gentle opprobrium. There is no malice in it. Like Whig and Tory, which at their first adoption were terms of scorn, but which before long

came to be borne with pride by their possessors, the title Dryasdust has been changing its significance for the better during the past hundred years. Some day there may be a Dryasdust Club to which famous researchers all the world over will be anxious to belong. And Dryasdusts are not only vastly more numerous to-day than they were in the time of Scott, but their learning and quality have improved out of all comparison. They have become an honourable craft, distinguished by their disinterestedness and by their readiness to help their fellow-students. No modern historian could carry on his work without their assistance. And yet, with all this to their credit, we may continue to disbelieve that, even if they were aided by a corps of perfected psychologists, they would ever be able to change history from an art into a science.

If Dryasdust's sober profession verges on the commonplace, Monkbarns, the antiquary, offers a complete contrast. He is something of an 'original' and engages with zest in a joyful pursuit. He is even less concerned about pecuniary rewards than is Dryasdust,

considering himself amply rewarded if he can persuade some substantial number of his fellow-antiquaries to accept one of his laborious explanations. Though his business is with stocks and stones, with worn inscriptions, dusty charters and uncouth snatches of old songs and ballads, his spirit is not deadened by these preoccupations. His inventiveness is livelier than the average. His hypotheses are distinguished by their daring and often by their excruciating ingenuity. When he puts forward one of these, he tolerates none too readily a cool and scientific examination of it. It becomes at once an article of faith, a point of honour, and he inclines to treat all who cast a doubt on it as enemies. It is remarkable that, though both Dryasdust and Monkbarns are absorbed in innocent and gentle studies, they are among the most quarrelsome of men. Although they cannot compete in their command of high-flown Billingsgate with divines and scholars of past days, their way of addressing one another is not always polite; and woe betide any ignorant outsider who trespasses upon their chace!

Much of the historian's material must needs be of his own gathering. There has probably never been a great historian who had not something of Smellfungus, or of Dryasdust, or of Monkbarns in his composition. Readers of Thucydides cannot fail to be impressed by the care and patience with which he must have studied, compared and sifted the accounts of people who had been eye-witnesses of the events that he describes. The same may be said of Tacitus, who, in addition, had much written information to explore; and the same may be said of Scott, Macaulay and Carlyle, who, broadly speaking, had no living eye-witnesses to examine, but only records in bewildering profusion. The great Tacitus was not only a Dryasdust, but a Smellfungus as well, and unfortunately he had several of the faults that are found in that unamiable person. The smell of fungus was the breath of life to Suetonius, Procopius and other chroniclers of minor rank; while Monkbarns seems but a pygmy when you set him beside Herodotus and Livy.

Macaulay and Carlyle cannot fairly be

accused of neglecting research; yet we have the feeling that neither of them greatly enjoyed this part of his work, and each was only too glad when he could get back to his writing. Scott differs from these two in that he did his drudgery with a lighter heart and a greater gust. When he laughs at Dryasdust and Monkbarns, he is laughing at his own ardour. Before the crippled child could do more than crawl, he was learning old ballads by heart. He tells us that 'old and odd books and a considerable collection of family legends' were his introduction to history. As he grew up through a chequered youth to a manhood more than usually strong and healthy, most of his leisure was devoted, from choice, and not under any kind of constraint, to the gathering together of minstrelsy that had been kept alive by oral tradition among the friendly peasantry of Liddesdale and Ettrick; to devouring books of chivalry and other more authentic chronicles; to poring over broadsheets, pamphlets, charters, statutes and genealogies; to the deciphering of graven memorials on tombstones and tablets; to the investigation

and measurement of green mounds and stonework that marked the sites of ruined strongholds and abandoned camps. He delighted in these pursuits nearly as much as he delighted in making stories out of them for his fellow-schoolboys at the High School of Edinburgh; afterwards for the inner circle of his young friends apprenticed to the law; in later years, for the grateful multitudes who read his poems and the Waverley Novels. He was Dryasdust and Monkbarns in one, with the laborious patience of the first, the constructive fancy of the second, and a memory all his own.

I can think of no memory like Scott's. There have been memories, not a few, that were equally retentive; some, verging on the miraculous, that were even more retentive; but the real marvel was not so much the retentiveness of his memory as what went on inside his memory: not only a swift arrangement and laying away of things for future use, but (greatest wonder of all) an alchemy by which the dead were made alive. He was for ever pitching things, apparently at random and without system, into that vast,

high-domed, double-storied head of his--the whole range of English literature from the very earliest, with not a little Italian; facts of every description, and the most various information; and yet when he wanted anything it came to his whistle, without search or effort on his part. Living creatures thronged an appropriate scene--historic figures of kings, counsellors and fine ladies; and others, still more quick with nature, the commonalty--the splendid Scots and English commonalty--who walked, talked, laughed, sang, prayed, fought, drank, danced and capered as they had done in the days of King Robert, King James or King Charles. The things that went into his memory so higgledy-piggledy, and to all appearance dead, came out of it, when he needed them, orderly and alive.

Had I been asked on the day I left school, at the age of sixteen, to name the books from which I had learned the little history I then knew, my list would have been a very short one--*The Waverley Novels*, Macaulay's *Essays* and the *Plays* of Shakespeare; and I should probably have added Trevelyan's *Life*

of Macaulay, Green's *Short History* and Froude's *English in Ireland*. Were I asked the same question to-day, more than fifty years later, the list would be considerably longer; but it would begin with the same three names, placed in the same order; nor would the other three be left without honourable and grateful mention. This is the truthful confession of a *common reader*, and it is unlikely that it will be approved by the learned. These books, despite their many inaccuracies, still seem to me to deserve the name of true history, though if I were asked to state categorically what I mean by true history I should at once be deep in difficulties.

A record of events is not a history: a history is the impression that a record of events has made upon the mind of a man of genius. When we watch a queen-wasp at work in early summer we are curious about the nature of her material, but we are still more interested in the artistry with which she builds her pendent nest. The most painstaking, full and accurate record ever compiled by Dryasdust will not shape itself

spontaneously into a history any more than a few spoonfuls of wood-pulp will turn spontaneously into a wasp's nest. The historian gathers his materials from the objective world; but he gives us in addition, out of his own mind, a synthesis that is still more precious.

History is an austere art. The historian is bound in honour to tell the truth as it appears to him from his particular standpoint. He must never suppress evidence which he knows ought to be laid before the court, nor admit evidence which suits his argument and helps his narrative, when he knows or suspects it to be worthless. This is a severe code, seeing that historians are but human, and are beset, more perhaps than most humans, by the temptation to indulge their prejudices furtively. Perhaps no one of them all could pass this test entirely scatheless. Thucydides may stand above reproach--I am not scholar enough to venture an opinion; but Tacitus, beyond a doubt, has broken faith on several occasions, and we think the worse of him in consequence. Nor is it possible to believe that Macaulay, in his attacks on

William Penn, or Carlyle in his panegyrics on Frederick the Great, was guiltless of deliberate perversions. It is for the historian who does wrong with his eyes open that the extreme penalty is reserved. Misrepresentations that are made through impetuosity, carelessness or some like cause are less heinous. Yet, though less heinous, they cannot escape blame; for it is the historian's duty to be ever on his guard, not only against false witnesses, but against his own subconscious self. There is always a danger, as he knows full well, that his particular hatreds, predilections and theories will run away with him unless he keeps them on the curb.

This rule of truthfulness is not enforced to the letter in the case of historical romances, though in the spirit it applies to them as it does to formal history. Considerable indulgence is granted to a picturesque imagination, but this indulgence extends no farther than to the incidents of the story; the characters may not be tampered with, whether they be real or imaginary people. The partisan writer who deliberately ignores

or falsifies essentials is pretty certain to be found out and to be punished sooner or later, with neglect. Scott occasionally (as in *Quentin Durward*) plays wild tricks with his dates--indeed, he tells us so with a disarming frankness; but I can recall no instance where, in dealing with his characters--whether these be historical personages or creatures of his fancy--he is guilty of anything that approaches deliberate untruthfulness. The ruffian Christie of the Clint Hill in *The Monastery*; Mause Headrigg and her son Cuddie in *Old Mortality*; Wildrake in *Woodstock*; the Baron of Bradwardine in *Waverley*; Andrew Fairservice and Bailie Nicol Jarvie in *Rob Roy*: these, and a host of others, are not caricatures; still less are they libels on the religion, politics, race, class or calling of anyone. Great knowledge and great sympathy have gone to their making. They are inventions; but they are truthful inventions, drawn in a truly historical spirit without either sentimentality or rancour.

Accuracy is not the same thing as truthfulness. Not a few of the greatest historians have sometimes been exceedingly

inaccurate. And if perfect accuracy is unattainable by the historian it is equally beyond the reach of Dryasdust, for he has no instruments wherewith to measure the heavings, writhings and perturbations of human motives. The idiosyncrasies of some prodigious character, who by his sole genius diverts the current of mundane events, are beyond his analytic skill. Phenomena of this sort, phenomena in a continual flux, will not submit themselves to the methods of a land surveyor. The spirit of an epoch refuses to be set down upon a chart. Keenness of observation is a quality which the historian must possess; but the gift of sympathetic understanding ranks even higher. We will forgive him much inaccuracy if he has penetrated into the spiritual mysteries.

Supposing that two men of great and approximately equal genius were to write histories of the selfsame epoch, their two narrations--unless the standpoints from which they wrote were identical, which would be nothing short of a miracle--would surely differ so widely at many points as to amaze and bewilder an ingenuous reader. Suppose,

for example, that the English Reformation were the epoch chosen, and that the one historian wrote from the Protestant standpoint, the other from the Roman Catholic, even their general panoramas would hardly be recognisable as belonging to the same landscape. Every feature in the two accounts would show in a different perspective, having been viewed from two different angles. Lights and shadows would fall differently in the two pictures and the shapes of events would seem absurdly unlike. The valuations placed on most of the characters would be hopelessly at variance, and men who figured in the one narration as personages of great ascendancy would often be passed over very slightingly in the other. And yet each historian might deserve high praise for his truthfulness, his good judgement, his powers of observation, and for many of the other virtues of his art; while their two books--notwithstanding that they seemed to contradict one another vehemently over the whole field--might both be rightly praised as fine pieces of history. The doctrine, derived from the exact sciences,

which lays it down that there can be but ONE truth with regard to any matter, is as inapplicable to history as it is to aesthetics, morals or religion.

The historian breaks one of the rules of his art if he changes the position of his easel as his work proceeds. He must choose his station once and for all, and must paint truth as she appears to him from that station. It is his business to describe what he actually sees in the unity of a comprehensive vision. If he keeps on shifting about, in order to get a fuller view of this thing or of that, in order to peep round a corner or to see the other side of a mountain, his work will go for nought. Being a jumble of false perspectives, a meaningless confusion, it will interest only a few and will be believed by none.

No book deserves the name of history which is not alive in every part of it. The narrative must be alive and the characters must be alive. Cards labelled with the names of kings and queens and other persons of importance will not satisfy the common reader, however neatly and accurately they may be inscribed with the qualities, defects

and so forth of their originals. Marionettes, however exquisitely they may be contrived, however correctly they may be dressed for their parts, however skilfully they may be manipulated and made to talk by the manager-ventriloquist, will not pass muster for long. The men and women who figure in the story must be seen to breathe and move; and their pulses must beat.

In order that the characters should be credible, it is necessary, among other things, that they should be drawn to scale. Bad histories often bear a resemblance to the untidy and overcrowded doll's-house of a very young girl, whose loyalty insists on finding accommodation for all her favourites--for the woolly blackamoor, beloved from early infancy; for the Gargantuan baby-in-long-clothes that squeaks when its stomach is pressed; for the neat little French dolls which alone are of a size at all suited to their habitation; down to the tiniest figures from India and the East--all these are crammed in together with a lamentable disregard of artistry and proportion. I have a recollection of history books I read at school and in my

school days which fell not far short of this description. They were, I think, intended to establish the infallibility of the Protestant religion; for it was my good fortune to be brought up under a Calvinist regimen. On the other hand, had I been nurtured in Papistry, I cannot doubt that other history books, no less preposterous, would have been provided, in order to enslave me to the 'idolatries' of Rome.

History must be tense and closely knit, like a drama; it must have a beginning, a middle and an end, like a drama; it must keep strictly within certain fixed boundaries, like a drama; it is more like a drama than it is like any other kind of artistic creation. Lagging, straggling and an indeterminate conclusion are all grave faults; for history should be a living river that runs with speed; sometimes a turmoil of broken waters, sometimes smooth, but never sluggish. The backwaters of digression are filled with sunken dangers. A leisurely history is as certain to be a bad history as a leisurely tragedy, comedy or farce is certain to be a bad drama. In the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries writers who professed to be, and who were accepted as, historians appeared to glory in their prolixity and in their funeral paces. They took their own time over the journey, as if there were a sort of merit in being as long as possible on the road. Their books often had a ready sale, for this style of literature was then very much in the fashion, and no gentleman's library was complete without it. On the old shelves in many a country house you may still find these rows of volumes, standing stiff and handsome, with unbent corners and unbroken backs, bearing no traces of hard usage. They were bought by well-to-do people in an age that professed a craving for enlightenment; but it may be doubted if they were widely read even in their own day, and now they are never read at all.

Nothing that has been said is meant as a disparagement of that numerous class of authors who have written commentaries and reflections on special aspects of the historic movement. Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* is one of the most illuminating books ever written on the art of government and on the

causes and consequences of certain events; but it is not itself a history and Machiavelli never pretended that it was. In the same way a host of less eminent writers on politics and political philosophy have found in history a rich mine of illustrations in support of their various hypotheses. This is quite legitimate, and what they achieve is often of high value; but such writers are not historians any more than Dryasdust, Monkbarns or Smellfungus is a historian. Their craft has rules of its own and is capable of producing very brilliant results, but it works by a method which is entirely different from that of the historian. The historian, on the other hand, is ill-advised when he trespasses (as he sometimes does) on the sphere of these reflectors and commentators; for it is not *his* business to spin ingenious theories, and to occupy himself in philosophic disquisitions and speculations. His peculiar task is to unravel human actions and motives--a matter of superlative difficulty--and, for the rest, to tell his story as simply as he can.

It seems likely that the historian produces more effect in practical affairs than any other

kind of writer; more even than the theorist, for the reason that mankind listens more attentively to a story than it does to an argument. He appears sometimes as a benefactor, at others as a scourge. If he speaks the simple truth with courtesy and moderation he may do much to bring about appeasement, and to foster that respect for the beliefs and traditions of others which is the essence of good-neighbourliness. And as he knows that truth is something more than a bare record of events, he will try to get at people's hearts. His endeavour needs that he should be friends with the Comic Spirit, as Scott and Shakespeare were, as Carlyle was, and as most of the classical historians were not. For laughter is one of the relaxations of the very poorest, nor has mankind ever yet been 'always wholly serious' even in the sternest times. Modern history has at least this advantage over the old, that it no longer regards a funeral gravity as the only expression consistent with decorum.

Historians, however, are too often of a baser sort. Such men write dark melodramas, wherein ancient wrongs cry out for

vengeance, and present rivalries incite to conquest, and wholesale destruction of institutions or of states appears the only way to safety. Productions of this kind require comparatively little labour and thought; they provide the author with high excitement; they may bring him immediate fame, official recognition and substantial profits. Nearly every nation has been cursed at times with what may be called the *Titus Oates* school of historians. Their dark melodramas are not truth, but as nearly as possible the opposite of truth. *Titus Oates* the historian, stirring his brew of arrogance, envy and hatred in the witches' cauldron is an ugly sight. A great part of the miseries which have afflicted Europe since the beginning of the nineteenth century have been due to frenzies produced in millions of weak or childish minds by deliberate perversions of history. And one of the worst things about *Titus Oates* is the malevolence he shows in tainting generous ideas. Nationalism and Imperialism, for example, are honest and honourable ambitions, provided that they have their spring in truth and reason; but they have both

been turned into monsters by lies and propaganda. Nationalism has been let run wild like a suicidal madman, while Imperialism has changed into bloodthirsty megalomania. Falsification of history is the trade of a bawd.

The great historian, pen in hand, is at his ease among all sorts and conditions of men. He has the freedom of the market-place. He moves without embarrassment in courts and camps and council-chambers, in the worlds of fashion and of pleasure. He learns, like other people, by study, by observation and by the use of his reason; but what his spirit tells him has an even higher validity: he is no historian if he cannot *divine*.

His wisdom has little in common with the wisdom of the man-of-science and the philosopher. It is a very human wisdom, grim but kindly, which sorrows when high hopes are shattered, which rejoices when great purposes are achieved; which finds a place even for laughter. But there is never any place in it for mercy; for the historian is the humble servitor of Fate, and it is his duty to

cry aloud the judgements that are written in the Book.

The beginnings of his wisdom are an interest that never flags and a sympathy that nothing can quench: at full growth it is a fusion of transcendent common sense with passion at a white heat. He eschews argument, and concerns himself but little with systems of philosophy. His glory is to tell his story straightwise, and he is careful not to cumber it with preachings and moralisings of his own. He leaves epigrams and aphorisms and firework displays of eloquence to 'the lighter people.' His wisdom is a volatile essence which permeates his whole work; to separate, and capture it, and store it in phials is beyond the power of any analyst.

No artist has a greater capacity for suffering and for sympathy with suffering; but his passion is governed and kept within bounds by an iron self-control. Very rarely may he let himself go; for a single outburst of violence might ruin his work. The force of what he writes is strengthened by the restraint he practises. A quiet sentence may reveal the agony of his heart. Is there any fitter ending

to a great tragedy than this?--‘Of all the actions that took place in this war--indeed of all Hellenic actions that are on record--this was the greatest; the most glorious to the victors; the most ruinous to the vanquished, who were everywhere defeated, and their sufferings were terrible; their army and their ships, these and all else were utterly destroyed; and of the many who went forth few returned home. Thus ended the Athenian expedition against Syracuse.’

BOOK EIGHT

19

THE NEW PARLIAMENT (1735)

I.--*How Walpole met the new Parliament and was comforted*

21

The new Parliament met in January 1735. Party divisions were not then so clear as they are to-day, and it was never quite certain beforehand how the new members would vote when their virtue was exposed to the temptations of Westminster. It could hardly be doubted, however, that the general election had gone in Walpole's favour, and that nothing but a great superiority in the arts of intrigue, promises and pressure could produce

a contrary expression in the House of Commons. In these arts Walpole and Newcastle feared no competitor. They were not the men to lose in Parliament what their party had won at the hustings. So soon as the Opposition challenged a trial of strength they were soundly beaten by a majority of fifty.

The Opposition was as much amazed as disgusted by this result, for they had counted confidently on the downfall of a Ministry which was obviously unsupported by popular enthusiasm of any kind. But in this respect the Opposition was in precisely the same plight as the Ministry. It is true that they had succeeded, a few months earlier, in stirring up a great storm of indignation against their enemies, yet they had entirely failed in winning for themselves the confidence of their fellow-countrymen. The unexpectedness of their defeat at the polls caused deep depression among the leaders, and at the same time it fanned the mutual suspicions of the two sections of their followers. Bickerings and recriminations broke out and could not be suppressed. Walpole had not been so far wrong in his prophecy, that the

Whigs of the Opposition would sooner or later be overborne by their Tory allies, for now the Tories formed the larger part of the Opposition, whereas, before the election, the Whigs had held a substantial preponderance.

The Whigs of the Opposition were not slow in laying the blame for the recent disaster upon the personal unpopularity of Bolingbroke. There was a good deal of truth in this ungrateful judgement, for ever since his return from exile there had been a disposition among the vulgar to regard him as a maleficent character and to make a scapegoat of him when things went wrong. Yet of all the leaders of Opposition it was Bolingbroke who played the manliest part after defeat. It was he who went on fighting almost alone while the dispirited complainers against him sat wringing their hands. The object of his able and slashing articles was to prove that Walpole had lost the confidence of the nation, and that, though he still continued to hold office, his power was now precariously dependent on a miserable band of hirelings, who had been swept together out of the holes and corners of the country. This

thesis could be supported plausibly by an analysis of the poll. Had it not been for Newcastle's safe-conduct of his Kingdom of Sussex, and for Isla's threats and bribery, and for the venality of the Scots electors, and for the docility of the Cornish pocket-boroughs, the government, when Parliament met, would assuredly have been faced by a hostile majority. Moreover, the quality and the individual importance of the constituencies which had given their verdicts emphatically against Walpole's administration must be taken into account. The counties, formerly his strongholds (even his own county of Norfolk)--the large towns like London and Bristol, whose strong commercial interest had hitherto treated him, if not with affection, at least with confidence--were now almost unanimously against him. Could there then be any doubt that his prestige was gone? His government still stood upright; but only as a tree stands that has gone pompit--soft-hearted and hollow, with nothing to support it except the outer fibres and the bark.

Bolingbroke was a master of logic and rhetoric, and no one was his equal with these

weapons. Yet, although he proved conclusively from the laws of nature that the government was tottering to a fall, it may be doubted if Walpole's composure was ruffled as he sat at his writing-table in Downing Street. For him the characters of individual members and the relative importance of their constituencies were not the main matters; for when the House divided all votes were of equal value. Whatever his enemies might say, he had secured a comfortable majority, which with good luck and good management he might reasonably hope to retain until this new Parliament died a natural death by effluxion of time. A seven-years renewal of his lease of power was surely enough to content the most aspiring politician; for already he had held the chief office of State continuously for fourteen years. In the ensuing septennial period it was likely that there would be various changes in the popular mood, and in one or other of these Walpole might shortly recover the favour he had lost since his misadventure with the Excise Bill. It would therefore have been mere waste of effort for him to come forth and engage in open battle

with assailants who were leading a forlorn hope against a walled citadel.

There had undoubtedly been a large element of luck in the government victory. Other famous commanders besides Walpole have enjoyed the same kind of casual good fortune. An English general election has never been of the same nature as a plebiscite. The sum-total of recorded votes is not what determines the issue, and has never been regarded by the voters themselves with more than a languid interest. The game, as a golfer might say, is won on holes and not by strokes. In a general election each party strives to return as many members of Parliament as possible; and the methods employed and the characters of the individual contests are of a great variety. In those early days the kidnapping of electors and other crude forms of violence occasionally played a part. Some of the contests were pitched battles; others were won or lost by ruses or panics. The good looks of a candidate or his local popularity frequently carried the day, without regard to his political principles. Many seats went by carelessness or default,

while others of the first importance were often gained by very slender majorities. When the election was over the first concern of each party was not to count the voters who had polled on one side or the other, but to find out the political colour and the numbers of the successful candidates. The government stood or fell in those days, as it still does, by the amount of support it received in the new House of Commons. And the nation accepted--as a rule peacefully--what was thereupon proclaimed to have been its considered verdict.

A septuagenarian can recall more than a dozen general elections in the United Kingdom, but not, I think, a single instance where the seats which the various parties managed to secure tallied even approximately with the totals of the votes cast in the constituencies. And after each of these general elections the defeated party endeavoured, with less or greater energy, to establish the selfsame propositions that Bolingbroke sought to prove in 1735:--That its own candidates had been incomparably superior in character, in intelligence, in

patriotism and in every kind of public virtue to those of the other side; That the victory had been won basely, by persistent misrepresentation and falsification, or by some eleventh-hour fraud; That the number of seats held by its opponents was absurdly in excess of anything which an analysis of the poll would have justified. After the General Election of 1880 Lord Beaconsfield claimed that a few thousand votes, sprinkled about at his discretion, would have changed Mr. Gladstone's large majority into a comfortable working majority for the Conservative government. And after the General Election of 1895, when the Unionists gained a majority of 152 over all parties, Lord Rosebery calculated that, by the rules of arithmetic, their majority ought to have been no more than 14. Yet no one can doubt that, in 1880, the true and strong will of the nation was to put Mr. Gladstone in power, and that in 1895 it was determined to make an end of the futilities of a Liberal government torn by the dissensions of its three most prominent members.

On first thoughts our rough-and-ready

method for discovering the ‘will of the nation’ may seem less like a process for arriving at scientific truth than one of those superstitious trials by ordeal which men practised in the Dark Ages. Yet how far would it be likely to profit us if we adopted some more logical way to exactitude? Suppose, for example, that votes at a general election were to be given, not to individual candidates, but to the parties--Red, Buff or Blue--and that it was the duty of the returning officers, counting up the totals of the ballot papers, to declare the number of seats in the House of Commons to which each of the parties was entitled. Suppose that the accredited party managers thereupon proceeded to allot their respective shares of seats to the ablest and most disinterested of their fellow-partisans (as they presumably would)--suppose that this or some other method were adopted for producing in the House of Commons an accurate reflection of the polls, would the government that was eventually chosen be a wiser and stronger government than those we are accustomed to? Should we secure a better House of

Commons for practical purposes? Above all, should we obtain by this means a clearer and more emphatic expression of the 'will of the nation'? The danger of any ideally perfect system of voting is that hardly anyone might trouble to vote; and laws would probably have to be passed making it penal to abstain from voting. The expression of the national will would thereupon tend to become an irksome drudgery. Sulky and listless voters would drag themselves wearily to the poll. At present the interest shown may not be very intelligent; but it is usually very keen. On the whole, most of us would probably prefer to retain our rough-and-tumble trial by ordeal, with all its absurd, and sometimes scandalous, anomalies.

Bolingbroke's campaign of able and slashing articles produced but little effect on the political situation. In their despite, the phlegmatic Ministry--the tree that was supposed to have gone pompit--refused to fall down; nor had his propaganda any noticeable success in reviving the spirits of the Opposition. Yet, though these attacks produced so little improvement in the

fortunes and spirits of his party, they have had considerable influence with the writers of history and, by reason of their attractive literary quality and specious arguments, have helped to establish the prevalent belief, that Walpole's decline is to be dated from his defeat on the Excise Bill and the election that whittled down his majority in the following year. The opinion that after these events he never fully recovered his self-confidence and the confidence of the nation, that he never again undertook any serious adventure, but was thenceforth content with merely holding office and marking time, is still widely held.

This opinion is to some extent inconsistent with the facts. The disparaging phrase about holding office and marking time is only another way of saying that he found employment enough for his energies in governing England. That, however,--and not legislation--was his prime duty as chief minister; it was a task of no mean difficulty, and, on the whole, he performed it excellently well. At no time had it ever been his habit to seek adventures. The Excise Bill stands almost alone--a solitary and probably an

unintentional exception to his usual policy of letting sleeping dogs lie.

Except at the time of the South Sea Bubble, Walpole had never been a popular character. Nevertheless he had enjoyed the confidence of the nation as a trustworthy, hardworking steward, until the Excise Bill suddenly caused him to be looked on with hatred and suspicion. With the abandonment of this obnoxious measure, he began almost at once to regain what he had lost. It was not long before he was restored to his old position, and enjoyed again the unenthusiastic favour of his fellow-countrymen. We must now admit--with our fuller knowledge of diplomatic history--that when Parliament, in 1736, unanimously approved his conduct of foreign affairs, it was to some extent the victim of an illusion; but the effect of this approval--countersigned, as it seemed to be, by public opinion--was to give him a conspicuous triumph in little more than a year after his speedy downfall had been so confidently predicted. At no time in his career had Walpole possessed more actual power than he did in 1736 and the year following.

The King and Queen now reluctantly acknowledged that his refusal to engage in the European war had been justified by success. His tame Cabinet was disturbed by no counter-policies, or intrigues or cabals. The Opposition had no cohesion, no hope, no stomach for a fight. The House of Commons for the time being was a model of obedience. Even the trouble and vexation caused by the quarrel of the Prince of Wales with his parents ended in the discomfiture of Walpole's enemies. And so things remained until the Queen's death, at the end of 1737. During this short period the bitter complaints of the Opposition that Walpole was 'sole minister' came pretty near the truth.

During this apparently quiet and prosperous time Walpole aimed at peace but neglected safety. In the view of the present writer he had acted wisely both in keeping out of the European war and afterwards in dismissing colleagues who had tried to counterwork his plans; but, as a result of what he had done, both his government and his policy stood in urgent need of reformation. It was the most fatal blunder of his career that

he took no steps to set things right. He made no effort to restore the prestige of his government by bringing in men of character and ability to replace the people who had left. He was content--indeed he preferred--to surround himself with ministers whom he could order about, with a few clever politicians whose services were very useful, but whose evil reputations brought discredit, and with magnates of mediocre intelligence whose only contribution to the strength of the administration was the votes of their personal adherents in the House of Commons. But an even worse blunder was that he neglected foreign affairs, apparently for no better reason than that he was weary of them.

The great prestige that Walpole enjoyed, both at home and abroad, when the War of the Polish Succession ended, was to a great extent spurious and in its nature evanescent. His fellow-countrymen had feared that Britain would be drawn, sooner or later, into a struggle where none of her vital interests appeared to be at stake, and they were grateful to him for having kept them out of it so cleverly. Peace and prosperity were their

first considerations--peace at any price, provided the Emperor paid it. Neither Parliament nor the English people was deeply moved by the fact that Austria emerged from the contest mauled, mutilated and weakened. Remembering the obstinacies, arrogances and perfidies of Charles the Sixth, they cared little for the losses that had been inflicted on his realm in order to satisfy the enemies he had provoked. Parliament only echoed the general feeling when it rewarded Walpole with a vote of approbation. For it was he who had quenched the flames--so it appeared to his contemporaries--and this without the loss of a single British life, without the expenditure of a single guinea on subsidies or campaigns.

The cessation of hostilities, however, soon showed that England had drifted into a friendless and dangerous isolation. Walpole's diplomacy had left France stronger than she had ever been before; while the policy of the pacific Fleury, though it worked so quietly and demurely, was as aggressively imperialistic as that of Louis the Fourteenth. France and her recent antagonist, Austria, had come to an understanding inimical to

England. Spain now realised how scurvily England had treated her in the negotiations for peace. The Dutch also had grievances, to a large extent imaginary, which made them sulky and suspicious. Charles Emmanuel of Savoy saw the advantage in siding with the most powerful combination. England and Prussia, who had much to gain from a good understanding, were kept asunder by the personal animosity of their respective kings. Fleury lost no time in cultivating the goodwill of Russia, Turkey and the Baltic States, and the effect of this astute diplomacy was soon felt by British merchants in the growth of French competition and the shrinkage of their own trade.

Disadvantageous as the position of England was from 1735 onwards, a few years of conciliatory and resolute policy might have done away the ill-will of her neighbours and re-knit the old attachments. (We have seen such things happen in our own time.) For there was no real clash of vital interests among the great Western powers. As for the others, they entertained no prejudices against England, whose traders enjoyed the benefit of

a long start. Nothing more was needed than a reasonable amount of energy and tact; but Walpole seemed utterly supine, while his rival never rested. Walpole had shilly-shallied, not unsuccessfully, through the recent war; but the new situation required a complete change of method. Imagination was needed to foresee and forestall insidious encroachments on British interests in nearly every quarter. The two secretaries-of-state were usually at loggerheads; the chief minister jeered at them and left them to their own devices; as a consequence there was neither vigour nor consistency in the national policy. England was left without a friend or a political ally in Europe. It is incredible that so shrewd a politician as Walpole could have been altogether blind to these dangers; but the peculiar bent of his mind prevented him from discovering and applying the only remedies that could have checked Fleury's ambition.

Three years later troubles came on Walpole thick and fast. The country had grown unmanageable owing to the arrogance of prosperous tradesmen. The prestige of England had vanished. She stood alone in

Europe, surrounded by contemptuous ill-wishers and by enemies who awaited their opportunity. The armed forces were unfit for war by reason of neglect and parsimony. The worthlessness of the creatures he had chosen so carefully to be his colleagues left him to face the storm alone. His misfortunes during the last four years of his administration (1738-1742) were not due mainly to the strength or malice of his foes, or to the untowardness of events, or even to the loss of his ally, the Queen. They were due, above all, to his own unfitness for dealing with a new situation--a situation that he had himself created. Hitherto he had been extraordinarily lucky, for he had scored heavily on his qualities, while his deficiencies had not counted against him. Now it was different; his deficiencies dragged him down and his qualities could not save him. He was but an indifferent Foreign minister when force--force in diplomacy or force of arms--was the only remedy.

II.--*Concerning a maxim*

and an excuse that are both unworthy of respect

No one who has ever engaged in business is unfamiliar with the quandary that presents itself when the occupant of some important position is discovered to be unfit for his job. It is in essence the same quandary whether he be a silk buyer, or a credit clerk, or the superintendent of a factory, or a managing director, or a highly placed Civil servant, or a general in the field, or a Cabinet minister. He may be merely unfit and nothing worse--a good enough man, but in the wrong place. Or he may be an incompetent fellow, or lazy, or obstinate, or disobedient, or disloyal, though not so flagrantly at fault as to warrant a penal dismissal. His superiors and his colleagues may be agreed in wishing they were rid of him, but they are hindered from taking action by a cautelous maxim which lays it down that he must not be discharged until a better man has been found to take his place.

This maxim is very comforting to that large class of persons in authority who dread

responsibility and hate coming to a decision, but it preaches a dangerous doctrine; for a minister or a manager who fails in his duty embarrasses policy and may hold up the whole general movement. He not only demoralises his own department, but is apt to become a centre of infection, spreading inertia or disloyalty outside his particular sphere. Delay in making a change is always in itself an evil, though too often there is no way of avoiding it.

One of the strongest reasons for prompt action is that until the vacancy is actually declared it is impossible to know what candidates are available. The best kind of man will not offer himself, nor will he allow his friends to stir in his behalf, while the position is held by someone else. Dismissal or resignation produces an immediate release, and applicants appear from unexpected quarters. Some quiet subordinate, whose loyalty to his superior has hitherto kept him in the background, frequently comes forward, astonishing the persons in authority by his grit and his thorough grasp of the situation. Or some bold fellow who has already won

success and security in another department may be attracted by the hazards of a new adventure. Moreover, the persons in authority are now free to go about their business of selection frankly and openly; there is no longer any need for indirect methods, or for secrecy, simulation or false delicacy; honest information is much easier to come by and to sift.

The great evil is delay. In public affairs more particularly, but in private business as well, there is nearly always a drag on swift action owing to what, under a favourable view, is called good nature, the fear of doing an injustice, the inclination to give another chance even to one who has failed egregiously. Clemency of this sort is a very doubtful virtue. Indeed, it is often no better than moral cowardice, which would put off decision as long as possible from repugnance to facing a bad quarter of an hour. Action is postponed from day to day, from month to month, from year to year. Meanwhile the disease spreads and a fatal ending is too commonly the result.

There is another quandary still harder to

escape from than the first. It arises when the head of a government, a public company, a factory, a bank or a shop fails in appointing capable men to fill important positions. This is a ticklish business; the most skilful and conscientious chooser will probably go wrong more often than he goes right, but if over an extended period his selections are hardly ever right it is clear that the chooser lacks that special sense which every first-rate administrator must possess. Disclosure of his defect will not come in a clap, but slowly, and at first with uncertainty. When at last there remains no shadow of doubt that his appointments have turned out badly, what is to be done to cure the mischief? The only remedy--and in many cases it would be worse than the disease itself--is to get rid of the head. But the head may perform all his functions creditably save that of selecting an efficient staff; he may be generally respected; or, like the younger Pitt, an object of adoration to his followers. Many people, turning a blind eye on his single defect, would uphold him out of loyalty and personal affection. Others, with whom the preservation

of party unity is a religion, would realise the impossibility of superseding their leader without smashing the government. For these and other reasons the drastic remedy is rarely practicable, and public opinion, having no hopes of a cure, deliberately deceives itself in order to save its face. A consolatory excuse is formulated: it is whispered about that the bad appointments are not due to the head having preferred incapable men to able men, but to the lamentable fact that the times are barren and that there are no able men to choose from.

It may be doubted if there was ever a period in which able men were not to be found by one who knew how to look for them. An eye for a man is not a very common gift in any walk of life; but it seems to become rarer and rarer the higher one ascends the scale of affairs. Nor is the discovery of the right man the end of the difficulty. It is no easy matter to secure his appointment if this means breaking with seniority and custom. The business of the head, moreover, is only half done when he has installed his nominee; for it will still be necessary to uphold him

with courage and determination, over a longer or a shorter period, against prejudiced or envious people. The elder Pitt sometimes made mistakes in choosing his commanders; but even in that discouraged age he was able to find enough first-rate men for his purposes. He upheld them, and breathed fire into them, and raised the spirit of the whole nation. The younger Pitt was unlike his father in most things; but he likewise raised and sustained the spirit of the nation; and this was ample justification for his long tenure of office. Nevertheless he was a poor chooser of men; he was too recluse, too chary of departing from tradition. He found but few great servants, nor can it be truly said that he breathed fire into those he found.

In order that a minister may be well served he must understand human values; and in order that he may understand human values he must go about among his fellow-creatures avoiding no one--least of all those who are uncongenial to him. Judging men rightly is a gift of nature which no pains or study can supply; but the gift is one which will atrophy unless it is assiduously

cultivated. A minister with strength of character will never allow familiarity to undermine his authority; but neither will he shut himself off from the world in a select company of admiring friends, colleagues and subordinates; for this kind of seclusion tends to foster in his mind the idea that he is well beloved by all good men; and this never comes anywhere near the truth of the matter. To prevent the growth of this perilous delusion, he should be willing to lounge and gossip and rub shoulders in the market-place. There he will learn a great deal about the estimation in which the members of his government--himself included--are held by their fellow-countrymen. He must use his own eyes and ears; for the eyes and ears of other people will never give him all the information he requires. He should occasionally fluster the placidity of his entourage by calling for, and checking by the light of his own common sense, such things as estimates, contracts and financial reports, or by reading over the copies of some batch of letters that his private secretaries have been writing in his name. Above all he must

not flinch from asking unpleasant questions and receiving unpleasant answers. This has ever been the way of the very great ones, like the elder Pitt and Walpole. The not-so-great ones, on the other hand, have had a fatal predisposition for allowing themselves to be persuaded that their own insight and foresight, their own superlative penetration, will enable them to settle everything without stirring from their official chairs. And this is one of the chief reasons why so many bad appointments are made, and why, in the end--the remedies of outraged nature being very drastic--so many administrations, apparently invulnerable in point of numbers, fall mysteriously in pieces.

Neither the *maxim* which says that you must never get rid of a blunderer until you have found someone better to put in his place, nor the *excuse* which would justify the making of bad appointments, on the ground that the world no longer contains able men, is deserving of respect. In my seventieth year I distrust them both even more than I did at the beginning.

III.--*How Walpole is maligned in popular legend*

Walpole was no respecter of the *maxim*, nor did he ever need to shelter himself behind the *excuse*, which have both been considered in the preceding chapter. He had no qualms about getting rid of unsuitable colleagues when he felt that he could safely dispense with their parliamentary support; nor was there ever a prime minister of England who had a shrewder eye for a man, or knew better how to choose the kind of man he wanted. If he kept incompetents in his government, and made appointments that were intrinsically bad, he did both these things deliberately, with a view to present advantages. His hand-to-mouth sagacity served him well through the greater part of his career; but it failed him in the end, partly because troubles were brewing abroad which he neither understood nor would take the trouble to understand, partly because his fair-weather staff of triflers, dullards and time-servers was utterly unfit to face a storm.

The generally accepted legend is that Walpole did a great deal to bring about his own ruin by parting too readily with able men, and by driving so many of his colleagues into Opposition. It is true that hardly any of the more important politicians with whom he was connected at the beginning of 1721 were members of his government in 1734. Macaulay takes the view that, while a case may perhaps be made for each individual dismissal or defection, the cumulative effect of so much wastage is clear proof that Walpole was lacking in the qualities needed for keeping a ministry together. A brief examination of the instances will show that this plausible judgement misses the real heart of the matter.

Stanhope was the first to go. He died early in 1721; but neither directly nor indirectly had Walpole anything to do with worrying him to his death.

A little later Sunderland was driven to resignation by the force of public opinion, which judged that he had been mixed up discreditably in the South Sea scandals. Walpole had no hand in that agitation. On the

contrary he did his best--not so much perhaps from a chivalrous feeling towards his old enemy as because he was working for a general appeasement--to shelter Sunderland against the wrath of his fellow-countrymen who were clamouring for an impeachment. That Sunderland suffered no worse evil than deprivation of office was due very largely to Walpole's moderating influence.

In 1724 Townshend and Walpole, acting together, forced Carteret to resign his secretaryship-of-state and to accept the viceroyalty of Ireland, a position from which he could bring no influence to bear on general policy.[2]

In 1725 Pulteney retired in dudgeon, because he considered (as did most other people) that his abilities and deserts had been insufficiently rewarded with a paltry office and the offer of a peerage.[3] Since the reconstruction of the government in 1721 he had lived on hopes and promises; but the appointment of Newcastle to succeed Carteret as secretary-of-state in 1724 seemed to close the door on his ambitions. His brilliant gifts of oratory were thenceforth used in

Opposition.

In 1727, when Walpole again reconstructed his government after the accession of George the Second, a few persons of subordinate rank and doubtful loyalty were left out, as they would have been left out in similar circumstances by any modern prime minister.

In 1730 Townshend, secretary-of-state, got to loggerheads with Walpole and the Cabinet over a matter of high policy. Being defeated in this encounter he went, not into Opposition, but into complete retirement from public life.[4]

Shortly after Townshend's withdrawal Carteret was asked by Walpole to exchange the viceroyalty of Ireland for an office that he regarded as inferior in rank. He rejected this proposal and joined the Opposition.[5]

In 1733, after the Excise fiasco, there was a grand purge, but of the numerous noblemen who were then driven out Chesterfield alone was a personage of much political importance. The offices and appointments held by the Dukes of Bolton and Montrose, the Earls of Stair and Marchmont, the Lords

Cobham and Clinton, were merely honorific sinecures. These six placemen were deservedly punished in pocket and position for having raised a mutiny at a time when the existence of the government was at stake. Cobham, a rich wire-puller, was a substantial gain to the Opposition; the others brought little but the paling glory of their names.

The legend that Walpole wrought his own ruin by his ruthlessness in getting rid of able colleagues begins at once to crumble when we look closely at it. The only instances that appear to give it any countenance at all are those of Carteret, Pulteney, Townshend and Chesterfield. Four defections or dismissals in thirteen years--which was the age of Walpole's government in 1733--is not a heavy casualty list when we compare it with the records of other administrations in later times. And when these four instances are examined coolly the legend is left with only a single leg to stand on.

Incompatibility of ambitions was the reason why Carteret, in 1724, was pushed out of the secretaryship-of-state on to the Irish

side-track. He had not been disloyal, according to his lights, but he would not take his orders from the brothers-in-law. He wished to control the policy of his own department. As secretary-of-state he regarded himself as responsible directly to the King. George the First had a great liking for him, and their intercourse was easy because Carteret (alone among ministers) could talk German fluently. In these circumstances it was natural that Townshend and Walpole should regard him with suspicion, and even with hostility. The one was as much concerned as the other in depriving him of an office that gave him power over policy and in relegating him to the semi-banishment of the Irish viceroyalty. Townshend played the more active part in this manœuvre, but he had Walpole's hearty support, and Carteret walked obligingly into the snares that were set for him. Had he remained in his former office the control of foreign policy must have been divided--a bad thing for the country and, viewed from the standpoint of the brothers-in-law, an intolerable confusion. One can hardly blame them for ruthlessness because

they chose to rid themselves of so dangerous an associate. Nor can one blame them for imprudence, seeing that for six years they contrived to keep their rival dangling on in an honorary position, so that when he ultimately joined the Opposition in 1730 his energies were no longer in their prime. The final severance in that year was Walpole's sole doing, for Townshend had already felt the edge of his own axe; but it was the logical outcome of the previous degradation, and the only wonder is how it came to be delayed so long. Most practical politicians, taking a dispassionate view of all the circumstances, will probably conclude that Townshend and Walpole (for their responsibility stands in that order) chose the less of two dangers when they let Carteret go.

Walpole's treatment of Pulteney is not easy to defend against the double charge of ingratitude and unwisdom. Even when Walpole's fortunes were at the ebb, Pulteney had always been a faithful friend. He was very rich and very eloquent. His riches, however, might have encouraged

independence, a quality that Walpole could never admire in colleagues. There might also have been danger in allowing the readiest and most brilliant speaker in the House of Commons to fill too prominent an office; beginning as lieutenant he might eventually outshine his leader. Walpole was morbidly suspicious where there was the remotest chance of rivalry. So far as we know, there was no private enmity between the two men. We have nothing to guide us but conjecture. It seems more likely that Pulteney was kept in the background because Walpole feared to place so dexterous a player in the limelight, than because he honestly regarded Pulteney as unequal to a secretaryship-of-state. It is certain that no other contemporary judged Pulteney so contemptuously: Newcastle and Harrington, who were promoted over his head, both stood much lower in general estimation.

Pulteney left the government in 1724. His opposition during the eighteen years that followed confirms the view that Walpole made a serious blunder when he let him go. It shows clearly enough that Pulteney's tongue

was a very formidable weapon; but it also shows that he had no other weapon. Judgement, resolution, daring were not his. As a critic he was able to cause the government much discomfort and not a little damage; as a minister he would have used his flail no less effectively against the Opposition. And the folly of getting rid of him is equally apparent from another point of view: despite his natural gifts, several most favourable opportunities, a large parliamentary following always ready to applaud, his sails filled with popular prejudices on more than one occasion--with all these to help him he could do nothing to dislodge his enemy. There was no more reason to fear his rivalry from within than his enmity from without. The plain truth is that Pulteney was not man enough to get the better of Walpole in any kind of encounter.

According to Macaulay, Pulteney 'became the greatest leader of Opposition that the House of Commons had ever seen.' This judgement, I think, attaches too much importance to Pulteney's pre-eminence in the arts of rhetoric, and to his unremitting

practice of these arts over a long period. There are things that count for more, even in Opposition, than oratory and debates. We know that Pulteney never enjoyed the unquestioning confidence of his fellow-leaders. He rarely seemed to see his way clear to any goal. He was a bad strategist, infirm of purpose, a hesitating counsellor and not infrequently, when it was necessary to take critical decisions, he sought the healing waters of Bath. And in the House of Commons he showed himself a poor tactician. Bold, brilliant and copious in declamation, he seldom made the right move at the right moment: on more than one occasion he threw up the sponge. He was a virtuoso in making the kind of speech that factious Oppositions delight in listening to; but even as an orator he fell short of greatness; for there was no real fire in his belly; only tinsel shavings.

At the beginning of 1742, when Walpole fell, Pulteney found himself the national hero. No leader of a victorious Opposition has ever received so splendid an ovation. It was victory that found him out and exposed an

unsuspected sham. The difficulties that faced him were nothing out of the common; but he failed to grapple with them. In a few weeks all his authority, all his prestige, all his glorious popularity were gone. He disappeared almost as a man does who falls overboard in a storm. The truth is that Pulteney was as fit to be secretary-of-state as many who have filled that high post with credit; but he was quite unfit to be chief minister bearing the ultimate responsibility of government; for without a staunch superior to uphold and guide him he was at once reduced to futility through lack of confidence in himself. So shrewd a man as Walpole might have been expected to see that a politician of this calibre could never supplant him in Cabinet or with the King.

The honest, but irascible, Townshend had been an uncomfortable colleague ever since the accession of George the Second, when Walpole became the unequivocal head of government. He could not bring himself to play second fiddle, and there was no higher place for him in the orchestra. Even if the

particular grievance that was the occasion of his leaving had been smoothed over, one feels it could not have been long before some other disagreement would have brought about his resignation. His withdrawal in 1730 strengthened rather than weakened the administration, by doing away its internal dissensions without adding to the number of its enemies. The Opposition gained nothing, because the outgoing minister refused to have anything to do with them. We may mourn that a career as steadfast and honourable as any in our history should have ended thus--in defeat, and bitterness, and loss of friends; the break with Walpole is a painful episode; but as a mere matter of politics there is little to regret and nothing to condemn; for the counsels of Townshend were no longer listened to by his colleagues with more than a semblance of respect.

Chesterfield was unceremoniously dismissed in 1733. He held an illustrious position in society, but his office, the Lord Stewardship, gave him no executive power. His opinions, whether from a lack of energy

in expressing them, or from a constitutional incapacity for ministerial collaboration, seem to have carried but little weight with his colleagues. His functions were mainly ornamental; he shed a lustre of wit and fashion on a humdrum administration. His offence was unforgivable. At a most critical time he had spoken without reserve, in the companies he frequented, against the main policy of the government of which he was a member, and he had also instigated his friends and relatives in the Commons to support his mutiny by voting with the Opposition. Only the feeblest kind of prime minister would have condoned his transgression. After his dismissal he at once joined the Opposition, but he added neither vigour nor sagacity to its distracted councils. He wrote pamphlets that were elegant and witty, and he contributed many articles to the *Craftsman*. Occasionally he delivered set pieces in the House of Lords, where his elaborate brilliancy was much admired. He drew large audiences, but he changed few votes. The government was not seriously injured either by the deprivation of his

services or by his attacks.

The result of this brief inquiry is to show that only once did Walpole depart from the sound principles of Cabinet government; only once did he act towards any colleague otherwise than Peel, Palmerston, Disraeli or Gladstone might have acted. In all these thirteen years the current legend receives no confirmation, except from Pulteney's case. It was a bad mistake to drive him out, and it produced unfortunate results; but a solitary blunder is not enough to prove the general charge of despotism and disregard of consequences, which party feeling at the time brought against Walpole's conduct as chief minister, and which, a century later, Macaulay adopted and clothed in his persuasive rhetoric.

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[2] Vol. I. pp. 301-322.

[3] Vol. I. pp. 347-350.

[4] Vol. II. pp. 136-141.

[5] Vol. II. pp. 217-230.

IV.--*How Walpole chose his colleagues*

The true charge against Walpole is not that he got rid of men whom he ought to have kept; but that he kept men whom he ought to have got rid of, and engaged men whom he ought never to have brought in. It is not true that he made mistakes in choosing men: no prime minister ever made fewer. He got exactly the men he wanted, and, on the whole, they did the work he wanted them to do; nor did they often meddle with things he wished to keep in his own hands, or to leave alone.

It would have been surprising if his selections had been blunders, seeing that he cultivated so assiduously his natural gift for understanding men. Of all our prime ministers he was probably the least recluse. He went everywhere and he saw everybody. He appeared regularly at Court; was unremitting in his attendance in the House of Commons during the months when Parliament was sitting. At Downing Street he

was easy of access to city folk as well as politicians. He moved freely in society, delighted in conviviality, was cordial with his friends, good-humoured with his enemies, always ready, in public or in private, for a bout of single-sticks or quarter-staff. The climax of his vigorous good-fellowship came in autumn, when he spent his well-earned holidays at Houghton, entertaining his political supporters in large and boisterous companies.

Walpole's colleagues after 1733 were the sort of men he liked best to have about him. They were not the pick of England for breadth of knowledge and business capacity, nor for honour and a sense of public duty; but their characters were unblemished by independence of spirit; they were less troubled by their consciences than their betters would have been; asked fewer questions, bore themselves more humbly, and were less dangerous with the King. It seemed incredible that any rival would grow up in the seed-bed which Walpole sowed and weeded with so much care; and yet, before many years had passed, a rival *did* spring up,

greatly to his disgust and dismay. The utterly unexpected happened, as it so often does in politics. The despised and timid Newcastle insisted upon becoming his coadjutor; and what was even more unwelcome, insisted on going his own way, which was not Walpole's way. Walpole bitterly denounced his 'perfidy'; but perfidy was hardly the right word. The government owed more to Newcastle's successful party management than Newcastle owed to Walpole's contemptuous patronage. Jack is as good a man as his master, when he inherits a million, or when he discovers that he has a party majority in his own right.

Walpole intended that his government from 1733 onwards should be a one-man show. His success in this endeavour was hurtful to England, and not less hurtful to himself; for if we look at the matter through eyes which, though critical, are friendly to Walpole, we must conclude that the colleagues he chose were not the kind of men he needed to save his government from disaster and to keep his fame bright with posterity. They were of two sorts: men of

mean or mediocre abilities, whose timidity or laziness made it probable that they would submit most matters of importance to the superior judgement of their chief; and men of talent, whose dubious or damaged characters would have made it impossible for them to remain in office except under some powerful protector. To the first order belonged Henry Pelham, Newcastle and Harrington; to the second, Winnington, Yonge, Hervey and, in later days, Henry Fox. Of Henry Fox, the dissolute and broken gambler, who rose by politics to be one of the richest men in England, it will be time enough to speak when he comes upon the scene. Hervey was useful to the Prime Minister as a speaker, more often as a pamphleteer, but most of all from his favour with the Queen, who delighted in his quick understanding, brilliant small-talk and indelicate gossip. He sought office, and in his attempts to cling to it suffered much humiliation, but he never aimed at leadership. His proper sphere was not Parliament but the boudoir. He had a fine intelligence without much judgement, inextinguishable malice, a frail constitution,

gentle manners and a strange effeminate beauty. In quarrels, of which several came his way, he showed himself cool as well as brave. His memory is preserved by two immortal passages in English literature, of one of which he was the victim, of the other the author--as *Sporus* of Pope's fiercest satire,[6] and as the chronicler of the Queen's death.[7]

Walpole's right hand and his left in the House of Commons were Sir William Yonge and Thomas Winnington. Winnington was a consummate practitioner of the second-rate order. He had some good friends, such as Horace Walpole and Hanbury Williams, but the world took him at his own cynical valuation and saw in him only an official parasite who jested, like Bubb Dodington, at his own want of principle. His fellow-members acknowledged his skill in debate, but never gave him their respect. Yonge, though his gifts as a speaker were of a higher order than Winnington's, was generally regarded, not merely without respect, but with positive disgust. Decent people fought shy of his company. Walpole's saying has

been often quoted: ‘Nothing but so bad a character could have kept down his parts, and nothing but his parts could have kept up such a character.’ In the simple schoolboy dialect of George the Second he usually figures as ‘Stinking Yonge.’ Chesterfield, while admiring the ‘fitness of tongue’ which earned him high employments, adds significantly: ‘And all this, with a most sullied, not to say blasted,’ reputation. When the government began to totter it could not look for moral support (which was the thing it needed most) from men like Yonge and Winnington. It is true they stood by Walpole to the end, clinging like limpets to their offices, and in the confusion that followed they found a ready market for their talents among his wrangling successors.

Henry Pelham,[8] brother to the Duke of Newcastle, stands in a class by himself. He was neither a knave nor a noodle; but timidity prevented him from taking an influential part. He was a capable administrator, a peacemaker, unpretentious, and well liked by the House of Commons. His personal integrity stood above suspicion--like Pitt a

few years later, he refused the rich perquisites of his office of Paymaster--but his will was completely dominated by the much stronger will of the Prime Minister.

Until the end of 1735, Walpole held the Foreign Department with a firm grip; but when peace was made, he fell into an apathy. Thenceforth, for nearly three years, Newcastle and Harrington were left to their own devices. Since British policy had ceased to have any objective it seemed to matter very little that the two secretaries-of-state were at cross-purposes, providing their disputes were not allowed to disturb the deliberations of the Cabinet and the tranquillity of the Prime Minister. Fleury was not the man to awaken his English rival from this pleasant dream; his words were smooth; his policy was to avoid provocations and idle boasting, and to work for the hegemony of France with an industry that never slackened and a vigilance that never slept.

Had Newcastle been a moderately able, and Harrington a reasonably industrious, Foreign minister--had they seen eye to eye, and worked loyally together--had Walpole

been patient with them and interested himself in their proceedings--it seems more than likely that, between the years 1735 and 1738, England might have recovered her powerful position in European diplomacy, might gradually have won back the confidence of her former allies, and might have preserved her old intimacies with those other countries whose markets were immensely valuable to her merchants. Fleury's widespread web of anti-British policy could then never have been spun. But Newcastle was incompetent, Harrington an incorrigible idler; the chief concern of these two ministers seemed to be to trip one another up; trivial things claimed their most eager attention; they were blind to the large and quiet movements of French ambition; and to crown all, they were alternately snubbed and neglected by the head of government. In a game played in this fashion it was certain that Fleury must come off winner.

Newcastle had been appointed secretary-of-state in 1724,[9] when Townshend and Walpole were looking for a docile successor to the unmanageable Carteret. According to

Bismarck, ‘strong nerves, a balanced mind and a skilful hand are essential’ qualifications for a Foreign minister. No one could say that Newcastle was cut on the Bismarckian pattern. The pitiful weakness of his nerves, his unbalanced mind and his bungling duplicity made him a laughing-stock even to those who came seeking his favours. This is not to say that there was no position in Walpole’s government which he could have filled with some degree of credit and usefulness. The office of Lord President, combined with the control of party management, might have satisfied his vanity, and, for a time, his love of power. It would undoubtedly have been for the national advantage to get him out of the Foreign Office; but it is by no means so certain that Walpole would have gained security by the exchange. For although the Prime Minister would no longer have been thwarted departmentally by the holding up of important dispatches and by unauthorised changes in their tenour, there would have been nothing, save a want of personal courage, to prevent Newcastle from opposing

his policy on general grounds at Cabinet meetings and with the King. We must doubt if so restless and self-seeking a politician could have been kept from meddling in great affairs when once he realised that his well-disciplined followers in Parliament were numerous enough at any time to bring the government down. The fact that the King was known to favour a more spirited policy, and that public opinion was clamouring for bolder action against the encroachments of Spain, would have encouraged his insubordination. Such a one as Newcastle was likely to become dangerous, so soon as he ceased to be subservient. He was not a man to go tiger-hunting with. It seems certain that Walpole did not foresee his defection until the danger was upon him; and even if he had foreseen it, it is hard to say how he could have prevented it from taking place. For even in 1733 Newcastle's parliamentary interest was too powerful to be dispensed with. Walpole had never placed any faith in the Duke; but he despised him more than he distrusted him. It is possible that the Prime Minister counted too confidently on his own masterful

predominance, and assumed that Newcastle would always shiver and come to heel when he was scolded, as he had done so meekly in the past.

Harrington, partly at Newcastle's instigation, had been appointed secretary-of-state when Townshend left the government. His natural abilities would have been sufficient if his practice had not let them run to waste. In his early days he was not undistinguished as soldier and diplomatist. His career in politics began successfully in 1729 when, as William Stanhope, he negotiated peace with Spain. In the following year he was raised to the Peerage and given a seat in the Cabinet as a reward. At the time, his promotion to high office was regarded unfavourably only by his rivals. His defects, however, were not long in showing themselves. Indolence settled on him like a disease, and such energy as he retained was spent in petty, and for the most part impotent, intrigues which won him no favour even among those with whom he sought to ingratiate himself. He studied the King's foibles, but gained nothing but kicks for his

obsequiousness. He was neither a loyal colleague nor a good servant of the State. The caricature of him which Hervey attributes to Queen Caroline is not altogether unfair: ‘There is a heavy insipid sloth in that man that puts me out of all patience. He must have six hours to dress, six more to dine, six more for his mistress, and six more to sleep, and there, for a Minister, are the four-and-twenty admirably well disposed of; and if now and then he borrows six of those hours to do anything relating to his office it is for something that might be done in six minutes and ought to have been done six days before.’[10] Nevertheless his final rupture with the King in 1746 was creditable to his good sense and force of character.

The worst mistake that Walpole made in the composition of his government was his failure to draw loyal and honest men about him. We refuse to believe that no such men were to be found in England if he had looked for them with his discerning eyes. Had he taken pains to win their confidence and bring them forward he might have made a happier ending. But unfortunately it was not his way

to encourage talent where its possessor was a man of independent and honourable character. The ardour of youth could draw no sympathetic response from this good-natured sceptic, whom it mistook for a cynic. So much, at least, must be conceded to the popular estimate of Walpole's conduct.

As compared with modern prime ministers Walpole had a much greater freedom in choosing his colleagues. At one point only was he hampered more than a head of government would be in the twentieth century: his nominations needed the King's approval; nor was this an empty form, for the royal veto had not then fallen into disuse. The heavy noblemen who were concerned to find offices for their relatives and henchmen have their counterparts in our own time. Then, as now, there were ministers who wished to push their favourites forward; then, as now, Downing Street had its queue of sturdy beggars who came to sue in person. And it was no less desirable then than it is now to avoid outraging the prejudices of the House of Commons by the preferment of any of its particular aversions. In all other respects

Walpole enjoyed a liberty that must be the envy of a modern prime minister. There were no newspapers to dictate his choice, no popular clamour for the appointment of platform stars, no journalists, no press agents and no demagogues.

A very wide freedom of choice has this disadvantage, that the chooser is apt to pick the men who will be easiest to work with; and these are not necessarily the men who will do their work best. It was one of Walpole's worst mistakes that he yielded too often to this temptation. The dilemma is seldom resolved with perfect wisdom, and it is only fair to look at Walpole's circumstances through Walpole's own eyes. Even now, a prime minister who was free to take his own way would place very few of the newspaper favourites. There is seldom elbow-room in a smooth-working government for more than one will. The worst of having very brilliant colleagues is that they have too many brilliant ideas; are too original and self-opinionated. Even when they are not deliberately set on mischief, they often produce mischief, simply because their talents are fretting for want of

exercise. Moreover, brilliancy is no guarantee that a man will make a good administrator or head of a department; the presumption is rather the other way. It is the workaday qualities that a prime minister values most in his subordinates. He can do 'the big bow-wow' himself. It was Walpole's business to govern England, not to find accommodation in his ministry for 'all the talents.' Admirers of Bolingbroke, Carteret, Pulteney and Chesterfield may lament the hard fate that prevented those politicians from employing their gifts in the service of their country and for their own glory; but we cannot blame Walpole because he chose to use less refractory material. When people mourn over the waste of shining talents they are apt to forget that the worst waste of all occurs when clever men are so placed that they have the temptation, as well as the opportunity, to trip up their chief. There is a popular idea that a really great leader will surround himself with men who, as nearly as possible, are his equals in character and capacity. This is not in accordance with history. Competent and industrious people of the second class have

usually been preferred by great men (by Caesar, Marlborough, Frederick of Prussia, Napoleon and Bismarck) to others whose genius might have disposed them to obey the promptings of their personal ambition rather than to uphold in all circumstances the policy and interests of their chiefs.

When all is said, Walpole's decline and fall were not caused, but were only hastened, by the infirmities of his colleagues; nor were they due, save in minor part, to the *élan* of the Opposition. Undoubtedly he suffered injury from the attacks of men whom he had discarded, but in other circumstances the wounds they dealt would not have proved mortal. The hostility of the younger generation, whose sympathies he had not thought it worth while to win, cut deeper, but touched no vital organ. He received deadlier hurt from the men he had conciliated with office than from those he had cast out; for the majority of his own Cabinet turned against him. The most fatal defection was the King's, since it encouraged Walpole's enemies and detached his lukewarm friends. But, in truth, the enmity of the outcasts and the younger

men, the desertion of the Cabinet and the King, were not themselves causes so much as effects of the same cause that brought Walpole down. And it is this cause that is accountable in nearly every case where a statesman, triumphant in his earlier career, has made shipwreck in the end. The special emergency had passed for which Walpole was created. Largely through his own efforts the conditions of the country had changed, and with them the temper and aspirations of the people. The fear of a Jacobite restoration had passed away, and had given place to an overweening confidence that was the result of prosperity. But his own strong nature was a thing that could not change. Nothing could shake his faith in the system that had served him so well. It was not solely because he was the greatest man in England that he had governed the country so successfully for nearly twenty years; it was also because his aims and methods were in harmony with the temper of the times. After 1738 this harmony was changed to discord, and neither gratitude for his past services nor his own strength of character can save a statesman who has

ceased to be the embodiment of the national will. The strongest oarsman could not have forced his boat against such a tide-race as that which swept Walpole on to the breakers.

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[6] Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot*.

[7] Hervey's *Memoirs*, caps. 38 to 40.

[8] Vol. I. pp. 338-339; Vol. II. p. 68.

[9] Vol. I. pp. 331-338; Vol. II. pp. 150-153.

[10] Hervey's *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 43.

BOOK NINE

57

SOME CHARACTERS AND EXCURSIONS

59

I.--*Concerning Lord Chesterfield as man of affairs*[11]

When Philip Dormer Stanhope, afterwards fourth Earl of Chesterfield, first entered Parliament, in 1715, he was still a minor; and he was barely twenty-seven when the great Walpole administration started on its course. His father's death, which occurred five years later, consigned him to the House of Lords, which, to the end of his days, he continued to describe irreverently as a

hospital for incurables.

During the first ten years of his public career he cut a rather unsuccessful figure in debate; but, in this early period, it was rather by the arts and graces of a courtier, than by parliamentary renown, that he sought to advance his fortunes. He succeeded only moderately well in his endeavours. Youth is the season of hope and daring, and with these, its own proper weapons, it may occasionally carry all before it; but when an old-young man ventures to pit himself against his experienced elders at the game of craft and insinuation, he is more likely to incur ridicule than to win success.

Immediately upon his entry into public life young Stanhope was appointed to the household of the Prince of Wales (afterwards King George the Second); and in 1723 he was made Captain of the Gentlemen Pensioners. But this was the end of him as a House of Commons man, for, at the bye-election which followed his appointment, he lost his seat.

He continued to keep the King's favour without losing that of the Prince, although these two, in accordance with the Hanoverian

tradition, were at daggers drawn. His assiduity gained the goodwill of the Prince's mistress, gentle Mrs. Howard, who had no political influence; but by this success he incurred the lasting enmity of the Princess, who guided her husband in all public affairs. In a fit of petulance, somewhat hard to reconcile with his own maxims, he offended the all-powerful minister by a contemptuous refusal of a Knighthood of the Bath, for which insolence he was duly punished by being deprived of his captaincy of the Gentlemen Pensioners.

At the age of two-and-thirty he became Earl of Chesterfield, and straightway set up as a leader of Opposition in the House of Lords. He was not a ready speaker, but, with infinite pains, he made himself master of perspicuous statement, a harmonious style and a graceful delivery. His carefully polished invectives and sparkling epigrams struck and stuck. During the eighteen months that preceded the King's death in 1727 he proved himself an irritating, if not a very formidable, opponent. The new King was his friend, and desired to advance his interests; but Walpole was

inexorable, and had the new Queen on his side. The utmost that the minister would do for Chesterfield was to admit him to the Privy Council and, shortly afterwards, to appoint him ambassador at the Hague. It was perhaps a good stroke of diplomacy to send this dangerous orator abroad to fill one of the most important embassies in Europe; but this act of grace might have produced more fortunate results had it been done less grudgingly. Such, however, was not Walpole's way.

Chesterfield performed the duties of his new post with success; but he blundered by engaging with Townshend in certain intrigues against Walpole which led to Townshend's resignation. Chesterfield, however, was again forgiven, and allowed to retain his embassy, until ill health obliged him to relinquish it some two years later. He received, in addition, the appointment of Lord Steward, and admitted freely that his old enemy had acted towards him with great magnanimity.

But, where there is a natural antipathy, reconciliations of this sort are apt very soon to wear away in the ceaseless friction of

political life. These two men had hardly a taste, an interest or a sympathy in common. The pursuits in which each delighted were sneered at by the other. Walpole was happiest at the gallop over green turf; Chesterfield was happiest bandying wit and compliments by candlelight. We know from his own letters what the Lord Steward thought of the First Lord of the Treasury's coarse and common speech, of his boisterous laughter, his noisy dinner-parties and sculduddery over the wine. And we also know how the First Lord regarded wits and scholars who would have taught him his business of statecraft out of history books and writings of the past. But, beyond this, Chesterfield appears genuinely to have detested the prevalent method of governing Parliament by corruption, and to have held the view that sooner or later it must end in the ruin of the nation. He was young; he was conscious of great abilities; his character, combined with his rank and fortune, made for independence. Walpole disliked independence, and he disliked it all the more when it was mated with ability. If Chesterfield could have been won by any

means--which is doubtful--it could only have been by taking him fully into confidence; and full confidence was the last thing Walpole would willingly bestow on any of his colleagues. It was not long before the old enmity blazed out afresh, nor was it ever afterwards got under until Walpole had been driven from power.

The ill-starred Excise Bill was the occasion of their final rupture. Whatever excuses may be found for the mutiny which then took place, they will not cover the case of Chesterfield, whose mind was too much governed by liberality and reason to have been carried away by the torrent of vulgar prejudice. The dwindling ministerial majorities in the Commons were reduced still further, upon a critical occasion, by the votes of the Chesterfield following. The Bill was withdrawn in April 1733; and, within a week of this mortifying conclusion, the Lord Steward was dismissed from his employments with significant marks of the royal displeasure.

For the next nine years (1733-1742) Chesterfield was once more a free-lance of

the Opposition, and must share responsibility for the continuous blundering that enabled a government, weakened by its unpopularity, to beat off all attacks. The counsels of the Opposition never led to effective coöperation, and when Bolingbroke withdrew to France in 1735, the futility increased. The various captains had little trust in one another and were much hampered by their mutual jealousies. They might agree in willing the destruction of the government, but were seldom of one mind as to the best way of setting to work. There was not one of them who had the true stuff of parliamentary leadership in his composition. Chesterfield carried even less political weight than either of his coadjutors, Pulteney and Carteret. He was master of the art of annoying his enemies, and to this congenial task he devoted his remarkable resources of wit and invective; but he was of little account as a fighting man, because he could only deliver himself of set pieces. He never acquired, or seemed anxious to acquire, the skill of debate, reply and interruption which, to the politician, is a more valuable possession than

eloquence. ‘He fired his ringing shot and passed;’ and there, for the time being, the matter ended. The attack was not followed up; nor renewed, until he had reloaded his big gun in the leisurely quiet of his study. In its way this was magnificent, but it was not politics.

Since this book is not a history, a glance into the future may be allowed:--Although Chesterfield played a leading part in the overthrow of Walpole, no place was found for him in the new administration. He had taken no pains to simulate a confidence which he did not feel in his confederates. As minister he might have been a serious obstacle in the way of Carteret, who entertained an ambitious project for the aggrandisement of his country and for winning Court favour by a policy that might easily be misrepresented as a subordination of British to German interests. At this time, moreover, Chesterfield stood particularly ill with the King, whose two ruling passions--love of Hanover and love of money--he had appeared to thwart. For while, in his public conduct, he had shown but little tenderness

for the Electorate, he was an object of no less dislike in his private capacity, by reason of his marriage with the Countess of Walsingham--a natural daughter of George the First by the Duchess of Kendal--whose inheritance (under the will of their common parent) George the Second was desirous of appropriating to his own more legitimate uses.

The only difference, therefore, which the fall of Walpole made in Chesterfield's position was, that from having shared the leadership of Opposition in the Lords, he now became the only leader. Without undue delay he transferred to Carteret and his Hanoverian policy all the bitterness and many of the epithets which he had used against Walpole and his supposed tenderness towards Spain. In these attacks, which were supported with even greater vehemence by Pitt in the Commons, it was now Carteret who figured as the enemy of the constitution, as 'sole minister,' as a despot, whose usurpation overbore the opinions of his colleagues and threatened the nation with domestic tyranny and foreign embroilments.

It was not, however, the thunderbolts of either Chesterfield or Pitt which brought Carteret down, but a hint of Walpole's to the ever-diffident Henry Pelham, that he should take advantage of the death of the titular chief minister, Lord Wilmington, to make himself head of government. Chesterfield did not immediately profit under the new arrangement; but at the beginning of 1745 he was sent on an embassy to the Hague, and in July of the same year he became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Owing to illness he was only able to perform the functions of this office for eight months. On his return to England he received a secretaryship-of-state; but his health showed little improvement, and his position was one of humiliating subordination to Newcastle. In 1748, at the age of fifty-four, he resigned, and never again accepted office, although he lived for another five-and-twenty years.

Chesterfield's withdrawal from politics at so early an age may be excused by frequent and prolonged attacks of the gout, and by an increasing deafness that was soon to cut him off from communion with his fellow-men.

But even if he had kept his health and hearing he could never have become a great parliamentary force. He had been drawn into party warfare, as into gambling, by the excitement it offered, and by the opportunity it afforded him for letting the world behold the glitter of his gifts; but he had no head for the game, and could never have come off a winner.

Notwithstanding Chesterfield's failure in the career that first attracted his ambition, he rendered public services of another kind that earned him a solid reputation. For four years (1728-1732), and again in 1745, he was ambassador at the Hague--one of the most difficult and important posts in Europe. His work there was well done, and such mischances as occurred were due not to any faults of his, but to the procrastination and carelessness of the British government.

Diplomacy, though the target for many sneers, is a beneficent employment; the surest prophylactic against wars; especially against wars that spring from vanity or ill-temper. For all the talk about the evils that are supposed to arise from the secrecy of its

methods, none but fools will imagine that the confidential intercourse of nations can safely be conducted in the open, to an accompaniment of the hissing and gabbling of an ignorant and pseudo-patriotic press. It is an important part of the business of an ambassador to keep relations friendly between his own government and that to which he is accredited; to clear away misunderstandings and suspicions; and to maintain the prestige of his country, not only by his weight of character and mastery of his craft, but by his social tact and the splendour of his hospitality. It is an equally important part of his business to keep his own Foreign Office frequently and accurately informed as to the never-ceasing flux of opinion in the country where he resides. The dispositions and motives of its ministers change from day to day with circumstances. The tendencies of thought among what we call the governing classes--that is, 'society,' bureaucracy, the trading community, soldiers, academicals, writers and fashionable prophets--must be noted carefully and reported upon, because they have a powerful, though indirect,

influence on the conduct of affairs. In addition, there is the evolution of popular moods and movements, which are now more apt than they were in the eighteenth century suddenly to disturb the trend of settled policy. All these things will be dealt with *con amore* by a diplomat whose heart is in his profession. A much harder part of his business is to induce his own government to pay attention to the information, advice and warnings which he sends it. This requires unwearying patience and an indomitable spirit that refuses to be crushed by neglect or disappointment. The bulk of the world's business is done more or less well by steady, competent diplomatists--such as Methuen, or Waldegrave, or Chesterfield--whose aim is to work as quietly as possible and to avoid making any kind of splash.

There are, however, two spectacular varieties of the diplomatic profession. One of them is nearly as rare as the Phoenix; the other not quite so rare. The first succeeds in establishing a personal predominance over the rulers of the kingdom to which he is accredited, so that he becomes, in time, an

unofficial, though a very powerful, participator in their councils. He influences their policy over a wide field, prevents things from being done which might injure his own country, and procures things to be done which may be for its advantage. He is regarded by his rivals in the diplomatic corps as a bugbear and a bully; but he contrives notwithstanding to keep the confidence of the government he so skilfully controls.

The second kind of high-flyer affords a complete contrast. He is a personage of cordial manners and a warm heart, who makes friends wherever he goes, and is innocently vain of being so much loved. His praises are sung in both the states between which he forms the friendly link. His fellow-countrymen believe that he could do anything with the Dacian emperor and his counsellors, and the other European powers envy the popularity of England's representative at that formidable court. He is hail-fellow with the sovereign, who claps him on the shoulder. The Foreign Secretary appears to feed out of his hand. Even the surly Chancellor relaxes his habitual frown when they forgather. The

limelight shows nothing but happy trustful faces; and yet it may be that in the penumbral background there are other public functionaries engaged in hurrying forward their lethal preparatives; and (alas!) some day, without warning, when all is ready, the emperor and his ministers may show their teeth without an accompanying smile.

Chesterfield, the ambassador, never allowed himself to be misguided by his natural vivacity and wit, nor by an outbreak of temper. His aims were practicable, and he was seldom taken unawares. He was a free-moving roadster, who went steadily and at a good speed along the beaten track of his profession. He never tried to put the Dutchmen in his pocket, nor did they often succeed in putting a feather over his eyes. His job was not an easy one, but he served his country well.

In 1745 (the year of Walpole's death) Chesterfield was appointed Viceroy of Ireland. His Dublin administration during a short but dangerous period of eight months (July 1745-April 1746) deserves high praise. Very quietly--with foresight, firmness and

tact--he restrained his Roman Catholic subjects from engaging in the rebellion that had swept over Scotland and penetrated far into England. This incident is highly characteristic of the man; for all Chesterfield's best work was done when he was acting alone, and when he was master in his own house, unhampered by colleagues sharing his authority. Where he failed conspicuously was in team work. As a minister he never seemed able to make his influence felt; but when he had control of some special business, he saw clearly, acted promptly and had the art to be faithfully served. Something more may be placed to his credit than merely his conduct of affairs during this emergency; he saw deeper and more sympathetically into the internal condition of Ireland than did any of his immediate predecessors or successors. And he retained his interest after he gave up his office; his subsequent correspondence abounds in wise and kindly counsels to the friends he had made there and left behind him.

An interesting and somewhat unexpected

light is thrown on Chesterfield as a politician by a correspondence which he addressed to Newcastle from Dublin in 1745 on general policy.[12] That one who valued himself so much on his self-control, and had proved himself so cool and competent a viceroy during the anxious period of the Jacobite rebellion, should have given way, on paper, to outbursts of childish violence, must cause surprise. An image forces itself on the mind of ‘a little tea-table’ statesman in a tantrum. It would be hard to say whether these outbursts were produced solely by genuine hysteria, or whether their main motive was not to curry favour with the enraged Sovereign by putting forward proposals for the indiscriminate slaughter and starvation of his Scottish subjects. We surmise that these letters of Chesterfield’s were intended to be shown to the King; and we know that they *were* shown to the King, and that, in the heat of the moment, the King thought well of them. But whatever the explanation may be, they are a proof that Chesterfield was unfit by reason of his temperament for the highest departments of government. Newcastle’s replies are filled

with mealy-mouthed praises of the writer; but he was not so bereft of statesmanship as to act on the Viceroy's bloodthirsty suggestions. The general impression left by this particular episode is, that Newcastle, with all his weakness, was not only less unwise than Chesterfield, but also that he was the stronger character of the two. It is clear that he had succeeded in establishing a personal ascendancy over his infinitely more intelligent subordinate--an ascendancy that cannot be adequately accounted for by the superiority he possessed in virtue of his office. This goes some way to explain why Chesterfield found the last two years of his official life so humiliating and intolerable. For Newcastle belonged to a meaner order of understanding than Chesterfield; but he was more cunning, much more masterful, and his jealousy was always on the watch. The unfortunate secretary-of-state, broken in health, was weighed down and discouraged from first to last by a sense of his own impotency.

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[11] The greater part of this

chapter and the next were written before the publication of Mr. Bonamy Dobrée's *Life of Lord Chesterfield*. I must nevertheless acknowledge my indebtedness at several points to his sympathetic interpretation.

[12] *Private Correspondence of Chesterfield and Newcastle* (1744-1746), edited, with an introduction and notes, by Sir Richard Lodge, LL.D., Litt.D. Published by the Royal Historical Society (1930).

II.--*Concerning Lord Chesterfield in his social relations*

Chesterfield was an assiduous worshipper of the artifices--of manners, wit, eloquence, scholarship and gallantry--and was regarded, not unjustly, as the most finished man-of-fashion of his day. But the standards he applied to persons of condition were judged, even in his own age, to be somewhat too fantastic and austere. Laughter, for example, was inconsistent with good breeding. Gambling was a vice--a vice to which he himself was much addicted, as he acknowledged frankly--and he condemned it, not on moral grounds, but because it tended to the dilapidation of a man's fortune and to the depression of his spirits. Sport and all business, except public affairs, were taboo. According to his notions, a landowner who took pleasure, as Walpole did, in his gun and his hounds, thereby degraded himself to the level of a butcher and a vermin-killer; while another, like Townshend, who undertook the detailed management of his acres, and allowed his attention to become engrossed in tillage and live-stock, must necessarily sink into the condition of a bumpkin. For his own part, Chesterfield meddled no more in the

administration of his large estates, than to draw his rents from them, and to lay out such sums as his agents could prove to him were for the benefit of his property. On the ample revenues that remained he led an urban and suburban existence of great splendour, and was elegantly at home in the chief cities of western Europe. At the time of his retirement from public life he was engaged in building himself a palace in South Audley Street with spacious grounds behind it, and about the same date he inherited a villa at Blackheath, to which he added, and where he laid out gardens of great extent, to the admiration of all his visitors.

Although moralists are agreed as to the unworthiness of some of Chesterfield's ambitions, they have been unable to fix him with the character of a charlatan; for what he aimed at being, he achieved; what he professed to be, he was. His scholarship was of a high order and brought its possessor constant enjoyment. It was the same with his eloquence and wit. His serious life's work, however, was not the perfecting of these and other accomplishments, but the creation of a

piece of supreme artistry--Lord Chesterfield himself: Lord Chesterfield the man of fashion and of culture, who moved in a highly sophisticated and sharply critical society with easy superiority and consummate self-control. The enterprise he deliberately undertook was an arduous one; for nature had treated him unkindly by turning him out a clumsily built, dark, little fellow, with black teeth, a huge head, and a shrill voice that rose to a scream when, in early youth, he allowed himself to become excited. He had been drawn at first towards learning and philosophy, but so soon as he left Cambridge, at the age of eighteen, his resolution was immutably taken to become a leader of society, a figure in public affairs. In the end he gained what his heart was set on; but the change from a shy undergraduate into a courtier and a man-of-fashion was neither a rapid nor a painless evolution. In his first employment with the Prince and Princess of Wales, he was over civil to the mistress and somewhat neglectful of the wife. The vivacity of his spirits was apt to get the better of his discretion. He poked fun at his royal patrons,

and is reported to have made faces at them behind their backs. He had not then learned that ill-natured tale-bearers are to be found in the most confidential companies. Nevertheless he stood well with the Prince, though he offended the Princess. It would have been better for his career had he done the opposite; for the Prince was as inconstant in his friendships as the Princess was stubborn in her dislikes.

At the accession of George the Second Chesterfield was in his thirty-fourth year. He had by that time served his apprenticeship and become a finished craftsman. His manners were gracious, his dignity impregnable and his gallantry successful. He had made it his aim on entering the great world that every man he met should like him, and that every woman should fall in love with him. The character of Don Juan, however, does not fit him. He was none of your temperamental seducers or whirlwind lovers. No woman seems ever to have thought of dying for love of Chesterfield, nor Chesterfield for love of any woman. One suspects a lack of ardour. He never sought to

experience or inspire a grand and reckless passion. A storm of this sort would have been highly inconvenient; for it must have disturbed his equanimity and might easily have broken his career. With women he aimed no higher than to make himself excessively agreeable. He may have smiled at the romantic title--*All for Love; or the World well lost*; for one of the chief objects he pursued in gallantry was to raise himself in the world, by enhancing his reputation as a man of fashion. And with few exceptions, the ladies he courted were graduates in the same school, and met him upon equal terms.[13]

Chesterfield was an English country gentleman; but only in the sense that he had inherited large estates, and with them certain traits of character that could have been moulded in no other tradition. He had few of the tastes of the class from which he derived through a long line of ancestors. He was an aristocrat; but not a typical aristocrat, being at once too fastidious and too eclectic. Despite his patriotism, he looked to Paris, rather than to London, as the metropolis of civilisation. He was one of those who prided themselves

on their freedom from insular prejudices; on being not merely Englishmen but Europeans, and not merely well-bred but well-read. He was a politician, and an ambitious politician; but here also he was distinguished from his order, for although he enjoyed parliamentary intrigue as a game, he detested bribery and corruption, and shrank with even more disgust from the steady drudgery of business, without which no man can hope ever to reach the summit.

It is not so much Chesterfield's practice as his precepts that must be held accountable for the belief of later generations that his morals were worse than those of other men. The actual tenour of his life won a general respect, and in many cases a warm regard. Though a gambler he was scrupulously honest; he was truthful, kind, and diligent about his friends' affairs, which he allowed to take precedence of his own. His condemnation rests almost entirely on his letters to his son--letters written in the strictest confidence and with no thought of publication--which were given to the world a year after his death by the greed of an under-

bred woman. For Eugenia Stanhope, his son's widow, no excuse can be found; she was in no need of money, because she and her children had all been generously provided for by Chesterfield during his lifetime. Some may think that this mercenary female was an instrument of Providence for enriching English literature with a correspondence which, but for her breach of decent feeling, would almost certainly have been lost. But it is possible to take the other view, that there would have been no cause for great regret had the letters been swept into the dust-bin. These didactic compositions, though written in an agreeable style, have no conspicuous historical or literary value, and are interesting to readers, not so much intrinsically, as for the lights they throw on the character of the writer.

The evidence of private letters cannot be ignored by historical writers; but it is dangerous stuff and should be handled gingerly. Chesterfield's letters were not written like Horace Walpole's for the world at large and posterity, but simply and solely for Philip Stanhope, a painstaking and not

unamiable young man; obviously rather a dull fellow; too much addicted (in his early youth) to practical jokes that were not particularly funny, to inappropriate argument and inelegant contradiction; greedy in the matter of food; lacking force of character and moral courage, and without the faintest tincture of either grace or genius in his composition. This correspondence began when Philip was a child, and ended only with his death--a period of nearly thirty years. It shows, on Chesterfield's part, a singularly persevering and pathetic attempt to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; for neither a diet of worldly maxims nor the fondest encouragement could have turned the son into a man of wit and fashion. The contents of these letters are prosaic, matter-of-fact and often commonplace; but no correspondence exists which has a better right to claim the immunity due to thoughts uttered in the strictest privacy. Chesterfield wrote these letters, not as an artist, to please himself, nor as a gossip, to provide entertainment for mankind, but as a schoolmaster, to improve a pupil who was very backward in certain

branches of his education. He anatomises his son's defects, and seeks to cure them by laying bare his own thoughts and experiences at a similar age. The epistolary confidences of men-of-letters and young ladies of a marriageable age (of which we possess many shining examples) may wear the appearance of a more torrential candour; but they are really much less entitled to plead the privileges of spontaneous intimacy. Such outpourings, as a rule, are marked by an exaggerated self-consciousness. The writers have deliberately cosseted their moods for the pleasure of delivering the appropriate rhapsody, paradox or rant. They have their eyes on an audience other than the persons they are addressing, and are much more interested in their own mental processes than in those of their correspondents. Chesterfield's letters to his son are as intimate as any of these; they are much more sincere; and they are of an opposite sort, for it is his son's mind he is concerned with, and not his own, save by way of illustration. Consequently his confidences deserve more than the common measure of indulgence

which critics of men's private lives are bound in decency to extend to their victims. But in fact he has received much shorter shrift than the impassioned egotists. The formal correctness of his style, his singleness of purpose, the concentration of his thoughts upon the effects which he aimed at producing on one particular human creature, have concealed too much the essential intimacy of this correspondence.

It is hardly less hazardous to judge a man on the evidence of his letters to an intimate friend than upon reports of his private conversation, when a gesture, a glance, an inflexion of the voice may change the whole meaning of the words. And in the case of letters, the greater the intimacy the greater the danger of misconstruction. Every friendship has its own special phrases; its own esoteric allusions. Do we write to any two of our friends using quite the same language? There is an infinite variety in friendships, and each of these has its own set of values for words and wit. There is much in the simplest of these intimate communions which the outside world, armed only with a dictionary, may

misconstrue most ludicrously. To one who holds the key to his friend's mood and circumstances, a solemn aphorism or a high-flown rapture will often provoke--as it was meant to provoke--an answering smile. An apparently ferocious censure will be rightly construed as the mild chaff that was intended. A jest, a sneer or a curse may bring tears to the eyes of a reader who knows what present sorrow it conceals. Moreover the circumstances and present mood of the receiver of the letter will be apprehended and allowed for by the man who writes to him. Everywhere there is a flickering light of irony that may easily lead Dryasdust, or Smellfungus or Monkbarns into a quagmire.

This is the usual kind of letter which most of us write by instinct, but more or less blunderingly, to one another. There is, however, a different kind, in which intimacy is very little concerned. This may be called the encyclical letter, and when it is of a high quality (as Macaulay's are) it not only makes excellent reading, but can be used with confidence by historians. The encyclical letter is usually written to be passed round the

family, or for a circle of friends and acquaintances, and there is no reason in the world why the world should not be allowed to see it by and by. For as there is no privacy to speak of, there can be no breach of confidence, and very little danger of misconstruction in publishing it after the writer's death. Macaulay's letters are like the very best journalism--keen, vigorous, picturesque, perspicuous and swiftly moving. It must be regretted that although encyclical letters are common enough, *good* encyclical letters are exceedingly rare. The didactic uncle on his travels is generous in regaling his family with compositions of this sort, but (alas!) by far the greater number of these are of an unreadable dullness.

Chesterfield was painfully aware of his son's deficiency in the graces, and spent infinite pains in his endeavours to mend the fault. The way he chose was to load his discourse with maxims and illustrations, hoping thereby to work a cure. For the 'common reader,' who is not himself afflicted with Philip Stanhope's defect, or who is happily unconscious of his affliction, the

result will seem lacking in a sense of proportion, the arid philosophy of a worldling whose most serious concern is good company manners, and the benefits that proficiency in this art may be expected to bring in the way of social position and professional advancement. Had Chesterfield been writing to a youth of brilliant parts--to a George Wyndham, for example, or a Henry Cust, or a George Curzon--we may be sure he would have omitted the greater part of those counsels that weary our patience and occasionally scandalise our sense of propriety. In place of them we should have had something vastly more entertaining and possibly also more edifying. For no one was more at home in the higher departments of politics and society than Chesterfield. None was better qualified to interest and delight an eager and receptive pupil, who aspired to cut a figure in these two worlds, to which he had a natural right of entry by virtue of his birth, and tastes and education. But poor Philip Stanhope stood shivering in the shadows of the outer porch, and had to be dragged in, were the thing possible, by main force. He

was slow at apprehending the characters and motives of his fellow-creatures. He was only half an Englishman, the other half of him being a dull and unimaginative Dutchman. Owing to his backwardness he had to be kept at his A B C until he was a grown man; whereas the other three who have been named were, at the same impressionable age, already ranging, light-hearted and yet serious, among the booths and pavilions of Vanity Fair.

Chesterfield's other writings are more interesting as history and literature than as a key to the workings of his mind. His well-known *Characters* were composed very much at his leisure, with due reserve and with a sense of responsibility; but they are marked by the same sincerity that is shown in the letters to his son, while their atmosphere is not esoteric, except in the broad sense that every age has its secrets from all its successors. As they were written for the world, they are entitled to no indulgence. The best of them (like the *Lord Scarborough*) reach a high level; the majority are very good reading and on the whole trustworthy; but

there are a few (like the *Queen Caroline*) which are blurred beyond recognition by prejudice. We may regret that Chesterfield did not devote more hours during his twenty years of retirement to biographical and historical reminiscences of a similar kind.

When *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son*[14] were published in 1774 they sold like hot cakes; but they had a very bad press. They were at once denounced unsparingly, and at some points with justice, by many good men, and by at least one great writer.[15] The common herd of undiscriminating pharisees and sensation-mongers followed in full cry. Critics of the popular sort were attracted by an abundance of themes on which they could descant with the gusto of self-righteousness. There was little sense of proportion in this storm of censure; and the temper of the audience was biassed against a defendant who had passed into the limbo of the day-before-yesterday. The chorus of reprobation was swollen by the envious, who considered (with that stern moralist, James Boswell) that the appropriate provision for illegitimacy was a modest pension, and that

its proper lodging was with the skeleton in the cupboard; that it was the sublime of arrogance for a great nobleman to lavish his wealth and his stores of worldly wisdom in order that his bastard might soar upon a brilliant career, over the heads of people born in wedlock. There were also the Puritans, who held that a man of reputable life would not have had a natural son to write to.

Something less than a quarter of a century had passed away since Chesterfield was leader of London society; but during that short period he had fallen out of the fashion and almost out of the memory of the rising generation. It was twenty years since he had refused ever again to set foot in White's, where an unfeeling wag had given him the nickname of 'Joe Miller.' For the same length of time he had been fading out of politics and social intercourse by reason of his deafness and ill-health. When he died he was in his eightieth year. No one is ever much concerned to see justice done to a man-of-the-world who is no longer in the world or of it; for his is a trade that produces envy and competition in his lifetime, but not a cult after

he is dead. By the year 1774 Chesterfield had come to be regarded as a relic of the bad old days of George the Second, when the great world was given over to vices which might be assumed to have fallen out of use in the more virtuous reign of his successor.

At our present distance (some hundred and fifty years later) it is rather puzzling to understand why the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century should have been regarded by the fourth quarter as a period of superior depravity. For in the later age--the age of Lord North, Charles James Fox, George Selwyn and 'Old Q.'--politicians and leaders of *ton* lived as loosely, gambled as heavily, drank as deeply, took bribes as readily, as they had ever done in the days of Robert Walpole, Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, Hervey and Pulteney. Calumny, intrigue and frivolity had in no wise abated. There were no signs that any remarkable change of heart or even of manners had taken place among politicians, persons of quality or the people at large. One is therefore forced to the conclusion that the wholesale condemnation of the Chesterfieldian code by the generation

that followed him was due merely to some subtle change of fashion, and had little or nothing to do with morals.

In showing us what manner of man Chesterfield was, the contents of his letters have less value than the motives that led him to write them--his devotion to his son; the constancy that kept him at his self-appointed task for thirty years; the gentle and forgiving fortitude with which he encountered failure. Assuming that the moralists were right to show no mercy, to denounce him as a misleader of youth, an offerer of dead-sea fruit--assuming, as his critics have maintained, that his multitudinous maxims are little better than a heap of phosphorescent sawdust--still a friendlier, and possibly not less penetrating, eye may discover behind all this an unconscious and incurable sentimentalist; a man of strong affections, though they ran in narrow channels; a man whose courtesy was not mere prudence or convention, but rooted in a deeper soil, in consideration for the feelings and natural dignity of every member of the human race, from King George the Second to the valet

who buckled his wig.

Chesterfield watched over Philip Stanhope with unremitting care from his cradle to his grave. The son was not an object of blind idolatry; for the father was conscious of his faults. Nor was he merely a pet or favourite on whom self-indulgent emotion might be lavished. During all these thirty years Chesterfield plied his son with helpful counsels, the great majority of which were sound and wholesome, though they may not greatly interest the general reader. He does not seek to hide his affection, but he insists on industry and discipline. Like Colonel Newcome he bores his friends--especially his female correspondents--with discussions of his son's progress. And he submits to the intrusion of dullards and people of no fashion, whose only claim to his society is that they have news to give him of his son. So the letters flow on; there is no intermission, no change of tone, no trace of coldness, or anger or even of disappointment, when at last it has become clear that Philip can never be made into a silk purse. But he still may be made into *something*; and so the efforts

continue although the dream is ended.

It is a depressing but heroic story. Philip the boy was to be made into a scholar with a well-stored mind. An excellent tutor was engaged to take him travelling. Book work and life and lectures in foreign cities were the curriculum. But clearly it must always have been heavy going. Then it was sought to make him a freeman of smart society in Paris and in London--a lamentable failure! Then his father bought him a seat in Parliament and sought to launch him on a political career; Philip stuttered, sat down and never made a second attempt--another lamentable failure! Then it was proposed to bring him into the higher branch of the diplomatic service; Newcastle promised, but the King objected on the score of his illegitimacy--in some ways this was the bitterest failure of all. So he was forced to seek a humdrum career in the inferior branch of the profession, where there were no prospects of distinction, except for some daemonic character who could force his way against precedents; and Philip was no daemonic character. One feels that these disappointments must have struck

Chesterfield the dreamer much harder than they struck the actual victim.

And so on to the end, when, contrary to the expectations of nature, the son is taken and the father left. And then comes a painful discovery. Chesterfield's trust and affection had been meanly repaid. Philip Stanhope had been married for some years, and had kept the marriage secret from his benefactor. Under this double shock the old Earl behaves with all his accustomed dignity and regard for the feelings of others. Mrs. Eugenia Stanhope, deficient alike in breeding and attractiveness, is kindly received and liberally provided for. Her ingratiating letters leave an unpleasant after-taste; but Chesterfield's answers to them are not merely courteous but indulgent; and yet he is careful to guard himself against intrusions. The grandsons, of whose coming into the world he has been kept in ignorance, are generously dealt with, which is less to be wondered at than that they are allowed to inherit their father in their grandfather's affections. His letters to them are playful and tender; the letters of one who will not suffer his own grievances to turn him

from justice, one whom disappointment and infirmities cannot sour.

The letters of Chesterfield to his son are the chief count in the indictment against him; and yet, when we have made an end of reading them, we are in some danger of forgetting those elegant abstractions--Chesterfield the courtier--Chesterfield the intriguing politician--Chesterfield the wit and man-of-fashion. The actual contents of his letters fade quickly from our memories, and what remains permanently vivid is merely the old story of a father who loved his son beyond reason and received an inadequate return.

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[13] The following quotation is hackneyed, but may bear repetition. How much of it is Hervey's malice and how much the petulance of George the Second it would be hard to say. The King's opinion (if it was indeed his opinion) is characteristically violent:

‘Chesterfield is a little tea-table scoundrel, that tells little womanish lies to make quarrels in families; and tries to make women lose their reputations, and make their husbands beat them, without any object but to give himself airs; as if anybody would believe a woman could like a dwarf-baboon!’ (Hervey’s *Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 162).

The date attributed to these expressions is 1737, when Chesterfield was very much in the King’s bad books.

[14] Philip Stanhope died in 1768; his father five years later, in 1773. In the following year Dodsley published the famous *Letters of Lord Chesterfield to his Son*,

having bought the copyright from Philip Stanhope's widow for £1575. These letters--some 300 in number--begin when the son was a child of seven and continue till his death. They cover a period of nearly thirty years (1739-1768). Certainly a large, possibly the larger, part of this correspondence has been lost or destroyed. In Dr. Bradshaw's edition (1913) letters to other correspondents more than double the bulk of the original collection. In Mr. Bonamy Dobrée's recent edition more than 2600 are included; but these, as yet, I have not read.

[15] Samuel Johnson on the *Letters* (1774, *i.e.* on their

first publication):--‘They teach the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master’ (Mr. Birrell’s edition, vol. i. p. 216). But again (two years later):--‘Lord C.’s letters to his son, I think, might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put in the hands of every young gentleman’ (*ibid.* vol. iv. p. 59).

III.--*In which Bolingbroke goes out of the story*

At the end of 1735, within a year after the new Parliament met, Bolingbroke gave up the struggle and went to France. His enemies affected to believe that Walpole’s onslaught in the last session of the preceding Parliament had put him in a fright; but had this been true,

he would have left much earlier--so soon as the results of the polls were known--and would not have continued his hostility unabated for another twelve months. The obvious explanation of his departure is that he found his position in his own party intolerable. Defeat seemed to have taken the heart out of his Tory followers, so that they refused to go on fighting despite his encouragement and example. His Whig allies turned against him, and threw the blame for their misfortunes on his defects of leadership. The murmurings in this quarter were so loud that Pulteney felt himself obliged to speak plainly to his colleague. The conclusion he drew was the same that Walpole had drawn at the famous interview ten years earlier: that no party whose policy was popularly supposed to be directed by Bolingbroke could ever hope to win the confidence of the country. Since he became secretary-of-state to the Pretender, in the first year of George the First, public opinion had never ceased to regard him as a bird of ill omen. Bolingbroke himself has given us an account of this episode: ‘they think my name and much

more, my presence in England, when I am there, does them mischief.' . . . 'My part is over, and he who remains on the stage after his part is over deserves to be hissed off.' It was a bitter and ungrateful ending; but no uncommon one with those who ply the dangerous trade of politician.

Another reason for his going abroad was want of money, an evil hard to cure until his father's death should put him in possession of the family estates. Dawley, which he had bought on his return from exile in 1723, was put up for sale, and he went to live with his second wife, the Marquise de Villette, first in Touraine and afterwards near Fontainebleau. There, amid scenery very refreshing to the eye, he indulged in his favourite pursuit of landscape gardening, hunted two days a week in the forest, and abandoned himself, with grateful expressions of relief, to the study of history and philosophy, to a copious and stately correspondence with his friends in England, and to literary composition. His political career was ended. Despite his flittings to and fro, his occasional reappearances when things were in a flutter,

his epistolary exhortations and advice to former colleagues, his influence on the Opposition was now no more than a memory, and he was no longer taken seriously as a candidate for office. In 1738, when Frederick, Prince of Wales, set himself openly at the head of Walpole's enemies, Bolingbroke returned to England, was graciously received, and circulated, for private reading, his most famous work, *The Patriot King*. But the chorus of admiration which greeted this adventure had no practical results, and he was back at Fontainebleau in the following spring. He again returned to England in 1742, when his father's death put him in possession of his patrimony; but though this visit coincided with the triumph of Frederick over his father, with the break-up of the government, and the downfall of Walpole, no avenue opened for Bolingbroke's ambition. In 1744 he returned from France for good and all; settled himself in the family home at Battersea, and became the central and dominating figure in a select society, drawn from both parties, which was not long in gathering round him. He saw the rebellion of 1745; he saw the stormy rise of

Pitt, and the subsequent transformation of that reckless free-lance into a sober and hard-working minister of state. He died in 1751, a year later than his devoted wife.

To talk of Bolingbroke's career as a failure, as a wicked or pathetic waste of great talents, is not altogether in accordance with the facts. He entered the House of Commons as Henry St. John in 1700, when he was twenty-two years old, and solely by his abilities and his eloquence--unrivalled among his contemporaries--he rose, only four years later, to be secretary-at-war. The struggle with Louis the Fourteenth was then at its height, and Marlborough was anxious to put the parliamentary interests of the army in safe hands. He chose accordingly this young man of twenty-six, and had no reason to repent of the appointment. He gave him his full confidence, and seems to have regarded him with an almost fatherly affection. All went well until the split, in 1708, when Marlborough and Godolphin were forced to come to terms with the Whig Junto. Harley then left the government, and with him Henry

St. John, who had been his faithful follower from the first. The rest of the Moderate Tories likewise gave up their offices and before long united with the ‘High Tories,’ who held no offices, and who had been a thorn in the side of the administration ever since the Queen’s accession. Thenceforward there was a formidable Opposition, a war to the knife, in which Harley and St. John were the leading spirits. Old friendships were forgotten and gratitude played no part. In 1710, Anne dismissed the Whigs; the country, at a general election, countersigned their disgrace; Harley became chief minister, and St. John chief secretary-of-state. For four years St. John (created Viscount Bolingbroke in 1712) was one of the most prominent statesmen in Europe. He was the principal artificer (on the English side) of that famous diplomatic instrument, the treaty of Utrecht, and deserves the largest share of the credit, and also of the dishonour, which attached to a very remarkable achievement. But it was not long before Bolingbroke began to find Harley’s leadership intolerable; they quarrelled, and the younger man prevailed.

Harley was dismissed and Bolingbroke was designated to succeed him. But he had no time to assume his new office, for two days later the Queen was dead, and her successor, George the First, had no occasion for his services. Thenceforth, to the end of his life, political good fortune never smiled on him again.

This is not the kind of career that can be lightly dismissed as failure; still less as a pathetic failure. For it began with fourteen years of 'glorious life,' enjoyed with the full zest of youth; a course as full of triumph and excitement as it would be possible to find in the whole adventure of politics. And before Fortune turned, he had reached the very summit of his ambition, though he was unable to keep his footing there for more than a few hours. This is a good deal to set against the twenty years of clouded exile, unprofitable intrigues and frustrate leadership that followed. Thereafter he lived for another sixteen years in pleasant places; enjoying his retirement, in health and with faculties alert; beyond the reach of sordid want; among friends, admirers and young men destined to

greatness who sat at his feet; among books and gardens; returning for the last years of his life to the house of his fathers, with the river and its barges for a foreground, and the fields and woods of Battersea stretching southwards to the Surrey hills. Certainly a happier decline than has fallen to the lot of more than a very few of our most famous politicians! It is impossible to pack the gist of such a career as this into a few lines; and clearly the word 'failure' will not cover it. At the winning of power Bolingbroke was amazingly successful: at the keeping of it, not so successful; and partly through his own fault he sometimes fell between two stools. He trusted too much to the efficacy of words. There seemed to be something lacking in his judgement, in his capacity for coming to a decision, in his courage. But if ever there was a man of whom it can be said truly that blind chance was his worst enemy, that man was Bolingbroke; for when Fortune turned her back on him in sudden anger she remained implacable for ever after.

Bolingbroke will be remembered by his

capacity for friendship. He took pleasure always in free companionship, and won the attachment of the younger men by treating them seriously and on a footing of equality. The many and illustrious friendships that were his, at one period or another of his life, would never have been given to a man who was grudging of his confidence or his sympathy. He was warm friends with Harley for all the earlier part of his career; with Swift, Pope, Arbuthnot, Wyndham, Chesterfield, the young Polwarth, the young Pitt and a host of others. For these he unlocked his experience and opened his political heart; his talk was an inspiration and his indiscretions, which were many, did harm only to himself.

With Walpole it was entirely different--he gave friendliness rather than friendship. In private life he treated everyone with good humour, but no one seriously; least of all the young. When conversation approached too near 'the misteries' of his craft, he put up a screen of cynicism. 'Were they going to set up as Roman patriots, or take their politics like sensible men--for what they might hope

to get out of them?' . . . It is not by questions of this sort that a statesman wins disciples among the rising generation. History, the philosophy of politics, and other topics that engage the interest of aspiring youth, were subjects only for mockery to this worldling man of affairs. He refused to discuss business out of business hours, or with amateurs and novices whom it did not concern. Of sport he would talk with enthusiasm, and of women very freely, but in a strain that was rarely edifying. He preferred conviviality to conversation, and the society of his subordinates and dependents to that of his equals. He laughed what his son calls 'the heart's laugh,' was boisterous over his cups, but ready next morning to rise with the sun and follow the hounds. Bolingbroke had many more friends of the distinguished sort than Walpole had. And he won from them more admiration; he was a teacher who seemed to have disciples. But was there perhaps a touch of exaggeration, of artificiality, of chilliness in his impassioned friendships? The contrast with Walpole's beery *bonhomie*, which shed a glow all round

him, leaves us wondering which of the two men was really the better loved by those who knew them well.

After nearly two centuries there is still disagreement with regard to Bolingbroke's merits as political philosopher and man-of-letters. It would be unseemly to dismiss with a few contemptuous phrases one whom so many persons of fine judgement have delighted to honour; but nearly every reader who is honest with himself will have to confess that, for him, certain famous writers have written in vain. To a large number of people (of whom I am one) Bolingbroke's writing is merely a procession of beautiful sentences, extremely pleasing to the ear, but devoid of any vital significance. His style, at its best, is a miracle of strong, easy movement, like a deer-hound at the half-gallop. The fashion of his reasoning, invective, and exhortation is almost faultless. Critics have complained that he abounds in commonplaces; but the same may be said truly of every philosophic man-of-letters from Plato to John Morley. There is nothing

against a commonplace providing that its author is able to bring it to life; and this the great ones succeed in doing; and for the most part, unconsciously. But merely to garnish and decorate an accepted commonplace will not bring it to life. To get together a heap of commonplaces, and then, like a child with its box of bricks, to build them deliberately into a rhetorical or dialectical composition is a profitless business. If the composition happens to harmonise with the humour of its own particular generation, it may receive applause from a sophisticated few; but its influence will never be either general or permanent. To those who are not under Bolingbroke's personal spell, his commonplaces are wearisome; not things that ever were humanly born, but a collection of lay-figures, dressed in very well cut clothes, and set in a glare.

The spell that he cast over so many of his contemporaries was due less to his ideas than to his remarkable personality, his talk, the tradition of his early unreported oratory, and above all to the quality of his rhetoric. Chesterfield confesses that he had never

known the extent and power of the English language until he read the *Patriot King*. The elder Pitt, whose praise and blame were alike extravagant, said that he would rather have recovered one of Bolingbroke's great speeches in the parliaments of Queen Anne than any of the lost masterpieces of Greece or Rome. His works were the delight of men of both parties in his own day and for a short time afterwards. His noble style of writing, the calm dignity with which he marshalled his arguments, were so perfectly in tune with mid-eighteenth-century taste that the want of substance was overlooked in admiration for the form. To-day he is judged by a different standard; his readers are comparatively few and unimpassioned; and he is honoured more often in the invocation of his authority than in the perusal of his works.

It is difficult to take Bolingbroke seriously as a political philosopher. We cannot discover that he established any principles, or preached any doctrine, or held any definite convictions, or stood consistently at any point of view. The trail of the pamphlet, or of the apology, is over all his

political writings. He produced articles and treatises instead of making speeches; and this for the good reason that his circumstances left him no choice in the matter. He is always the politician in search of a party. He adapts himself with a surprising suppleness, but also with great dignity, to the moods and views of those with whom he wishes to combine; but it is on party combinations that his eyes are ever fixed, and not on philosophic principles. When he was pardoned in 1723 he at once appeared as the politician hopeful of reinstatement, eager to join forces with the government of the day; and while he was endeavouring to attach himself and his friends to Walpole and Townshend, he argued plausibly for a 'national' party, whose alliance would make the dynasty secure and whose patriotic virtues would put the malcontents to shame. If his negotiations had succeeded it is not impossible that the services of the Whig party to freedom might have been celebrated in one of his resounding discourses, and that he would not be remembered to-day as the scourge of their oligarchical pretensions. When his attempt to

gain admittance to the government proved fruitless, he speedily threw his whole energies into a campaign for its destruction. The party he had so recently courted was now denounced; while the malcontents--a discordant rout of Tories, Jacobites and office-seeking Whigs--were upheld as the only pure patriots and were urged to make common cause. Union, of a jealous and precarious sort, was in fact achieved, and Bolingbroke's policy was followed, though without success, for many years. When its failure was consummated in the General Election of 1734, he at last announced his disgust with the party contest and his determination to withdraw into contemplative seclusion. But so strong in him was the instinct of the politician that the first-fruit of his solitary meditation was another bid for power. The goody-goody idea of a *Patriot King*, who would select, with beneficent discrimination, the best and wisest men from every party, and who, with their help, would deliver the land from the rage of faction, was deliberately calculated to appeal to a recalcitrant young prince who was at open

war with his father and his father's ministers.[16] The author seems to have assumed that, in the event of his success, Frederick's choice of a chief minister would naturally fall on his eloquent adviser. The world knew better; whatever might have happened, Bolingbroke was out of the running.

There was nothing blameworthy in this procedure, nothing that any other ambitious politician need have felt ashamed of doing had he found himself in Bolingbroke's position and had he possessed Bolingbroke's abilities, energy and unquenchable hope. But it should be kept clearly in mind that the object with which Bolingbroke wrote was to rehabilitate himself and to advance his own immediate political interests. In spite of all his fanfares, the discovery of philosophic truth was not the motive of his labours; nor did he in fact arrive at any such result. For he was not in the same class with Disraeli, whose faculties worked with far greater intensity, whose imagination was capable of coming to a glow of white-heat even amidst the dullest affairs, and throughout whose career as a parliamentarian and as a novelist

crystals of political wisdom were crushed out willy-nilly and scattered broadcast by the way.

From Bolingbroke's death until the nineteenth century was well on its way, and parliamentary reform had become the leading issue, he does not figure prominently as one of the high priests of the Tory tradition. His eloquence is occasionally referred to and his style of writing held up as a pattern; but the homage he receives is chiefly from men of taste and not from practical politicians. Neither his memory nor his maxims were much concerned in the rallying of the Tories to the support of the famous administration of the elder Pitt; nor in their support of George the Third and Lord North when these rulers of men insisted on running their heads against a stone wall; nor in the consolidation of a new Tory party behind the younger Pitt when he was waging the Napoleonic wars; nor afterwards in the early years of questioning and reaction against the supremacy of Metternich. During this period of nearly three-quarters of a century there is nothing to

suggest that the influence of Bolingbroke with his fellow-countrymen was a living force. Even his name was almost forgotten when the young Disraeli appeared leading him respectfully back into public notice. The theory that the modern Tory party was the posthumous child of Bolingbroke, that it was quickened by his spirit and guided by his principles and maxims, rests on no solid foundation. When Disraeli took the Tory party in hand very few of its members had much knowledge of Bolingbroke's career, and still fewer had ever made a study of his opinions. He was only a name, and not even a name that was held in much veneration. Disraeli did not need to borrow his ideas or his aphorisms from anyone; but he was a sagacious leader of men, and he knew that it was politic upon occasions to pay the appearance of deference to the counsels of buried authorities.[17] Moreover, it was convenient for the Conservative party to possess a patron saint, and the memory of the younger Pitt was too fresh and too much the subject of contention to make him suitable as yet for canonisation. It seemed wiser to

choose someone, as England chose St. George of Cappadocia, whose remote career was not likely to become the subject of too curious investigation. When the audacious young Disraeli (tongue in cheek) proceeded to conjure with the name of Bolingbroke, his motive was not so very different from that of the young Caesar when he ‘produced the images of Marius.’

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[16] Mr. Trevelyan has made it clear (*Reign of Queen Anne*, vol. ii. pp. 17 and 83) that the way of government recommended in the *Patriot King* had already been used by Harley, Godolphin and Marlborough from 1704 to 1708. Soon, however, it became impracticable, owing to the vigorous egoism of parties, and no attempt to reintroduce it, as a permanent modification of our political system, has

ever been attempted.

[17] ‘It was a rule with Vivian Grey never to advance any opinion as his own. . . . In attaining any end, it was therefore his system always to advance his opinion as that of some eminent and considered personage; and when, under the sanction of this name, the opinion or advice was entertained and listened to, Vivian had no fear that he could prove its correctness and its expediency. He possessed also the singular faculty of being able to improvise quotations, that is, he could unpremeditately clothe his conceptions in language characteristic of the style of the particular author.’ . . . During dinner the

muddle-headed Marquess of Carabas entered on a political discussion. He ‘was decidedly wrong, and was sadly badgered by the civil M.P. and the professor.’ Vivian Grey came to the rescue with a brilliant argument, ‘and finally quoted a whole passage of Bolingbroke to prove that the opinion of the most noble the Marquess of Carabas was one of the soundest, wisest, and most convincing of opinions that ever was promulgated by mortal man.’ . . . ‘Mr Grey looked smiling to his son and said, “Vivian, my dear, can you tell me in what work of Bolingbroke I can find the eloquent passage you have just quoted?”’ (Disrael’s first novel, *Vivian Grey*,

written when he was
twenty-two, chapter i.).

IV.--*Concerning the Bolingbroke Succession*

Walpole, in spite of his long success in governing England, was lacking in the brilliant qualities that we associate with genius. Bolingbroke, on the other hand, was a figure of romantic distinction, endowed richly with the graces, standing high above his contemporaries in eloquence and wit. And yet it would be hard to find any close parallel to Walpole among British statesmen; while nearly every generation has produced its Bolingbroke. It is not an apostolic or a spiritual succession. There is no fountain-head of principles, no question of passing on the torch from hand to hand. The Bolingbroke succession (if we may use this term) is merely the recurrence, in either party, of a certain picturesque, but by no means uncommon, type.

Our Parliamentary history is rich in a variety of such recurring types, and we greet them as old acquaintances when they appear in its pages or in our own day. There is the Bubb Dodington type--the cheerful and shameless mendicant; the greedy, arrogant and purblind Grenvilles; the witty and convivial Wilkes who specialised in insolence to authorities; Trollope's *Mr. Bonteen*, the sapless and persistent party-hack; Disraeli's *Tadpole* and *Taper*; with a host of others. The Bolingbrokian is cleaner and comelier than any of these. He is a very brilliant fellow who makes a great stir in the world. Like Prince Rupert he shows to greatest advantage in attack; but should he chance to win his way to a position of power, his glory will soon begin to fade. The reason for this is that his gifts--great as they are--seldom stand him in good stead when he takes command and tries to get things done. He is thirled to the belief that facts will yield to the efficacy of words; he does not easily distinguish phantasms from realities; and he treads by preference on air--on hot air--rather than on the solid earth. He can lead men *part*

of the way with great éclat; but he can never lead them the *whole* way, because *he knows not how to govern*.

Comparatively few of our most famous politicians can be classed as well-known types. Godolphin, Walpole, the younger Pitt, Wellington, Castlereagh, Palmerston, Peel, Salisbury and Arthur Balfour are a company of sturdy individualists. None of them had any temperamental kinship with Bolingbroke; and they resembled one another in little else, except that they were remarkably competent, and were guided by a certain solid patriotism and a fixed determination not to look further into the future than a hop, skip and jump would carry them. Nothing beyond the-day-after-the-day-after-tomorrow came into the field of their vision.

There are three who stand by themselves, and in a sense together--the elder Pitt, Disraeli and Chamberlain. All these, when they began, were loaded with a burden of ignorance that would have sunk a lesser man under the waters; and they were also cursed

with unbridled tongues that raised up a host of enemies who never forgave. They are not in the Bolingbroke tradition, because their feet were planted firmly on the ground. They are not in the Walpole tradition, nor in the tradition of prudent statesmanship all the world over, because they saw with a prophetic eye, and took into their account, things that lay beyond the-day-after-the-day-after-tomorrow. But the characteristic that most distinguishes them from other politicians was their intuitive understanding of the Englishman. They knew him for what he then was, and still is--a good-humoured nonesuch--a matter-of-fact idealist, optimist and pugilist--despiser of preparations and precautions--lover of his ease--lover also of adventures--lover most of all of England--a light sleeper when England's honour or interests are concerned--prompt as lightning--and in resolute self-sacrifice a stayer to the end. How these three men came by their intuitive understanding of the Englishman is something of a puzzle. Not, one thinks, either by heredity or by upbringing; for Pitt was the grandson of a piratic 'interloper,' who in later

life turned gamekeeper and became a governor; Disraeli was the grandson of a mild, insolvent Jew, a dealer in straw hats from Leghorn; Chamberlain was the grandson and the son of dissenting shoemakers. None of these three was born into the governing class or nourished in its traditions.

Since the death of Bolingbroke there have been not a few politicians marked, to a greater or less degree, with the characteristics of his type; and they are to be found in both parties. Charles James Fox,[18] Canning,[19] Gladstone, George Smythe,[20] and George Wyndham,[21] in spite of the contrasts which in some ways they present, may all be classed as Bolingbrokians.[22]

These politicians were all men of high culture. Fox was one of the most enjoying scholars that ever lived, worthy in this respect to be classed with Carteret. Each one of them could be a charmer when he chose, and in addition, all save one had great good looks. An air of authority sat on them easily and naturally. They were all aristocrats, either by

birth, or like Canning and Gladstone, by adoption. And they all had a wonderful facility in the use of speech--a gift which they cultivated assiduously.

The Bolingbrokian, though he is a strong believer in the efficacy of words, delights in action. He is impatient, however, of the unexciting drudgery that should precede it. He tends to scamp the preliminaries, to shirk the tedium of protracted observation and the irksome task of making certain of his facts. He prefers to trust to a flair. And although he will occasionally engage in investigations with daemonic energy, as Gladstone did, the prime object of his search is not to discover the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, but to fortify conclusions at which he had already arrived before his inquiry began. He would be soaring before his preparations are complete; and when he tumbles from the upper air, it is always the same story; always--always--*he has forgotten something*; and what he has forgotten is almost invariably some common, obvious, unimportant-looking thing that an ordinary person, with his wits about him, would never have forgotten. This

capering up aloft is a fine show while it lasts, and sets people gaping. He may loop a good many loops before he crashes, may make a good many popular hits, may be rewarded with loud applause. His audacity produces for a time a heroic illusion, and yet he never runs to the end what can truly be called a fortunate career--not even Gladstone, though he kept his popularity for half a century. And what is a matter of greater consequence to mankind, not one of these Bolingbrokians--not even Canning--ever succeeded fully in any *constructive* work he undertook. They were all ardent adventurers; but somehow, they never laid their plans beforehand with sufficient thoroughness. They were impatient both in words and actions, and very liable, especially at high altitudes, to be overcome by the fumes of their own oratory. Many politicians, who appear very dull dogs in comparison, have left much greater practical achievements behind them.

Gladstone resembled, and even exceeded, Bolingbroke, Fox and the others in the restlessness of his mind, in the impression he

produced of furious energy, in his copious misuse of rhetoric and argument, but, above all, in his impotence when he had to deal with facts. Facts, to the Bolingbrokian, are pliable things that can be bent this way or that; plastic things that can be squeezed at the orator's will into surprising shapes; things that can even be converted into vapour and blown away.

It would be unjust to accuse any of these politicians of insincerity; but there are two kinds of sincerity--beliefs that are part of a man's being, and beliefs that he has persuaded himself to believe. It used to be said of Gladstone that in perfect honesty he could believe anything he liked. This second kind of sincerity needs to be sustained by stimulants; its practitioners must be forever stoking, in order to keep their fervour at a red glow. The other kind of sincerity--the sincerity of such men as Cavour and Bismarck--rarely resorts to the devices of Bolingbroke and his successors--to rhetorical excess and self-conscious decoration. Their vehemence makes less of a blaze; it burns at a white heat by spontaneous, inexhaustible

combustion.

Cavour's aim was the union of all Italy under the House of Savoy, governing through a 'free' Parliament; 'a free Church in a free State'; 'freedom' was the watchword from first to last. Bismarck's aim was the union of Germany under a Hohenzollern sovereign wielding the reality of royal power; a Germany armed at all points and permanently organised for war against the machinations of its enemies. Cavour and Bismarck pursued their different aims without wavering, without turning aside, through long years of bitter opposition, calumny, delays and disappointments. Cavour remained true to his ideas of union and freedom, Bismarck to his ideas of union and power. Cavour knew, as he lay on his death-bed, that his ultimate victory was secure; though it was not crowned till seven years later. Bismarck, in one respect less fortunate, lived through nearly a generation after his victory had been won; long enough to suffer insults and ingratitude. At the end of his stormy life he repeated what he had said more fiercely in his earlier days--that Germany would get no

nearer her goal by speeches, associations and resolutions of majorities; that there are contests which cannot be avoided and which can only be settled by blood and iron.[23] And Cavour, the great Liberal, the constant lover of freedom, held the same opinions and acted on them without hesitation or remorse. Your Bolingbrokians talk a different language; Gladstone could never have brought himself to speak simply about 'blood and iron.' There was in these men a lack of clear vision and adamantine purpose. Their eager engagements and busy contrivances seldom produced results that were permanent, and more often than not, they only added to the confusion of the world.

The career of no one of these six politicians can, I think, rightly be described as 'fortunate.' When the furnace cooled, when all the dross of failure and disappointment was brushed away, very little gold was found at the bottom of each crucible. Of what is commonly called achievement--constructive reforms, policies that have lasted, wars that gained their ends--

there is surprisingly little to show. Nor did any one of them, save Fox, leave behind him a tradition that influenced his fellow-countrymen after he was dead. Their legacy to posterity was hardly more than a vague legend of personal pre-eminence.

Charles James Fox lived his whole parliamentary life in the limelight.[24] His three terms of office amounted all together to barely eighteen months;[25] he was the chief leader of the Opposition for more than thirty years. But although he was the mightiest of debaters and in political prestige second only to one, his fellow-countrymen steadily refused to give him their confidence. Nearly always in antagonism to the prevailing sentiment, he set himself up as a loftier moralist and an incomparably more sagacious statesman than any of his opponents. And yet no one was ever less of a prig, less of a pedant, or less malevolent. He lived his life in the open. People knew him for what he was--a gambler who had dilapidated three fortunes; a plunger who was systematically rooked; a rake too cheerful and too careless to bother about appearances; a borrower with both

hands who rarely repaid; an unwieldily fat man, of a swarthy complexion, but wonderfully active considering his bulk; a lover of field sports and of his fellow-men; the best beloved public character of his time. Extravagantly abusive, his abuse seldom left much poison behind. In an evening over the wine, or at his ease in a summer garden, he delighted the whole company with his gaiety, with his rich and kindly talk, bringing both enemies and strangers under a spell. The most devoted sections of his following offered a strange contrast--on the one hand, envious and censorious dissenters of the lower middle class; on the other, dissipated young men of the highest fashion who took a pleasure in outraging morals and decorum.

From the very beginning of his public career there were evidences of a want of self-control verging on the hysterical. As a young Tory blood denouncing Wilkes, and scoffing at the opinions of the populace and the liberty of the press, he caused discomfiture to his own side. A few years later, during the American War of Independence, hysteria inspired the indecency with which he

rejoiced, as a sentimental Whig, at the news of British defeats and surrenders; and accounted for his unmeasured abuse of ministers and his indiscriminating eulogies of the rebellious colonists. There was something hysterical also in his unrelenting pursuit of Warren Hastings; in his championship of the divine right of his boon companion the Prince of Wales to become regent when George the Third went mad; in his ecstasy when the French Revolution broke loose; in his fury when England engaged reluctantly in a war which France had forced on her by threats and insults; in his acclamation for many years of the character and resplendent career of the national enemy, Napoleon. It was a stolid perception of this hysteric taint which warned his fellow-countrymen, not in vain, against trusting their destinies in his hands.

Fox resembled Bolingbroke in the badness of his judgement. Like Bolingbroke, he seldom foresaw truly the effect that would be produced on public opinion by what he did and said. His career is strewn with mistakes of the first magnitude. His coalition with

North in 1783 was at once, and forever after, regarded as a monstrous scandal; unprincipled; repellent alike to good sense and good taste; for only a few months earlier he had been denouncing North's incurable depravity (a ridiculous travesty) and clamouring for his impeachment as a traitor to his country. This is perhaps the most notorious of Fox's many blunders. Bolingbroke's flight to France in 1715, and his subsequent acceptance of office under the Pretender, had hardly been a more ruinous miscalculation.

In one thing, however, the two men were utterly unlike. Bolingbroke was a cold, ambitious, self-centred, eighteenth-century rationalist; Fox, a warm-hearted, irreclaimable enthusiast, without a touch of self-consciousness in his composition.

Enthusiasm was the name people gave in those days, and for some time afterwards, to a form of mental affliction which consisted in a chronic looseness of the emotions and a deliberate disuse of reason. The decay of scepticism during the last hundred and fifty years is perhaps accountable, to some extent,

for the amelioration which the meaning of the word has undergone since the days of George the Second. Bolingbroke would have shrunk with horror from the imputation, less because enthusiasm had not yet become the fashion than because it was repugnant to the verities of his nature. Nowadays we give the general name of enthusiasm to a nut that has two kernels--the enthusiasm of credulity and the enthusiasm of action. It is the first of these that was looked on with so much disgust in the eighteenth century; the spirit of the revivalist meeting-house, where people perversely excite their emotions, and accept as a divine revelation the hallucinations produced by their wilfully disordered minds. This form of enthusiasm has its political counterpart in the writings of Rousseau, and of those hot-gospellers who followed him, and who lacked what he himself possessed in so high a degree--the vision of a poet. The evil has its degrees, and shades off at times into a comparatively innocent philanthropy. But, broadly speaking, the eighteenth century was right in its condemnation of those who practise trickery with their beliefs.

If the two forms of enthusiasm are in any degree related it can only be by a very distant cousinship. Stark reality or some plain and simple duty is what most often calls forth enthusiasm of action, alike in great affairs and in the careers of common men. It was enthusiasm of action that brought the English campaign in Picardy during the autumn of 1415 to such a fortunate conclusion; that inspired the administration of Pitt between 1758 and 1761; that upheld the British race from 1914 to 1918. Enthusiasm of action was the *Familiar Spirit* of Wolfe, of Nelson, of Charles Gordon and an unemblazoned legion of faithful and heroic servants. It is by the force of this passion that men are led to consecrate themselves to efforts that seem to transcend the powers of humanity, to hold fast against overwhelming odds and against a succession of defeats, to brave the fiercest blasts of execration in a righteous cause. This spirit was honoured even in the eighteenth century, though it was not then insulted with the name of enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm of credulity is certainly not a touchstone that will enable us to tell a true

Bolingbrokian from a pretence. Bolingbroke was wholly immune from it--a hard professional who had no interest to spare for emotional illusions. But the illustrious Charles James Fox, who was always something of a simpleton in the technique of party politics, may be classed unhesitatingly as an enthusiast. In a much less degree Canning, George Smythe and George Wyndham were subject to the same failing. Gladstone is a puzzle. Like Bolingbroke, he was as inveterate a gamester as ever rattled the dice in the great game of politics, and it might be imagined that any indulgence in sentimentality would have put him off his play. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that he deliberately excited and encouraged the enthusiasm of credulity among the multitudes he sought to influence, and that he did not disdain to pose himself as an enthusiast when it suited his purposes; but whether he really suffered from the malady, or was only malingering, in order to keep his followers in countenance, still remains a mystery.

Fox is in a class by himself. Never before

or after him has enthusiasm been clothed in such a sober disguise of good sense. He spoke without braggadocio or swank, without affectation, with an easy fluency, and in such vigorous, colloquial plain English, that Pitt, in comparison, seemed stilted and artificial. A stranger, listening to one of his greater efforts, might have found a difficulty in believing that such a cogent strain of eloquence had any admixture with the froth of enthusiasm. And yet Fox was a classic example of the enthusiast; for he never lost his faith that facts could be charmed away by the efficacy of words; and he was also a true Bolingbrokian in this--that he too often cast his spear before he had fixed his foothold.

Some of Canning's youthful, witty verse can still be read with pleasure. He was drawn from literature into politics by his devotion to Pitt and by his horror of the French Revolution. He entered Parliament at the age of twenty-three, and during the five years preceding Pitt's resignation in 1801 he filled various minor posts with credit. He went out with his leader, and come back with him in

1804. After Pitt's death he became Foreign Secretary under the Duke of Portland, who was a feeble head of government. Castlereagh, the Secretary for War, was a resolute and intractable colleague. Canning strongly disapproved of Castlereagh's conduct of the war in several matters of importance. Busybodies in the Cabinet, afraid to be outspoken, sought to make peace, but made only mischief. Canning threatened to resign unless Castlereagh was removed to some other post, and the conduct of military operations taken out of his hands. There were several months of negotiations, entreaties and remonstrances; but eventually Canning carried out his threat. Castlereagh had been kept in the dark; received no warning of danger; was unaware of Canning's hostile attitude; was not even told of his resignation when it took place, but only learned of it casually some time later. Canning had practised dissimulation over a long period, and his offence was unforgivable. There was a challenge, a duel, and he received a slight wound, without hurting his adversary. The government fell in the following month.

Thenceforward, for thirteen years, Canning had little or nothing to do with high policy, notwithstanding that his party was in power. For the greater part of this time he was no more than an eloquent and influential private member. And he alone was to blame for his own exclusion, and for the triumph of his rival. After the murder of Perceval in 1812, Liverpool offered the Foreign-secretaryship to Canning; but Canning refused it on the ground that Castlereagh, his unforgiven enemy, was to lead the House of Commons. This was one of those decisive blunders from which it is impossible ever to recover: a blunder which is comparable with Fox's coalition with North in 1783, and with Bolingbroke's flight, and acceptance of office under the Pretender, in 1715. Had Canning closed with Liverpool's offer, British policy during those tremendous years that saw the downfall of Napoleon and the restoration of the Bourbons would have been in *his* hands and not in those of Castlereagh. He missed the chance of a splendid fame and of the leading place in Government. And yet one can hardly think that Canning's mistake, so

fatal to his own career, did any injury to England. On the contrary, it seems most fortunate that negotiations during those anxious years were in the hands of Castlereagh--a cool, clear-sighted aristocrat, whose single purpose, from first to last, was appeasement and a healing of the wounds of Europe, and whose high position, unruffled self-control and faultless courtesy fitted him so perfectly for his task. Canning's impulsive nature would have been less well suited to the occasion. We feel that he might have failed, where his rival succeeded, from a lack of firmness, simplicity and candour; and also that it might have been dangerous to expose a man so versatile, so sympathetic and so quickly responsive to new ideas to the humanitarian-imperialistic illusions of Alexander of Russia. There are times when the finest intelligence in the world is less serviceable than the sound common sense of a *grand seigneur*.

When Castlereagh died by his own hand in the autumn of 1822, Canning became Foreign Secretary and was virtually at the head of affairs until his death five years later.

This is the period by which his capacity for achievement must be judged. His policy aimed at curbing the repressive and despotic tendencies that were everywhere reviving among the old dynastic powers. He had popular opinion behind him, and he was undoubtedly in earnest; but it seems, at this distance in time, as if his foreign policy consisted too much in protests and gestures which seldom produced any solid or permanent advantage. His activities, nevertheless, were warmly applauded by his fellow-countrymen, who, then as always, were only too ready to persuade themselves that strong words and chivalrous flourishes were equivalent to action.

Canning's domestic policy followed in the footsteps of Pitt, his master. First and foremost he stood for the preservation of order. In his opinion the time was inopportune for Parliamentary Reform, nor was such a change either necessary or urgent. He favoured Catholic emancipation. With the help of Huskisson he endeavoured to mitigate the more oppressive restrictions on trade, and

to lower the insane import duty on corn; but his attempt was frustrated by Wellington and the House of Lords. He held strong and sound views on currency matters. He may be fitly described as an enlightened Liberal-Conservative. The bulk of the Tory party, though they shared his feelings against Parliamentary Reform, looked on his domestic policy as a whole with suspicion. As his term ran on he found himself opposed with more and more bitterness by that powerful section of the party which was led by Wellington, Peel and other reactionaries who had formerly been his friends. What Disraeli has described as 'sublime mediocrity' was too much for him. He went down in the struggle, broken in health and wounded in spirit. In the last sad phase of all, his friends watched him with an ever-increasing anxiety, and foreign ambassadors who had business with him entertained doubts as to his sanity.

The glory of Canning's career was not continuous but chequered. He was no demagogue, but there were times when his

popularity stood very high in the country. He had more than a few notable triumphs in the House of Commons, where, upon occasions, he was applauded more loudly than any other politician of the day. In spite of all this, however, a reputation for instability clung to him and was never shaken off. His speeches were so perfect in form as to raise an unjust suspicion of his sincerity. It is certain that his rival Castlereagh had a narrower vision and a much narrower range of sympathies; but the things that Castlereagh saw were real things, not phantasms. Though one of the clumsiest speakers in Parliament, Castlereagh was incontestably the better man of the two, and his prevalence over Canning sprang from this cause, and not from any casual confusion in the chapter of accidents.

In the public lives of Bolingbroke, Fox, George Smythe, George Wyndham--even of Canning--the dominant note is disappointment deepening at times into tragedy. Their careers were not fortunate. But who shall presume to say that the career of Gladstone was not fortunate? A man who was

four times Prime Minister of England; a man who filled, over a long period, many of the highest offices of state; a man whose official life began when he was twenty-five and ended when he was only five years short of ninety; who won four general elections, borne to victory on popular acclamation--what in politics may be called fortunate if this record does not constitute good fortune?

As an agitator, Gladstone, during the last twenty years of his life, was without a rival. Cynic politicians on the Liberal side regarded 'the old man' very much as an impresario regards a *prima donna* at the height of her fame; as one who can be safely counted on to draw big houses. There was no one like him for winning elections; and he won them, not so much by skilful wire-pulling, as by his magnetic personality. He laid a great part of his fellow-countrymen under a spell, and they followed him as the children followed the Piper of Hamelin. And yet, though he could lead and sway a multitude, he knew not how to govern men. His cabinets were hardly finished making before they began to crack and fall in pieces.

Like several of our greatest political characters, he was a demagogue; but he was a demagogue of a sublime and somewhat unusual pattern. It is not surprising that a demagogue should have been deficient in the qualities that are needed to make a successful head of government; but it is indeed surprising that he should have possessed in a very high degree the solid qualities of a first-class departmental minister. This peculiar excellence was actually one of the chief causes of Gladstone's undoing; for he delighted in the detailed administrative work, which he did so easily, much more than he delighted in the business of leadership, where he always fumbled. As Chancellor of the Exchequer under Aberdeen, Palmerston and Russell he had thoroughly congenial employment for his energies, and deserved all the credit he earned; but when he became Prime Minister he could not put aside the departmental habits of a lifetime. He seemed to enjoy the labour and vexation of carrying on his own shoulders a contentious measure through the House of Commons. He took upon himself matters which ought to have

been left to capable subordinates, and gave too little and too casual attention to the duties of the premiership. As a result his team soon began to kick and plunge, and it became impossible to keep the coach running straight and smoothly on the road.

Gladstone had a grand habitual courtesy. He was a splendid fighter--like Porthos, towering above the press: at times, perhaps, like Don Quixote, encountering the windmills. When he chose to play the autocrat, he wore a formidable frown; as who should say--'I *will* be master in my own house'; and people liked him all the better for that. On the other hand, he behaved with great dignity when differences arose among his followers; seemed to be temperate, long-suffering and a healer of strife. This was how he appeared, during his heyday, to the outside world.

Those, however, who watched him at a closer gaze were aware that his courtesy, though it produced an illusion of magnanimity, covered no very remarkable warmth of heart. Although bold in battle, he was irresolute and vacillating in council. His

autocratic gesticulations were seldom followed by prompt and effective action: he gave no clear commands--‘Do this’ or ‘Do that’--but issued hasty prohibitions, and peremptorily forbade certain things to be gone on with, or to be undertaken, which same things too often had to be done or to be attempted in the end, after ruinous delay and sometimes at a fatal disadvantage. Nor would many of those who served with or under him have singled out peacemaking as one of his distinguishing virtues. On the contrary there were frequent murmurs against his tortuous and by no means disinterested diplomacy. He practised with great gusto and self-complacency a kind of high ecclesiastical cunning, such as priests use to divide their colleagues and destroy their rivals. We have no right to blame him for seeking by those means to safeguard his own power. Prime ministers can never wholly dispense with the weapons of manœuvre and intrigue against members of their own cabinets; but in Gladstone’s case there was a self-righteousness that his victims resented even more than they resented the injuries he

inflicted; and what is of considerably greater importance, he diplomatised so ineffectively, and with so little understanding of human nature, as to make for himself more trouble than he scotched.[26]

The unfruitfulness of his personal diplomacy and his failure to carry on the workaday business of government with even a moderate degree of success were due largely to one and the same cause. He was so much wrapped up in his own projects and in himself as hardly ever to be fully aware of what was passing in the minds of other people. For a man of such multifarious interests Gladstone was singularly unobservant of the humours of his fellow-creatures. He walked abroad in blinkers; often blindfold. And so, since there was no clear-sighted leader to coördinate the work of government, ministers tended to get out of step, out of line and out of tune. Things were taken up haphazard without a time-table, and cabinet discussions were allowed to range inanely over the whole field of policy without decisions being taken, without answers being given promptly to the two important

questions--‘What is to be done to-day?’ and ‘What to-morrow?’

Gladstone himself always worked with a furious energy; a contrast with his ministers who often loitered. Poor things! they could not do otherwise than loiter and stand and gaze, having no one to set them their appointed tasks and speed them on their way. The Prime Minister was for ever absorbed in some favourite project which he had convinced himself would be an infallible pill against the earthquake. Ireland claimed the greatest share of his departmental attentions. Church disestablishment, a land act, compensation for disturbance, a coercion act, another land act, arrears of agricultural rent, a Home Rule bill, another Home Rule bill; and yet with all his concentration of purpose he never seemed to get at the real heart of any of these problems. He never seemed to understand the Irish--their religions, their land hunger, their lawlessness, their reciprocal hatreds or their nationalism. He never took pains to measure and to fit his customer, but endeavoured to fob him off with a reach-me-down ‘which we can

thoroughly recommend.' The result was an unbroken series of disappointments. And meanwhile many things--some of them of a serious nature--were happening in the sister island, in the British Empire and in the world at large.

To find a parallel with Gladstone's administration from 1880 to 1885 we have to go back to the third quarter of the eighteenth century. In 1756, after three years of misgovernment, it seemed as if Newcastle could never recover from the disgrace that had overwhelmed him, nor be forgiven for the humiliations he had brought on England. And yet, only a few months later, he was again at the head of affairs, in title though not in fact. His reinstatement, like his original acquisition of power, was due solely to his command of votes in the House of Commons. Gladstone's government, which ended in 1885, made shipwreck in similar circumstances. There had been the same unceasing flow of talk, the same timidity, the same humiliations and the same confusion. In both cases the chief minister had been inspired by a singularly vain ambition--to

possess himself of a power which he was incapable of wielding. Gladstone, like Newcastle, was reinstated within a few months of his fall; and by the same agency--his command of votes in the House of Commons. These two men came back to office, not because they had made any atonement, but because politics are politics, and because, in the hurry of events, the day-before-yesterday is very apt to pass out of popular memory. But they will never win back their honour, because History is fortunately too honest to blot her pages with unveracious pardons.

Gladstone's position was one of the strangest in which an English prime minister has ever found himself. On the one hand he was admired, almost to the point of idolatry, by vast numbers of his fellow-countrymen. On the other hand the people with whom he had to work felt but little confidence either in his judgement or his candour. He was like a generalissimo whose army leaders have lost faith in him. Battles were won, but the campaign ended too often in disaster. Those

who stood closest to him were the most chary of taking his words at their face value. Many of them had learned by their own personal experience that it was unsafe to accept his simplest-seeming utterances without searching them for hidden meanings and mental reservations.

There is no doubt that when a great man is cogitating great plans he should not babble to his household; but when his ponderings have come to a conclusion, when he is sure of his purpose and has determined on his general line of action, he can hardly be too frank with those persons whose help will be needed in his enterprise; for it is of the highest importance that he should win them to his own sanguine mood. But in order to do this he must show them clearly the road he means to travel, and the prevalent reasons for going that road rather than another. This was not Gladstone's way. He was rarely an open-hearted leader, possibly because his general sense of direction was so seldom clear and firm. His habitual vehemence does not produce the impression of self-confidence, but rather of an internal tumult in which

factitious indignation had the upper hand.

Though Gladstone's failures in achievement were too flagrant to be overlooked even in the heyday of his popularity, they were forgiven and forgotten by his admirers, who saw in him the beneficence and the majesty of a destroying angel. It was an age in many respects very different from any which preceded or has followed it. Gladstone was easily forgiven for the sacrifice of England's prestige abroad; for the Manchester school had been preaching busily that prestige was only a vanity, and that foreign affairs were much more dangerous if they were attended to than if they were neglected. They were not very prescient, these mid-Victorians, and some of them lived long enough to see the error of their ways.

Leaving foreign policy aside, the electors were not much interested in what we now regard as among the chief duties of a statesman--maintenance and construction. They were much more concerned in housebreaking, in getting rid of obstacles and barriers to the onward course of prosperity

and democracy. If once the site were cleared, new and more admirable institutions would spring up of themselves. *Laisser faire*, *laisser aller* and everywhere freedom!--freedom to set up a new tyranny called industrialism which some people thought was many times more savage than feudalism had ever been.

The prejudices of the country gentlemen were forced to give way to the nostrums of a new commercial class which believed, with perfect sincerity, that the government of the nation should be conducted on the selfsame principles that had raised so many of their own order from poverty to affluence. The first of these principles was that private enterprise should be allowed to go its own way unregulated and unchecked. Protection of every sort, whether sentimental or self-interested, was mischievous and would certainly defeat its own aims. The thoroughly orthodox were opposed not only to import duties for the protection of British produce, but also to the protection of the working class against unhealthy conditions of labour; they were opposed to the restriction of the hours worked by women and children, to factory

acts, to acts for preventing the adulteration of goods, to compulsory education, to State interference of every kind which had for its object to help the helpless by tampering with the sanctity of contract. Gradually of course the fanaticism of pedants was mitigated by the spread of a common-sense humanity which realised that conditions were becoming intolerable, and which insisted upon a remedy being tried, whether it was pleasing to the economists or not.

But the change came slowly, and while these dogmas continued to affect public opinion--as they did more or less until after the election of 1885--Gladstone went to and fro delivering speeches, and the walls of Jericho fell at the sound. For the time being words ‘were in the saddle and rode mankind.’ His oratory was received with enthusiasm by the populace. Bolingbroke himself had never cast so strong a spell, and his followers were a mere handful compared with those of Gladstone.

The eighteenth century was no less gullible than the nineteenth, but it had a different standard of taste. Culture was a

tradition among the people whom Bolingbroke addressed, though the greater part of them were only bumpkin squires. They wanted something loftier than plain English; and he gave it them in as fine a style of the artificial sort as has ever been composed. The multitudes who hung on Gladstone's words were less sophisticated, less critical of style, and their taste was less refined; but *they* also wanted something loftier than plain English, and he gave it them in a form so declamatory, so copious, so sonorous, apparently so logical, so devoid of all doubt and difficulty, that they gaped with admiration. Posterity is not attuned to his wave-lengths, and consequently it knows nothing of the famous orator at first hand; but only what other people have written about him.

The likenesses between these politicians of the Bolingbroke type show themselves in incidentals as well as in essentials. Beauty and grace of person will win the hearts of men as well as women. In their young days[27] five out of the six--Bolingbroke, Canning,

Gladstone, George Smythe and George Wyndham--filled their contemporaries with an admiration that was akin to affection, while Charles James Fox, in spite of his plain looks, exercised a fascination that few could resist. They all possessed the grand manner; authority seemed to come to them by nature; and they had a way with them which did much to smooth their paths, especially at the beginning. And yet these beautiful, swift-moving creatures, so brimful of vitality, so ambitious, so daring and so hopeful, have left but few monuments behind them; only a waste, marked here and there by ruins that commemorate some enormity of misconstruction. Their gift of speech raised them above their fellows; raised them, in a sense, above themselves, for their understandings were not on a level with their powers of expression. They were apt to come to decisions before they had taken their bearings. Their preoccupation with themselves and with their own ideas obscured their vision of what was passing through the minds of others. They were fine fighters, but in the art of government they did not excel.

Not one of them was a realist; and it is impossible to play a statesman's part--to build institutions, to wage wars, to guide, encourage and firmly hold a cabinet, in a word, *to govern*--unless the would-be leader understands the hard nature of facts, and will endure the drudgery of grappling with them.

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[18] Charles James Fox (1749-1806) entered Parliament 1768.

[19] George Canning (1770-1827) entered Parliament 1793.

[20] George Smythe (1818-1857) entered Parliament 1841.

[21] George Wyndham (1863-1913) entered Parliament 1889.

[22] Smythe (the original of Disraeli's *Coningsby*) and Wyndham (whose rise and fall many of us can remember) were perfect

and exceptionally attractive specimens of the Bolingbrokian; but they are not figures of great enough importance to be brought into the present comparison. Their names are cited here only in order to show the continuance of the type down to our own times.

[23] *Reflections and Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 309.

[24] 1774-1806.

[25] He held high office in the administrations of Lord Rockingham (1782), Lord North (1783) and Lord Grenville (1806).

[26] Henry Labouchere's well-known gibe expresses what was then a very general feeling:--'We don't object to the old man

having a card up his sleeve; but it is too much to ask us to believe that Providence put it there.'

Mr. Garvin in his *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* quotes what he describes as a 'savage wail' of Labouchere's, who saw, in 1886, that Gladstone was engaged in smashing the Radical party beyond repair:

'Is it not terrible to have to deal with a lunatic at large, whose intelligence seems to be now limited to a sort of low cunning and who cannot refrain from perpetually bringing an ace down from his sleeve when he has only to play fair to win the trick? . . . The public does not know the object of their adoration as we do. He is still their

fetish, and they regard any doubt of his divine character as sacrilege' (vol. ii. p. 241).

During Parnell's brief experience of high London society Mr. Birrell dines one evening with him and Gladstone at the Sydney Buxtons', 'when Mr. Gladstone expatiates on the enormous iniquities accompanying the Act of Union. "And you remember, Mr. Parnell. . . ." Mr. Parnell does not remember; he has no historical bent and prefers chemical experiments. When he leaves with Mr. Birrell his comment on the erudite patriarch is: "The old gentleman is very talkative."' (*ibid.* vol. ii. p. 396).

[27] Gladstone was even more beautiful in his old age.

V.--*In which five young men appear upon the scene*

In the House of Commons which met in 1735 there were five new members, all under thirty years of age, who were destined by and by to play more or less notable parts in political life. These were Henry Fox, Hugh Lord Polwarth, George Lyttelton, Richard Grenville (afterwards Earl Temple) and William Pitt. Fox at once attached himself to Walpole and was soon rewarded. Polwarth was the close friend and confidant of Bolingbroke. Lyttelton and Grenville, who acted under the patronage of their kinsman Lord Cobham, with Pitt as their intimate associate, soon earned for themselves the name of *Cobham's Cubs*.

This Parliament ran its full course of seven years. During the whole of this period

the preoccupation of the livelier spirits of the Opposition was Walpole-baiting. For three years--up to the end of 1737 when the Queen died--they made no impression whatsoever, though the Prime Minister on several occasions found himself involved in perplexities that laid him open to attack. During the last four years, however--after Walpole had lost his best ally--their efforts proved successful. They forced the country into war with Spain, and thereafter they found a congenial theme in denouncing the incompetence of the administration in conducting it. When the next Parliament met, at the beginning of 1742, Walpole fell.

By the date of Walpole's defeat Fox had made himself a solid reputation for parliamentary ability. Polwarth had ended a remarkably promising career when he succeeded to the earldom of Marchmont in 1740. Lyttelton enjoyed the reputation of being an able man, but owing to his defects of manner had failed to gain any real influence with the House. Grenville was disregarded alike by friends and foes. Pitt, on the other

hand, had already become the foremost figure in the Commons. He excelled in the arts of the demagogue, in sarcasm and invective; but as yet he had shown few signs of statesmanship.

Though Fox came into public life on the Whig side, he sprang from a Tory stock. Sir Stephen Fox, his father, had risen from obscurity and menial employments to a great fortune. His fidelity, his knowledge of book-keeping, his sound business judgement and his resourcefulness in obtaining supplies, had recommended him to Prince Charles as manager of his household during the years of exile. At the Restoration Fox was rewarded with high and lucrative appointments in the Civil Service. He was a useful man--discreet, able and tenacious; and although, like the Vicar of Bray, he contrived to keep in office for more than half a century--from the return of the Stewarts to the Hanoverian establishment--he was capable of putting gratitude before popularity and principle before Court favour. He stood by Clarendon in his disgrace, refused to turn Roman

Catholic, and opposed the policy of James the Second for the creation of a standing army.

None the less, the founder of this remarkable family was one who studied the interests of his various masters without neglecting his own. His record as a civil servant might be regarded to-day as scandalous; but, by the standards of his own time, he passed for a reasonably honest man, being neither rapacious nor extortionate, and no taker of bribes to betray his trust. The shafts of his enviers and detractors were not levelled against his improbity; but rather against the meanness of his origin and the obsequiousness of his manners. On the whole he kept friends with the world, and gained the good opinion of men like Clarendon and Evelyn whose approval was worth having.

Finding himself, at the age of seventy-seven, without a surviving heir, and being 'unwilling that so plentiful an estate should go out of the name,' he ventured upon a second marriage. As he was 'of a vegete and hale constitution,' his hopes were realised in a family of two daughters and two sons, of whom the younger--Henry--was eleven years

old at the time of his father's death.[28]

The prejudices that the great Whig families had entertained against Stephen Fox were not abated in favour of his descendant. So soon as Henry came of age he proceeded to dissipate his inheritance in riotous living. His losses drove him abroad, where he continued upon a course which was not merely dissolute but disreputable. While he was still in his twenties he returned to England apparently a ruined man, a broken though still hopeful gambler, determined to retrieve his fortunes at the game of politics. He became a Whig and was returned to Parliament by family influence in 1735. Two years later he received his first official appointment, through the good offices of Hervey with the Prime Minister.

Mere ability was no passport to Walpole's favour; but the plight in which Fox found himself was in itself a recommendation to his suit. For, as he had lost his character with the world, and could not have stood upright without the support of a patron, nothing was to be feared from his independence. In Walpole's eyes the inability to betray ever

appeared to be the best guarantee of fidelity. Fox, to his credit be it said, was a much worthier object of favour than many who owed their advancement to similar credentials. Unlike his father, inasmuch as he was a spendthrift, a gambler and a rake, he yet inherited great business ability, together with a strong trait of loyalty to persons from whom he had received kindness. He knew how to make himself useful and trusted. For once Walpole was well served by a self-seeking politician. He soon perceived that the Surveyor-General of Works might be employed with advantage in a wider sphere, drew him more closely into his own service, and gave him a portion at least of that confidence which he was so chary of bestowing upon his colleagues.

Walpole's faith in his subordinate was well repaid. Fox's staunchness remained proof against the prevailing spirit of intrigue and desertion. When his master fell, he insisted upon resigning his own appointment, and refused to rejoin the government until it was clear that he could serve Walpole better by taking office than by standing out.

Fox's qualities were of that kind which makes a man more welcome as an ally than feared as an opponent. He was stronger upon the defensive than in attack. His speeches had a formidable cogency; although, in form and in the manner of their delivery, they were as awkward and ungraceful as his person. He did not possess the gift of leadership. He could occasionally drive members of the House of Commons with a stock whip, as if they were a mob of cattle; but no one would follow his lead; for no one regarded him with admiration, love or respect. He had certain of the more ruffianly arts of parliamentary management. He was afraid of no one, and would not be put down. He could bribe and browbeat, could play the bully and the oppressor of helpless people. Timid premiers--Newcastle and Bute whom he despised--hired him, like a bravo, to do their dirty work in certain emergencies, and he did it very thoroughly, turning a surly face on all mankind outside the circle of his own family and private friends. He had great courage, but a mean ambition. Or rather, he was held by two conflicting ambitions--honourable fame

and great riches--which drew him into opposite ways. At the beginning he neglected, and in the end he abandoned, the wife for the mistress.

He would have persuaded himself and others that no man can fight against his fate; but after the fall of Walpole he never made a fight on principle. On occasions he fought the battles of his friends, but as a rule he fought only as a mercenary, for reward. A want of luck, the jealousy of colleagues, the fickleness of popularity, the omnipotence of folly--these were the trumpery excuses with which he endeavoured to silence criticism and quiet his own conscience. But nature had endowed him with an understanding far too powerful to be deceived by these specious insincerities. He knew better than any of his enemies that he had chosen deliberately the baser part. By degrees his whole view of public life became embittered by a sense of his own apostasy. His vision was at once morbidly clear and 'irrecoverably dark.' Nothing of weakness or depravity in his contemporaries could escape his inhuman penetration; but when a sagacious policy was

urged with violence and exaggeration, or when nobility of character was mixed with absurdities and arrogance, all the wisdom of the one, all the higher motives of the other, were hidden from his sight. For a man of his temperament he was put to the wrong school. Walpole, his ever-sanguine master, scoffed at patriots, but practised patriotism: Fox, the saturnine scholar, scoffed at patriotism, and pursued his private gain.

According to a law of nature, which knows but few exceptions, the mirror of the world showed Fox the reflection of his own face. Where he loved, he was beloved in return--by his family, by his friends, by a few benefactors whom his gratitude would never desert in their ill fortune. But where he had taught himself to suspect and hate, he soon became himself an object of hatred and suspicion. In 1742 he had gone only a short way upon his career, and as yet but little was known of him. When the acquaintance ripened, the world came to like him as little as he liked the world.

At the date of Walpole's downfall Fox

and Pitt had sat opposite to one another in Parliament for seven years. During all this time the one had been a constant defender of the government; the other had done nothing but abuse it in terms of increasing violence. Fox's dilapidated fortune was meanwhile in process of being rebuilt. Pitt never possessed any fortune to dilapidate. When, like Fox, he was brought into the House of Commons by family influence, he had but two hundred pounds a year and his pay as a cornet of horse. Before many months were gone, Walpole dismissed him from the army upon the inspiration--foolish in so shrewd a man--that a satiric vein could be curbed by deprivation of income.

Fox and Pitt were not more unlike in character than in ancestry. Sir Stephen Fox was at the zenith of his prosperous and orderly career when the grandfather of Pitt, issuing from the quiet rectory of Blandford in Dorsetshire before he was yet of age, ventured overseas to infringe the chartered monopoly of the East India Company. In the eyes of the law his action was illegal. In the current language of the day, he was an

‘interloper’; which is to say, that he followed a vocation which it was not always very easy to distinguish from piracy. His methods were crafty and violent by turns, he evaded all efforts to lay him by the heels, all plots to destroy him; and upon the whole his ventures prospered exceedingly. So, for more than twenty years, he fought and defied the most powerful trading corporation in the world. Then the opponents came to terms. Thomas Pitt, the interloper, was created Governor Pitt, and was set to beat off other interlopers. He performed his new functions with zest and fidelity, but without neglecting his own advantage. In 1710, however, having got to loggerheads with his employers, he returned to England with a large fortune and a prodigious diamond.[29] Thereafter he behaved in true Nabob fashion; bought land and pocket-boroughs, quarrelled with his wife, and set his family by the ears.

The means by which Sir Stephen Fox--safe, bland, obliging and industrious--built up his great fortune were as different as might be from those of the choleric old interloper, who loved great risks, and who won his way in the

world largely by reason of the alacrity with which he fell foul of every opponent. The difference between the political methods of the descendants[30] of these two men was fully as great; though it was not the same difference.

Already, in 1742, Pitt had displayed a most remarkable talent for vituperation, and for trimming his sails to catch the gusts of popular passion. He was the first, and also the greatest, of the demagogues. But, unlike the majority of those who pursue this dubious trade, he was as hard a student of facts as of rhetoric. At first, however, and for more than ten years after he entered public life, increase of knowledge was wholly without effect in moderating his violence. His imagination seemed to possess the power of transmuting all the materials of study and experience into so much fresh fuel wherewith to feed the flames of his invective. Walpole himself in early days had not shown himself more factious, more regardless of the honour of his opponents or of the interests of his country.

Although, by and by, when the great

opportunity came, Pitt proved himself to be a good political strategist, he was a bad tactician to the end. Already by 1742 he had made innumerable blunders, any one of which might have ruined a less daring spirit. But in the very multitude of his offences he found protection; for, so fast as one of them was brought to book, he ventured upon another, which distracted the public mind with a new sensation. The injustice and the insolence of his assaults had wounded the King so deeply that no minister durst propose him for a place in the government which was formed when Walpole fell. It seemed as if he had violated the first canon of the adventurer by making himself impossible before he had made himself indispensable.

Much had been forgiven to Pitt--many things which, taken singly, would appear unforgivable. The judgement that was passed upon him by his contemporaries was even more influenced by the spirit of the man than it was by the splendid success of his achievements. It has been the same with posterity. He came to be the idol of his own time, and he is also the favourite child of

history.

To Fox, on the other hand, nothing was ever forgiven; nor had he any claims to forgiveness. The popular verdict, though unmerciful, was founded in justice. In what he actually did during his public career there is not a great deal that can be termed outrageous; he is condemned for his wasted talents, for his sins of omission that stand as mountains, irremovable even more because of his lack of faith, than from his barrenness in good works. He was a capable administrator, an excellent man of business. Even his honesty, in the pecuniary sense, would pass muster, if due allowance be made for the practice of the times. But the popular instinct with regard to him was right; for he was a lover neither of his country nor of his fellow-countrymen. As years went on he became indifferent to everything except his own wages and perquisites. The amazing laxity of custom allowed him to take interest from bankers on the huge balances which during the war were entrusted to him as Paymaster of the Forces. But Fox went further, and speculated on a vast scale with the balances

themselves. His inner knowledge of the intentions of government gave him a clear advantage over unofficial operators in the funds. As he was daring, vigilant and of sound judgement, it is hardly surprising that he should have made an enormous fortune out of a game which in his case contained hardly an element of hazard.

Henry Pelham in 1730 and Pitt in 1746 had held the office of Paymaster of the Forces; but neither of them would accept the usual perquisites. Pelham's self-denial was little noticed, because he made no fuss about it; but Pitt refused with a flourish, and consequently was much admired. Fox became Paymaster in 1757. He was a respecter of the old traditions which allowed the ox to go about his work unmuzzled. In 1762 his services as leader of the House of Commons were requisitioned by Bute, in order to procure, by fair means or foul, parliamentary approval of the peace with France. Fox accepted somewhat reluctantly, yielding to the bribe of a rich sinecure in Ireland and the promise of a peerage when his job was done. But he still held on to his Paymastership; and

when in 1763 he received his peerage and retired altogether from the administration and from political life, he fought tooth and nail, and with much acrimony, to retain his lucrative appointment. Strange to say, he succeeded in bluffing his timid employers, and was not finally got rid of until the summer of 1765, after eight glorious years of public plunder.[31]

In matters of policy he was singularly supine, watching in an attitude of detachment, and usually with disapproval, the various sways and turns. Whether the action taken was to his liking or not disturbed him very little; for either way he could make a profit in Change Alley. When he believed that things were going wrong, the limit of his opposition was obstruction. He never risked his office, never came out into the open and opposed on principle. Few politicians, indeed, have ever been less encumbered either with principles or beliefs. The whole story was not known upon evidence until considerably later, but almost from the beginning his character was truly suspected.

The personal attributes of Fox were not of

a kind to do away the popular disfavour. His heavy frame, his dark and rather forbidding countenance, his awkward and unimpassioned delivery, as well as the substance of his harangues, were contrasted with the graceful and commanding figure of Pitt, his flashing eye, his miraculous voice, his fiery speech, his lofty appeals to the patriotism of Parliament and the British people. Howsoever wildly Pitt might declaim, there were few of his hearers who doubted his sincerity, his love of England, or his belief in the high qualities of his fellow-countrymen. There were many who thought him mad, but none who believed him to be a hypocrite.

In comparison, Fox appeared a cynic and a spiritual starveling--one who could never hope to influence great events, because there was no power in him to move the hearts of men. Unlike Fox, Pitt was an undoubted demagogue. He was one of the first who courted popularity beyond the walls of Parliament. But even the debauching influences of his profession were powerless to keep his great character in subjection. It is impossible not to be struck by the recurrence

of the words ‘noble’ and ‘nobility’ in conjunction with his name. Enemy or friend, there is hardly a contemporary who, at one time or another, does not offer him this homage. Henry Fox is the exception; but Fox’s own son is no exception. Nor is Walpole’s son an exception, little as he loved the Great Commoner, and little as he was addicted to generous judgements.

For six years Polwarth played as influential a part in the new Parliament as either Fox or Pitt. Unfortunately the death of his father, Lord Marchmont, ended his House of Commons career in 1740, and Walpole’s hostility prevented him from being elected to the House of Lords as a Scottish representative peer. The elder Marchmont was an intimate friend of Bolingbroke’s, and his son was readily received as a disciple and taken into favour. Polwarth’s capacity for inspiring confidence and affection was one of his most remarkable characteristics. People of very different sorts enjoyed his company and trusted his judgement and his loyalty--not only Bolingbroke, but Chesterfield, Cobham,

Pope, Arbuthnot and many others. Old Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough--a hard woman of business--made a close friend of him, and named him one of her executors. He sprang from an ancient Whig family, which had suffered exile and other injuries under the later Stewarts. Notwithstanding his ancestry, however, Bolingbroke seems to have succeeded in persuading him that there was no longer any difference between Whigs and Tories, but only between politicians who were honest and others who were not--a contention in which there was probably more truth than Bolingbroke's modern admirers have been willing to allow.

Polwarth wisely followed the bent of his own mind and never attempted to ape the style of his admired master. His manner of speaking is said to have been fluent and forcible, not free from bitterness, but entirely innocent of fireworks and rhodomontade. His power with the House lay in the fact that he spoke so much to the point as to compel people--even Walpole himself--to listen to what he said. In tactics he showed himself cool, reasonable and tenacious, utterly unlike

his coruscating, vacillating leader, Pulteney; and he was also unlike his other leader, Wyndham, who, though a sedate and formal person, was apt at times to overact the part of the 'choleric gentleman.' Polwarth resembled Walpole more nearly than he did either of these two leaders of the oratorical fashions of the day.

It has been a characteristic of most politicians in every age, including our own, that they were addicted to talking at large and in general terms about things which they saw only dimly and from far off. It is an odd thing that the audience has so seldom protested against this method of addressing it. Our ancestors differed from ourselves in nothing but this, that they were more pleasantly affected by euphuism, and enjoyed more than we do the harmonious sound of pompous and carefully chosen words. *Our* ears are less fastidious, and we are content if only there are enough words and if they are poured out in a torrent; but we are no more exacting than our ancestors were that the words of each speaker should possess a fixed and unambiguous meaning and should aptly

correspond with the matters under discussion. It would seem that a mere flow of talk is capable of producing the same pleasurable sensations among civilised human beings as we have been told it does, or did, among the Redskin tribes of North America.

Like Walpole, Polwarth went up very close to examine his problems--so close, as the saying goes, that he could count the hairs in their nostrils. He did not aim at delighting his audience. In this particular both he and Walpole may be contrasted with Pitt, when he became Minister, darting backwards and forwards, amazing people alternately by his grasp of details and by his flights of eloquence. At times his eyes seemed as if they were glued to the canvas; anon he was at the farthest end of the studio taking a general survey. This is a singularly rare combination among politicians. Pitt ordering cordage and stores, keeping contractors up to the mark, checking their deliveries with the utmost rigour, and the same Pitt soaring into the highest regions of European policy and ‘knocking the heads of kings and emperors together’--Pitt in his splendid but short

meridian, after he had put off the recklessness of youth and before his genius had begun to waste is an almost unique phenomenon in political life. Polwarth did not soar; but he held on like a hound of race. Walpole told his friends, when they were praising the eloquence of Pulteney, Wyndham, Pitt and Lyttelton, that they might cry up these speakers if they pleased; 'but when I have answered Sir John Barnard and Lord Polwarth I think I have concluded the debate.' This is a remarkable tribute from the greatest parliamentarian of the time to an inexperienced young man who stood up to him unafraid. He had a clear head, an easy delivery, perfect self-possession and an admirable control of his temper. Neither impudence nor abusiveness was among the weapons he used. And it should be noted that, although he loved and admired Bolingbroke, he had none of those traits which mark the Bolingbrokians and which have been discussed in the preceding chapter.

It is no doubt just to withhold from Polwarth the honour that rewards high political achievement, and to class him no

higher than among the might-have-beens. It was through no fault of his own that his career suffered an absolute check in 1740, when he ceased to be a member of the House of Commons and was excluded from the House of Lords; but other politicians have endured as much ill-fortune, and have recovered their footing and pursued their careers victoriously. We have the feeling that Polwarth was not spurred on by any strong desire to hold high offices and to make himself a power in politics. It is difficult to be certain what motives first brought him into action; but it was certainly not ambition in the ordinary sense. He never seems to have been much concerned about his personal aggrandisement. His father (as he thought) had been very oppressively treated by Walpole, and the son, being a true-born Scot, was very ready to engage in the family feud. But though this feud seems to have been his primary motive, his admiration for Bolingbroke provided another; and when he was once fully engaged in opposition he entertained no doubts whatever that Walpole was pursuing a course against the national

interest. He would stop him if he could; but unfortunately he had disappeared from the field two years before Walpole fell. That event seems to have quenched Polwarth's zest for politics. There is no evidence that he was cold-shouldered in 1742; but neither is there any evidence that he bestirred himself on that occasion. He does not figure among the scrambling mob of office-seekers who sought to push their fortunes under the titular leadership of Wilmington. It was not till 1751, after an exile of eleven years from Parliament, that he was chosen as a Scottish representative peer. Nor perhaps did the House of Lords appear as a very promising field to one who loved the actual business of life much more than he loved its competitions and intrigues. To look after his estates, to rebuild his house in Berwickshire, to lay out beautiful gardens, to school young horses, to attend to local affairs, above all, to help his friends in their perplexities, were things which attracted him more strongly than the pursuit of cabinet rank. His life from 1740 onwards was busy, uneventful and happy, nor can we find any trace in it of the bitterness of

disappointed ambition.

Of all the young men who entered the House of Commons in 1735, George Lyttelton was the one from whom most was expected. His reputation at Eton and Oxford had preceded his coming into Parliament. He belonged to a powerful political connection, being a nephew of Cobham's, a cousin of the Grenvilles and a relative of Pitt's. He was heir to a baronetcy and well off; made the Grand Tour in accordance with aristocratic custom; and on his return to England in 1731 was taken into favour by the Prince of Wales. On his election for Okehampton, at the age of twenty-six, the political world was already prepared to receive him as a person of consequence. He at once took his place as one of the leaders of that small, extreme, but before long influential, section of the Opposition which consisted of his own family and friends.

The expectations which people had formed of Lyttelton were speedily disappointed. It was clear, almost from the first, that he was out of his element in

parliamentary warfare. The literary side of his nature, though it showed nothing that amounted to genius, was much stronger than the political side. There were two reasons for his failure, either of which must have been fatal.

In order that a man should succeed in politics, he must be made of flexible steel: Lyttelton was stiff and wooden. He was learned, persevering and, in a way, wise; but altogether incapable of swift and resolute action. He won no followers. Now and again, during close on forty years, he made a speech that was much admired; but his eloquence lay entirely in his thought and language; the personality of the speaker contributed nothing to the effect. His voice was disagreeable, his appearance ridiculous. His manner of speaking had every conceivable fault of false stress, inappropriate gesture and halting delivery. To crown all he seemed to have no fire in his belly.

The second reason why he could never make his way in politics was the extreme awkwardness of his company manners. It was difficult even for his best friends not to regard

him as a figure of fun. Chesterfield was not an enemy; but on more than one occasion he held Lyttelton up to Philip Stanhope as an awful warning that showed how a man of great abilities and high character may fail in life through deficiency in the graces. ‘You have often seen, and I have as often made you observe, L.’s distinguished inattention and awkwardness. Wrapped up like a Laputan in intense thought, and possibly sometimes in no thought at all; which I believe is very often the case of absent people; he does not know his most intimate acquaintance by sight, or answers them as if they were at cross purposes. He leaves his hat in one room, his sword in another, and would leave his shoes in a third, if his buckles, though awry, did not save them; his legs and arms, by his awkward management of them, seem to have undergone the *question extraordinaire*; and his head, always hanging upon one or other of his shoulders, seems to have received the first stroke upon a block. I sincerely value and esteem him for his parts, learning, and virtue; but for the soul of me I cannot love him in company.’[32]

Notwithstanding all this, we cannot dismiss Lyttelton from the story as a person of no account. Though he cut such an absurd figure on the public stage, his influence was felt over a long period in the private discussions and communings of politicians. Pitt in their long friendship, which lasted unbroken for twenty years, must have owed much to him. The abilities and knowledge he possessed, but could not use for his own advantage, were always at the service of his associates. His name and the standing of his family counted for not a little in establishing the prestige of *Cobham's Cubs*. We cannot know, but can only surmise, that Pitt in his young and reckless days was saved by this trusty counsellor from even worse extravagances than those he actually committed. It should have been graven in Lyttelton's epitaph that neither his honour nor his loyalty was ever called in question, and that he was by nature a moderator and peace-maker.

Little need be said of Richard Grenville, a youth of great possessions and still greater expectations, who counted, notwithstanding,

for next to nothing in the great struggle that was opening in Walpole's last Parliament. In the House of Commons he was a nonentity, who obeyed the orders of his uncle Cobham and of Pitt, voted with the *Cubs*, and made, from time to time, abusive, but very dull, speeches to which nobody listened. He was not one of those who--man facing man--are clothed in a natural authority, but one of those whose authority (should they ever come to possess it) is derived solely from some external accident, such as a great fortune, high rank or an office of distinction. Grenville's unillustrious career continued till 1752, when he became Earl Temple in succession to his mother. Thereafter his name figures prominently, but never in a favourable light. He was profuse, rather than cordially generous, and spent a considerable part of his substance in financing calumnies against people he disliked. He came of a family of voracious and hide-bound Whigs, who by their arrogance and pedantic legality played a chief part in losing America; but who, even amid their country's calamities, prospered their own fortunes exceedingly during two

generations.[33]

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[28] *The Early Life of Charles James Fox*, by Sir George Trevelyan, chapter i.

[29] In 1701 Pitt bought the famous diamond, as an uncut stone, from a native dealer for £20,400. The following year his eldest son brought it home in the heel of his shoe. Some years were spent in cutting, and in negotiations for its sale. In 1717, through the introduction of the notorious John Law of Lauriston, he sold it to the Regent Orleans, during the period of inflation which preceded the Mississippi crash, for £135,000. But he was obliged to accept other jewels in part liquidation of

this sum and a substantial balance remained unpaid (Lord Rosebery's *Chatham*). In 1791 the Pitt diamond, which was then among the Crown jewels of France, was valued at £480,000. Thomas Pitt had five children--Robert, of whom William Pitt was the younger son; Thomas, afterwards Earl of Londonderry; John, who became a soldier; in 1712 his second daughter married James, afterwards first Earl Stanhope (*D.N.B.*).

[30] Not only Henry Fox and Lord Chatham, but *their* sons Charles James Fox and Pitt the younger.

[31] Henry Fox's own view of these matters may be conveniently quoted here.

It was written in 1763. The following passages are taken from his ‘Memoir,’ which is contained in the volume entitled *The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, edited by the Countess of Ilchester and Lord Stavordale:

‘It is singular that after five years’ silence in Parliament, being neither of the Court or Cabinet and, besides at present in a place as retired as a hermitage, where I see nobody, meddle with no business, nor stand in anybody’s way--a people whom I never offended cannot let me alone; as if it was of course, that when there is to be abuse, I must be the object of it.’ . . .

‘The sudden and great rise of stocks has made me

richer than ever I intended or desired to be. Obloquy generally attends money so got, but with how much reason in all cases let this simple account of my gains show. The Government borrows money at 20 per cent discount, I am not consulted in making the bargain. I have as Pay Master great sums in my hands, which, not applicable to any present use, must either lye dead in the Bank, or be employed by me. I lent this to the Government in 1761. A peace is thought certain. I am not in the least consulted, but my very bad opinion of Mr. Pitt makes me think it will not be concluded: I sell out and gain greatly. In 1762 I lend again; a peace comes, in

which again I am not consulted, and I again gain greatly' (vol. i. pp. 71 and 72).

[32] *Chesterfield's Letters* (Bradshaw's edition), vol. i. pp. 245-246: also *ibid.* pp. 273-274 and 407-408.

[33] Readers who are interested in the subject will find an entertaining account of this family in Rosebery's *Chatham* (chap. v. etc.) and also in Macaulay's *Essays*.

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BOOK TEN CONCLUSION A POLITICAL TESTAMENT

In which the author, being pressed for time throws a clumsy pontoon across the river of events, instead of building the series of bridge which originally he had planned.[34]

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[34] The reader is referred to the Prefatory Note at the beginning of this volume.

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A POLITICAL TESTAMENT

Prince Bülow quotes with high approval this saying, which he attributes to Disraeli:[35] ‘Professors and rhetoricians invent systems and principles. Real statesmen are inspired by nothing else than their instinct for power and love of country. These are the emotions and methods which make great Empires.’ Bülow gives no reference. The main matter, however, is not whether these words were actually spoken by Disraeli, but whether or not they are true in substance and in fact.

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[35] Bülow’s *Memoirs, 1909-1919* (translation published by Putnam’s), p. 269. I have tried without success to trace this alleged quotation to its source. If Disraeli did in fact put these words into one of his speeches, it must have been during the Gladstone administration which ended in 1874; for Bülow states that they were used in the House of Commons

when Disraeli was leader
of the Opposition.

I.--*The love of country*

Few people will challenge the saying that a real statesman is always inspired by the love of country. I cannot recollect that history shows a single political character of the first rank who was not at heart a genuine patriot. The same handsome certificate could not of course be bestowed indiscriminatingly upon the lower ranks. With the greatest statesmen of all, patriotism is a passion that overrides every other emotion; but as we descend the scale of politics, passion tends to attenuate into sentiment--sentiment which too often is overborne by the stronger motive of cupidity, or by some even baser spring of action, such as vindictiveness or revenge.

It is impossible to deny that many, even of the highest rank, did serious hurt to their respective fatherlands, and that they did it knowingly. They acted with culpable recklessness; not indeed from corrupt or

sordid motives, but for the sole purpose of winning power. The voice of their consciences was stilled by a sincere, though too easy, confidence that so soon as they had gained their ends, they would find little difficulty in pouring a healing balm into the wounds which they had struck. But this is dangerous doctrine; for if they failed in their bid for power (which is a much commoner experience than its opposite) they had no opportunity for undoing the mischief they had started; and on the other hand, if they reached their aim, they were apt to forget, in the excitement of victory, their resolution to provide an immediate remedy; so that the payment of the debt of honour has been too often postponed till the coming of the *coquecigrues*. Moreover, some of the evil they wrought was incapable of being undone--in particular, evil precedents drawn from their own examples. One thing, however, may be said in mitigation of their misdeeds: that when they did wrong it was not from hatred of their fellow-countrymen, nor from any wish to lay the institutions of their fatherland in ruins. They were not wreckers.

It was not malice but ambition that tempted them into the perilous way. And it must be remembered that the most firmly rooted conviction in their aspiring minds was that they could do no finer service to their country than by seizing control of its destinies. To do a great good they were willing to do a little wrong. This no doubt is how their action was justified in their own eyes; and if we examine closely the careers of such men as Bolingbroke, Walpole, the elder Pitt and Chamberlain we can hardly doubt their sincerity.

There is a disposition among the English to be friendly with other nations. They are not a quarrelsome people and rarely offer provocation by intention. They are not much given to boasting or vainglory. But they are possessed by an invincible determination to live, as well as by a willingness to let others live. Patriotism is an immensely potent factor with every class and party. It is mainly instinctive. Deliberate reason has little to do with it. Enough that England is England and shall not submit to be bested, or interfered

with, or domineered over, or insulted by foreigners. This powerful emotion sleeps lightly, awakes at any serious menace, and governments, as a rule, have a harder task in keeping it within bounds than in bringing it on. Its characteristics are everywhere the same--among the nobility and gentry; among the military families; among the upper, middle and lower bourgeoisie; and they are the same (no less) in the great commonalty, and even in the underworld of society. Devotion to the honour of England is as prevalent among the masses whose ever-urgent prayer is 'Give us this day our daily bread,' as it is among those others whom fortune has treated less hardly. By far the greater part of the commonalty consists of landless and almost penniless men. Some of them--and these not the least valiant fighters or least generous comrades--are desperadoes who know by experience what the inside of a prison is like. Yet in all respects they are the selfsame Englishmen who fought at Agincourt, at Blenheim, in the gorges of the Bidassoa and the marshes of the Somme; and when things are brought to an issue no part of

the people is harder to hold back.[36]

The leaders of the commonalty have as good a right to rank as statesmen as have the leaders of the older parties; for most of them have served a hard apprenticeship in politics, and the knowledge of men and things which is to be learned in Trade Unions and in labour organisation has a high value. It is true that these men are sometimes very ignorant of matters which are necessary for proficiency in statecraft; but they are not more ignorant of such matters than capitalists, financiers and employers are of other matters which are no less important for the national interest. They are better acquainted with the actual conditions of labour, with its real, substantial grievances, than are any of the other party leaders; and looking upward from a lower plane, they can often obtain a clear view of the stupidities of management and of policy into which rulers are so apt to stumble blindly; just as officers and men who did the actual fighting in the recent war were often plainly aware of disastrous bungling that escaped the notice and attention of the pundits who sat in the seclusion of Whitehall.

These leaders of the commonalty are for the most part truly representative of their class. They are combative and stuffed with prejudices, but are guided in the main by sound common sense; their honesty has rarely fallen under suspicion; their patriotism and their loyalty never fail in an emergency where the issues have been made clear to them. At such times they think and act as Englishmen, and faction is forgotten.

Besides these there are others of a different kidney, who also aim at leading the commonalty, but who have no tincture of English patriotism in their composition. They attract considerable attention by reason of their violent declamations and extravagant antics; but they are lacking in authority: when it comes to taking a decision the regular leaders are more often listened to and obeyed.

And there are a certain number of professed revolutionaries, active and enterprising wreckers, whose wages are not always paid in English money, and whose aim is to bring the whole fabric of society crashing down. These have never possessed a

great or a wide influence. They are a great deal less numerous than another class of revolutionary--*speculatists* bursting with intellectual conceit, devoured by their own systems and inventions, as dungeon-prisoners are said to be devoured by self-engendered lice. They are not wanting in the learning of the schools and are fluent preachers of a high-flown morality and of an impending social retribution. They are not patriots, but avowedly anti-patriots, who desire that England should be a model of meekness and compliancy, a captive state in a communist commonwealth, existing only on sufferance. An England that is strong, that stands four-square to all the winds that blow, master of its fate and resolute, is an idea that maketh their hearts sick. There is a greater gulf between these people and those whom they seek to manipulate than there is between leaders and followers in any other class or party, and this is one of the chief causes of their failure to possess themselves of real power. They are to a certain extent suspect because they talk a language--largely jargon--which is not fully comprehensible to the vulgar. And yet who

shall deny that mischief has been at work? The world is probably no wickeder than it was before the war; but the minds of many of its inhabitants are still unsettled, and the influence of silly men and crazy women is now much greater than it used to be.

The patriotism of the politician is a virtue partly of necessity; for even the greatest statesman must swim with the main flow of national feeling. If he is to gain power and keep it he must breast his way out of the eddies and eccentric currents and make head against rough adverse winds. The main stream in all nations which retain the vigour of life is Patriotism--that and nothing more; a strong and permanent love of country; the instinct of the hive, sagacious, undeliberate and fierce. This instinct moves the great statesman, owing to the superiority of his nature, even more passionately than it moves his fellow-countrymen.

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[36] 'What!' said Monkbarns, 'so your martial spirit is rising

again, Edie?

Even in our ashes glow
their wonted fires!

I would not have thought you, Edie, had so much to fight for?'

(Old Edie Ochiltree, the Gaberlunzie beggar, had just been released from prison.)

'*Me* no muckle to fight for, sir? Isna there the country to fight for, and the burnsides that I gang daundering beside, and the hearths o' the gude-wives that gie me my bit bread, and the bits o' weans that come toddling to play wi' me when I come about a landward town? Deil!' he continued, grasping his pikestaff with great emphasis, 'an' I had as gude pith as I hae gude-will and a gude cause, I

should gie some o' them a day's kemping.'--Sir Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, 'Border Edition,' vol. 2, cap. xxiii.

II.--*The instinct for power*

Following Disraeli's thought: An inordinate desire for power is as necessary to the making of a real statesman as is love of country. History confirms this opinion. They are all the same--those whom we class as 'good' men, no less than the self-seekers. Popular tradition has invested Gladstone with an aura of righteousness, Walpole with an aura of unrighteousness. In Cavour there was a streak of duplicity, in Bismarck a taint of villainy. But in their appetite for power there is not a pin to choose between them. They were all insatiable and tenacious of power, and all were in a greater or less degree unscrupulous in the way they stretched the rules of the game, discarded colleagues and trampled on their opponents, in order to clear

the way for their ambition.

Although no one who deserves to be called a statesman will surrender himself to a fanatical obsession, the great majority have set their hearts on getting this thing or some other thing done. They are not content merely to govern. One of them may wish to establish a system of justice which will protect the weak against extortion and oppression; another may aim at fostering prosperity; another at promoting security by means of some constitutional change; another at putting the national defences on a strong footing; another at throwing off a foreign yoke, or at conquest. But before a statesman can engage with hope of success in any of these undertakings, he must be governing; he must be firmly in the saddle; he must have power. It follows from this that his first and most imperious duty is just this--to get power and keep it. He can do nothing without it. And power is not an occasional display of fireworks, but a very grim thing, which mountebanks can rarely hold and handle. Washington's well-known saying that 'influence is not government' comes pretty

near the heart of the matter. Eloquence, persuasiveness, cajolery, trickery, coaxing and emotional appeals are not themselves power, but only instruments which the statesman will use, more or less unwillingly, when it suits his purpose, in order to get power and keep it. All these are brushwood fires which soon burn themselves out. Even a tremendous personal predominance, overbearing opposition and striking awe, will not endure for ever, but will need to be supplemented by sleepless vigilance and novelty in expedients; as is shown very clearly in the career of Bismarck. But as political circumstances are of an infinite variety and always in a flux, the rules by which a statesman may hope to get power and keep it have never yet been written down, and never will be. This, however, is certain: that in order to get power and keep it a man must be prepared to do things which neither a punctilious country gentleman nor an honest trader could do in his private capacity without losing his self-respect. And equally hazardous to a man's soul are the actions which Patriotism calls on him to perform for the

salvation or advantage of his country. ‘What scoundrels we should be,’ said Cavour, ‘if we did for ourselves the things we are prepared to do for Italy!’

III.--*Professors and Rhetoricians*

According to Disraeli, ‘the emotions and methods which make great empires’ are those that statesmen use and are swayed by in the turmoil of their own rivalries and contests, and in their outbursts of irrepressible energy. By way of contrast he shows us *Professors* and *Rhetoricians* who ‘invent principles and systems,’ and indulge in anaemic speculations on the causes of the hurly-burly. Learning without experience is held at a cheap rate in politics. One who presumes to offer his advice on human affairs, either private or public, should possess more than a common understanding of common things and of common men; and this is precisely what professors and rhetoricians so seldom

do.

At the middle of the sixteenth century the *Philosophers* had ceased for many hundred years to be sought as counsellors by potentates and kings; and their feeble successors--the *Pedants*--had already become figures-of-fun. The pedant's, to begin with, was a respectable enough profession. They were schoolmasters, neither more nor less, instructors of youth from childhood to puberty or even later. Montaigne falls foul of them because they were such bad schoolmasters; complains that they had sadly degenerated from the standards of the Lacedemonians, and of Socrates and Plato; that their only idea of teaching was to cram the minds of their pupils with grammar and rhetoric, and with old saws, wholly neglecting conduct, and leaving the wisdom of life untaught. And he is still more severe on them when they go outside their own particular sphere of pedagogy to show themselves off in general society, making a parade of their erudition and dragging their learning creakingly in. But most of all he resents their presumption, when they push

themselves forward to deliver their opinions on public affairs. Never having borne any responsibilities outside the schoolroom, or taken part in political action, they are contemptuously regarded by people like himself who know something of statecraft, and are set down as vain pretenders whose babble of absurdities brings discredit on the noble profession of learning.

More than a century after this we find Swift praising his leader, Harley, because 'he makes little use of those thousand *Projectors* and *Schematists* who are daily plying him with their visions.' And Walpole was no readier to listen to them than Harley had been.[37]

Eighty years later Alexander Hamilton was writing anxiously from America to his friend Lafayette in Paris warning him against 'your *Speculatists*,' whose fantasies were fitter for stirring people to a frenzy than for building a constitution that would last. His apprehensions were soon justified; and for the next ten years *Ideologues* and other academic triflers flourished, were much applauded during their brief heydays, and produced

nothing but a crop of mischief and disillusion.

This class of publicists did not cut much of a figure in the nineteenth century until the last quarter of it was reached. At the beginning they were discredited by the failure of the French *Speculatists* to produce the millennium, and by the long struggle that saw the overthrow, first of the Republic and afterwards of the Empire. And later on their fellow-countrymen became more and more absorbed in material concerns, in repairing the wreckage and wastage of war, in earning a livelihood under conditions of exceptional hardship, in making fortunes--those of them who had the brains and the daring--as new inventions and the opening of new markets gave them the chance. They found as much political excitement as they wanted in watching and hallooing on the parliamentarians whose combats at this epoch were of an unusual vehemence. Practical considerations were all their care and they needed not to trouble their minds with the theories of students and philosophers. But shortly before Queen Victoria's *First Jubilee* there was a strong recrudescence of political

activity among the intellectuals, and down to the present time there has been little or no abatement of their voluble pontifications. *Theorists*, *Economists*, *Idealists*, *Humanitarians*, *Pacifists*, *Experts* and *Busybodies* of an infinite variety have increased greatly in number; but their nature and habits are still what they were at the beginning. The congregations of their numerous mushroom chapels soon dwindle away. The confusion of the world does not seem to have been cured by their efforts to teach plain men how to do their business. They are still the same vermiform progeny they were in the days of Montaigne.

It is remarkable, and has often been deplored, that the classes who rule the affairs of state have rarely paid homage to the political teaching of men of high intellectual attainments. Nor have the middling classes, whose chief concern is the conduct of their own businesses, ever shown themselves a whit readier than the statesmen to accept the guidance of these counsellors. Both classes appear to entertain an inveterate distrust of

learning that is not founded on experience. ‘The worst of great thinkers,’ said John Bright, ‘is that they usually think wrong.’ The intellectuals not unnaturally resent this attitude, and have by degrees transferred their attentions to audiences that are less grudging of appreciation. Having trained themselves like gymnasts for the arena of verbal combats, having acquired a mastery of the arts of argument, rhetoric and evasiveness, they find the warmest admiration for their talents among the superficial few who are dazzled by ingenious dialectic, and among the uneducated many who take a sensuous enjoyment in listening to the grand roll of dictionary words, which for the most part they are incapable of understanding. The wide diffusion of sophisticated ignorance, which is one of the greatest achievements of the popular press, has produced eager multitudes who are willing to lend their ears to any fluent expositor who undertakes to illuminate the mysteries, and to the inexhaustible torrent of scorn which he directs against officialdom and its supposed stupidities.

These irresponsible publicists, being excluded from any direct part in the management of public business, are all the more eager to make their influence felt. Some of them are innocent creatures whose single idea is to do good; others are affected by vanity and wish to make themselves conspicuous; others again are conceited persons who, having failed to persuade the politicians and the business people to accept them at their own rating, are not unwilling to do mischief; but they all have this one thing in common--that they have never served a regular apprenticeship to the trade of government. Many of them have worked hard at books and in their lecture-rooms; but they have not been through the mill; they are all amateurs, and most of them are demagogues. Their activities are a nuisance rather than a serious evil; they draw red herrings across the trail; delay affairs of urgency with much talking; interfere with the application of remedies which practical reformers have thought out carefully and are impatient to apply; but, as a rule, when they aspire to play a constructive rôle they are held back before

they succeed in producing actual disaster.

There are, however, others of this fraternity--*Professors* and *Rhetoricians*, to give them the names Disraeli chose--whose baulked desires to meddle in affairs of state have tempted them to exchange the rôle of mentor for that of pimp. They seek service with men of action--men who possess but little academic learning or literary facility, men who have gained power and kept it, and are plotting to make use of it against their enemies. To these influential personages the encyclopaedic professor, the eloquent and nimble-witted rhetorician may sometimes prove invaluable. Their special department is propaganda, perversion and calumny. They belong to the *Titus Oates* School of historians and pamphleteers. They are mercenaries who sin against the light of their knowledge and the honour of their craft. They are obsequious to those in power, and their wages are official preferments, court favour and the caresses of the great. It must be admitted that few countries have been entirely clean-handed in abstaining from the use of these degraded instruments; but nowhere in recent times

were they so numerous, so unscrupulous and so busy as in Germany for nearly a generation before the war. Part of their business was to make contacts with honourable men of learning in other countries, to keep them in play, and to blindfold them as to the hostile designs of their own government. Some simpleton of goodwill, congratulating Edward Grey on the growing friendliness between English and German professors, received the unexpected answer that unfortunately all the British professors were pacifists, while all the German professors (in their hearts) were chauvinists. Though these highly educated persons were treacherous and malevolent in their dealings with foreigners, they did even deadlier injury to their own people by poisoning their hearts with untruth. Our own officious pacifists, in partnership with these German 'decoys,' did much to bring about the recent war, and must share the parentage of the monstrous birth that was cradled in the early days of August 1914.

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[37] Walpole's view, I think, was, that men with

special knowledge should be consulted freely on matters where they had actual experience, but should at all times be rigorously excluded from interference in the business of government.

IV.--*The morals of the Politician*

The hardest chapter to write about Politicians is that which deals with their morals. Let me say again what I said at the beginning--that in my view 'politics is the noblest career that any man can choose.'[38] Some of my friends imagined that I had my tongue in my cheek when I used these words. It was not so; I spoke sincerely then, and have not changed my opinion now. Stout must be the hearts of those who take so great a risk, and who dedicate themselves--souls as well as bodies--to the service of their country! . . .

I am speaking, of course, of the Lions who have souls to be saved; not of their legion of Jackals who think of nothing but the offals.

When I wrote these words about politics, I was unaware, or had forgotten, that they had been used more than three hundred years ago by an observer whom little escaped. Few, if any, writers have been so free from illusions as Montaigne. 'I am of opinion,' he writes, 'that the most honourable calling is to serve the Public and to be useful to the Many: (as Cicero has said) *We best employ the fruits of genius, virtue and all excellence when we are able to bestow them on our fellow-men*. . . . For myself I disclaim it, partly out of conscience (for whenever I consider the weight of obligation attaching to such employments, I also see how little I am able to bear it) and partly out of cowardice. I content myself with enjoying the world without bustle; only to live an excusable life, and such as may neither be a burden to myself nor to any other.'[39]

This serene apology for an unheroic choice does not show us the full content of his mind, nor, taken by itself, would it lead us

to suppose that he was far more keenly aware than most men are of the irreconcilable antinomy which darkens and perplexes statecraft. In an earlier Essay[40] he had sharpened his merciless pen and there stated the problem with an unimpassioned but deadly frankness. ‘In every government there are necessary offices which are not only base but wicked. Wickedness finds a place there, and is employed in sewing and binding us together; as poison is used for the preservation of our health. If wickedness becomes pardonable, because we are in need of it--if the common necessity blots out its real quality--we must allow the part to be played by the stoutest and least timorous citizens, who will sacrifice their honour and their conscience, as those others in ancient times sacrificed their lives, for the good of their country. We others, who are more feeble, will assume easier and less dangerous parts. The public weal requires men to betray, to lie and to massacre. Let us resign that charge to men who are more obedient and more compliant. . . . No private interest is worth so great a strain upon our conscience;

but public interest certainly, when it is both very apparent and very important.'

How much of this is irony? I think none of it is irony, but only candour uncurbed, a thing that is very apt to be mistaken for irony. No one has ever come up to Montaigne in candour; it would be folly to enter into a competition; but we may try, none the less, in our heavy-handed way, to be honest with ourselves. Our optimists would persuade us that the atrocities which took place in the wars of the *Ligue*, and which caused Montaigne so much sorrow, are no longer possible. They assure us that the practice of all civilised nations has changed fundamentally, and for the better. But has it? . . . This theme was a favourite with orators of the *Jubilee Year* and most of my contemporaries, myself included, were inclined to accept it without demur. Do we feel the same to-day? . . . The year 1887 was one of the lowest ebb-tides of ferocity that civilisation has ever seen. It was assumed too readily that the angry ocean had gone back for good, leaving what geologists term 'a raised beach'--a permanent conquest from the

watery waste; that an era of reason and goodwill had opened, and that betterment had come to stay. Since then, however, we have seen one of the highest spring floods of savagery of which there is any record in history. Smooth words there have been in abundance, and idealism is still strutting like a peacock in pride. Yet it is not more than a few years since a body of high-spirited Russian patriots, seeking only the happiness of mankind, judged it their duty to massacre in mass the bourgeoisie of Moscow. This took us back some centuries, and made *St. Bartholomew* and *The Terror* seem trifling affairs. The extremists whom we have to do with here in England are soft-spoken, have eaten chalk, like Red Riding Hood's wolf, to soften the natural harshness of their tones, and talk the jargon of the schools as circumspectly as any professor. But if duty called them and opportunity offered, why should we suppose that our own academic *frondeurs* and lawyer revolutionaries would act differently from their Russian prototypes? . . . It is ignoble to be always fussing about one's own throat; but, in truth, this organ

possesses no more sanctity or immunity in the year 1934 than it did in the years 1572 and 1793. And if we are predestined to a violent end, as the communists are sometimes so indiscreet as to remind us, it will not matter much who is the executioner--the highbrow, all softness and compassion, in a *Trilby* hat, or that predatory patriot the lawyer revolutionary, or the professional butcher who takes his wages and rifles the corpses. On the whole I should prefer the last of these three; for he would talk less than the others, and would not be so likely to make a botch of his job.

Fortunately there is a creature that bears a mortal antipathy to idealists, and theorists, and academic *frondeurs*, and lawyer revolutionaries, regarding them as poachers on his own preserves; a kind of mongoose, which, if you give him a free run, may clear your house completely of the vermin, and in any case will keep their numbers down. I can never understand why we keep on girding at him, hampering him in a hundred ways, calling him off when he has one of his enemies (and ours) by the scruff; for he is our

most serviceable protector. This mongoose, who so much enjoys the hunt and the scuffles, is none other than the Common Politician. Unlike the quarry he pursues, he is not naturally of a bloodthirsty disposition, but only a hard-bitten sportsman who loves the chase and bears no malice. If he himself should cut our throats, we may be sure it would be for some sound reason and not in the panic or delirium of fantasy.

The laws of Nature differ from those of the Hive in being altogether conscienceless. The laws of the Hive, on the other hand, differ from those which regulate the conduct of human beings one to another, not so much in being less under the rule of conscience as in owing their fealty to a different kind of conscience. The predominant aim of private morality is the perfecting of our own characters, while the predominant, and indeed the sole, aim of the morality of the Hive is the life and security of the Hive. In statecraft, therefore, when there is any clashing, the laws of the Hive ruthlessly override the laws of personal honour and virtue. But these laws

of the Hive are a hidden mystery; they have never been promulgated; and we may suspect that, behind the screen, they are constantly altering their import in sympathy with changing circumstances. We quote upon occasions the precepts of some of the great practitioners; but for the most part these sayings are now no more than a dried-up herbage of platitudes and truisms; the modern politician can draw but little sustenance from them, and uses them, if at all, only as tags to beautify his speeches. The pragmatical Pharisee, of course, is never at a loss, nor is he ever helpful. I remember listening to a sermon shortly after leaving school in which the predikant, with an assurance that never faltered, laid down a universal rule of conduct for public men. His doctrine amounted to this--'that he who grasps the Bible firmly in his hand will never find his conscience fail him or want for guidance.' Lord Beaconsfield (against whom the sermon was mainly directed) was held up as a terrible example of how a man must come to ruin and disaster who neglects this simple rule. The congregation, which was mainly Radical (as

indeed I was myself in those days), approved of this discourse and found it comfortable; but it left *me* in a quandary; for I had recently been reading in my school-books of various people who, grasping their Bibles firmly in the one hand, had done deadly mischief with the other. The Spanish Inquisitors had a firm grasp of the Bible; and so had John Calvin; and so had those ferocious pietists who directed the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation in Germany and elsewhere. The fires that were lit by Protestants and Catholics, turn and turn about, in our own pleasant suburb of Smithfield, never flagged for want of Biblical encouragements. In spite of my youth I could see that the preacher had not discovered a rule of universal obligation; but I did not suspect until much later that there never has been a rule of universal obligation from the first beginnings of human government to the present time.

The morality of the Hive and the morality of common life are not kept in watertight compartments. Even in the minds of politicians who have served a hard apprenticeship, they are forever

intermingling; while with ordinary people, probably not more than one in a hundred realises (and then only in the vaguest way) that there *is* such a thing as the Hive, and that it is governed under its own peculiar laws. Consequently when a living politician is tried at the bar of public opinion the argument proceeds under what we may call 'the Common Law,' and his advocates rarely set up a defence for his conduct by appeals to 'the other Law' which in practice he has no option but to obey. It is doubtful if, at his trial, either he or his counsel are fully aware that he is entitled to claim such a privilege. By and by, however, when he is dead and buried, things are differently regarded, and his historical vindicators may occasionally succeed in holding a re-trial of the issues under the laws of the Hive.

A notable instance of such a refusal to claim a privilege outside the Common Law is found in the case of the younger Pitt. His intimates have told us that when he was nearing his end, his chief consolation was what he referred to on more than one occasion as 'the innocency of my life.' He

had a strong and simple faith that his abstinence from women, gaming, greed of money, corruption, homicide and most of the other fashionable vices of his day would be his surest hope when he came up for judgement at the Heavenly bar. And it is clear that to his noble but modest mind the fact that he had saved his country by keeping his firm hand on the helm of state for more than twenty turbulent and distracted years, seemed to be a matter of comparatively little importance.

An affectionate ironist has pictured Mr. Pitt's arrival in Heaven, where, following the customary ritual, he was required to state the grounds on which he hoped for mercy.--'On the innocency of my life,' was his reply--putting, as he thought, his best foot foremost.--Saint Peter may have been in a testy humour: 'I don't give a cherub's feather for the innocency of your life. I have no interest in the things you didn't do. I want to hear *what things you did*.'--Pitt, like the first-rate parliamentarian he was, quickly recovered his footing and did as he was bidden. He spoke of his political acts with obvious reluctance

and without a shade of boastfulness. He told how, when he was only a stripling, he had held the fort single-handed against the astute Lord North and the formidable Mr. Fox; how he had crushed their factious opposition at the polls; with what anxiety he had steered his way through the dangers of the King's madness; how, then and afterwards, he had been beset with traitors; how he had kept his opponents at bay for a generation; how he had fought the King's enemies--France and the Emperor Napoleon--for thirteen years that were chequered with disappointments and Allied defeats; and how (alas!) his strength had given way under the strain, and he had died before the victory was won. Saint Peter's interest was captured by this narrative, and before the end of it he showed unmistakable signs of approval.--'A fine record; a very fine record! Amos! see that Mr. Pitt is honourably lodged.'--When the affable angel had performed this commission, he returned to his duty, and proceeded to arrange the papers on his Master's desk. Among these he found a sheet of foolscap whereon the Examiner, in his big schoolboy handwriting, had noted,

under their appropriate headings, the marks he had awarded to the successful candidate. Amos smiled to observe that ‘the innocency of Mr. Pitt’s life’ was not one of these headings.[41]

Pitt spent much of his scanty leisure in a cloistered garden, where he opened his heart to a few intimates, romped with children, played practical jokes on others besides his own family, had a great flow of spirits even in the worst of times, and where he cultivated in a state which deserves the name of ‘innocency,’ the virtues and amiabilities of private life. Very few of his official colleagues were admitted to this secret close. And outside its sheltering walls lay a hard-faced world, where business was business, and where patriotism and ambition governed all his actions. When he locked the door behind him, he became a different man. I know of no instance where he allowed his personal affections, virtue or honour to conflict with his public duty. As minister of state he showed himself merciless to his opponents, cold and awe-inspiring to his Cabinet, never in doubt, never in arrears,

prompt, matter-of-fact, and mirthless.

Pitt, I think, is unique. Not so, however, the high-minded gentleman who becomes a political leader and arrives occasionally at possession of great power--being borne upwards to a tragic eminence by the love and admiration that his fellow-countrymen have conceived for his personal character. He is not a frequent phenomenon, but he is a well-recognised type, and is capable of producing terrible disasters by his goodness. Montaigne was right when he said that men whose chief concern is their own honour and virtue should choose some other vocation than high-politics. The worst of it is, not that by choosing a career for which they are unfit they themselves will suffer spiritual torments, but that they are apt to do deadly hurt to their country. The famous Mrs. Battle maintained that there is no place for generosity and chivalry in *whist*. She considered that the player who fails to exact the rigour of the game is a sentimentalist, a perfidious partner, a despicable enemy. But the politician is often forced to go much farther than Mrs.

Battle would have approved. Some of his methods would have filled her with horror. For if he is unable to mislead legitimately within the rules of the game, he will not hesitate to ‘correct’ an adverse run of fortune in the best way he can. Bluntly--he will cheat, if he thinks he can thereby serve his country. *Cheat* is an ugly word, but a cool survey of the past three-quarters of a century--to look no farther back--will disclose the melancholy fact that there has hardly been, during that period, a single eminent statesman who has not practised deceptions which in private life no one would forgive. Some have been more shameless than others; but not one of them has played fair from first to last. The Russians of the Czardom cheated and lied as a matter of ritual, and went back on their pledged word with the unruffled naïveté of savages. The others were not less deceitful and perfidious, though they were less crude, usually paying homage to decency with some lawyer’s quibble. This is not an atmosphere in which a high-minded gentleman can breathe freely. He would revolt; but the traditions of his office are too strong for him.

Besides, he is no longer free to do what he likes with his own soul; for when he entered politics he took *the King's Shilling*. It would not be just to say of him that he sells his soul; rather that he assigns and dedicates it to the service of his country, as a soldier assigns and dedicates his courage and his life when he enlists. The high-minded gentleman ought never to have enlisted; but having taken this false step he cannot put matters right by squeamishness when circumstances by and by require a sacrifice of his honour.

Devout contemporaries may sometimes admire the statesman who ruins his career and injures his country by refusing to act his allotted part; but History has little patience with this *non possumus* attitude, and does not much concern itself as to whether or not a certain Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary preserved his honour as an English gentleman, the sole question being if he did the best he could for England. When you are dealing with a trickster like von Billow it is merely silly to persist in acting as if he were an open-hearted gentleman like yourself. Ministers of state are not fighting to earn the

praise of mankind for their magnanimous virtues, but for England--in deadly earnest.

The occupations where it is possible for an honest man to remain honest are far more numerous in every grade of life, from handicrafts and trades to the Services and the learned professions, than those others, like politics, where he is constantly beset with temptations. One, therefore, who is fastidious about his personal honour should always be able to find abundance of congenial employment, providing that he is careful to avoid the higher and more serious departments of government. If he fails to keep his conscience clear, the blame, as a rule, will rest, not on the nature of his vocation but on himself. A country gentleman, for example, can live his whole life without being driven to do a single act that soils his hands. He may indulge to the full his natural love of justice, his sympathy and benevolence, and may help his neighbours and the countryside by the genial performance of his public and private duties. And the fact that so many of our landowners

have acted on these principles from generation to generation is one of the chief reasons for the greatness of our country. Such men deserve our gratitude for the way in which they have played their admirable parts; but in no less measure do the politicians deserve our gratitude for the way in which they have played theirs. Their parts have always been harder and harsher to play, more illustrious in case of a brilliant success, but infinitely less productive of peace and happiness to themselves.

In no country is there room for more than a comparatively small number of ‘practising politicians’--using this title to distinguish them from the irresponsible multitude of ‘ale-bench politicians’ who gossip and wrangle together cheerfully about ‘the affairs of the nation, and such things as all men can understand’ in the sociable spirit of *Squire Western* and *Mr. Allwortby*. A country where all the inhabitants were ‘practising politicians,’ or even half of them, or indeed anything more than a very modest fraction of them, would be a mighty uncomfortable place

to live in. There are doubtless instances of men who have found themselves obliged to engage in this dangerous employment against their wills; but for the most part, politicians are self-selected; they are conscious of ‘a call’; and the motives that direct them in their choice are only two--the instinct for power and the love of country.

Our present-day abuse of politicians is not usually drawn from our own poignant experiences, but is merely cant and parroting--phrases we have picked up haphazard from loungers who would consider it a kind of sacrilege were they asked to give up any of their ease for public service, and from superior beings who shrink from contamination with rufflers of coarser clay. We have heard a good deal about ‘cynicism’ from these supercilious critics; but the true cynics are precisely the loungers and superior beings themselves. The typical politician has plenty of faults that are gross enough, but he has a strong healthy circulation that carries off the humours; he is a hearty, hard-riding fellow whose principles sit lightly on him;

but the title of ‘cynic’ is not his proper designation. And Disraeli was surely right when he said that great empires are built up by the *acts* of statesmen and not by the *words* of rhetoricians and learned men.

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[38] Vol. I 99.

[39] Bk. iii. 9.

[40] Bk. iii. 1.

[41] ‘For still the Lord is Lord of might;
In deeds, in deeds, he takes delight.’
R. L. S., *Our Lady of the Snows*.

V.--*The Politician’s Apologia*

Some may consider that this apologia for the Politician is pitched too high, and that it would have been more decent to offer no more than a modest defence of his

shortcomings. If his successes have been due in some measure to unscrupulous means, anything like glorification of his misdeeds is apt to work mischief, especially among the weaker sort of minds. It would be absurd to pretend that he leaves the Court without a stain upon his character. There is no doubt that his profession is in bad odour, and it may be useful to inquire somewhat further into the causes of its discredit.

If only it were possible to bring one of the greatest politicians back from the dead, and to talk with him in friendly fashion for an evening over the walnuts and wine, our distinguished guest would probably put up a cogent defence of his calling. He would justly insist that in England and Scotland (if nowhere else) politicians are entitled to take credit for a notable amendment of their conduct during the past three hundred years. Assassination, for example, is no longer one of their weapons. The English distaste for this method grew strong during the latter half of the sixteenth century. In Scotland, however, until the Union of the Crowns, it continued to be used as freely as it still was in France,

Italy, and throughout the continent of Europe; nor did it cease in Scotland at once on the accession of James the First to the English throne, but showed itself sporadically till the end of the seventeenth century, when Dutch William inadvertently put an end to it for good and all. This bold and politic Prince, who had reached the highest pinnacle of power in his own country, mainly by his great ability, but not unaided by the brutish savagery of his adherents which he did nothing to check, cannot fairly be described as a bloodthirsty man, but rather as one who was indifferent to bloodshed. When he signed his order for the massacre of Glencoe, and countersigned it so that there might be no mistake, he seems to have had no doubt that it was a sound policy, in accordance with common sense, and that no reasonable statesman would take exception to it. His aim was to terrorise the Highlands by destroying an insignificant and defenceless sept which had been unruly in the past, but which was now at peace. The result disappointed his expectations. The corpses of a few hundred men, women and children cast out in the

snow was all he took by it. And as the facts became known, a shudder of disgust and horror passed over the whole island from Land's End to John o' Groats. Since the thirteenth of February 1792 there has been no political murdering in England and Scotland except by Irishmen and lunatics.[42]

'I will grant you,' our guest might continue, 'that we politicians cannot claim the whole credit for this amelioration. Sooner or later it would have been forced upon us by the decent English and the kindly Scots, who, when their countries were at last reduced to order and comparative peace, would have found the practice of political homicide increasingly repugnant to their sense of humanity. The current of circumstances was sweeping the British people away from savagery, and the politician, as he always must, went with the stream. Yet politicians were indispensable in giving effect to the national will, which (judging by the example of other nations) might never have succeeded in realising itself without staunch assistance from the professionals.

‘It was a much longer and more irksome task to get rid of corruption than of assassination. Corruption in public life is the hardest of weeds to kill when once it has established itself over the field. It is like those dockens and quickens, which spread over-ground by seed and under-ground by roots, and against which the farmer wages unceasing war. It was not until Pitt’s administration at the end of the eighteenth century that politicians set themselves seriously to abate the curse of corruption. Before that time it was found everywhere--among the politicians themselves (though there were many exceptions), among the voters, among government contractors and the supervisors of stores who were supposed to check their rascality, but who actually shared in the plunder.

‘British politicians had freed themselves from the taint of corruption some time before the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, and shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century it had all but ceased even among the parliamentary electors. England and Scotland (if not Ireland) had undergone a complete

purification of their political and civil services. And they had done this thanks to the efforts of the politicians supported by public opinion. The same could not be said of any other great country in the world except Germany, nor of more than a very few of the small ones. People who are so ready to sneer at the irreclaimable depravity of politicians should ponder upon these two instances. Popular feeling among other nations might in many cases have welcomed the abolition of murder and corruption; but without politicians who were prepared to do battle for reform, the nations would have been helpless, and the proof of this is the present condition of the world, where the degradation and venality of its public men have raised a most notable monument. *Circumspice!*

'If we politicians sometimes receive less than our due for actions which are highly commendable, we likewise suffer in reputation by reason of our associates. Granting that politics is an honourable profession--perhaps the most honourable profession of all--it has a dangerous attraction

for parasites who bring it into discredit, because they are looked down upon by their fellow-countrymen. In England and Scotland at the present time it is a pursuit that does not contain any element of physical danger, and consequently the pusillanimous are very willing to engage in it. They cannot now hope to make money by their efforts, since corruption has been stamped out; but it is a lure for many kinds of vanity. Committees, public meetings and political dinners need chairmen, and a lower hierarchy of consequential agents and organisers. In all this there is a mighty lot of talking, and showing off, and pretence of influence with invisible people of importance behind the scenes. The very simple may be impressed with the spectacle of the frog blowing himself up beyond his natural capacity; but to ordinary folk the pretensions of lower grade politicians are easily seen through and appear ridiculous, even when they lead, on rare occasions, to some busybody becoming a Member of Parliament or gaining a knighthood. These petty grandeurs, nevertheless, are sought with avidity by

persons whose characters, although not vicious, are below rather than above the average of self-respecting men in all classes who work for their living. The fact that people of this sort--spouters and wirepullers--are found swarming in the subordinate ranks of politics does not enhance the lustre of the profession.

‘Here in Britain, moreover, our good name has suffered more from the sins of others than from our own. In almost every foreign country politicians are in disrepute, and our own public men, though for long past their records have shown nothing to justify the graver charges of venality and jobbery, have not altogether escaped the backwash of this sentiment of distrust.

‘Despotic Russia was a cesspool of corruption. A great part of the huge loans which France provided for her ally before the war, believing that they would be used for strengthening the military position, found its way directly and indirectly into the pockets of highly placed politicos--Grand Dukes, ministers, courtiers, generals, admirals and

civil servants. Contractors, having obtained their orders by bribery, made big and easy fortunes by giving short measure and inferior quality, and by charging exorbitant prices. There was no standard of integrity, no thought of patriotism, in any public department, and most of the political fraternity seemed quite indifferent to the fact that the result of their knavery was to leave Russia defenceless. When war came, there was found to be a terrible dearth of arms, ammunition and stores; and much of what existed was unfit for use. It was corruption and nothing else that lost Russia the war, and ultimately plunged her into anarchy and ruin.

‘The two great democracies--France and the United States--fell little short of Russia in corruption. It is not easy to understand the case of France, where, almost from the beginning of the century, the whole nation had been overcast by a growing dread of German aggression. National safety depended, not merely on spiritual qualities (of which there was no lack), but on material provisions of unimpeachable quality--arms,

ammunition, equipment and stores. Military contracts have always been a favourite hunting-ground for rascally politicians and for their relatives, cronies and accomplices. The French people were fully aware of the characters of their representatives, and suspected, with justice, that they were being cheated by them on all hands; and yet, even when faced by grave and obvious danger, they took no steps to make an end of the evil. With the outbreak of war suspicion turned into certainty, and even the simple *poilus* were moved to wrath when the soles of their boots came away in the mud, when fuses failed to go off or exploded prematurely. How France in spite of it all contrived to make head against the storm from which she was so poorly protected, is one of the most heroic episodes in the history of that brave and efficient people. They kept their heads and got on with the fighting. There were hundreds of thousands of devoted officers and privates, men of intelligence and education, who soon became fully aware of the causes of their troubles; but fortunately their self-control and patriotism were beyond

proof. The temptation to divert a portion of their efforts to a sensational execution, to having out the whole brood of their political betrayers and shooting them, might have proved too much for a less loyally disciplined army; but with these hard-bitten and trusty soldiers there was but one thought--to go on fighting the Germans as best they could. Justice might await a less perilous season. And justice is still waiting. For after the war the fighters must needs rest. They were too tired, and possibly too stoical, to set vigorously to work as judges and executioners. They shrugged their shoulders--"These politicians were rascals; but what could you have expected? French politicians are nearly always rascals." And so the criminals escaped; few of them even lost caste; the names of several who were most gravely suspected have even figured in post-war administrations. The French whom we know and admire are an odd mixture--logical, hard, fierce, but not much interested in retribution, and, after centuries of experience, somewhat incredulous of the possibility of reformation. "What sense is there in worrying

ourselves to clean the uncleansable? Our various Republics, Empires, Directorates have been no more free from this kind of corruption than the Bourbon dynasty which preceded them."

'French corruption was carried on for the most part by swarms of mean rogues who had all the vices of small shopkeepers, each of them playing for his own hand and courting obscurity. Combinations were not unknown, but a jealous individualism was the general rule. In America corruption was different in form, more openly practised and more shameless. It was there organised upon a grandiose scale, and was secured upon the solidarity of two rival gangs, the two great political parties. Politicians as a class were in it up to their necks, from Congressmen and Bosses down to their humbler associates, judges of the inferior courts, police, gangsters and the keepers of saloons and brothels. It was a most impressive consolidation of coöperation for purposes of public plunder. The trail of Tammany was, and still is, over it all.

‘I am a plain English politician and shall not attempt to play the philosopher, nor to determine which of these three forms of corruption is likely, in the end, to be most deadly to the nation that suffers it. . . . The Russian form was the almost universal corruption of the governing classes. . . . The French form was the corruption of a by-no-means-negligible minority of the middle and lower middle classes, which had planted itself like a tapeworm in the vitals of public life. . . . The American was the combination and corruption of the predatory classes, who were all out for money, for big money if possible, and for quick returns.

‘Taking a survey of the whole world at the present time we shall find far more nations that are poisoned by political corruption, than we shall find nations that are passably free from it. Of the great countries Britain and Germany were the only states before the war where it was not prevalent. It has not been prevalent in Britain, has not dared to raise its hideous head, for nearly a hundred and fifty years. This has been largely

the work of our politicians, whose moral courage never failed them in the struggle. You may fairly allow us some credit for the result.

‘I cannot see that the vices and virtues of politicians are very different from the vices and virtues of people who follow other professions. Our behaviour, like theirs, varies with circumstances; is sometimes admirable and sometimes much to be deplored. Like the lawyers, the medicos and the clergy, we are not incapable of generosity, or even of chivalry, but, like them, we are occasionally tempted by opportunity to climb on a comrade’s back. Like them also, we are not inconsolable when we learn that some formidable rival has bogged his career; for his too brilliant success might have been an obstacle to our own. We will trip an opponent if we can, and the rules of the game allow us a wide latitude. We spend the greater part of our time in fighting, and this does not tend to soften men’s manners. Let us admit it frankly--most of us are rough fellows with a bad bedside manner. The nature of our work

leaves us but little choice when we are fighting for our own hands--still less choice when we are fighting for England. When we are engaged with foreigners we can never open wide our hearts; we have to be forever on our guard: we can never lay aside suspicion in dealing with them either as adversaries or as allies. Our conduct may sometimes be condemned as unscrupulous if you judge it by standards of private morality; but it would be absurd to insist on judging it by such standards; for the rules of this particular game are so few and so ill-defined as to impose no clear obligation that all the players would accept. We will keep to such rules as there are, for so long as our opponents do the same, but no longer. For we have ever in our minds what our easy-going fellow-countrymen are so apt to forget--that an unceasing and desperate struggle for existence--nation against nation--is forever going on; and that it is waged for the most part by very able men, underground, in the chanceries of the world. It has never been otherwise and, so far as we can see, it never will be otherwise; for the nations of the world

are like the wild creatures of the jungle and the veld, each one eternally on its guard against the others.[43] Would you blame us politicians--your protectors--for going fully armed and for using our weapons of diplomacy when we conceive that danger threatens?

‘Gentlemen, you have been very patient. Try to think gratefully and, if you can, kindly of the Politician. Good night!’

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[42] The Southern Irish have used assassination freely from the beginning, and they appear to be using it still, with no lessening of gusto or of frequency. But fortunately *we* are no longer responsible, even in a technical sense, for what they do. They are not of our race any more than the Slavs or the Bantus are. Whence the Southern Irish spring--from what branch of the human family--I

have never seen satisfactorily explained. They seem to be neither Picts nor Celts, but something more primitive and more ancient still. One thing is certain about them--that although they have often been defeated and sometimes conquered, they have always succeeded, in the end, in driving out the intruders--Picts, Celts, Danes, Normans and English in turn; and this not by valour or brains, but by sheer fecundity--the daemonic fecundity of an aboriginal stock.

[43] When the young Alfred Milner went to Egypt to serve under Lord Cromer (then Sir Evelyn Baring) he was shocked to find himself in a tangle of

international suspicions, jealousies and bickerings. Surely something might be done to straighten it out? Cromer listened patiently, but his answer was hardly encouraging:--‘You must remember that one of the fundamental axioms of foreign policy is that every nation hates every other nation.’--‘But if we can get them to understand one another better may we not in time get rid of much of this hatred?’--‘I’m afraid, my dear Milner, that the better they understand one another, the more they will hate one another.’ It would be interesting to know if the Royal Institute of International Affairs has arrived at similar conclusions.

VI.--*The despondencies of Great Men*

Montaigne was no scaremonger; nor was he a sentimentalist or a fanatic; but, on the contrary, a singularly equable man who disliked innovations and hated cruelty; a master of irony, wit and candour, who wrote on many themes, gay and even trivial, as well as grave. Yet throughout his Essays there is a constantly recurring note of tragedy, a note almost of agony, when he reflects on the miseries of France and the distemper of the whole world. He was not in any sense an old man when he died in his sixtieth year. His body, it is true, had lately been grievously tormented by 'the stone'; but his mind remained to the end as clear and fragrant as one of the grand vintages of his own Medoc.

Here is a passage from one of his later writings:[44] 'Now let us everyway cast our eyes. Everything about us totters. In all the great States both of Christendom and elsewhere that are known to us, if you will but look, you will there see evident menace

of change and ruin.'

He finds a certain consolation in the universality of the sickness; even 'some hope for the duration of our own state; since naturally when all falls nothing falls. . . . For my part I am not going to despair, and I think I see ways of saving ourselves. Who knows but that God intends it to be as with bodies that are purified and restored to a better state of health by long and grievous maladies, which will bring them to a cleaner and more perfect health than that they took from them?' . . . On second thoughts, however, this hope fails him, and he concludes with a postscript of utter despondency--'This troubles me--that the evil which most nearly threatens us, is not a change in the entire and solid mass, but its dissipation and disintegration; the extremest of our fears.'

The extremest of Montaigne's fears was that the world would be reduced to a condition comparable to that which followed the Sack of Rome and the break-up of the Western Empire; a thousand years of darkness and savagery; the final and irreparable ruin of an ancient civilisation.

There could never be a restoration of what had then been destroyed. We are told that after a forest fire the seedlings which spring up and struggle painfully for existence are for the most part different in species from those that were burned out; and in like manner, when a large portion of the human race is swept by some tremendous conflagration, that which begins to appear after a long interval is not a regeneration of the old society but a new order of men and things. The re-growth or new-growth of civilisation is a slow affair, an affair not of a single lifetime but of hundreds in succession. After more than ten centuries had passed away the inhabitants of Italy, France, Spain and the Atlantic-facing States were still behind their ancestors who had lived in the days of the Antonines. They were behind them in the arts and amenities of life, in culture and courtesy, in personal cleanliness, in the trafficking of merchants, in the making and enforcement of laws, in the maintenance of justice, order and peace; behind them in everything except perhaps in the craft of warfare.

Fortunately Montaigne's 'extremest fears'

were never realised. The doom of universal destruction turned out to have been only a nightmare. Yet we may excuse his despondency; for the ‘wars of religion’ began when he was only a lad, and he had been living all his life long in a period of rage and mischief. In public affairs disappointment had followed disappointment and disillusion disillusion. He had never seen the world under a smiling sky, and the clouds were darker than ever when he died. France had still a long way to go before she reached the end of a full century of tempests and foul weather. Yet had he been able, as they were carrying him to his grave, to look seventy years ahead he might have found comfort.

It was a glorious morning of hope when in 1660 a young and able King called Louis the Fourteenth took the reins of government into his own hands. Two years before Montaigne died, the laying of the foundations of unity and order was begun very painfully and slow by Henry the Fourth and his sagacious Sully. The work was afterwards continued by the genius of Richelieu and the astuteness of Mazarin. By 1660 France was

the most firmly united and the most powerful monarchy in Europe. She had ceased to be tormented by the bloody ambitions of nobles and princes. Her boundaries had been extended, her territories compacted. She was no longer a suitor for alliances, but granted them when she thought fit. Yet it is a melancholy reflection that the ground had no sooner been cleared of the old crop of mischief than a new crop of mischief was sown broadcast and deliberately. Centralisation was to be the cure-all that should put an end for ever to conspiracies, seditions, rebellions and civil wars. The nobles were pressed and enticed to establish themselves in Paris, adding by their presence to the splendour of the most extravagant Court in Europe. The ties that had bound them for generations to their own countrysides were severed, and their tenantry abandoned to the mercies of intendants whose invidious duty it was to spend the least they could on the upkeep of the estates, and to wring the most they could out of the unfortunate inhabitants. Meanwhile the absentees, in the elegant frivolities of the

metropolis, lost their capacity for leadership, the use of authority, their powers of self-defence and their manhood. For a century and a quarter the three Louis ruled over a nation in which the old form of resistance seemed to be wholly dead. Then a storm of no great magnitude or force arose (Richelieu had weathered a hundred worse) and the fabric of society, like an old forest tree which still bears its leafage gallantly and which has shown no outward signs of sickness, crashed suddenly to the ground. Rottenness had hollowed out its heart. What happened in 1789 came nearer to Montaigne's 'extremest fears' than any of the troubles that had occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

For more than fifty years after the French Revolution, reflective minds were haunted by its memories. In 1830 Sir Walter Scott believed that, owing to the loosening of foundations (which Whigs called 'Reform'), the roof of the world was in danger of falling in. The Whigs themselves, though they stood staunchly to their principles, were by no

means universally confident that the innovations they proposed would save the situation. Scott was no less apprehensive of disaster than Montaigne had been in 1590. Agitation was at its height; violence was rife and the language of discontent had grown threatening. Although Scott was a very sick and careworn man, the immovable foundations of his character were courage, common sense and a generous humanity. Hysteria had no part in his composition. And yet it is beyond doubt that in these last years of his life he also was racked by 'the extremest fears.' He could not foresee that Reform, which he hated, would build buttresses to support the old world which he loved.

In some respects the Duke of Wellington offers a sharp contrast. He was neither a sick nor a careworn man (though he was a year or two older than Scott) and he then stood about midway in the meridian of his long political career. His opinions nevertheless on this matter were almost identical with those of Scott. He also thought it more likely than not that the roof of the world would fall in. And

in such case he felt certain that the heaviest crash would come in England. But although he was expectant of serious trouble, he remained as cool and imperturbable as he had been in the worst hours of Waterloo. There was nothing to be gained by worrying beforehand. If the catastrophe came, he would find some means of dealing with it. He was confident in his own star, and had no reason to think that his powers of action were likely to fail him. His old crony, Talleyrand, the French ambassador in London, went one day to see him.--'Duke of Wellington,' he said, 'I am nearing the end of my career. Perhaps you can advise me; for you have seen more of Europe, its governments and peoples than any of my acquaintances. Can you tell me of any country to which I can now retire with a reasonable hope of being able to end my days in peace?' The Duke answered deliberately, but with his usual conciseness--'No, Prince! By God, I can't!'

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[44] Book iii. cap. 9. Query--*circa* 1586?

VII.--*A swift Reparation* (1830-1851)

The English recovery after 1832 was surprisingly rapid. In this year they laid Sir Walter quietly to rest by Tweedside, and some twenty years later his friend, the Iron Duke, was buried with the highest military honours in St. Paul's, having lived in full vigour almost to the end. In the short period between these two deaths a most remarkable change from anger and apprehension to tranquillity and hopefulness had come over the country. More than a year before Wellington died he saw proof incontrovertible that England had recovered from her fright; for in 1851 all the world and his wife--monarchs, ministers of state, men of business and intelligent travellers--had flocked in their tens of thousands to gaze on the marvels of Prince Albert's exhibition in Hyde Park--the first and the most famous, though the smallest, of a long and illustrious line. It was a brilliant season of smiles and friendliness. The Great Exhibition was, in a

sense, a demonstration of goodwill to the world, but even more was it an advertisement of the prosperity and contentment which England had attained, in less than a generation, under the blessings of freedom and peace.

Whigs and Liberals were excusably self-complacent as they contemplated the success of their policy. Moreover, a somewhat vague spirit of Liberalism, which had lately been spreading rapidly on the continent of Europe, drew encouragement from the spectacle and was not slow to point the moral. Its too sanguine enthusiasm would have pushed on too fast, and too far beyond the bounds of human nature, fully assured that as mankind pondered the British example, it would realise that deeds of darkness, repression of the peoples, violence and war were falling into decrepitude, and must soon pass away like a fog in the strong sunlight of sweetness and reason. Extension of the franchise, freedom of competition and of trade did undoubtedly seem to be producing some very remarkable and beneficent results; but the period of the experiment had been short--less

than a generation; and as yet it had been confined to a single nation--a nation already well prepared, as it might seem, to profit by these particular boons. The fact that no two nations are alike, either in temperament, in political development, in industrial conditions, or in the nature of their apprehensions of foreign aggression, was overlooked. Shortly after 1851, there were many good people in England, in America and on the continent of Europe, who drew their inspiration from the prophets of Manchester, and who firmly believed that, although militarism might linger for a while, it had now at last received its deathblow.

VIII.--*A tremendous Effulgence* (1851-1874)

The next stopping-place is 1874.--A generation had passed away since the Great Exhibition. The trade and riches of England had increased by leaps and bounds, and foreign competition was left far behind. The

middle classes and the Liberals were more self-confident and more exuberantly hopeful than they had ever been; and their high spirits seemed to have infected the whole nation. The landowning classes had found an El Dorado in the growth of population and the spreading out of towns. Even the working classes were animated by the spectacle of so great a national prosperity, though indeed it brought but little grist to their mill. Why they should have regarded the situation so cheerfully and so hopefully is not altogether easy to understand. Their numbers had increased, but unemployment had also increased; wages had risen surprisingly little; while the conditions under which men, women and children were forced to live and work had lost nothing of their horrible inhumanity since the passing of the Reform Bill. If a Conservative leader like Disraeli drew a picture and pointed a moral, or if a Conservative country gentleman like Lord Shaftesbury devoted his life to fighting the evils of famine wages, of insanitation and of overcrowding, they were not only sneered at as sentimentalists by the employers of labour

(and by their academic jackals, the economists), but they were also accused of class or party spite, of stirring up discontent and fomenting strikes, of an envious desire to injure and impede the party of progress by saddling its millowners and other industrialists with the cost of an expensive reformation. This was the epoch in which people spoke of profits and the remuneration of capital with a kind of sacramental reverence.

It is true that a few cross-grained old men--Carlyle, Ruskin and afterwards Matthew Arnold--expressed an opposite view very vehemently, and declared that the gospel of devil-take-the-hindmost was no part of Christ's teaching. These great and inspired writers, despite their heterodox opinions, were admired for their eloquence, and their 'ravings' (as the academic jackals called them) were received with the contemptuous indulgence which the English are so ready to pay to genius of a high but impractical order when it presumes to suggest the application of its principles to common life. The English of those days were proud of their world-

famous men who scolded so vigorously; boasted about them; endured castigations at their hands with a humorous shake of their thick skins; but never for a moment, in factory, or counting-house, or parliament, did they dream of carrying their prophetic mandates into practice. Busy, prosperous, practical fellows in a workaday world felt no need for spiritual guidance; but in true British fashion they enjoyed listening to declamatory sermons in their leisure hours, as they might have enjoyed a large cigar after a good dinner.

The middle classes had waxed fat, and were inclined to attribute most of their good fortune to their own individual industry and enterprise. They had not depended on leadership for their success. Gladstone, encouraged by a series of overflowing budgets, had as good as promised that if he were returned again to power he would abolish the Income Tax; but the country, satiated as it seemed with fiscal benefits, and not too well content with his general conduct of public affairs, brought his famous Liberal administration to an end at the February

election.

Nevertheless, during these two-and-twenty years of unexampled prosperity events had happened which might well have caused the enthusiasts of 1851 to reexamine their faith in universal peace. From 1854 to 1871 there had been an almost uninterrupted series of sanguinary wars in one quarter of the world or another. Large French and British armies had invaded the Crimea and laid siege to Sevastopol (1854-1856) with the object of saving the Turkish empire from the clutches of Russia. There had been a savage mutiny in India (1857-1858), which was only quelled by prolonged fighting and after horrible massacres of men, women and children of our race. In 1859 France and Sardinia had launched a campaign against Austria for the redemption of northern Italy, and there had been great carnage at the battles of Magenta and Solferino. Nor, unfortunately, was the settlement then arrived at conclusive, so that in 1861 there had been another war in which Garibaldi conquered Sicily and Naples, and Victor Emmanuel, coming down with the

Sardinian army from the North, was proclaimed King of Italy. In the same year Civil War on a vast scale broke out in the United States, raged for four years (1861-1865) and cost over a million lives. In 1864 Prussia and Austria in alliance snatched Schleswig and Holstein from Denmark. In 1866 the victors quarrelled over the spoils, and Austria, after heavy fighting, was defeated at Königgratz and forced to let go her end of the bone. In 1870 Bismarck, with consummate skill, manœuvred France into declaring war on Prussia. There was a swift series of fierce and murdering battles; the Emperor Napoleon with his beaten army was taken prisoner; the Third Empire fell; a Republic was proclaimed, one of whose first tasks was the ruthless suppression of the Commune.

This is a fine tale of bloodshed! Strangely enough, the prophets of universal peace and their apostolic successors were less disconcerted by it than might have been expected. The Peace Party, which was now merged in the Radical Party, viewed these

various horrors mournfully, but with a discriminating eye; there were degrees in iniquity between devils incarnate and high-minded crusaders.

A minority of the Radical party fell foul of the part England took in the Crimean War, but little heed was paid to its protests and several of its chief apostles lost their seats. The Peace Party could not oppose the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, because the lives of too many of its fellow-countrymen were at stake, but it was not indisposed to moralise upon the nemesis which follows on territorial aggrandisement.

The proceedings of Prussia and Austria against Denmark, and of Prussia against Austria, it regarded with a kind of sulky indifference; these things were deplorable; but they were no affairs of ours; only a family scuffle among Teutons on the outskirts of civilisation.

Very different had their feelings been ten years earlier as they watched with enthusiasm the efforts of Napoleon, Victor Emmanuel and Garibaldi for the redemption and union of Italy.

They had been moved to even greater enthusiasm during the American Civil War, which promised the emancipation of the negroes and ‘a new birth of freedom.’

The tradition of the English Peace Party had for long been all against slavery and all for the expulsion of the Habsburgs and Bourbons from Italy. Their attitude towards the Franco-Prussian war, the exultation with which they hailed the result, and the morals they proceeded at once to draw from it, are, however, something of a puzzle. For Prussia was nothing to us, except that our Queen’s eldest daughter had married the Crown Prince, and this was hardly a consideration that can have weighed with Radicals. We had been bickering with France much as we have always bickered since the Norman Conquest; but of late there had passed between our ever-interesting neighbour and ourselves certain courtesies and compliments, and also some amiable demonstrations of friendship between the reigning families. Moreover, it was only fourteen years since France and England had fought side by side in the Crimea. And had not Napoleon gone single-

handed to the assistance of Victor Emmanuel and played the chief part in breaking down the Austrian oppression of Italy? Besides all this France stood shining and clearly seen in the very forefront of civilisation and enlightenment. The English upper classes were sympathetically affected by these considerations; but Liberals and the middle classes turned suddenly to adamant when misfortunes fell upon their former friend. They seemed completely to forget that they had always claimed a certain vague kinship of sentiment with the French people ever since 1789, and that despite all the vagaries and vicissitudes in their dynastic rearrangements, the spirit of the Revolution still burned in the hearts of that people with a strong if unsteady flame. By contrast Prussia was an illiberal, despotically governed neighbour, with whom we had but few affinities.

It is remarkable how prompt, and apparently heartless, the British middle classes--and indeed the great bulk of our nation--were in turning their backs on France. Nay, they seemed actually to enjoy the

spectacle of her downfall, and to regard it as the well-deserved chastisement of a criminal. German victories were hailed with enthusiasm; her subsequent proceedings against France were generally approved; while Carlyle, forgetting his earlier sympathies in his new rôle of trumpeter to Frederick the Great, gave his blessing in the columns of *The Times* even to the rape of Alsace and Lorraine. As the English are not an ungenerous people, nor given to hardening their hearts against friends in adversity, their behaviour on this occasion seems to need an explanation. The explanation is simple and illuminating.

IX.--*The rare and refreshing Fruits of Duplicity*

To students of politics the origins and conduct of the Franco-Prussian War afford a classic instance of how duplicity on the grand

scale may sometimes serve, not only the immediate emergency for which it was contrived, but may afterwards operate beneficially over a long period of years. Diplomatic falsehoods, however, in order that they may serve high purposes, must be put together with strong, imperishable mortar, like old Roman masonry; as Bismarck's were; as the quickly crumbling futilities of William the Second never were. Bismarck's handling of the situation in 1870 fell nothing short of genius. It was the most brilliantly successful diplomatic feat of modern times. He has himself told us frankly--and it is one of his chief contributions to the art of politics--that he never grudged even the utmost pains in studying how he might turn the 'Imponderables' of any situation to his own advantage. Fortunate it was for Europe that clumsier craftsmen had the making of war in 1914!

Having prepared his invincible weapons, and made certain that neither his King nor his army leaders would fail him, he chose the day when it would be most advantageous to go to war, and stung the French where they were

most sensitive--in their pride and vainglory. The world knew nothing of the hidden hand and venomous injection; for outwardly Bismarck wore an air of stern self-restraint, producing the impression that Germany had been too patient under insults. The public statement he issued seemed irreproachable; but in essentials this document, so unprovocative in form, was false; for Bismarck had put a twist on truth which it would have been hard to straighten out; nor was there time. He knew full well that he had fixed his stings where they would rankle intolerably. After suffering a few hours of torment the French, as he had reckoned confidently they would, committed a supreme act of folly by declaring war. Ministers, the army and the Paris mob were all at one, and the cry was *à Berlin*! This was enough for Bismarck's purpose, and he had now no difficulty in persuading the lovers of peace in every country that France was a wrongful aggressor.

This, I think, is the true story. . . . 'An abominable crime!' cries the moralist, and most common readers will agree with him.

But let me ask you this question, gentlemen--those of you whose business it is to deal with affairs of State:--Suppose that, like Bismarck, you saw an opportunity of doing an immense service to your country, and suppose that you possessed Bismarck's brains, and Bismarck's strength, and Bismarck's courage, would you flinch from an abominable crime? It must be remembered that Prussia stood among many dangers, surrounded by a ring of potential enemies. And here was a golden chance of winning security at a single stroke; material prosperity would flow copiously from victory; world-power would follow, and possibly, as a final result, the hegemony of Europe. Supposing, however, that you decided on high moral grounds to resist the temptation and to let slip the opportunity, and suppose that subsequently great disasters befell your country--disasters which would have been avoided had you struck the felon blow at the favourable moment and with a true aim--would you have an easy conscience as you sat brooding amid the ruins? Would it be enough to feel that possibly you had saved your own soul?

. . . Like old Michel de Montaigne I thank whatever gods there be, that the obscurity of my station has saved me from such tremendous decisions!

Bismarck's juggling with the Imponderables was no less successful in its way than Moltke's handling of his big battalions in the field. Thanks to the efforts of these two great men, Germany, and nearly the whole of Europe, enjoyed peace for four-and-forty years. How much longer that happy condition might have lasted, had Bismarck been followed by a line of equally capable and unscrupulous successors, it would be idle to conjecture.

For good and for evil he had duped the whole world. How he contrived to practise this grandiose deception remained for long a well-kept secret. But twenty years after the Peace of Versailles he fell from power, and there was rage in his heart. In a burst of vindictive candour he suddenly destroyed the myth of a peace-seeking Germany and an encroaching France by confessing exultantly how cunningly he had loaded the dice and

brought about the ruin of his enemy. Had Bismarck gone to his grave without making this confession, French and German historians might to-day be still disputing which country was the guilty one in the war of 1870; but Bismarck, in his blunt downright way, has left them nothing to dispute about.

Bismarck's crafty procedure completely hoodwinked and won over Liberalism and the British middle classes. Few of my earliest recollections are clearer than the frequent discussions of my elders as to the causes and probable consequences of the Franco-Prussian war. It was always the same story. Let us be glad that France, the chauvinistic scourge of Europe, has been crushed to the ground. Peace-loving, industrious Germany, the home of learning and philosophy, the possessor of the finest system of education in the whole Continent, will now be able to get on with her work and her development, undisturbed by the periodic rattling of the Gallic sabre. And the rest of us will share in this great boon, which the good Emperor William and Prince Bismarck have secured

for Europe, as well as for their own people, through the devotion and sacrifices of the German ‘citizen’ army.

I was brought up in one of the straitest sects of the Radical Peace Party. As a child, to my disgust, I was not allowed to play with lead soldiers like other children, and so soon as I was old enough to have the meaning of a few long words explained to me I was taught that war was an ‘anachronism.’ My family and their friends, who included a fair sprinkling of by no means undistinguished politicians and professors, were people whom I shall always regard with honour and affection. Their honesty and their sincerity were unquestionable. Within a restricted sphere they saw clearly and judged shrewdly; but they had deliberately raised walls and enclosed themselves so as to shut out the broader view. They saw neither far nor wide over the vast landscape of the world. They believed with an almost religious fervour that free competition, free trade and an extended popular franchise were the true and only ways to Peace--to Peace, not only within their own enclosure, but all over the Earth. Mr.

Bright, who was the most eminent member of our circle, had said that ‘force is no remedy.’ His words were taken almost literally, and as a divine edict.

A very resolute belief is seldom overthrown by confrontation with the plainest facts. Italy had been redeemed from a foreign yoke--by force. The lives of many of our fellow-countrymen in India had been saved--by force. The reactionary Southern States of America had been crushed, and the negroes set free--by force. Denmark had been pillaged--by force. Prussia had deprived Austria of her share in the booty--by force. And now France the peace-breaker had been humbled and reduced to impotence--by force. There was no denying that all these comparatively recent occurrences had been due to force; and yet, as my elders sat discussing things in the middle seventies this fact was almost wholly ignored. The evils that had happened were dead and buried, and would never recur. I can remember the complacent confidence with which an occasional doubting Thomas was rebuked!

There had certainly been bloodshed on a

considerable scale--here, there and everywhere, as one might say. So much was conceded. Cruel sacrifices unfortunately had been required before Peace could be finally enthroned. The object of these wars had been ‘to end war,’ an aspiration which good men cherished in their hearts in those times as they do to-day. This wistful phrase covers one of the saddest futilities ever conceived by long-suffering, eagerly hoping, mankind. But when people are resolutely bent on self-deception it is usually waste of breath to reason with them, for they will press every occurrence into service in order to uphold their illusion. So my forbears believed in all sincerity that the savage struggles of the recent past were the writhings of the death-stricken dragon of militarism which had preyed for so long on the vitals of the world. It is clear that they were wrong. The disproof of their vain imaginings stared them in the face; but they averted their heads and would never meet its eyes. We can sympathise with them, for we ourselves have had similar experiences. Many have told us, and are still engaged in telling us, that force is no remedy, and that wise and

gentle words will do all that is required; but in the light of recent and present events, how can any sane man believe that force is not now, as it ever has been, the fundamental, final and supreme law of human affairs?

An epoch ended in spirit and in fact when Gladstone was defeated in February 1874. For nearly a generation the full river of British prosperity had flowed majestically on, bank-high; Treasury surpluses had gushed in fertilising runnels, encouraging others besides the middle classes to believe that the millennium was at hand. It had been an epoch of ceaselessly expanding trade, of rapidly increasing riches and of highly coloured illusions thrown against a sombre but disregarded background of pitiable squalor. All things considered, the optimism of those days is not perhaps to be wondered at; for the sufferings of the poor had been borne patiently; there had been no fierce outbreaks or threats of domestic revolution; and the devastations of war had left the soil of England untouched. And yet if these middle-class Englishmen--Liberals, Radicals and

Peace-Lovers--had sometimes looked abroad, gazing over the high walls of their enclosure on the world that lay beyond it, they must surely have suspected that the dragon of militarism was not dead of his supposed wounds, but was merely sleeping the sleep of satiety.

X.--*Palmerston*

When Disraeli became Prime Minister in 1874, there were some faint indications of a ferment in the national mood. Disraeli himself had no hand in this; for he had won the recent election solely by conventional party tactics. Nor was it due to the exhortations of any of the other leaders or to the activities of any group of politicians or propagandists. It seemed rather to be a spontaneous and unconcerted questioning as to the present influence of England in the councils of Europe; whether there had been a gain or loss of prestige and consideration during the eight years that had passed since the death of Palmerston.

The results of this inquisition were not wholly reassuring. The predominance of England (for such it may be called), which had lasted from the battle of Waterloo to the surrender at Sedan--a period of more than half a century--now no longer went unquestioned. The sudden uprising and military success of Prussia had disturbed the old balance. It was unavoidable that such a prodigious series of victories should adversely affect British prevalence--all the more so because her military strength (apart from the Navy) had lately come under the suspicion of being little more than an imposing façade. The inevitable effect of stricken fields and the imagined weakening of the British Army were not, however, the whole story. In many quarters there was an uneasy feeling, that since the death of Palmerston there had been no voice which spoke up for British interests abroad in clear and ringing tones. Gladstone seemed to concern himself but little with the European situation, having his hands too full of more congenial work at home. Since 1870 the Foreign Department had been in the hands of

Granville, a witty, lazy and most amiable trifler, whose personal charm and courtesy were quite inadequate for the maintenance of British prestige; while, on the other hand, they failed to soothe the irritation which his indecision and negligence were continually causing in continental chanceries. The Liberal party, nevertheless, seemed to have little fault to find with the foreign policy (if such it may be called) of the Gladstonian administration, and to be entirely unaware of the disregard in which it was held abroad. To the thriving men of business, who made up the more active part of Gladstone's following, prestige was a mere vanity. They warmly approved his conciliatory words and pacific professions. They realised that they themselves were enjoying an unexampled prosperity; but they failed to perceive the small dimensions to which respect for British authority had shrunk in the eyes of the outside world. It is always hard to bring benevolent well-wishers of humanity (especially when they themselves are very comfortably off) to understand that a splendid affluence is more apt to produce envy than

friendship; still harder is it to make them face the sombre truth that the power of a nation and its influence over other nations owe very little to conciliatory words and pacific professions, but are due to three things above all others:--to strength in arms; to promptness in action; and to a sagacity, like that of Ulysses, lynx-eyed, self-regarding and unscrupulous. 'The moral leadership of the world,' of which our epicenes were so fond of talking during the recent war (with the object mainly of exalting Woodrow Wilson at the expense of Lloyd George), has no existence in fact, but is only a phantom. Strength, force, and a sagacity that aims at turning every event, be it good or bad, to the national advantage--these things, and not either innocence or the love of peace, are what give a nation leadership in the councils of the world.

In December 1851--the year that had basked in the sunshine of the Great Exhibition--Louis Napoleon usurped the powers of a dictator. His notorious *coup d'état* would be described to-day as a fascist

revolution. It was then a novelty, and caused vast scandal all the world over. It was done so quickly that Liberalism had nowhere any chance to protest; and it was done so thoroughly as to be past undoing. Palmerston, who was Foreign Minister at the time, acted with even more than his usual promptitude, and recognised the *fait accompli* without consulting either his Sovereign or his colleagues in the Cabinet. Presumably he believed, and probably he was right, that the sooner recognition was accorded to the new government in France, the less danger there would be of international disturbances. His action, however, was clearly unconstitutional and an infringement of the Crown's prerogative. He paid the penalty of his rashness, and was at once dismissed by the Queen.

Palmerston's high-handed action on that occasion was only the climax of a series of encroachments on the royal prerogative. This able but headstrong minister had been in control of the Foreign Office for seven years before Queen Victoria came to the throne, and seems to have regarded his Royal

mistress as an inexperienced and rather wilful child, whose adoration for her handsome young husband was at times a nuisance. Prince Albert had many high qualities. He was extremely intelligent, well-informed and determined; a man of excellent judgement, but too methodical and too priggish to run comfortably in harness with the roistering old Foreign Secretary, who was impatient of long memorandums and frequent discussions. Palmerston had already been warned on several occasions; but his latest offence was too flagrant to be overlooked.

Queen Victoria was a jealous Sovereign, and could not abide a minister who had even tried to encroach on her authority. On the other hand, it was hard to withhold forgiveness from a servant whose notions of patriotic policy agreed so closely with her own. She could not but admire Palmerston's promptness in action and clarity in speech; and after all, his offences had been due mainly to his impatient concern for the honour and prestige of England. Palmerston's exclusion from office did not last long, and when he died in 1865, at the age of eighty, he

was still Prime Minister.

It is true that he could not share the Queen's almost morbid dread of Revolution; still less her sacramental tenderness for ancient dynasties, merely because they were old and legitimate. The incompetence and the cruelty of Italian Princes and Neapolitan Bourbons filled Palmerston with disgust. At the same time he was neither a hammer of tyrants, nor a crusader for freedom, though at all times he was an un-friend to the first and a well-wisher to the second. His paramount duty and prime concern were the interests of England and the peace of Europe, and there were occasions when these considerations acted as a drag upon his freedom of action, and even produced an appearance of inconsistency. But in the main matter--the prestige and honour of England--the Queen and her resolute minister saw eye to eye and walked hand in hand. Victoria was not a profound philosopher; but she had wiser intuitions about many things than her Liberal counsellors. Being free from the pedantry of individualistic theories, she never forgot, as they often did, that Europe, by the Act of

God, was a family, though a very quarrelsome family--an ancient, indivisible and mystical union. Her resentment reached its highest point when agreements were come to between her neighbours on their independent accounts about matters which affected, or might conceivably affect, the interests of the Continent as a whole. Nothing of such a nature ought to be settled without the concurrence of the British Government and the other great Powers. She was a masterful and prejudiced woman, but a good European.

These opinions were held no less strongly by Palmerston than by the Queen; though we may suspect him of being perhaps somewhat less concerned that England should *concur* than that she should *dictate*. Although no Revolutionary, no Radical, he was in his own strange way--like Canning, his master--a fervent supporter of national aspirations. His by no means unsuccessful efforts to give effect to these sympathies won for him less credit than they might have done with his Liberal followers, had he not shown so openly the contempt he felt for these mealy-

mouthed champions of freedom. He despised them because they shrank from clear, bold, unmistakable words in support of causes they professed to have at heart, and because they were terror-stricken at the idea of action which might conceivably need to be backed by force. They were prepared to go no further than what they called ‘conciliation’; more conciliation! and always conciliation!!

Palmerston’s influence on Foreign Affairs was the master-force in every cabinet, save one, in which he served. But neither the longevity nor the security of his prevalence was due to any rare or occult virtues or to intellectual superiority or diplomatic finesse. There was no mystery about him, and few surprises. His character was comprehensible to all men. He was merely a whole and hearty politician raised to the highest power. The old Whigs (still, up to the time of his death, a very compact and powerful party) gave him their confidence and support. The Tories regarded him almost as one of themselves. A large part of the new Liberal party, though they did not love him, admired his promptness in action, clear speech, good

humour and strong common sense. And the same may be said of a considerable number of the Radicals (like the young Chamberlain), who girded against him fiercely as a side-tracker of Reform, but at the same time were grateful to him for his firm upholding of British interests against the machinations of foreigners. Undoubtedly, however, the larger part of the Liberals and Radicals detested him and held his methods in abhorrence. To these he was even more an object of hatred and suspicion than Disraeli himself. They cared little or nothing about his bickerings with the Prince Consort and the Queen in regard to the prerogative, but they had two grievances against him--that he was the chief obstructionist to domestic reform, and, still more, because his attitude to Foreign Governments was, in their opinion, dangerously lacking in urbanity. He kept the unco-civil Liberals always on tenterhooks. They regarded him as a blustering swashbuckler. They trembled at his curt and unambiguous speech, fearing always that it would give umbrage to foreigners and lead to war. But bold words and prompt action lead

less often to war than diffidence and delay. On the whole, he upheld British interests very successfully against the chanceries of Europe during two long terms of office--without ever needing to draw the sword in earnest. The Crimean War was not the result of *his* chauvinism (on this single occasion he had lost control), but of the endless vacillations of Aberdeen's egregious cabinet of clever men.

Palmerston was freely accused of 'bluffing,' and was saved, as they said, from disaster only by miraculous good fortune. But what great career of action has ever been run without bluff? What famous soldier, ruler or statesman has ever shrunk from using this method, realising full well that he used it at his peril? Nay, for that matter, what great lawyer, man-of-business or financier? Palmerston, it is true, took more risks than statesmen in some more favoured countries, knowing as he did that the darling motto of the English is 'never prepared,' and that, if he waited until he had assurance of a strong military position, he must remain dumb and let everything go by default.

The middle-class Liberals and Radicals

did not love Palmerston any the better because ‘he made no bones’ about being an aristocrat. Arrogance was not one of his faults, and he was much less given to insolence than were many of the New Men; but his easy manners produced in them an uncomfortable feeling that, in spite of their frock-coats and silk hats, and their prosperity, they had not yet quite learned how to behave. And, just as they were piqued because Free Trade had not abolished war, so they were chagrined because an improved system of higher education had failed so far to get rid of class distinctions. But if Palmerston was the *bête noire* of intellectuals and serious thinkers, and also of the Pharisees and idealists, he was undoubtedly beloved by that large section of society which his enemies spoke of sneeringly as ‘the mob.’ He was certainly the idol of a great mass of common Englishmen, including, we may admit, most of the rowdy good fellows--a very numerous body, whose political shrewdness or horse-sense was by no means despicable, though it rested on no intellectual pretensions, being the product of nothing more subtile than high

spirits and good digestions. These adherents delighted to honour him just because he was an ‘aristocrat’--an aristocrat after their own hearts, a good-humoured old sportsman, who usually gave rather better than he got, and who never was known to strike his flag.

Search the world over, hunt history from beginning to end, and you will conclude as the result of your labours that the great Foreign Minister is almost the rarest bird that flies. If he were a commoner occurrence there would, I think, be far fewer wars, and far firmer settlements. Since Castlereagh and Vienna, it seems to me that we have only had one, or possibly two, who can be placed in this class--Palmerston and Salisbury.[45] In Italy, during the same period, there was Cavour, in Germany, Bismarck; and these were giants. In all Europe were there any others? It would hardly profit us to go hunting for them in America.

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[45] I feel that it is too soon to attempt a final appreciation of Lord Salisbury.

XI.--*Disraeli* (1874-1880)

After Palmerston's death in December 1865 until Gladstone's fall in January 1874 there were no more bold words, no more clear decisions, no more prompt action. Clarity had given place to indecisive circumlocution. Amiable procrastination became the rule of the Foreign Office, and this did more to provoke distrust and ill-feeling abroad than the brusque speech and methods of the old minister had ever done. During these years the Gladstonian spirit of disinterest in Foreign Affairs appeared to have gained complete mastery. 'Pussy' Granville purred and purred; things were allowed to drift; were never settled; and England became less and less considered in the counsels of Europe.

The Prince Consort died in December 1861. For more than twenty years a singularly happy and fortunate marriage had sustained Victoria in her task of ruling a great Empire. Prince Albert was at once her lover, her best

friend, and her wisest counsellor. Hers was a nature that craved for sympathy and good counsel. In the years before her marriage her devoted uncle, Leopold of Belgium, and her not less devoted Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, were the teachers and comforters of her girlhood; but her husband soon became all in all to her, so that the two seemed to think and to act as one. It was a good thing for England that Albert gained her confidence so completely, and exerted his mastery with such temperance and sagacity. And yet, like others before him, he was never popular with the nation that owed him so much.

When Prince Albert died, the Queen was for a time utterly desolate, and there were fears that her mind would give way under the strain. Palmerston, so long as he lived and remained head of government--a period of only four years--could be depended on to do his duty respectfully and considerately; but there was no tincture of affection or of intimacy in his relations with his Sovereign. Though she now no longer distrusted him, he was not one to whom she had ever opened her heart confidingly. His successor, Earl

Russell, was old and sapless, while her enforced partnership with Gladstone, who came after, was unfortunate from first to last. Her feeling for Granville was warmer than for any of these others; but her judgement warned her that his amiable character lacked the essential qualities of force and firmness.

Disraeli, on his advent to power (February 1874), was not altogether a *persona grata* with the Queen, nor had he as yet dedicated himself whole-heartedly to the restoration of England's waning prestige abroad. He had won a party victory on party lines, and his cabinet was composed to a large extent of people of importance who had claims not to be left out. But so soon as he had leisure to review the situation into which he had come, he saw clearly that things were far from right in Britain's relations with her European neighbours. He had little to hope for in the way of active assistance from his colleagues--the appointment of Lord Derby as Foreign Minister had been a mistake of the first magnitude--and the only quarter from which he could hope for sympathetic

suggestion and coöperation was the Sovereign herself. But here certain difficulties stood in the way. Queen Victoria and her husband had been strongly prejudiced against Disraeli, not only because they looked on him as a landless adventurer, but by reason of his violent, and in the end fatal, attacks upon Sir Robert Peel, whom they both esteemed. That Disraeli so soon succeeded in gaining Queen Victoria's confidence is a remarkable tribute to his genius. Ill-natured tongues averred that the method he used was flattery of the grossest kind, and cynical sayings about the Queen's inordinate love of laudation were attributed to him, probably without any substantial truth, by the malice of his enemies. Victoria no doubt was accessible to flattery (what monarch has ever been immune? or for that matter what politician, what linen-draper, what police magistrate, or what breathing mortal?); she had been used to it in the nursery and for ever after; and for that reason it may perhaps have gone less to her head than it would have done to yours or mine. She would never have given her confidence to a flatterer unless he had had a

great deal more than flattery to offer her.

The main reason why Disraeli won the Queen's goodwill so rapidly is clear enough to-day and is wholly to his credit; he was the first of her ministers to appreciate the value of her extraordinarily wide and intimate knowledge of foreign courts, of the characters of Kings and Princes, of their personal ambitions, of their mutual likings and mislikings. The information she was able to give had little in common with the official reports of the Foreign Office, but it was an illuminating side-light. She had friends and relatives in almost every court in Europe with whom she kept up a constant and sympathetic correspondence, mainly on family matters. But in those days family matters of Royalties and matters of state were closely interwoven. She had natural penetration and a retentive memory of which a wise minister might profitably avail himself. This was not flattery, though undoubtedly it caused much gratification to the Queen, who had not been used to such considerate treatment. Gradually it became clear that her opinions and suggestions were often worth attending to on

their merits, but most of all, that she was possessed of a rich if peculiar store of information. If Disraeli was the first of her ministers to draw on this store, he was not the last. Salisbury and Rosebery, and indeed all the succeeding statesmen who had to do with foreign affairs (save Gladstone alone), drew upon it more and more as time went on. There is a piquant contrast between 'the wilful and inexperienced child' of the 'forties and early 'fifties, who caused Lord Palmerston so much impatience, and the Sibyl of the 'eighties and 'nineties so reverentially treated by her ministers.

It was not long before Disraeli and the Queen found their projects for the recovery of influence abroad obstructed by the dead weight of their ill-chosen Foreign Secretary. Gratitude had had something to do with his appointment; for his father, an entirely different sort of man, had been head of government when Disraeli first led the House of Commons. The younger Derby inherited none of the impetuosity of his illustrious parent. He was an extraordinary mixture--an inert and unimaginative sackful of

knowledge; cautious, and slow, and averse, not only from precipitate and foolish actions, but from action of any sort, no matter how wise and timeous it might be. Such a temperament utterly disqualified him for the post he held at the particular time he held it. The foreign situation from eighteen months after Disraeli came into power, and henceforth to the end of his administration, required above everything energetic, prompt and sagacious action. Derby was nothing but an impediment. He could rarely be brought to do anything until the season was past in which it might have been useful to do it. Again and again, when things were delicate and critical, his obstinate delays and vacillations produced serious miscarriages of policy. For these Disraeli most unjustly bore the blame, and his government incurred discredit. During three and a half precious years (February 1874-March 1878) Derby was strong enough to benumb the efforts of his Sovereign, his chief and his colleagues. When at last he resigned and Salisbury succeeded him there was a sigh of relief. But the wasted months and opportunities were

irrecoverable. The administration had then only two years more to live, and Disraeli died a twelvemonth later. As one reads the memoirs and records of that time in cold blood, half a century later, one finds oneself wishing that the nineteenth had been the sixteenth century, and Queen Victoria Queen Bess; so might the head of the princely house of Stanley have been sent about his business with a cuff on the ear. Derby was undoubtedly honest and a patriot, but it cannot be said that loyalty either to his leaders or his party was one of his most conspicuous virtues. Within a few days of the Conservative defeat he had accepted office in Gladstone's Cabinet. There was certainly some kink in his outwardly so stolid character.

Disraeli, when he took office, made no attempt to bring about a revival of the Palmerstonian tradition. He was fully aware of the many differences in temperament and social standing between himself and the great Whig leader, and that by trying to ape his predecessor he would only make himself

ridiculous. His courage and sagacity were special brands of his own. Bluster and swashbuckling were not in harmony with his genius. He was a clever enough man to know that second-hand clothes never fit. There is now, and has been for many years, a Disraelian tradition; but it is singularly unlike the Palmerstonian.

During the summer of 1875 fire broke out in the Balkans, when Herzegovina revolted against the oppressions of her Turkish misgovernors. The three Emperors thereupon produced a scheme of reforms for Turkey, and the Sultan promised relief to his Christian subjects. But a year later Montenegro and Serbia, finding the conditions intolerable, declared war on Turkey. They were badly buffeted; but it was clear that the fire had got hold and was spreading all over the peninsula. Under pressure from Russia, Turkey granted an armistice; a conference of all the Great Powers was held in Constantinople; and in December a new Turkish constitution was promulgated. The whole situation, however, was over-clouded by insincerity, unreality and intrigue. The

sufferings of the unfortunate subjects of Turkey were not the veritable cause of the conflagration, which was stoked and fanned by the greed of two great Powers, Religion and humanity had little to do with it. Russia was the prime and cool instigator, with a vast policy for her own aggrandisement. Austria was jealous and fearful of Russian ambitions: she was not shocked in a moral sense by anything that was happening or seemed likely to happen, but she aimed at security and haggled for compensation. The ill-omened reign of Abdul Hamid had just begun, and under his dominion Turkey proved incorrigibly obstinate, thinking that she could divide the Powers. Despite the warnings of the British government, Russia declared war on the Sultan in the spring of 1877. By the following spring her armies were completely victorious, and her antagonist was forced to sue for peace. Britain, however, refused to agree to the ruinous terms which Russia sought to impose upon her beaten foe; and as, for the first time in recent years, Her Majesty's ministers were seen to be in earnest and ready, if need be, to resort to the

arbitrament of force, a European Congress was summoned to meet in Berlin at midsummer, under the presidency of Bismarck as ‘the honest broker.’ In this congress, which dealt with readjustments of territory, reformation of the Turkish government and other perplexities arising out of the war, Disraeli (now Earl of Beaconsfield) played the most notable part. ‘The old Jew,’ said Bismarck admiringly, ‘that is the man!’

Two years before, when the trouble had broken out, it seemed as if at last the Turkish Empire, so often threatened and reprieved, could no longer avert the ruinous consequences of its own incompetency to govern, and of the unceasing intrigue of its enemies to undermine it. The three Emperors were concerned that the proceedings in bankruptcy should be conducted under their sole aegis. Germany had no desire to share in the partition of Turkey’s effects. Her paramount aim was to avoid being drawn into war with Russia, and this would be wellnigh impossible unless Bismarck succeeded in keeping Austria and Russia from going to

war with one another. These two Powers did not see eye to eye with regard to the division of the Turkish plunder, and Austria, in addition, dreaded the growth of Russian power in the Balkans. Austria, the more moderate of the two, would have been satisfied with a substantial slice; but Russian ambitions soared much higher: she aimed, in short, at establishing a protectorate (which was only a euphemism for ultimate annexation) over the whole of the eastern portion of the peninsula, from Roumania to Constantinople. The problem of the three Emperors was how to satisfy Austria with spoils in the north and west. With this object, a web of secret treaties, agreements and understandings was woven by the ministers of the Czar and of the Emperor Francis Joseph, and connived and approved by Prince Bismarck.

France in 1876 was preoccupied with anxieties of her own. England, it was assumed, would continue the supine policy of Gladstone and Granville, submitting meekly to walk blindfold until everything was settled and irretrievable. None of the other Powers

had interests that were likely to provoke their interference, nor had they forces available to intervene with effect. England had immense interests in the fate of Constantinople and the Straits--immense material interests, for sooner or later Russia at Constantinople would seal up the Black Sea to the trade and shipping of the world--immense, though ‘imponderable,’ interests in the loss of prestige that must follow on such a triumphant usurpation. England, if she woke up in time, had resources at her command which were quite adequate for repelling the premeditated Russian aggression. Most fortunately she did wake up, though none too soon. Her policy was clear and clean. She aimed at bringing the unanimous opinion of Europe to bear on Turkey, thereby ending the Sultan’s oppression of his Christian subjects, and at taking securities for his fulfilment of the bargain. Like Germany, she had no hankerings after territory or protectorates; and like Germany also, though for other reasons, her immediate concern was to avoid a war--war between Russia and Turkey--a war which must cause intense misery,

especially to those unfortunate creatures for whose sakes alone the Czar professed to be contemplating hostilities.

The danger-centre was the utter incapacity of Turkey to govern. For years Russia had been playing on this, plotting and planning to turn the conditions to her own advantage. Disorder on a large scale would provide her with the excuses she needed for intervention. Russian intrigues could be traced in each disturbed vilayet. Her agents and instigators were everywhere busy with propaganda and free with their gold. Bandit patriots were actuated much less by any definite political objectives than simply by love of partisan fighting and a blind desire for revenge and reprisals. The policy of the Czar, on the contrary, was clear and purposeful. For the sufferings of the oppressed Christians he cared not a jot, except as a diplomatic card, ‘an imponderable’ that would impress the civilised world. His emissaries egged on rebellions which were marked by ferocious cruelties. These sporadic outbreaks were invariably suppressed by superior forces, and were punished with cruelties that left no

credit balance on either side. Humanity was shocked; but the policy of Russia ran its heartless course, for the most part underground. The blood of the martyrs would be the seed of the Church! The Czar Alexander II. aspired to the title of the 'Czar Liberator,' and actually had statues erected to his honour inscribed with this comic designation. So merciless an oppressor of his own people was unlikely to prove a benevolent friend to the victims of oppression whom he pretended to have set free. It was not long before the unfortunate Bulgarians (under his son and successor, Alexander III.) felt the knotted fingers of Russian tyranny on their windpipe, and were forced to submit when their beloved Prince was kidnapped and forced to abdicate. It was by the side of this hypocritical savage that our pro-Russians from 1876 to 1878 would have had England take her stand 'in shining armour.' This Czar and his son were not unique; so-called 'Liberators' are usually of the same pattern.

The British people, as they did not understand the facts, passed quickly, under astute guidance, from impatience to strong

indignation concentrated wholly against Turkey. The British government, on the other hand, which did know the true facts, was withheld from setting them forth in plain words for fear of causing worse mischief. Disraeli's untiring efforts to produce amendment in Turkey, and to persuade the European Powers to work all together for this end, could only hope to prosper by patience and extreme discretion. To have proclaimed the truth and the whole truth from the house-tops might have kept public opinion in Britain better informed; but seeing what national and personal jealousies were involved, it could only have resulted in a ruinous fiasco. This, therefore, was the irresponsible agitator's golden opportunity, for the statesman he attacked had one hand tied behind his back. The agitator had more than an inkling of the reasons for ministerial reticence, and for the delays that occurred; but his main concern, like that of the Czar, was not so much to relieve the sufferings of the Christian subjects of the Porte as to see how far the advertisement of these sufferings might be used to subserve his own ambition.

And he also, as his own skin was not in danger, was free to moralise upon the blood of the martyrs being the seed of the Church: ‘the Church,’ in the one case, meant a prodigious expansion of ‘Holy Russia’; in the other, the destruction of Conservative predominance in Britain.

The fall of Gladstone and Granville was a serious blow to Russian policy. It might now no longer be practicable to prevent England from waking up. An unexpected stroke of luck, however, did something to restore the spirits of the Czar and his counsellors. When trouble in the Balkans broke out early in 1876, Gladstone had been for two years out of office, and had handed over the leadership of the Liberal Opposition to Lord Harrington. But already the late Prime Minister was pining for the accustomed limelight, and was restlessly anxious to return to the public stage. In the spring of 1876 Disraeli sent the British Fleet into Turkish waters, with the object of making it clear, both to the Sultan and the Czar, that England was in earnest as to the preservation of peace and genuine reformation. In September 1876 Disraeli

demanded reparations for the Turkish havoc in Bulgaria, and in November he issued a warning that if Russia occupied Bulgaria Britain would occupy Constantinople. There was no bluff in this threat, which in the circumstances was a perfectly feasible operation of war. Turkey was a client who did us no credit, and our government was wisely determined not to pose as her protector. But the *bona fides* of Russia as liberator of oppressed peoples was utterly distrusted by everyone over whom Gladstone had not succeeded in casting a spell.

In June 1876, to the sound of trumpets, Gladstone emerged from his retirement. The part he sought to play was that of an avenger, the scourge of Turkey; incidentally he became the champion of Russia in her mission of humanity. Oppressions and atrocities were themes which from early days had stimulated his generous but extravagant rhetoric. This was a style of speaking in which he excelled all competitors. He became at once the most formidable counter-worker of the policy of the British government. It was a crisis where wild words of provocation

and abuse could do nothing but harm. The Turk, stung by insults, tended to become more obdurate than ever. The Russian was encouraged in desperate courses. Gladstone's agitation was powerless to cure the evil; all it could do was to make war on a grand scale inevitable. In the spring of 1877 it achieved this dubious triumph.

The most effective check on Russia's breaking the peace had been her fear lest she might thereby become involved in war with Britain; for such a war she was ill-prepared both militarily and financially. This fear was Disraeli's strongest card, and to out-trump it was the chief objective of Gladstone's furious agitation against war with Russia in any circumstances. Up to the very end, even when the Congress of Berlin was sitting, Gladstone continued his efforts to weaken the diplomacy of his own country by vehement assurances to Russia that, come what might, British public opinion would never tolerate an appeal to arms. Fortunately, Russia was wiser than to accept these assurances at their face value. Being an unsophisticated state, she was less disposed to rely on encouragements from

an unofficial prophet or mullah, whose only weapons were words, than to be cowed by the warnings of powerful ministers who commanded the fleets and armies of Britain. But it was not Gladstone's fault that the Turkish surrender at San Stefano was not followed by a European war the extent of which no foresight could have circumscribed.

Queen Victoria's morality was simple and direct. She regarded the whole course of Gladstone's proceedings as wickedness. She was deeply concerned to end, once and for all, the Sultan's oppression of his Christian subjects; but, like her ministers, she believed that with tact and perseverance this might be done much more effectively by patient diplomacy than by letting loose a murderous war between two great and savage nations. Gladstone's reckless inclination to gamble at large with human lives filled her with horror, while his sensational methods caused her intense disgust, not merely because she considered them vulgar and undignified, but because they appeared to her to be both provocative and futile. And further, she regarded his efforts to weaken the hands of

his own country in a most critical negotiation as in the highest degree unpatriotic, as the sin against the Holy Ghost. So harsh a term as ‘wicked’ would not be deserved unless the things that Gladstone said and did at this juncture went definitely beyond the licence which is granted, as a matter of course, to all politicians who are engaged in pursuing a legitimate professional ambition. Her extreme condemnation would not have been endorsed at the time by more than a small minority of any party in the State; but after more than fifty years have passed away there are signs that the judgement of history is swinging round to her more severe opinion.

No party really wanted to go to war with anybody. The Jingoes of the London music halls might shake their fists at far-off Russia, the unco-guid might foam over their pulpit rails for vengeance upon Turkey; but neither of these high impotences would have welcomed any disturbance of their private habits or would willingly have risked their own skins in crusades or adventures. The one as well as the other of these inconsiderable minorities restricted its efforts to making a

loud noise; while the prospering humanitarians in frock-coats and silk hats, who were Gladstone's most serious supporters, were all for giving moral encouragement--but no material assistance--to Russia as the lord high executioner of the justice of Heaven. The great mass of the nation hated the idea of war, but would have faced it grimly had honour and security demanded such a sacrifice; and they believed, in spite of Gladstone's copious invective, that ministers also hated the idea of war and would do their utmost to avoid it.

In the end, the spread of war was arrested only by Disraeli's firmness and superlative good sense. His difficulties with foreign Powers, with his fellow-countrymen and with members of his own cabinet have been touched upon. They were enormous, and could never have been overcome except by one who was something more than merely a very able politician. He was one of those characters whose coming and whose presence change the face of affairs by some mysterious and invisible force. The Congress of Berlin

was not only a most remarkable triumph for its central figure, but it raised England, at a stroke, out of the post-Palmerstonian slough, almost to her old position of first authority among the nations of Europe. The nations of Europe were under no illusions as to this, and they may well have wondered when, less than two years later, his grateful countrymen passed a vote of censure on his conduct. They did not remember, perhaps, that this is a way we have in England. When his government fell, he enjoyed a respect and influence in Europe next to, and not far below, the German Chancellor's. Bismarck's outstanding prestige was the result of a long series of victories. Behind his policy there stood an army apparently invincible. Moreover, he was still in the vigour of his age, well buttressed in his power by the confidence of his autocratic Sovereign; while Disraeli, an old man in frail health, the head of a much vexed administration, was dependent on the always capricious goodwill of political parties. Bismarck had been master of Prussia for twenty years, whereas Disraeli was allowed no more than six for the

restoration of England. *Der alte Jude, das is der Mensch!*--We thank thee, Prince, for teaching us these words!

XII.--*Gladstone* (1880-1885)

Gladstone seemed to combine the *gravitas* in demeanour of a Venetian Senator with the levity in judgement of a revivalist missioner.

This man, who produced an impression of irresistible strength of character, never seemed able to keep control over the forces, whether friendly or hostile, with which he had to deal.

The methods by which he won the election of 1880 did not win the unanimous approval even of his own party. He had introduced a new form of agitation, which was thought to savour of sensationalism and to sacrifice the dignity which up to that time had hedged the great political leaders. His success, however, could not be questioned.

His followers in the House of Commons had a majority of nearly fifty over the Conservatives and Home Rulers combined.

Historians may wonder if there has ever been a more unlucky undertaking than Gladstone's administration of 1880, which started out so hopefully. Sheer ill-luck dogged its course from first to last. The tribulations of young Tristram Shandy are the only fit comparison. And yet we should not easily find an instance of a British administration which accepted office with greater confidence in itself and in its good fortune. The Liberal party which supported it with so much enthusiasm expected it to stand out in history as a landmark of progress. But even before members had been sworn in, it was in difficulties. So we have sometimes seen an angler in the pleasant month of July, when all the conditions of weather and running water seemed propitious, driven ignominiously from his sport by an almost invisible army of horse-flies. Gladstone's Irish policy was a failure; and so were his foreign and colonial policies; and likewise his management of the House of Commons and

of his own Cabinet. Nothing that he set his hand to, except the Franchise Bill, seemed to succeed, and the intention even of that measure was greatly modified under Conservative pressure.

The Liberal prophets made certain that, whatever else might come of it, the new government would be a great Peace Administration. From first to last, however, it was almost continuously at war, or in the shadow of war. The dream of universal peace had not yet been abandoned, though it had grown dim; but, as regards the British Empire, it was still confidently believed in 1880 that if ministers would but speak smoothly, and avoid swaggering gestures, we might reasonably expect to enjoy the blessings of peace in our own particular sphere and to be loved and respected by foreigners. A vain hope! In the first flush of electoral victory an exuberant Radical orator assured his audience that ‘spirited foreign policy was now as dead as Queen Anne’; and they cheered him to the echo. This prophecy certainly came true at once, and remained true for a good many years to come.

The Gladstone government had inherited a war with Afghanistan which Holy Russia had incited, though the Liberal Opposition had blamed Disraeli angrily for its occurrence. In the summer of 1880 the British were severely defeated at Maiwand; but in July the war was ended by Roberts' march from Kabul and his brilliant victory at Kandahar. Peace now appeared to smile upon the pacific administration, but in fact worse trouble was brewing at the other end of the earth.

In October of the same year (1880) the Transvaal Boers declared their independence and engaged in civil war. They had lately been saved by British efforts, lives and treasure from disaster, and probably from extirpation, at the hands of Zulu impis. The Zulu power was now crushed and the impis dispersed. Being assured of safety, the Boers judged the moment to be propitious for severing the political ties that bound them to England. It was the same old story. Just a hundred years earlier our own colonists in North America, having been saved, solely by the valour and sacrifices of King George's

armies and the generosity of British taxpayers, from encirclement and strangulation by the French, decided to make an end of their connection with the mother-country.

At the beginning of the following year (1881) our armies were heavily defeated by the Boer insurgents at Laing's Nek and afterwards at Majuba Hill. The British government decided that any attempt to wipe out this disgrace would lay them open to the charge of what their leader magniloquently described as 'blood-guiltiness.' Before the end of March Great Britain had signed, sealed and delivered--under the appropriate aegis of that bird of ill-omen, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Derby--a surrender, full and complete, of practically everything that had been demanded of them at the point of the rifle by a small, ignorant, scattered, but very valorous population of peasants. Lord Roberts, when he heard of it, vowed to 'keep himself fit; for this can only mean another war.' But even the 'other war,' which came in due season and had a different ending, has not been able to remove this blot on the national escutcheon.

In July of next year (1882) the country was startled to learn that the British fleet had bombarded and destroyed the fortifications of Alexandria. Granville described what had happened as ‘purely a measure of police.’ British subjects had been killed by rebel rioters and the property of foreigners had been pillaged. Similar evils threatened to occur on a larger scale unless prompt measures were taken. Bright resigned forthwith on the grounds that he disapproved of war. Gladstone’s government had acted up to its engagements. The Khedive had been for some time menaced by a rebellion of which Arabi Pasha, the head of the army and of the Nationalist party, was leader and chief fomenter. The Egyptian government had appealed for assistance in certain contingencies to Britain and France, whose nationals had advanced immense sums, nominally for the rehabilitation of the country. At the beginning of January Gladstone and Gambetta signed a guarantee that if things grew serious they would assist the Khedive by force of arms to keep order in his dominions. But Gambetta fell a few

weeks later, and when the occasion for intervention arose, his successors repudiated his engagement. England stood to her word and acted alone. In order to restore the country to order, it was found necessary to send out a military expedition under the command of Sir Garnet Wolseley, who, in September, signally defeated Arabi in a considerable engagement at Tel-el-Kebir and took the rebel leader prisoner. The disturbed state of the country rendered it impracticable immediately to withdraw the whole of our forces. This was the beginning of England's famous and beneficent occupation of Egypt. It was intended to be of only short duration, but lasted in fact for over fifty years. There were angry and excited protests on the part of the extreme Liberal section against what they described as 'a bondholders' war'; but the country as a whole considered that in honour as well as interest Gladstone had no alternative to the course he took.

The British government soon discovered that by occupying Egypt it had simultaneously assumed a number of irksome liabilities. It had established what was

virtually a veiled protectorate, and was saddled to a large extent with responsibility for the policy of the Khedive and for the security of his dominions. For some years past the Soudan had been in a ferment, of which the root causes were the corruption and the inefficiency of the Egyptian administration. Recently a Mahdi, or Saviour, had been preaching a crusade against the foreign oppressors. This religious incendiary had already gained a widespread influence over the emotional and untutored minds of the Arab and mongrel population of a territory twice as large as France. He was zealously and ably supported by a military lieutenant, the Khalifa, a savage ruffian and a furious fighter. While the Mahdi blew fanaticism to a white heat, the Khalifa established his prestige on numerous guerilla victories over detachments of the Egyptian army, and over such of the native tribes as remained faithful to their allegiance. With the hope of recovering its authority the Khedive's government dispatched up the Nile, on September 9, 1883, an army under Hicks Pasha. Two days later, Sir Evelyn Baring

(afterwards Lord Cromer) arrived to take up the duties of British Resident. The wisest and strongest (as I think him) of English Pro-Consuls could not have come at a time more perilous for his own reputation. His chief difficulties were the worthlessness of the Khedivial ministry, and the facts that the home government did not know its own mind, was singularly ignorant of Egyptian affairs (he himself as yet was only a novice), and was placidly unconscious of the hidden embarrassments and dangers by which it was surrounded. In November Hicks Pasha's army was cut to pieces in the jungles of Kordofan, some two hundred miles to the south-west of Khartoum, and only a few stragglers returned alive to tell the tale.

It was now out of the question to think of restoring the lost authority of Egypt over the Soudan: the one and only concern was how to bring away--if this were still possible--the Egyptian garrisons. It would be shocking to leave these troops to their fate without an effort made to save them. The Egyptian government and our own were at their wits'

end. Gladstone had no gift for dealing with an emergency of this sort. His powers of leadership were confined exclusively within the narrow limits of Parliament and popular agitation. Here there was need for an active policy, and he provided none. Confusion and conflict of opinion were allowed to run riot. His colleagues, many of them ministers of great intelligence, were mainly concerned with their own departments, and were apt to be snubbed if they ventured outside their particular sphere. The Foreign Office, the India Office, the War Office, and of course the Treasury, had all of them a hand in the muddle; but none of them was responsible and supreme. The Cabinet discussed, and discussed, and discussed; but was unable to come to any decision. In their vexatious quandary the stolid judgement of Hartington and the penetrating mind of Chamberlain were equally at fault. In the end they did the very worst thing that it was possible to do: they allowed themselves to be objurgated by a screeching cockatoo of a journalist into an act of the wildest folly. ‘Chinese’ Gordon was sent out with his riding-cane, single-

handed, to extinguish the seething rebellion of a sub-continent. General Gordon had a great and deserved reputation for quelling the disorders of uncivilised races by some strange, mesmeric influence, quite inexplicable in scientific terms. His qualities made him conspicuous wherever he went, from China to Khartoum. He was something more than a very brave man. Enemies no less than friends were astounded by his daring. He moved with an Ariel-like swiftness, and his track was everywhere marked with surprises. In conferences even the most arrogant quailed before those steady blue eyes. He despised money; considered his own salaries always too large and reduced them; would accept no rewards. Despite some puzzling complexities, he was essentially a simple soul--pure in heart and in sympathy with all God's creatures--who believed in the Finger of Providence, and went with alacrity wheresoever that Finger seemed to point.

Those who sent Gordon out to the Soudan were gambling on this mesmeric influence. The thoughtless proposal commended itself to many because it seemed so easy and so

cheap. If it succeeded it might save the British taxpayers millions which a military expedition would quickly consume. It also shifted vexatious responsibility on to a single pair of shoulders. But they overlooked the fact that the Mahdi also exercised a strange, mesmeric influence (though of a very different sort) over savage minds. And the Mahdi had a long start in the race with Gordon. His black magic had been at work for several years over a vast sphere. His followers were innumerable, and were aflame with a racial and religious passion that nothing but utter defeat could quench. It was a wholly different Soudan from that which Gordon had known in former days when he was Governor-General of Equatorial Africa. It was seven years since he had wholly suppressed the slave trade from Darfur to the Red Sea littoral. In achieving this he had overcome enormous difficulties--the indifference and bad faith of Egyptian officials, and the violent resistance of self-interested traders. Neither of these was any longer to be feared; but he was faced by something infinitely more formidable--a

people flushed with victory over an Egyptian army, and assured that the blessing of Allah had rendered them invincible.

Evelyn Baring was but newly installed; yet being a typical John Bull, and not inexperienced withal in dealing with Orientals, he looked with profound misgiving on the enterprise he was instructed to support. Imperfect sympathy marked his relations with Gordon; their temperaments were too different for harmonious accord; but he did his best. The sending forth of a solitary heroic figure with a riding-cane to overawe the excited hordes of the Mahdi and the Khalifa was a miscalculation of incredible levity. It was in plain truth only a quack cure-all at which a cabinet of ignorant shirkers had snatched in its perplexity.

In February 1884 Gordon reached Khartoum and succeeded in evacuating between two and three thousand of the Egyptian garrison before he was encircled and besieged a few weeks later. The gravity of his situation gradually became apparent to his fellow-countrymen. In April there was widespread anxiety, and an outcry arose that

he must not be left to his fate. But nothing was done while there was yet time to do it. It was the same old story with which students of Gladstone's career are familiar: a situation of great peril, where no one was in control. Gladstone's own mind was occupied with the excitements of domestic politics, with a franchise bill, and a congenial scuffle with the House of Lords. Indecision and delays continued from week to week, from month to month. It was not until September that Wolseley's belated expedition was in a position to begin its advance up the Nile. His operations were carried out with judgement, energy and success; but marching was slow work and time was very short.

In January 1885 the British advance guard were at last able to open communications with the remnants of those they had come out to relieve; but it was only to learn that Khartoum had been stormed a few days earlier and that Gordon, with all that remained of his tiny force, had been butchered. He had stood a siege of ten months (317 days) with no more at the end than two white officers to help him. His

native troops were wasted to skeletons by famine and disease; but their devotion to their leader kept them loyal to the last. Few heroes have ever earned so noble a monument.

I cannot remember any public sorrow during my lifetime that can be compared in its intensity with the feelings caused by Gordon's death. The blow fell so heavily that it seemed at first to deaden all feelings but those of grief: shame and anger came later. The mourning extended, beyond his fellow-countrymen in the mother country and the colonies, to foreign nations. Gladstone's explanations and excuses were very coldly received; and when, by and by, official apologists were so ill-advised as to suggest that Gordon's fate was due to his own mistakes and disobedience to orders, there were mutterings of a storm of indignation. Common opinion refused to credit these misrepresentations: and common opinion was right, as subsequent disclosures have set beyond doubt. When Gordon was sent out he was promised a free hand; but he was never given a free hand. He asked for various

things, most of which in the light of our after-knowledge appear to have been eminently reasonable, but all his requests were either refused or ignored. Had he been adequately supported, it seems more than likely that he would have been able to hold out until relief arrived.

We are inclined now to wonder--even those of us who lived through and can remember these occurrences--why Gladstone's administration was not at once overwhelmed by an outburst of wrath and contempt. There were several reasons. The twelve months following were unusually full of political excitements of various sorts. The scuffle with the House of Lords ended in Gladstone agreeing with Salisbury upon the terms of a Redistribution Bill, which should be passed into law before the Franchise Bill came into operation. Political parties were already busily preparing for the General Election, which would take place before the end of the year. The Radicals under Chamberlain and Dilke were at open strife--both in the Cabinet and on the platform--with

the Whigs who followed Harrington, Goschen and other highly respectable leaders; while the mass of Liberal opinion, under the spell of Chamberlain's compelling oratory, seemed to be shifting over to the side of the advanced reformers. Gladstone, who much preferred the dignified society of the Whig magnificos to that of the restless middle-class disturbers of the dust of tradition, was nevertheless too alert a politician to ignore the electoral significance of what was happening. He had a difficult task to hold the scales fairly and at the same time to calm the nerves of his Sovereign, which were sorely tried by Chamberlain's calculated indiscretions and unconventional pronouncements; but on this occasion his conduct was worthy of his high position--strictly honourable and at the same time surpassingly clever.

From March 1885 to Midsummer 1886 is the period in which Gladstone's craftsmanship as a party politician reached its zenith. His skilful contrivances and the nimbleness of his strategy were amazing. This old man of seventy-six, exceedingly

tenacious of power, had always disliked Chamberlain; and he disliked him all the more when he read about the enthusiasm with which the ‘Unauthorised Programme’ of this upstart follower was being everywhere received, and of the triumphal arches of welcome which referred to him as ‘Our future Leader.’ No great man has ever been pleased to hear people talking with admiration of his successor. Chamberlain was at this time the most potent character in public life. The force and lucidity of his speeches, their crispness, the clearness of his thought--understandable by all men, whether they liked him or not--were in complete and refreshing contrast to the vague and vehement rhetoric of the Prime Minister, to his ambiguities, evasions and prolixity, as they were also a welcome change from the heavy and solid argumentations of the Whig champions. And in addition to Chamberlain’s persuasiveness as a speaker, he was the maker and master of the most formidable party organisation that had yet appeared in Britain. His ill-wishers sought to discredit it by giving it an American name--the Caucus; but it was in fact a purely

domestic product. It was shaped after a new model which he had invented and introduced for municipal elections into his own city of Birmingham, where it had worked with remarkable success. Under his energetic direction it had lately spread very rapidly in the Parliamentary constituencies of England and Scotland. It was in form a democratic institution, and was designed to consolidate the coöperation of the Liberal party, and to swing it over to his own advanced views. The Conservatives and the Whigs both hated and feared it. For the time being it was firmly controlled by Chamberlain and his lieutenants.

When Gladstone's government was defeated in June 1885, on an unimportant amendment to the Budget, he made no effort to retrieve the position, but resigned, and Salisbury became Prime Minister. The chief business of the Conservative administration was to pass the Redistribution Bill, and when this was done the board would be set for a General Election in the late autumn. No party or section regretted the Liberal collapse; least of all the old ministers themselves; and of all

the ministers, least of all the Radicals. Chamberlain at once launched his *Unauthorised Programme* and seemed at first to be sweeping all before him.

A few weeks before Gladstone went out of office a heaven-sent opportunity offered itself, which he grasped at once. His reputation as an upholder of England's honour had been under an ever-darkening cloud since the Majuba surrender and the fall of Khartoum. The attacks of his opponents had done less to discredit his leadership than the lukewarm defence of his friends. Suddenly, Russia came to his assistance by making a violent and perfidious encroachment on our ally, the Ameer of Afghanistan. Gladstone did not hesitate a moment, but thundered defiance at the Czar, and asked the House of Commons for a vote of credit running into six millions. Russia could afford to be patient, as Gladstone had probably foreseen. She agreed to the arbitration of a friendly power; but matters were, in fact, adjusted peaceably in a few months, without having recourse to foreign

intervention.

It may be doubted if Russia was much the worse for this rebuff; but the world was astonished and very favourably impressed by Gladstone's vigorous and well-timed demonstration. The approval of his own fellow-countrymen was unanimous, and a glow of pride was felt by the whole nation. Even the old Whigs and Tories acclaimed it as having the true 'Palmerstonian touch.' It was undoubtedly a wise, bold and patriotic speech; but it was also a supremely clever one: for by this single stroke of genius he recovered all he had recently lost through the disasters and humiliations which his policy had brought upon the country. For the time being these were forgotten, and his courage lay no longer under suspicion.

The result of the December election came as a surprise, and pleased nobody except Parnell, who swept practically the whole of Ireland--saving the Protestant constituencies of Ulster--for Home Rule. It might fairly be described as an overwhelming national verdict in favour of self-government. The

Liberals gained the British counties, owing partly to the gratitude of the electors whom they had recently enfranchised, and partly to the glowing promises of the Radicals that every agricultural labourer should now have ‘three acres and a cow’; but in spite of the *Caucus* and the *Unauthorised Programme* the Liberals had made no headway in the towns. The most piquant interest of the election (apart from Ireland) was not the conventional battle between the Conservative and Liberal parties, but the civil war which raged between the Radicals and the Whigs who spoke their minds with aggressive freedom and even ran candidates against one another in various constituencies. Meanwhile Gladstone sat comfortably or uncomfortably on the fence, biding his time. The final count showed that neither of the old parties had enough parliamentary support to form a government without the support of the Home Rulers. Parnell with his eighty followers controlled the situation.[46] Gladstone made a proposal to Arthur Balfour which at first sight seemed sensible enough and not unpatriotic. It amounted to this--that Salisbury, as Prime

Minister, should endeavour to come to terms with the Irish as to what would content them in the way of self-government; and that Gladstone would then persuade the Liberals to accept the settlement. But this suggestion--apparently so reasonable and so simple--was impracticable because it ignored the conditions of party government. It would have meant, in fact if not in name, a coalition; and neither the country nor the parties themselves were in a mood to tolerate a coalition. Moreover, any symptoms of truckling to the Irish, after their recent outrageous attacks on Law, Life and Order, would have put a severe strain even on the Liberal party; while it would at once have smashed the Conservative party into fragments. Salisbury was shrewd enough to see this at a glance, and there can be no doubt that his wily adversary saw it just as clearly. The Liberals might shortly have recovered from such a shock, and possibly would have been gainers by it in the end; but the Conservatives would have been ruined for at least a generation.

The game now lay between two

exceedingly astute players--Salisbury and Gladstone. Salisbury had the safer cards. If he refused to have anything to do with Home Rule, his own party would stand solidly and stolidly behind him, and the Whigs would certainly come over to him if Gladstone began to parley for a surrender. How many stalwart Liberals would do likewise it was impossible to forecast. Chamberlain, now that Dilke had disappeared, was playing a lone hand. He had stated, both before and during the election, in his firm, unambiguous way that, although favourable to some form of Federal devolution, he was unalterably opposed to any weakening of imperial union and control. He was not one who went back on his word, and he had many friends and followers. He honourably kept this pledge from first to last, though it meant the crumbling of his dearest ambitions.

Gladstone, too cunning a politician to burn his boats a day sooner than he must, had bound himself to nothing either negative or positive. But before the end of the year Salisbury and Balfour saw clearly, and many of Gladstone's own unconsulted followers

suspected, the direction in which his mind was working.

The old man's game was supremely bold and he played it at a pace that left the slower-minded politicians gasping. . . . . .

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[46] Lib. 335, Con. 249, Home Rule, 86.

Overleaf will be found the list of chapter headings referred to in the Prefatory Note.

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Obvious printing errors have been silently corrected.

Inconsistencies in hyphenation, spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

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[The end of *The Endless Adventure Vol 3* by Frederick Scott Oliver]