as great theorists as they were experimentalists; Erasmus Darwin and William Smith gave science new methods of research.

The causes of this great and sudden expansion are more difficult to trace than the conditions of the literary revival which accompanied it. That it was connected with the Revolution seems highly probable, but in what way the connection came about is not obvious. It must be noted first of all that the leaders in the new science were without exception amateurs, and as such illustrate the characteristic individualism of the English intellect—an individualism likely to be still further accentuated in Dalton and Young by the fact of their being Quakers, and in Davy by his receiving lessons in science from a Quaker; and this independent character would be still further encouraged by the revolutionary environment. But why should so much of the newly-awakened energy discharge itself along the lines of physical investigation? I can only suggest that this happened because those ideal aspirations which the Revolution excited were debarred from seeking an outlet in political activity, partly by the conversion of the Revolution itself into a war of conquest and spoliation, partly by the repression of all reforming agitation in England under Pitt. It is noticeable, in this connection, that Macaulay has explained the analogous rise of English science after the Restoration by a diversion of energy from political to physical inquiries.

Another factor in the situation was the impoverishment of the country caused by Pitt's war-expenditure, diverting, as this did, large masses of capital from productive to unproductive

employment, besides imposing an oppressive load of taxation on the middle classes. Now, if it be true that an absorbing devotion to material interests was responsible for England's literary and scientific decline, it is at least possible that this subsequent depletion of wealth may have restored some of her best energies to the pursuit of more ideal ends.

At a time when France enjoyed undisputed supremacy in European science we might expect to find her influence at work in the revival of English science. But in this instance the French example does not seem to have counted for much. It is at least remarkable that the English were weakest where the French were relatively strongest —that is, in pure mathematics and biology. What we learned from them in these studies was learned at a much later period. Meanwhile America was, perhaps, more helpful. At any rate, it was Franklin's electrical discoveries that first roused Priestley's emulation; and the Royal Institution was founded by an American, the brilliant and versatile Count Rumford.

In 1798 appeared the greatest single contribution to social science made since *The Wealth of Nations*, and one not surpassed in importance ever since. This was the famous *Essay on Population*, by Thomas Malthus, an English clergyman. Its origin is closely connected with the political circumstances of the time. As a consequence, presumably, of the distress caused by the American War, an amendment to the Poor Law, passed in 1782, and known as Gilbert's Act, "abolished the workhouse test and provided work for those who

were willing near their homes."[1] In 1796, at a period of much greater distress, the justices who had taken the place of the old Poor Law Guardians were "empowered to give relief to any industrious poor person at his own residence."[2] Thus it came to pass that "the labourers' wages were systematically made up out of the rates";[3] and as the allowance was increased in proportion to the number of children, not excluding bastards, a direct stimulus was given to the increase of the population, in perfect accordance with the apparent interests of the manufacturers and farmers, who wanted cheap labour, and of the Government, which wanted cheap food for powder, not to speak of the Tories, who wanted cheap philanthropy. Paley, the official moralist, held that happiness is equally diffused among all classes of society, and that its "quantity in any country is best measured by the number of the people."[4] Malthus was of a different opinion, while at the same time supporting Pitt's Poor Law Bill, whose ulterior consequences he seems not at first to have perceived. What ultimately seems to have suggested his destructive criticism of grants in aid of wages as a method for the relief of want was a searching examination of Godwin's *Political Justice*. It seemed to Malthus that the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence raised an impassable barrier to every scheme and every dream of social regeneration. Stated generally, his philosophy is that all the miseries afflicting society are so many expressions of the

[1] Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 103.
[2] H. de B. Gibbins, *Industry in England*, p. 412.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Moral Philosophy*, p. vii.

ultimate fatality which prevents the limited additions to human food from keeping pace with the indefinite multiplication of human mouths. In point of fact, population has not increased at anything like the rate that would have been attained under the most favourable conditions; but this, according to Malthus, is chiefly because disease, vice, war, and famine have combined to check its normal growth; the removal of every preventable evil would merely leave mankind face to face with famine as the one insuperable enemy, and famine would bring back every other evil in its train.

Malthus afterwards came to admit that the practice of prudential self-restraint might be so developed as to keep the number of human beings within the limits of a comfortable existence; and as Godwin assumed that in a rational state of society such restraint would be habitually practised, the difference between them almost disappeared. At any rate, the *Essay on Population* merely applied to a particular case what *Political Justice* made the principle of all progress—the substitution of conscious, rational prevision for blind and violent constraint.

Since Malthus wrote, his law has been extended to the whole organic world, and has been exhibited as the sole cause, or at least a prime cause, of organic evolution. But Malthus had already grasped the possibility of such an application within the limits of the human species. Without dreaming of any change in its fundamental constitution, he represents the pressure of population on the means of subsistence as a divinely appointed

instrument for the perpetual exercise and enhancement of man's industry and ingenuity. He failed to see that a result which would equally have come about in the absence of supernatural guidance leaves the case for theism no stronger than before. And, of course, he still more thoroughly failed to see that his principle would become the basis of a vast theory destined, in the opinion of some, to supersede theism altogether. Meanwhile the Essay told as a trenchant criticism on Pitt's Poor Law, and led to an immediate reconstruction of scientific economics.

The French Revolution had been prepared by a philosophy in which destructive criticism on theology played a great part; it had been conducted by professed unbelievers, who began by confiscating Church property and ended with a proscription of the priests who took their orders from Rome. In England Burke had denounced it as anti-religious and as quite alien from the essentially religious genius of the English people. He referred to the English Deists as long extinct, and to their writings as forgotten. It would have been more correct to say that Deism had not set up any organised effort to strip the Anglican Church of her temporalities; but this was rather the result of a tacit compromise with Rationalism than a sign of its defeat. Since Hume, freethought had been spreading among the higher intellects, and with some had doubled the area of its original negations. Gibbon, the greatest of modern historians, counted among the assailants of Christianity; Bentham and Erasmus Darwin were known in private to be atheists; Romilly and Mackintosh seem to have

been Deists; Fox had no religious beliefs, nor, as would appear, had Pitt either.[1] On the other hand, the Church of England, while remaining nominally orthodox, had in practice become a teacher of what amounted to little more than a purely ethical religion, insisting on no dogmas beyond a personal God and a future life as sanctions of morality. Meanwhile a number of Nonconformists, grouping themselves under the name of Unitarians, compromised more openly with Deism by renouncing the dogmas of Original Sin, the Incarnation, and the Atonement.

Against this movement for transforming religion into simple morality a double protest was raised—by Methodism outside the Church and by Evangelicalism within it. Evangelicalism had gained access to the highest political circles in the person of Wilberforce, but otherwise had little hold on the intellect of England.

It has been shown with what energy the revolutionary atmosphere acted on all the latent tendencies of English life and thought, quickening the sense of possibility on the one hand and the sense of actuality on the other. It could not, therefore, fail to rekindle the old conflict between the appeal to a supernatural revelation and the exclusive reliance on nature which had divided opinion half a century before.

The first to break silence on the Rationalist side was Thomas Paine. Part I. of his *Age of Reason* appeared in 1794; Part II., a work of much greater importance, in 1795. Paine's natural bent was

[1] J. M. Robertson, *A Short History of Freethought,* vol. ii., p. 177 (2nd ed.).

towards science; circumstances made him a democratic politician. He founded the alliance of Rationalism with science and democracy. Attracted at an early age by astronomy, he could not reconcile the very insignificant place in the universe occupied by our earth with the overwhelming importance ascribed to its human population by the scheme of salvation. But in rejecting that scheme as represented by the current Christianity he did not rely exclusively on the *a priori* arguments that astronomy suggests. Admitting the possibility of a divine revelation, he denies that any has been made to man beyond the structure of the universe itself. Part II. of the *Age of Reason* goes through the Bible with the object of showing that much of what it contains is inconsistent with the theory of its divine authorship. If Paine added nothing to what the English and French deists had said before him, he brought together the substance of their attacks on the Old and New Testament stories, and restated it in a clear, popular style. Much of what he said was afterwards practically conceded by Coleridge, and has since been more or less openly admitted by many who claim to be Christian believers.

Although originally intended for the French rather than for the English public, it was in England that the *Age of Reason* proved most successful; and an attempt was at once made to stop its circulation among the poorer classes, the shilling edition being suppressed while the half-crown edition remained unmolested. For selling one copy a bookseller named Williams was prosecuted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment

(1797). But this seems to have been an isolated case; nor did persecution for propagating unbelief at that time rage with anything like the virulence displayed a quarter of a century later.

Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*, long the official text-book of orthodox apologetics, appeared in the same year as Paine's attack, but without reference to it. The main positions defended are: That miracles are not antecedently incredible to anyone who believes that the world was created by a personal Being; that Christianity could not have been introduced into the world without a display of divine authority involving some departure from the usual course of nature; that such a departure was justified by the end in view; that miracles performed for that purpose are recorded and abundantly attested in early Christian literature; that the authenticity of the books containing their evidence is certain; and that the credibility of the witnesses is established by their willingness to undergo cruel torment rather than renounce their belief, as also by their acceptance of a severe morality on the strength of the Gospel promises.

In the present state of criticism it is clear to all, and it must have been clear to many in his own day, that Paley's case rests on a series of assumptions inconsistent with religious psychology and with the results of New Testament criticism. But his steady reliance on pure reason as distinguished from the methods of authority and mysticism, his clear-headedness and dialectical ability, furnish one more instance of the increased intellectual seriousness which the French Revolution had communicated to the English genius. And the need for

such a defence shows how pressing the attack had become.

Paley's *Evidences* sought to show that the Christian religion was a supernatural revelation. A few years later Wilberforce, in his *Practical View of Christianity*, achieved something much greater: he showed what that religion actually was. It is not, according to him, what the eighteenth century vainly imagined, an ethical code armed with new sanctions; but, first of all, an explanation of the fact, universally recognised as such by everyone who has eyes to see, that man is by nature and fatal heredity an utterly corrupt creature, alienated from his Creator, and justly subject to awful penalties for that original apostasy. The Christian revelation tells us that from that lost condition there is one way of escape, and one alone. It has been furnished by the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who vicariously took upon himself the punishment due to our sins, and whose satisfaction we may henceforth plead, if we accept it, in discharge of our liabilities before God. Without that plea the austerest virtue cannot save us; but the austerest virtue is felt as a life-long obligation by him who has accepted the transfer of his sin and its consequences to the Redeemer. God must reign without a rival in the thoughts and affections of the true believer; and on one day of the week he must think of nothing but God.

This conception of human life as the prelude to man's eternal existence under the form of a disembodied spirit, and interesting only by reference to another disembodied spirit eternally distinct from the world, was the very essence of the religious

movement begun two generations before by William Law and John Wesley, and remodelled a generation later by Keble and Newman. It is the form given by minds of a certain constitution in a certain stage of culture to the claim that disinterested, ideal ends shall be made paramount over the selfish, frivolous, and fleeting satisfactions of a merely animal existence. To realise those obligations under concrete personal forms gives them at first an extraordinary grip on the affections and the will, but eventually compromises and corrupts their idealism by union with a perishable body of class-interests and unwarrantable beliefs, frequently degenerating into abject superstition. Wilberforce and his co-religionists led the agitation for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, which, however, would neither have begun nor have succeeded without the co-operation of men who stood at the opposite pole of thought. But they were out of sympathy with the scientific and literary glories of the age; their religious scruples long hindered the advent of popular education, and their credulous conservatism made them the natural enemies of all reforms directed towards benefiting the people with the aid of the people itself.

Chapter III.

THE EPIC OF NATIONS

The war between England and Napoleon from 1803 to 1814–15 is generally regarded by historians as a simple continuation of the war between England and the French Republic from 1793 to 1802. And this much is true, that the personal hostility of Napoleon to England, as the chief obstacle to his design of creating a world-empire, had already begun to show itself when, as General Bonaparte, he led a French expedition to Egypt with the object of making it a stepping-stone to the conquest of India. But, apart from what the necessities of self-defence demanded of her, the attitude and intention of England in the second war differed widely from what they had been in the first. She had then appeared as the champion of order against license; she now appeared as the champion of liberty against oppression; while, conversely, the sword of France was transferred from the cause of emancipation to the cause of spoliation and enslavement. On France's side, indeed, the change had been long in progress, and the Republic must share the responsibility for it with the Empire. Coleridge's great *Ode to France* lives as an immortal record both of her shameless aggression on Switzerland and of its effect in alienating the sympathies of some that even the Terror had left unshaken supporters of her

democracy. But England as a State had never pretended to fight for Switzerland any more than for Venice; and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy continued to be the avowed object of her rulers until the haughty rebuff of the First Consul brought them to their senses. The second war, on the other hand, though nominally engaged on the question of our retention of Malta, was really provoked by new French aggressions on Holland and Switzerland. From the beginning England's own independence had been at stake; in five years the war became a struggle for the deliverance of the Iberian Peninsula, in which the Portuguese and Spanish peoples fought on our side; the Tyrolese were next enlisted in the same cause; then came the heroic resistance of the Russian people; and, finally, the whole German nation rose in arms against the tyranny of Napoleon.

English public opinion could not fail to be affected by so vast a transformation of the questions at issue. During a war avowedly waged for the restoration of liberty, the friends of liberty could no longer be denounced as Jacobins; and, although there was still wide disagreement about our Continental relations, the dividing line ran more on policy than on principle. It became the fashion in Whig circles to throw doubt on the regeneration of the Spanish people—as subsequently appeared, not without good reason—and to predict the eventual failure of our arms in the Peninsula—as, had it not been for Napoleon's incalculable Moscow campaign, they would, in fact, have failed. But no party wished the French to win, or regarded their victories as other than defeats for freedom. Even

before the Spanish rising William Cobbett, the most popular of Radical journalists, denounced Napoleon as a military despot, and ardently advocated the continuance of the war until his empire should have been shorn of those maritime conquests which made it a perpetual menace to the independence of England. And he also had the highest hopes of our ultimate success, if English arms were brought into alliance with the popular revolt against French oppression.

The change of opinion brought about by this altered aspect of foreign politics could not fail to react on the balance of parties at home. The coalition of the majority of the Whigs with Pitt, the acceptance of a royal pension by Burke, and the secession of Fox from Parliament had marked the lowest depth to which Liberalism ever sank in modern England; while the final destruction of Irish autonomy a little later had completed the triumph of reaction. A few years afterwards Pitt himself was making overtures to Fox which, had they been successful, would have resulted in giving his great rival an equal share of power. Owing to the King's dislike of Fox the negotiations fell through; but on Pitt's death even George III.'s obstinacy had to give way, and the Whigs returned to power for the first time since 1783, their brief predominance being signalised by the abolition of the slave trade, which had been impossible so long as Pitt lived. On two subsequent occasions they might have secured a considerable share of office under the Prince Regent had not the demands of their leaders been pitched too high.

It has been already mentioned that Pitt carried

the Union with Ireland partly by an informal promise to the Irish people that the law excluding Roman Catholics from Parliament should be repealed. We cannot doubt his sincerity, but he had reckoned without the King. The Archbishops of Canterbury and Armagh got hold of the royal ear and persuaded George III. that for him to agree to such a measure would involve the violation of his coronation oath and the forfeiture of his Crown. Finding that his master's scruples could not be overcome, the great Minister honourably resigned, and Addington, an incompetent favourite, was installed in his place. Never since the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty had the power of the Crown been so signally or so disastrously exercised. And, as a further aggravation of its absurdity, at this very crisis the King was overtaken by one of those fits of insanity the very liability to which would have permanently excluded him from any inferior office of authority. It operated in this instance to strengthen his position. By threatening to go mad if Catholic Emancipation were ever again mentioned to him George III. succeeded in exacting a pledge from Pitt and all Pitt's successors that silence should be kept on so irritating a subject.

As parties grew more evenly balanced the power of the Crown became more and more a decisive factor in the situation, those who yielded to the royal will naturally having the advantage of those who defied it. But the Tories who were King's men ultimately had to pay dear for their degrading subservience, as indeed also had the Crown itself by the loss of all its authority. On the other hand, the new exercise of prerogative proved the salvation

of the Whigs. By refusing to take the King's pledge they acquired an unwonted dignity, and even a certain moral splendour. The old charge of greed for office could no longer be urged against men who sacrificed office to a scrupulous regard for honour, peace, justice, and toleration. The charge of aristocratic exclusiveness fell pointless against the champions of a despised and down-trodden race. The charge of adhering to anti-quated shibboleths seemed ridiculous as against the generous orators whose programme was so enlarged as to include respect for a religion their ancestors had long proscribed. The charge of truckling to popular clamour grew ever more irrelevant as the mob came to side with the King, whose prejudices they shared.

Nor was this all. If the Whigs won by taking up Emancipation, their enemies lost to an even greater degree by not accepting it. The Crown became a symbol of unpatriotic obstinacy and folly. Nearly all the Whig leaders who had allied themselves with Pitt in 1794—Grenville, Fitz-william, Spencer, and Windham—accepted the Catholic claims and returned to their old allegiance. Some of the ablest Tories—Canning, Castlereagh, the Marquess Wellesley—while remaining within the party, sided on that question with their political opponents, and thus formed a continual source of embarrassment to their associates, terminating in open disruption when the Protestant leaders them-selves accepted Emancipation—a catastrophe by which the power of the Crown was finally destroyed. Meanwhile, the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland were driven into the arms of the Irish people, thus

helping to create a new difficulty for the English aristocracy and a new link between the cause of suffering nationalities and the cause of European liberty.

Although resumed under far different auspices, the war with France long did as little to overthrow the new despotism as had been done in the previous decade to overthrow the new democracy. Even where they were not directly pitted against individual genius, our incapable oligarchy continued to pile up disaster and debt. An expedition to Buenos Ayres was placed by Court influence under the command of General Whitelocke, whom a court-martial subsequently declared "unfit to serve his Majesty in any military capacity whatever."[1] It terminated in the defeat and capitulation of a strong British force. A far more important expedition to the Low Countries was ruined by being placed under the command of a royal favourite, Lord Chatham, whose incompetence did not escape even his own brother, Pitt. Expeditions against Constantinople and Alexandria came to an equally ignominious end. Finally, a war with the United States, for which the lawless arrogance of our rulers is chiefly responsible, was signalised by the defeat of General Packenham at New Orleans, with the loss of 3,000 Peninsular veterans.

It must not be supposed that our naval was much better than our military administration. After Nelson by his individual genius had annihilated France's sea power, French privateers continued to infest the English coast and to capture

[1] *Political History of England* (1800–1837), p. 57.

English vessels in full sight of English men-of-war.[1] During the American War the conflict at sea was generally carried on by duels between frigates, in which the Americans were most frequently victorious. This was due to no deficiency in seamanship or gallantry on our side, but to the fact that our champions were invariably over-matched, being ignorantly allowed to engage what, although called frigates, were almost equal to ships of the line. And that such ignorance prevailed was due to the intelligence department—if it deserves that name—of the English Admiralty. For, shortly before hostilities began, one of these so-called frigates had anchored at Spithead, and offered an opportunity for estimating her fighting strength as compared with our own frigates, which opportunity was utterly neglected.[2]

When the hour of victory arrived the same military mismanagement contrived to throw its fruits away. Fortune placed at the disposal of the oligarchy a young general, sprung from their own ranks, gifted, for a wonder, with military genius, and, by a greater wonder still, with the genius for making the most of it by assiduous cultivation. Arthur Wellesley, although of noble birth, was saved from the usual temptations of his order by a fortunate poverty which caused him to be removed at an early age from Eton to a French academy, and which, when his school days were over, obliged him to work for his living. Aristocratic connections gave him the one thing he had to thank them for—early and rapid promotion. India practised him in

[1] *The Croker Papers*, vol. i., p. 33.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 45.

the exercise of command. The best humanitarian traditions of the eighteenth century acting on a naturally kind heart imbued him with a habitual, and, as it happened, most politic consideration for the sufferings and susceptibilities of alien and helpless races.

In 1808 an opportunity offered itself to the English Government for employing this young hero in Europe. Castlereagh, at that time War Minister, gave Sir Arthur Wellesley the command of a small expedition sent to deliver Portugal from a French invasion. A few weeks after disembarking his troops at Lisbon, he defeated Marshal Junot in the decisive battle of Vimiero, only to find the fruits of victory torn from his grasp by an incompetent favourite of the Horse Guards. Castlereagh had persuaded his colleagues to raise the strength of the expedition from ten to thirty thousand men, but his efforts to place the enlarged force under Wellesley's command were baffled by the King.[1] No sooner had the victor of Assaye set sail than "two senior officers of no special ability,"[2] Sir Harry Burrard and Sir Hew Dalrymple, were placed over his head. Burrard arrived on the field of Vimiero at the moment when Sir Arthur was about to launch his reserves on the retreating French columns, just in time to assume the command and to forbid the pursuit, which would probably have ended in the unconditional surrender of Junot's whole army. As it was, on the very next morning Dalrymple, who in his turn had superseded Burrard, received proposals for a

[1] Lord Holland, *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party*, p. 15.
[2] *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. ix., p. 440.

capitulation from Junot. But by this time the French had occupied a position of such strength that, so far from surrendering, they were able to insist on being conveyed to their country by English ships, taking with them all the plunder they had amassed, and with a guarantee of immunity to the Portuguese traitors who had abetted their designs.

The Convention of Cintra, as it was called, aroused a storm of indignation in England, and the generals were put on their trial. On examination by a court of inquiry they were honourably acquitted; but Burrard and Dalrymple were not again employed, whereas Wellesley received the sole command of another expedition to Portugal in the following year. It is said that the Duke of York, undeterred by his disastrous experience in Flanders, had intended to claim that position for himself, and that his purpose was only defeated by certain scandalous disclosures so opportunely sprung on the public as to suggest a suspicion that the somewhat ignoble personage who brought them before Parliament, one Colonel Wardle, was really acting on behalf of the War Office, whose responsible heads had no other means of keeping the Duke at home.[1] At any rate, it appeared that the mistress of the Commander-in-Chief, an actress named Mrs. Clarke, gave out that her royal lover allowed himself to be guided by her recommendations in the choice of officers for promotion, and that, on the strength of this alleged favour, she had opened an office for the private sale of commissions. That such transactions did take place there could

[1] This is hinted by Lord Holland, *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party*, p. 16.

be no doubt; the only question was whether the Duke had a guilty knowledge of them or not. The most plausible theory seems to be that he was innocent, but that, being a very loquacious person, he let Mrs. Clarke into the secret of his intention to bestow free commissions on certain deserving candidates, and that she profited by the information to levy toll on them under the pretence that the promotion which would anyhow have been theirs had been obtained by her interest.[1] On any view the affair was a scandalous one, and the Duke, though acquitted of connivance with his mistress's practices, had the decency to resign. His brother, the Prince Regent, subsequently restored him to the Command-in-Chief, an office which he otherwise filled very creditably; but by that time the supposed object of the Parliamentary attack had been gained, and, whatever else Sir Arthur Wellesley had reason to complain of, Court influence could no longer be turned against him. Nobody seems to have noticed in this affair that the objectionable thing was for commissions in the army to be sold by anyone to anyone on any terms.

None gave such eloquent expression to public feeling at this time as the poet Wordsworth, in a pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra. In a private letter the author of *The Prelude*, then not yet a "lost leader," prescribes two things as "absolutely necessary to the country—a thorough reform in Parliament and a new course of education."[2]

The new education of public opinion had already

[1] Kinglake, *Invasion of the Crimea*, vol. vii., pp. 418–19 (Cabinet ed.).

[2] Knight, *Life of Wordsworth*, vol. ii., p. 130.

begun years before Wordsworth wrote those lines —with little help or countenance, it must be owned, from the poet himself — under the form of a strenuous criticism on contemporary literature and life. The first collective impulse came from Edinburgh, with its brilliant University, its intellectual society, and its highly cultivated band of advocates. Among the forces making for culture and freedom in the northern capital, Dugald Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy since 1785, must be given the foremost place. As a thinker Stewart merely expounded Reid's shallow and reactionary metaphysics. But, as an educator and orator of the Chair, he exercised an unrivalled power of exciting noble enthusiasm among his young hearers. In society he was supported by a wife of surpassing charm and high intellectual interests, the "Ivy" of Lord Dudley's recently published letters. With the closing of the Continent it had become usual for English families of distinction to visit or even to reside at Edinburgh for pleasure or education; and, among others, the sons of great Whig magnates were sometimes sent to sit at the feet of a teacher who, even under Melville's reign of terror, had made no secret of his sympathy with the Revolution. Among his pupils were two future Prime Ministers, Russell and Palmerston, to whom must be added Lord Henry Petty (afterwards Lord Lansdowne), Ward (afterwards Earl Dudley), and Lord Webb Seymour. Some years later we find another future Whig Premier, William Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne), studying under Professor Millar at Glasgow.

From this fertilising contact between the English and Scottish intellects arose the *Edinburgh Review*, long the chief organ of Liberal opinion in Great Britain. The first idea of it was due to an Englishman, the great humorist Sydney Smith, who also edited the opening number, published in October, 1802; but much the greater mass of contributions came from Scotch lawyers, among whom Jeffrey, Horner, and Brougham stood foremost for ability and power. In after years also the only articles of permanent literary value, with the possible exception of Sir James Stephen's, were written by Carlyle and Sir William Hamilton, who were Scotchmen, or by Macaulay and Mill, whose fathers were Scotch.

Carlyle has described Jeffrey as the greatest of destructive critics. But this is a complete misrepresentation. Although holding rationalistic opinions, Jeffrey never attacked the reigning theology in print. Nor were his politics democratic, although he wished to reinforce existing institutions with a large popular element, advising the Whig aristocracy to seek support among the people. Unlike some other Whigs, he hated Napoleon; but, being of a desponding temperament, he opposed the Spanish policy of the Government—which, after all, only succeeded by a happy chance— a step which led to the severance of Walter Scott from the *Edinburgh Review*, and the transference of his support to the *Quarterly Review*, founded in 1809 as the chief organ of the reactionary principle in politics and literature.

On the whole, we may say that the principles of the *Edinburgh*, as guided by Jeffrey, coincided

with the central line of English political progress for the next two generations after its birth; but to maintain the movement in that line forces of a more radical direction had to lend their aid.

At that time the chief Parliamentary representative of the Reform party in England was Sir Francis Burdett, and its chief literary representative was William Cobbett. Each in his way did good work, but it was critical rather than constructive. The real founder of English philosophical Radicalism was a Scotchman, James Mill. This remarkable thinker, according to George Grote the greatest intellect that he had ever encountered, owed his enthusiasm for philosophy to Dugald Stewart, and perhaps his enthusiasm for liberty also. At any rate, he came up to London in 1802 a confirmed Liberal, though no Jacobin. His intimacy with Bentham begins not later than 1808. During the Revolution Bentham had been a high Tory. In 1809 we find him writing a Catechism for Reformers, in which universal suffrage is advocated. The dates suggest that he had been converted by Mill.[1] At any rate, Mill is henceforward the centre of what has come to be known as the Benthamite school. Dumont had first revealed Bentham to England and to all Europe by his French version of the *Theory of Legislation*, published in 1802. James Mill allied Utilitarianism with the political economy of Malthus and Ricardo, with the associationist psychology of Hartley, with a renewed study of Greek ideas, and with a comprehensive educational system, embracing all these as

[1] Elie Halévy, *Le Radicalisme Philosophique*, vol. ii., p. 196.

its elements, of which his illustrious son offers, so far, the only complete example. It is probable, as I have said, that he also allied Utilitarianism with democracy. Under his guidance the school adopted that extreme view, long supported by English Radicalism, for which the moderate Whig Reform Bill was finally substituted as a working compromise, with James Mill's complete approval. But this belongs to a period at which we have not yet arrived.

What best proves the growing liberality of the Napoleonic period is the spread of education among all classes and the lively interest shown in competing schemes for the education of the people. J. W. Ward, Dugald Stewart's pupil, who took his B.A. at Oxford in 1802, on revisiting the University in 1812 finds to his astonishment that during those ten years it has been transformed into a place of education. Examinations have ceased to be a matter of form; rioting and drunkenness are quite exceptional; idleness is discreditable, and reading the correct thing.[1] Writing between three and four years later, Coleridge contrasts the steady and serious tone of both Oxford and Cambridge with what it had been thirty years before, mentioning particularly "the zest in the pursuit of knowledge and academic distinction in a large and increasing number,"[2] associating it as part of a more general movement with "predominant anxiety concerning the education and principles of their

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy*, p. 182.
[2] Coleridge, *Church and State*, pp. 354–55 (ed. of 1839).

children in all the respectable classes of the community." Godwin, with ideals very unlike Coleridge's, observes, writing to Shelley in 1812, that between then and twenty years before the alteration in the men of these islands and of Europe was immense, greater progress having been made during that interval "than in any hundred years preceding."[1] And Jeffrey, no optimist, writing in 1809, tells the readers of the *Edinburgh* that "the people are, upon the whole, both more moral and more intelligent than they ever were in any former period."[2] In a word, from the time that we ceased to assail the French Revolution—and even a little before—its true principles began to spread and thrive among us.

Among the higher and middle classes the new demand for education was met to a considerable extent by existing endowments and by voluntary efforts. The demand for primary education had to struggle not only against the want of endowments, but also against the undisguised hostility of some among the well-to-do. "If there was any principle reverenced as indisputable by almost the whole adherents of the party in power," even little more than a century ago, "it was that the ignorance of the people was necessary for their obedience to the law."[3] Accordingly, even an unsuccessful attempt to do away with that ignorance by legislation must be noted as a sign of the times. Under Grenville's Ministry (1807) Whitbread, a prominent Whig, brought in a Bill providing free education for the

[1] Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii., p. 107.
[2] Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, vol. iv., p. 129.
[3] Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, vol. i., pp. 67–68.

poor in every parish throughout England. After passing the Commons against Windham's passionate opposition, probably in the assurance that it would be rejected by the Lords,[1] it was duly rejected, three Bishops voting for the Bill and fifteen against it. Archbishop Manners Sutton objected to Whitbread's plan that it would take education from the control of the Establishment—in his opinion a most dangerous innovation.[2]

Meanwhile private enterprise was supplying the place of State action. Several years earlier Andrew Bell, an East Indian army chaplain, had struck out a system of mutual instruction in schools, known afterwards from the place of its origin as the Madras method. The same idea occurred independently to Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster in London, who put it in practice on a large scale, carrying on an active propaganda for the system in all parts of the kingdom, and securing the support of sundry royal and noble patrons. With their aid he founded in 1809 the Royal Lancastrian Institution, a name afterwards changed to the British and Foreign School Society. Lancaster was a very religious man, but his plan was to teach religion simply by reading the Bible. Church people objected to this as tending to undermine the Establishment. Their attacks on Lancaster stirred up Bell to start a rival agitation for placing elementary teaching under the control of the Church. His efforts led to the foundation of the National Society in 1811. Between the two systems a bitter feud

[1] Romilly, *Memoirs*, vol. ii., p. 222.
[2] Clayton, *The Bishops and Legislation*, p. 59.

sprang up, and has continued down to the present day. The leading Whigs and the *Edinburgh Review* sided with Lancaster, the Tories and the *Quarterly* with Bell. Herbert Marsh, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, for those times a wonderfully liberal Biblical critic, made himself remarkable for the energy he threw into the sectarian cause; and Coleridge, the most advanced theologian of the day, lost no opportunity for attacking Lancaster with ludicrous animosity.

As an instrument for imparting knowledge the Madras method eventually broke down; but the Bell and Lancaster schools gave an impulse to popular education that has never since died out; while the feud between the two systems has brought religious differences into a stimulating connection with party politics, and raised both into the sphere of high national interests.

In physical science the period of the second French war fulfilled to some extent the promises of the revolutionary epoch, but was less productive of original thought. England suffered intellectually by her long isolation from the Continent. None were found to develop Erasmus Darwin's evolutionary ideas. Young's undulatory theory of light was allowed to be crushed by Brougham's ignorant and insolent criticism of it in the *Edinburgh Review* (1803). The most important pioneer work was done by two Scotchmen, Dr. Thomas Brown and Sir Charles Bell. Brown, in his treatise *On Cause and Effect*, took up Hume's theory of causation and introduced the idea of invariable sequence into the philosophy of science. Bell in 1811, after

four years of investigation, announced the distinction between the sensory and motor nerves, and explained the nature of their connection with the spinal cord. It seems characteristic of the time that both achievements were rather analytic than synthetic and constructive, probing phenomena to the bottom, not exhibiting them in their systematic connection. Thus they fall into line with Davy's contemporary decomposition of the alkalis rather than with the great theories of Dalton, Young, and Erasmus Darwin.

As compared with the revolutionary period, literature also shows a distinct decline both in poetry and fiction. The French and German inspirations had spent much of their force. Romanticism still prevails, but declines on a more realistic plane of representation. As a part of this realism we find the popular poets of the age reflecting the new political situation created by the resistance to Napoleon's aggressive career. On the Tory side we have Scott's series of versified narratives, romantic indeed, but strictly subordinating the emotions of wonder, terror, and sexual passion, so freely employed by his predecessors, to the motives of picturesque historical association, of local colour, and of loyalty, whether under the form of national patriotism or of the intenser devotion given by a clansman to his chief. On the Whig side we have Byron's first two Cantos of *Childe Harold*, where a certain reluctant sympathy with the victims of French rapacity and with the English armies sent to deliver them struggles against a good Foxite's dominant detestation of all

war as such; while the romantic use of horror and voluptuousness as imaginative excitements is not forgotten, and hollow eighteenth-century abstractions still crowd the scene. But in the portions giving the new poet's impressions of modern Greece reminiscence becomes prophecy; the traditions of republican liberty and heroism derived from Harrow and Cambridge spring to life before the entrancing spectacles of Parnassus and Marathon, consecrating this young English nobleman to be the future augur and leader in the coming war of opinion where the spirit of nationality and the spirit of individual liberty, retrieving France's errors, were to combine their forces against the spirit of feudal and absolutist reaction.

Childe Harold was followed by a series of dazzling metrical romances in which the same sympathy with Greece and the same hatred for her Turkish oppressors ally themselves to a general spirit of revolt against cramping conventions. Byron's extravagant admiration for the great literary conventionalist, Pope, seems at first sight inconsistent with such an attitude. But it was merely another aspect of his pervading liberalism. By Pope Byron meant the classic tradition of English poetry, the side on which it represented republican liberty as against the reactionary romanticism of Coleridge, Southey, and Scott.

Byron's friend Moore contributed to the cause of nationalities by the publication of his *Irish Melodies* in 1807. As poetry they have little value, but the musical accompaniments to which their author sang them in Whig drawing-rooms gave the words and sentiments a certain social importance, and

combined with his versatile productivity, particularly as a biographer, to make him a power in the party.

Wordsworth continued a political Radical till the end of the war, supporting the various patriotic movements against Napoleon, but still an ardent admirer of Fox; still, as we have seen, a Parliamentary Reformer; still no Christian, but a Platonist in the *Ode on Immortality*; still a pantheist in the *Excursion* (1814); and, what is perhaps even more significant, in the same poem an advocate of universal education.

Maria Edgeworth, in the silence of Jane Austen, the greatest novelist of the period, obeys the same tendency by striking into the didactic vein which she never afterwards forsook. Her Benthamite morality, too, offers a silent but not unregarded protest against Evangelical mysticism.

It has often been observed that without the industrial revolution England could never have fought the war with Napoleon, still less come out victorious from the conflict with that almost superhuman genius. But, in fact, had it not been for the industrial revolution there would have been no war, or at least none on so vast a scale. The English colonisation of America, the English conquest of India, had been largely suggested by the hope of gain. Both had been disputed by France with the object of diverting that gain to herself. In both regions French ambition and enterprise succumbed before the genius of the elder Pitt. Twenty years later it was imagined that the loss of her North American colonies would involve the commercial ruin of the mother country;

and the object of her old rival in helping the insurgents was to hasten on that consummation, which the English Government on its side fought desperately to avert. Both were deceived. The defeated power gained enormously in wealth, while the victorious Bourbon monarchy paid by its own extinction for an act of treason against constituted authority, just as the New Monarchy in England perished by the reaction of that very Reformation whose success it had secured in order to destroy the last check on its despotism a century before.

French policy, however, survived the Bourbons, and even provided itself with a far more powerful instrument. When the first ferment of the Revolution had subsided the adventurer whom it raised to supreme eminence in the State at once took up the tradition of his predecessors and rushed to strike for India once more, this time taking the path of Alexander through Egypt and Syria. In the pursuit of that chimera he lost a fleet and an army, and nearly wrecked his own career; but, returning to France a fugitive, won her throne by a lucky throw, and sat down once more with full pockets to play the game of universal empire at a board where European kingdoms were counters, India and Asia remaining the stakes through it all. To defeat England's German and Russian allies in the field was the least of his difficulties, each military success counting but as a means towards the higher end of undermining her commercial position, each new invasion being determined by the fatal necessity for closing every Continental market to her trade. His tragic Peninsular and Russian expeditions were undertaken that the excluding cordon might

be extended without a break from Riga to Lisbon, and round again from Lisbon to Odessa.

In the battle between the French Revolution and oligarchy revolution had won. But in the battle between the industrial revolution and militarism industry won. It seemed as if England's material resources were multiplied by the very measures taken to destroy them. Napoleon's Continental system, originally adopted as a reply to the paper blockade of the coast from Brest to the Elbe, was in its turn met by an Order in Council "forbidding neutrals to trade between the ports of France and her allies, or between the ports of nations which should observe the Berlin decree, on pain of the confiscation of the ship and cargo."[1] Its effect was to throw the whole carrying trade into British hands. At the same time our immunity from invasion, combined with the relative insecurity of Continental industry, gave us a manufacturing monopoly. As a consequence of this privileged position the trade of the United Kingdom, measured by the sum of its exports and imports, was in 1815 exactly double what the trade of Great Britain had been in 1795.[2] "The value of taxable income from lands, houses, etc., was estimated at forty-five million pounds in 1798 and at sixty millions in 1815."[3] "The Census of 1801 showed an increase of eleven per cent., the Census of 1811 an increase of fourteen per cent., the Census of 1821 an increase of twenty-one per cent."[4] The tonnage of shipping belonging to Great Britain

[1] *The Political History of England* (1800–1837), p. 55.
[2] *Social England*, vol. v., p. 606.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 611.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 608.

and Ireland increased over sixty-two per cent. between 1793 and 1813.

But as the political revolution in France had greatly increased the power of the central Government, so the industrial revolution in England made the rich richer and the poor poorer. It was the capitalist manufacturers who gained by the increasing volume of trade, while the landholders gained both by agricultural improvements and by the rise in the price of corn. Wheat rose from 49s. 3d. per quarter in 1793 to 69s. in 1799, to 113s. 10d. in 1800, and 106s. in 1810.[1] This was partly due to legislation. "In 1791 a duty of 24s. 3d. was imposed as long as English wheat was less than 50s. a quarter; if English wheat was over 50s., the duty was 2s. 6d. In 1804 foreign corn was practically prohibited from importation if English wheat was less than 53s. a quarter; in 1815 the prohibition was extended till the price of English wheat was 80s. a quarter."[2]

Meanwhile the cost of paying for the war was thrown as much as possible on the poor, every necessity and convenience of daily life being taxed, and the incomes of capitalists and landowners not paying their fair share.[3] By the system of supplementing agricultural wages from the poor-rate the farmers were even enabled to throw part of the maintenance of labour on householders who often could ill afford it.

Strikes were penal. "The Act of 1800 was applied to all occupations, unions, or associations

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 375.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 434–35.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 375.

of workmen for the purpose of obtaining an advance in wages or lessening the hours of work."[1]

This Act seems to have been passed without any debate. The penalty for violating its provisions was three months' imprisonment without, or two months with, hard labour.[2]

The wages to increase which the recipients could not combine are described as "excessively low."[3] "In 1800 the average wages of artisans were 18s. a week in London. They gradually rose by about seventy-five per cent. during the years of dearth.....When greater plenty prevailed they fell. In the country they were about a third less than in London."[4] Spinners were better paid, getting 24s. to 26s. a week from 1808 to 1815. Weavers, on the other hand, were miserably off, their wages falling from 13s. 10d. a week in 1802, when wheat cost only 67s. 9d. a quarter, to 4s. 3½d. in 1817, when it stood at 94s.[5] The introduction of machinery, leading as it did to the employment of women and children in the factories, is responsible for this decline. It also had the effect, in some instances, of throwing great numbers out of work altogether. Thus in 1811–12 a particular frame for stocking-weaving came into use at Nottingham which enabled one man to do the work of many, throwing the superfluous hands out of employment. Their remedy was to break into houses and destroy the frames—a

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 417.
[2] Stephen, *History of the Criminal Law in England*, vol. iii., pp. 207–8.
[3] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 424.
[4] Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, p. 494.
[5] H. de B. Gibbins, pp. 424–25.

reprehensible act of violence, but more excusable than the conduct of the landowning monopolists who at this time were excluding foreign corn in order to keep up their own rents. The legislature, however, thought differently, and passed a Bill punishing the frame-breakers with death. On this occasion Byron, who opposed the second reading, told the Lords that he had traversed the seat of war in the Peninsula, and had been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey; but never under the most despotic of infidel governments had he beheld such squalid wretchedness as he had seen since his return in the very heart of a Christian country.[1]

What Byron saw was only a specimen of the distress that prevailed through all the manufacturing districts of Great Britain, usually accompanied by the destruction of machinery and even of mills. Other causes besides the substitution of mechanical power for human labour had concurred to bring it about. Since 1797 cash payments had been suspended, and inflated issues of paper, combined with the bad harvest of 1809, had resulted in a terrible commercial crisis by which great numbers of operatives were thrown out of employment. Another crisis followed in 1814, caused this time by a good harvest, which, thanks to the protectionist system, ruined the farmers and obliged more than a third of the country banks to stop payment. Manufacturers suffered in consequence, and the destruction of machinery recommenced.[2]

[1] Byron, *Letters*, vol. ii., p. 429.

[2] Harriet Martineau, *History of England* (1800–1815), p. 398. (Bohn's ed.)

The immediate effect of peace with France was not to diminish but to aggravate the distress. Exhausted by a long war, the Continental countries could not pay for our goods in money, for they had none to spare, nor in their own goods, for these were kept out by our protective tariff. As a consequence, in 1816 our export trade had fallen sixteen per cent., and our import trade twenty per cent., from the level reached two years before. At the same time the value of the currency rose with the prospect of a return to cash payments, and the price of commodities rose with it, but to a considerably greater extent.[1] A bad harvest came to complete the catastrophe. In 1816 the price of wheat rose from 52s. to 103s. per quarter. Rioting, accompanied by depredation, incendiarism, and machine-breaking, prevailed all over the country. It seemed as if Napoleon, though fallen, had dragged down the conquering nation in a common ruin with himself.

We have now to consider how the Industrial Terror, which was an episode in the Industrial Revolution, modified public opinion during the first years of the Peace. But that is a subject which must be reserved for the following chapter.

[1] Spencer Walpole, *History of England*, vol. i., pp. 330–31.

Chapter IV.

THE LIBERAL ODYSSEY

We have seen in the foregoing chapter how the great Napoleonic War was accompanied by a remarkable rally of Liberalism, and generally by a more hopeful and progressive tone in the leading circles of opinion. Unfortunately, that forward-looking movement received a sudden check from the economic evils which war had brought in its train. The great reaction against liberal thought of every kind commonly associated with Burke's attack on the French Revolution did not really set in with full virulence until the years following Waterloo, when all danger from France was over. In the early nineties it had been made clear enough that the English people were fairly satisfied with the Government under which they lived, and certainly had no wish to imitate the behaviour of their neighbours across the Channel. Canning's *Knife-grinder*, if it meant anything at all, meant that the poor had no political or social grievances. Pitt became unpopular not because of his repressive measures, but because of the war. The war itself became popular when it was waged to protect England from invasion or to deliver Spain from oppression. The old King grew in his subjects' affection, and the people were content to be guided by his opinion on the Catholic claims.[1]

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy*, p. 85.

Now, it happened that the disappearance of George III. from the political scene in 1810 nearly coincided with the beginning of that widespread distress and discontent which the war at first obscured or palliated, but which the restoration of peace brought into full relief. Royal authority passed from the most honoured and steadfast of English sovereigns to the one who as Regent and King made the royal office more despicable and more despised than it had been made by any of his predecessors since Edward II. Tories might affect an enthusiastic loyalty for the hereditary representative of the Plantagenets and Tudors; but they must have felt that one who exhibited the vices of Louis XV. without his ability, and the vacillating incompetence of Louis XVI. without his respectability, was hardly a chief round whom they could rally with much confidence of success.

The interests symbolised by this degraded dandy were diversified, enormous, and in extreme peril. Capitalism, whether agricultural or manufacturing, was directly threatened by mob-violence, and indirectly threatened by the agitation for Parliamentary Reform. Those who advocated a large addition to the popular element in the House of Commons made no secret of their intention to use it as leverage for abolishing the protective tariff which mill-owners and landlords alike regarded as necessary to their existence. What was at least equally serious, the fundholders were threatened with the loss in whole or part of the interest on their investments. It was argued, not without some slight show of reason, that most of the war loans had been contracted in a depreciated paper

currency, and that therefore to pay the interest in gold would be robbing the poor to make the rich still richer. A reduction of twenty per cent. or so on the dividends was freely discussed; and to make up for the contemplated cutting-down of taxes all round it seemed not unlikely that a reformed Parliament would sponge out the debt altogether.

It has been already mentioned that Bentham, probably under the influence of James Mill, had by this time gone over to the democratic side, accepting even the extreme proposal of universal suffrage. Law reform had always been the object nearest to the heart of the old philosopher himself, and it had been adopted as a standing article in the programme of his followers. Now his contemplated reforms avowedly struck at the profits of the legal profession, and so far were likely to throw the whole of that influential body, conservative enough by nature, into the ranks of the Tory party. No professional interest (except the hangman's) was directly touched by Romilly's endeavours to reduce the number of capital offences; but none who trembled for the security of their property could view without alarm proposals calculated to diminish the penalties by which it was safeguarded.

Of all corporations the Anglican clergy, with the Bishops and the Universities at their head, were by training and association the most uncompromising enemies of progress, the most disposed to identify innovation of any kind with the extreme of revolutionary Radicalism. Their privileged position in the State was endangered by the Catholic and Dissenting claims, their tithes by free trade in corn, their Catechism by unsectarian education,

their infallible Bible by the advance of science, and all these collectively by whatever was involved in Parliamentary Reform.

These general motives for resistance were strengthened by the presence within the Church of gross abuses upheld by a powerful though small body of opinion, while those who suffered by them, though many, were weak and disunited. As an illustration of the length to which obstruction could be carried on such points, it may be mentioned that when Perceval, a Tory of the Tories, and personally most clerical, proposed in 1808 a measure compelling absentee pluralists to provide resident curates at a moderate salary for their neglected benefices, his Bill was opposed by the whole bench of Bishops, and rejected on the third reading without a division by the House of Lords. It was carried in 1813 by Lord Harrowby, a Liberal Peer, "amid the suppressed murmurs of the holders of Church property,"[1] but not without leaving a presumption of what might be expected from them in the coming conflict.

Finally, a much more limited but not insignificant contribution to Tory opinion came from the West Indian planters. With the success of the agitation for the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, Wilberforce and his friends turned their efforts against slavery itself, which before that had been carefully left out of the campaign. And the planters could point to this rise in the demands of their assailants as a warning example of what might follow on a first concession to Jacobinical attacks on the

[1] Walpole, *Life of Spencer Perceval*, vol. i., pp. 286–87.

rights of property in the name of the rights of man.

This coalition of prejudice and panic put an end for many years to the Liberal influences which had more or less asserted themselves in the Cabinet or in Parliament after Pitt's death. Power steadily gravitated to the most reactionary members of the Tory party. In 1810 the struggle for the Premiership between Canning and Perceval was decided in Perceval's favour, his rival quitting the Government and not returning to office until 1816, when he rejoined it to defend the policy of repression. The Marquess Wellesley resigned in 1812, and remained in opposition as a pro-Catholic and Free Trader for nearly ten years. Huskisson, the future Free Trader, gave his support in 1815 to extreme Protectionist legislation. After Perceval's death the leading spirits in the Regent's Government were Liverpool, Eldon, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth. All four opposed Catholic Emancipation, at that time the irreducible minimum of concession to Liberal principles—Castlereagh on grounds of expediency, his colleagues on grounds of sincere conviction. Liverpool was an average stolid Tory, distinguished only for his unrivalled power of keeping in office. Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, was Conservatism itself personified; he hated innovation as such and resisted it at all points, defending not only every political abuse, but even the atrocities of the English criminal law. The Court of Chancery is largely indebted for its evil reputation to the dilatoriness with which he allowed enormous arrears of business to accumulate during his tenure of office. As a statesman Castlereagh was the ablest and best of the four. His

administration of the war during its last years proved highly efficient ; and at a critical moment he held together the European coalition against Napoleon when everything depended on its stability. After the peace he became the most unpopular member of the Government, chiefly because as Leader of the House of Commons he had to defend its policy of repression and of resistance to Reform. In reality, so far as any single individual deserved to be made responsible for the state of the country, Sidmouth was that one. This pompous mediocrity is best known to history as the Addington who replaced Pitt in the confidence of George III. when the understanding on which the union with Ireland was carried had to be violated, that the royal conscience might be relieved at the expense of the nation's honour and safety. Raised to the peerage under the title of Viscount Sidmouth, the same inglorious leader contrived to make his way into every subsequent Cabinet but one, until he became Home Secretary in 1812, continuing in that office for the next ten years. His administration is marked by riot and conspiracy on the one side, repression and bloodshed on the other. In 1819 a large open-air meeting held in St. Peter's Fields, near Manchester, to petition for Parliamentary Reform, was attacked by mounted yeomanry and dispersed with some loss of life. At about the same time a batch of coercive measures known as the Six Acts were passed, some of them legitimate enough, but others having for their sole object to put down all adverse criticism of the Government at public meetings or in the Press. Twenty years before, Portland's administration

of the Home Office had preserved order without anything like the same ferocity. It must be owned that some of the Whig leaders supported Sidmouth's coercive measures; but they were not responsible for the policy that made force the only remedy for discontent.

The weakest, or at any rate the most assailable point in the Tory position was, as I have said, the character of the Regent, whose vices did the cause of free representation as much good as the virtues of his father had done it harm. For a time the popularity of his daughter and heiress, the Princess Charlotte, screened him and his office from attack; with her death the last hope of the English Monarchy seemed to expire, leaving it a prey to internecine strife. For if the Regent's daughter was dead, his wife, the unfortunate Caroline of Brunswick, Princess of Wales, still lived, serving the Opposition as a pawn with which to hold the future King in check for the present, and to push up to queen for his destruction at an opportune crisis of the game. So long as the Whigs counted on his favour she had been a Tory heroine; after he deserted them she passed to their side. When the Continent was reopened to English travellers, the Princess, a born Bohemian, took the opportunity of going abroad, and wandered about in very compromising company, watched everywhere by her husband's spies. On the death of George III., by Brougham's orders,[1] she at once returned to England, claiming

[1] This has recently been placed beyond all doubt by the publication of a private letter from Brougham to Creevey. (*Creevey Papers*, vol. i., p. 297.)

to be officially recognised as Queen. On landing she found herself the heroine of the Reform party and of the people. Her journey from Dover to London was a triumphal progress. The King and his Ministers met the attack by laying before the House of Lords a Bill to dissolve his marriage and to deprive the Queen of her title, evidence of her alleged misconduct being supplied in justification of the measure. For several weeks the country was deluged with filth. A general impression prevailed that the King was morally though not legally debarred by his own profligacy from seeking to divorce a wife who on the least merciful view had been much less guilty than himself. The Bill passed its third reading in the Lords by a small majority; then it was dropped amid the rejoicings of the people. How little they cared for her personally, how entirely their jubilation was meant as an expression of passionate hostility to the King, appeared soon afterwards, when her frantic efforts to be present at his coronation were met with indifference by some and with insult by others in the vast multitude assembled round the approaches to Westminster Abbey. A few days after the ceremony Caroline died broken-hearted, but the work for which Brougham had used her was accomplished. The personal power of the monarch had received a mortal blow, although it still lingered for several years in the agonies of dissolution, with influence enough to prevent the formation of a united and powerful executive.

Great events do not spring from trifling causes; but these really do determine what after all is a trifling circumstance in great events, that is the

precise moment of their occurrence. What people called the Queen's Trial was such a trifling event. By it we can date with precision the beginning of a new era, just as by the divorce of Catherine of Arragon we can date with precision the beginning of the English Reformation. Brougham, ablest and most energetic of the first Edinburgh Reviewers, and since 1815 a Parliamentary power of the first order, attained the zenith of popularity by his defence of the Queen before the House of Lords. This position made him a sort of link between the Radicals, with whom he had become disgusted, and the kid-glove Whigs of Holland House, who held scornfully aloof from the dirty work of agitation. On the other hand, the Ministry was weakened to an equal extent by the secession of Canning. This had been postponed till after the withdrawal of the Divorce Bill, but was understood to be connected with an attachment of old standing for the Queen, which made him unwilling to share in the responsibility for her persecution. How great was the loss is shown by the fact that his eloquence had just before this induced the House to reject a motion of Brougham's tending to abridge the power of the Crown by a rearrangement of the King's Civil List.[1] Next year the weakened and divided Ministry had to accept an important economical reform proposed by Joseph Hume, a disciple of Bentham, and largely to reduce the expenditure in deference to the demand of the people.

Under the terrible stress of the Tory reaction

[1] Walpole, vol. ii., pp. 88–89.

Whitbread and Romilly had committed suicide, Francis Horner died young, Ponsonby not indeed young, but prematurely. It was now the turn of those in power to succumb. Within little more than a twelvemonth Liverpool temporarily withdrew from public life, disabled by a domestic calamity, Sidmouth wearily surrendered the Home Office, and Castlereagh, now Marquess of Londonderry, died by his own hand. These things were not accidents, but incidents of strife, almost of civil war.

The triumph of titled obstruction was over, and untitled reformers made their way into the seats of power. Canning became Foreign Minister, forced on the reluctant King by public opinion; and in returning to office he also returned to the Liberal principles of his youth. Robert Peel, who had already begun to accept the guidance of public opinion, took Sidmouth's place as Home Secretary. Huskisson was not indeed made what he ought to have been, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the incompetent Vansittart being relieved in that exalted position by the somewhat less incompetent Robinson; but as President of the Board of Trade he directed the financial policy of England and initiated those great Free Trade measures which were to restore the prosperity she had lost. Eldon still unhappily remained Chancellor, to the ruin of his broken-hearted suitors; but it was beyond his power to arrest the progress of Criminal Law Reform. This had been long and unsuccessfully advocated by Romilly, a disciple of Bentham. After his death Mackintosh took up the work and

scored a first victory over the Government in 1819. Next year he persuaded Parliament to repeal the death-penalty for private stealing in shops.[1] In 1823 he proposed a more comprehensive scheme of reform, but was induced to surrender it into the hands of Peel, by whom much of it was carried out during his tenure of the Home Office. In the same year Peel also put an end to the depreciated paper currency, which Cobbett, the chief Radical journalist, had long denounced. In 1824 the Combination Laws making strikes penal were repealed.

Still the true chief of the remodelled Government and its most magnetic figure was not Peel, but he whom Heine has called the great, the noble, the adored Canning,[2] a phrase which, coming from such a writer, proves Canning to have been also the acknowledged leader of European Liberalism. His name brings us back to that world-wide movement by which the French Revolution, after its perversion and degradation under Napoleon, after its apparent overthrow by the allied Sovereigns, resumed its chequered course in a series of conflicts whose final outcome is not yet decided.

We have seen how French aggressions on the independence of other nationalities first alienated English Liberal opinion from the Revolutionary cause, and ultimately brought the English reactionaries themselves to become champions of liberty, not only in the Iberian Peninsula, but all over

[1] *Life of Mackintosh*, vol. ii., p. 390.

[2] Heine, *Englische Fragmente*, xii. Alison says that he was "looked up to as the head of the Liberal party throughout the globe" (*History of Europe*, 1815–52; vol. iv., p. 119).

Europe. It now remains to add that the peoples were induced to join their hereditary Sovereigns in the final revolt against Napoleon by an understanding that the recovery of independence from a foreign power would be followed by the concession of constitutional liberty at home. That understanding was violated, and the restored Governments had nothing more pressing than to reinstate, so far as they could, the old system of privilege and superstition, entering even into a compact, known as the Holy Alliance, for mutual assistance in repressing their subjects' revolutionary aspirations. With this compact the English Cabinet had nothing to do, although Castlereagh was accused, wrongly as would seem, of giving it a moral support. Still, the unjust treatment of Ireland, to which he had made himself a party, and his coercive rule at home, placed him in line with the Continental despots. Had he lived to attend the Congress of Verona, it is possible that public opinion might have assigned him a very different position—the position actually won by his successor, Canning.

Years before Napoleon's fall a movement destined to represent, and represent alone, the revolutionary cause during the first period of legitimist reaction, had begun to take shape in the Western hemisphere. The French conquest of Spain gave the Spanish colonies in America a long-desired opportunity for asserting their independence; and by the time that the French armies had cleared out of Spain her dominion in the New World was practically at an end. Nevertheless, the conflict, which was fought out with far more heroism than that between England and her Colonies, continued

to rage for many years, furnishing a new field for their energies to great numbers of English soldiers and sailors whom the peace had thrown out of work, and promising to furnish English manufacturers with new markets for their wares when the Spanish monopoly should have been definitely abolished.

At length the sword of oppression turned against its own heart. The armies assembled in the Spanish sea-ports for the re-conquest of America mutinied and declared for constitutional government. The movement spread with electric rapidity all over the country, and in a few weeks King Ferdinand swore fidelity to the Constitution of 1812. Naples followed suit immediately, and another Ferdinand went through the same comedy as his cousin at Madrid. In Portugal the tyrannical regency was deposed and a representative assembly convened. Next year an abortive insurrectionary movement broke out in Roumania, followed by a more hopeful Greek rising in the Peloponnesus and the Ægean islands.

Reaction followed close on the heels of Revolution. Before Greece had taken fire an Austrian army entered Naples and reinstated the perjured King in the authority he had so abused. Turkish vengeance was even more prompt and terrible. Four Greek Archbishops were hanged on the Easter Day of the same year. Then followed a series of massacres, among the worst of those by which Ottoman dominion is periodically signalised, culminating in the awful devastation of Chios, where 70,000 Greeks were either slaughtered or sold into slavery during the spring of 1822.

Russia, so far from protecting the Greek Christians, left them to their fate, and occupied herself with putting down liberty elsewhere. For this purpose the Czar was preparing to send his Cossacks into Spain, when France intervened and overthrew the new Constitution by force of arms. Among the victims of absolutist vengeance was Diaz, the William Wallace of Spain, justly famed under the name of the Empecinado for the part he had played as a guerilla chief in the War of Independence against Napoleon.

At the first outbreak of the European Revolution a Congress of the great Powers assembled at Verona (1822) to deliberate on the situation. Wellington represented England. He did not love popular government; but neither, probably, did he like to see the country he had freed from French vassalage brought again under the same yoke by Napoleon's puny successor. Canning, who had begun the Peninsular War, and who was an enthusiast for national independence, hated to see England's most glorious work undone. But he could not stop France, who this time had the armed force of the Continent at her back. Two things, however, he could do: he could protect America from the same sort of treatment, and he could also protect Portugal. At the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818 the Czar had proposed that the fleets of Europe should be sent to crush Republicanism in South America. Castlereagh raised no objection, but declined on England's behalf to join in the work. In 1823 a well-founded impression prevailed that France, either singly or with her allies, designed to follow up the conquest of Spain by a naval expedition for the reduction of

her American colonies; with a prospect of indemnifying herself by territorial acquisitions for the expenses of the war. Canning intimated that England would not tolerate such an enterprise; and as he disposed of a fleet superior to all the fleets of the world put together, his remonstrances were listened to with respect. Much to the disgust of the Powers, he also recognised the South American Republics, and gave an additional safeguard to their independence by suggesting to the President of the United States what is still known as the Monroe Doctrine—that is, the principle that no European State may acquire new territory on the American Continent or interfere in the domestic concerns of any American community.

Canning's next move was made in defence of Portugal. Don Miguel, the absolutist heir to the Portuguese throne, had conspired against the Cortes, and levied troops to destroy the new Constitution. He was driven into exile; but his army retired to the other side of the Spanish frontier, and, under the protection of the restored Spanish monarchy, waged war against the liberties of their country. Acting under a treaty that obliged England to defend her old ally against foreign attack, Canning sent troops to Lisbon. Secured by their presence, the Liberal Portuguese Regency drove Don Miguel's forces back into Spain, where the reactionary government now saw itself obliged to disown and disband them.

However, neither South America nor Portugal were interesting enough in themselves to command the undivided enthusiasm of Liberal opinion. That could only be awakened by the cause of Greece. Here the influence of literature acted

more powerfully than political oratory or journalism to enlist the sympathies of Englishmen. Members of the governing aristocracy had not forgotten their classical education. "We are all Greeks!" exclaimed Shelley. Byron succeeded best when he struck this chord of sympathy in the Second Canto of *Childe Harold*, in the *Giaour*, and in the *Corsair*. True, the same qualities that endeared the Chosen People of Culture to these two young poets were regarded with some dread and suspicion by politicians of the opposite school. The best Greek history then existing, Mitford's, published between 1784 and 1810, is, as Mill observes, "penetrated with the anti-Jacobin spirit in every line," and the *Quarterly Review* "laboured as diligently for many years to vilify the Athenian republic as the American."[1] But, on the other hand, quite apart from classic traditions, much in the Greek cause appealed to the romanticism generally associated with reactionary political opinions. Elsewhere the revolutionary cause was, truly or not, represented by its enemies as an anti-Christian crusade. In Greece it stood for Christianity; and Shelley, himself an unbeliever, in the Preface to his *Hellas*, unhesitatingly denounces the Turks as the enemies of Christianity, while in a chorus of the drama itself he contrasts the immortal cross of Christ with the dying moon of Mahomet. It is not wonderful, then, that the last of France's most Christian Kings "manifested on behalf of the suffering Christians of Greece a chivalrous warmth of heart, a gallantry, and a generosity which did honour to his character."[2]

[1] *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol i., p. 113.
[2] Stapleton, *Life of Canning*, vol iii., p. 226.

In Byron's poetry the classic and romantic currents are so perfectly fused together that none can tell what share each element contributed to the genius which reaches its highest expression in *The Isles of Greece*. His, therefore, was the decisive word; his, even more, the decisive deed. No poet's personality had ever counted for so much as an element in his literary success, and that even when it was understood to be the personality of a reckless and faithless voluptuary. How incalculable, then, must have been its effect on public opinion when Byron came forward no longer as the sentimental singer of Greek woes, but as an armed soldier in the war for Greek independence! His life, had it been prolonged, would have done less for European emancipation than his death; death on the field would have been less effective than death from exposure and fever; for that, so uncoveted, made the heroism of his self-devotion more apparent.

Canning had a much harder part to play than Byron's, and he fell in the war of opinion by a more tragic fate, bequeathing ruin to his party and victory to his two great rivals, Peel and Earl Grey; but victory also to principles he held more dear than any party distinctions. His sympathies were with Greece, and what in the circumstances could be done to save her he did, although now it seems little enough. Then, as half a century later, the problem was to use Russia as an instrument for coercing the Porte, without at the same time allowing the Czar to seize Constantinople, with the chance of kindling a European war. Just before his death Canning, with the help of France, had nearly solved the problem; and, although the

decisive battle of Navarino, which he did not live to see, may have gone beyond his intentions, it was no more than the natural result of his policy. A still more momentous result was the breaking-up of the Holy Alliance, the isolation of the German Powers, and the definite enrolment of France among the friends of European liberty.

On Liverpool's retirement in 1827, Canning, who had long been the ruling spirit of the Cabinet, became, in name as well as in fact, Prime Minister of England. His advent to the supreme dignity marked another step in Liberalism, for it involved the transfer of office from Tories to Whigs on a considerable scale, besides securing the independent support of some Whigs who did not take office.

The party shibboleth at that time was Catholic Emancipation. Canning renounced the support of his ablest colleagues because they opposed it; he accepted the co-operation of former opponents because they supported it, and this notwithstanding the King's known objection to Emancipation. It seems, therefore, certain that, had the Prime Minister lived, it would have formed a part of his legislative programme. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that the great popular chief, although in this instance he represented the most enlightened opinion of the country, and although the Radicals, no less than the Whigs, were with him, did not represent the opinion of the masses. To understand how this came about we must go a little further back.

The Catholic question, when it first arose, did

not particularly interest the English people. Had George III. agreed with Pitt, they would have tolerated the presence of some fifty Irish Catholic gentlemen and of a few English Catholic peers in Parliament; but, as George III. did not agree, they thought he should have his own way even at the expense of losing their trusted pilot before he had brought the ship of State into port. At the general election of 1807, following immediately after the King had dismissed his Ministers because they proposed to admit Catholic officers to high commands in the army and navy, some of the leading Whigs lost their seats because they had opposed his Majesty's wishes. A shrewd observer, himself a Liberal, remarked at the time that "as long as the King is anti-Catholic the people will be so too."[1] A few years later royal authority passed to the Regent, and in 1812 Emancipation seemed in sight; but personal difficulties prevented the formation of a Whig Administration, and, unhappily for the peace of Ireland, the moment for generous concession passed by, never to return.

With the end of the war English opinion took a turn most unfavourable to religious justice. For, until Napoleon fell, various Biblical prophecies, formerly supposed to be predictions of the Papal power, had been interpreted as referring to his career. He was the little horn in Daniel, or he was Antichrist. After Waterloo, Protestant theology reverted to the old exegesis. Besides, the claim to personal infallibility as Head of the Church, now put forward more audaciously than

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy*, p. 85.

ever on the Pope's behalf, produced an unreasonable, but not unnatural, irritation among those who disowned his authority altogether. We can therefore understand why, when Canning accepted office in 1816, "the opinions of the great mass of the population in England had become, more than they had been, hostile to Emancipation."[1]

No progress was made until the beginning of the great Liberal movement in 1821. At that date the unreformed House was probably more enlightened than the people. At any rate, it passed a Catholic Relief Bill by a majority of 19.[2] This was rejected in the Lords by a majority of 39, with the heir presumptive to the throne at its head. Then Canning passed a Bill through the Commons admitting, as an experiment, Catholic peers to sit in the Upper House; but the Lords rejected this also by a majority of 42. In two subsequent sessions the conflict of opinion between the Houses was repeated, once before and once after Canning's death. As usual it was settled by that *ultima ratio populorum*, the threat of an appeal to physical force. A great demagogue, Daniel O'Connell, had so united and organised the Irish demand for justice that its voice spoke with irresistible effect to an English Legislature divided against itself. After refusing to accept Canning's policy during his life, Peel and Wellington were obliged to put it into execution as his heirs, under the form of a humiliating submission to violence.

Yet, at the cost of civil war, force might have

[1] Stapleton, *Life of Canning*, vol. i., p. 117.
[2] May, *Constitutional History of England*, vol. ii., p. 380.

been met by force. Wellington declared that, by resisting Emancipation, he might have made himself the most popular of Ministers; and during the progress of the measure through Parliament innumerable petitions against it poured in to the King.[1] As has been already mentioned, this anti-Catholic feeling went back to the end of the war, being in fact the outcome of a wider and older movement. Besides starting a number of new sects, Methodism had given new life to the religious communities already in existence. From his accession George III. had been noted for personal piety, although his example does not seem to have influenced Court or official circles. The first religious minister of whom we hear is Perceval, much occupied with Church questions, and no less regular in his attendance at public worship than Pitt had been in his absence from it. Still more punctilious was Wilberforce, who called Perceval's attention to the danger of convoking Parliament for a Monday, whereby gentlemen who lived at a distance from London might be tempted into Sunday travelling.[2] Reaction in religion went hand in hand with reaction in politics. Southey became at once a Tory and a High Churchman. Wordsworth remained true to his early sympathies for a much longer period, but definitely enrolled himself on the same side as his friend and neighbour after the Peace—driven to it probably by the rising storm of discontent among the poor. In 1821 he wrote, *invitâ Minervâ*, a long series of

[1] Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life of Wellington*, vol. ii., pp. 240 and 237.

[2] Walpole, *Life of Perceval*, vol. i., p. 303.

Ecclesiastical Sonnets, strongly anti-Papal, and directed towards the glorification of the Anglican Church on its Protestant side. In 1816 and 1817 Coleridge published two "Lay Sermons," proposing to remedy the evils affecting England by a mystical interpretation of the Bible (in whose inspiration, by the way, he at no time believed) and glorifying Perceval as "the best and wisest statesman this country has possessed since the Revolution."[1] All three poets were passionately opposed to Emancipation, Wordsworth in particular prophesying that Catholic members of Parliament would co-operate with "other dissenters and infidels" in pulling down the Church of England.[2] They probably would have resisted the grant of a million for building new churches, voted in 1818 at a time of great financial distress, and the further grant of half a million for the same purpose voted in 1824, of which we hear that it was "not popular in the country."[3]

Coleridge, in his first Lay Sermon, cautiously deprecates the interpretation of Scripture prophecies as miraculous predictions of events in modern history. But for the mass of uneducated British Protestants they had no other meaning and no other interest. The nervous strain set up by the great war continued after its close, and bred a diseased craving for new sources of excitement. These were supplied to some extent by the pietistic movement; but intense religious feeling needs to be discharged along lines of greater activity than Bible-readings

[1] Coleridge, *Church and State*, p. 306.
[2] Knight, *Life of Wordsworth*, vol. iii., p. 57.
[3] Walpole, *History of England*, vol. ii., p. 161.

and prayer-meetings can supply. Some threw themselves into an agitation for the abolition of West Indian slavery. Others started missions for the conversion of Mohammedans and heathens to Christianity, or for the conversion of Irish and Continental Papists to what they were pleased to call the Gospel. Now that Southern Europe lay open to proselytism no more seemed needed for its regeneration than the gratuitous and wholesale distribution of Bibles and Testaments among the benighted inhabitants. But there were more sanguine and enthusiastic spirits whom even the prospect of a new Reformation could not content. These looked forward with a fearful joy to some great catastrophe heralding the Second Advent and the end of the world. They soon found a preacher to their mind in the person of a tall, handsome, and eloquent young Scotchman named Edward Irving, now best known as the early friend of Jane Welsh and Thomas Carlyle. In 1822 Irving came up to London, and soon attracted crowds to the chapel where his oratorical gifts were first displayed. Canning paid his preaching a high compliment in the House of Commons; and the fashionable world flocked to hear his impassioned proclamation of judgment to come. In 1827 he moved to a larger church, where audiences of a thousand persons hung spell-bound on his lips. That date marks the climax of his career as an index of popular religious feeling in England. Subsequently his name becomes associated with struggles and delusions which do not concern us here. Let it suffice to mention that, even so late as the close of 1831, millenarian enthusiasm still prevailed to

such an extent that anyone who doubted the near approach of the Second Advent was denounced by the majority of religious persons as an infidel,[1] even the enlightened Dr. Arnold of Rugby holding that a terrible catastrophe of some sort might be soon expected.[2]

Side by side with these noisy manifestations of reactionary mysticism a counter-current of steadier and more voluminous energy had set in. The progress of English Rationalism seemed to have been long arrested, but in reality it had been working underground, giving even such occasional evidences of continued activity as Gibbon's Roman History for scholarship and Paine's *Age of Reason* for popularity. Like the religious revival, it gained new prominence with the Peace. We have seen how, long before the end of the war, education had become a foremost interest in English life, and had at once connected itself with religious controversy. Lancaster went for simple Bible-teaching, Bell for Church control and the Catechism. Bentham took up their method of mutual instruction, and made it the basis of an elaborate educational system which he proposed at once to put into practice in a sort of college to be built on his own grounds. The religious difficulty was to be got rid of by eliminating religion altogether from the proposed curriculum. Various titled and wealthy persons promised their support, but withdrew it on finding that the secular scheme was denounced as dangerous by the clergy. Bentham retorted by an unsparing criticism of the Church Catechism, an attack on the personal

[1] Thirlwall, *Letters Literary and Theological*, p. 101.
[2] Stanley, *Life of Arnold*, vol. i., p. 252 (8th ed.).

character of St. Paul, and an *Analysis of Natural Religion*, written in collaboration with George Grote, the future historian of Greece. The object of this last work is to prove that the belief in God and a future life is most pernicious to human happiness, both by its direct effect in exciting terror, and indirectly by leading to the domination of an anti-social priestly class.

Although Bentham's scheme of secular education had at first no success, it remained a fundamental principle with his followers, and was realised, if only to a very limited extent, by the establishment of University College, London. The idea of that institution first came from the poet Campbell, a staunch Liberal, and was promptly taken up by the Benthamites, who, in association with other independent thinkers, raised £160,000 for the endowment of a college, opened in 1828, from whose curriculum religious instruction was omitted, and for the tenure of whose chairs no theological qualification was required.[1]

However, the main stream of opposition to religious orthodoxy was not represented by Bentham's school with its anonymous publications, but by the older Radicalism, whose most popular exponent was William Cobbett. Like Bentham, this powerful journalist had begun as an enemy of democracy, but, like him, had come to think that electoral reform supplied the only remedy for bad government. Imprisoned and heavily fined for showing up a cruel case of flogging in the army during the war, he became after the Peace the most widely

[1] Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. ii., p. 32.

read advocate of retrenchment, Free Trade, full representation of the people, and Catholic Emancipation, always basing his views on thoroughly practical considerations and on a profound study of English history. Driven out of the country by Sidmouth's repressive Acts, he took refuge in America. On a former visit to the United States he had attacked Priestley as a "Unitarian infidel," and helped to circulate slanderous stories about Paine. It may be gathered from his sneers at dissent and deism that Cobbett was at that time a good Churchman. Agreement with Paine's views on paper currency led him to form a juster estimate of the democratic freethinker's moral character. Paine died at New York in 1809, and a story gained credence that he had recanted on his death-bed. Cobbett proved by cross-examining the witnesses that no such recantation had been made. What was more he dug up Paine's bones, and carried them with him on his return to England in 1819, prophesying that these relics would effect a reformation in Church and State.[1]

Much ridicule has been cast on Cobbett's proceedings by people who would see nothing to laugh at or deplore in the second funeral of Napoleon, the transfer of whose body from St. Helena to Paris led on to the despotism and superstition of the Second Empire. At any rate, the arrival of Paine's bones in England coincides with a great revival of interest in his writings and the beginning of a sharp struggle between liberty of religious opinion and authority, in which liberty finally won.

[1] Moncure Conway, *Life of Paine*, vol. ii., p. 428.

The Regency, although a period of political reaction and reviving bigotry, was not on the whole, till near its end, a period of persecution. In 1812 Eaton, a bookseller, was prosecuted for selling the *Age of Reason*, and sentenced by Lord Ellenborough to be imprisoned for eighteen months and to stand for an hour in the pillory. He "underwent his public punishment amid the waving of hats and cheering of the crowd, not a voice or arm being raised against him."[1] At the end of 1817 another bookseller, William Hone, was prosecuted and underwent three distinct trials, the second and third also before Lord Ellenborough, for publishing certain alleged blasphemous parodies on the Litany, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Notwithstanding the violent efforts of his judges to procure a condemnation, Hone succeeded in persuading the jury that his sole object had been to throw ridicule on political abuses, and on each occasion he was acquitted.

Such a plea as Hone's could not be raised by Richard Carlile. This remarkable man edited and sold, among other books of a similar character, Paine's theological writings. After a three days' trial he was sentenced to a fine of £1,500 and eighteen months' imprisonment—a term extended to six years from his inability to pay the fine. The shopmen who sold his books all that time were also seized and imprisoned—the places of the victims being filled up immediately by eager volunteers—until recourse was had to a machine by which the volume asked for was given out and

[1] Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i., p. 289.

payment for it received without the vendor's face being seen by the purchaser. Large sums were raised for Carlile's benefit during his imprisonment, and on his release he found an establishment provided for him in Fleet Street, where the incriminated works were henceforth sold with impunity.

From Dorchester Gaol Carlile issued an *Address to Men of Science, calling upon them to stand forward and vindicate the Truth.* In this pamphlet he mentions the case of Professor (afterwards Sir) William Lawrence, who, according to him, was deprived of his post at the College of Surgeons for having attacked the prevalent religious beliefs in his lectures.[1] But Lawrence was an exception. Men of science under the reactionary *régime* had fallen off considerably from the standard of Priestley and Erasmus Darwin; so much so, indeed, that their most brilliant living representative, Sir H. Davy, joined the obscurantists in denouncing the new science of geology as dangerous to revealed religion, to the disgust even of Coleridge, who called the German Biblical critics infidels, while privately supporting their views.

Coleridge, in fact, contributed largely to what was now becoming a chief factor in progressive English thought—that is, renewed intercourse with the Continent. It has been seen what a powerful stimulus was given to English science and literature in the previous generation by the French Revolution and by German Romanticism. That impulse continued to operate, although with somewhat abated energy, all through the Napoleonic

[1] Carlile, *An Address, etc.*, London, 1821, p. 19.

war ; with the Peace it came up again in a greatly generalised form, especially after England, under Canning's guidance, made herself the champion of popular government all over the world. English travellers dispersed themselves through every country ; English readers ransacked the history and literature of all times. We find a reflex of that boundless curiosity more especially in the souls of two poetesses—in the metrical essays of Felicia Hemans, in the youthful studies of Elizabeth Barrett. It was nourished by the still fresher enthusiasm of American tourists, and returned on Britain herself by the candid admiration of foreign critics for the words and works of this victorious island at the epochs not only of its present but of its former glory.

Italy had long been a favourite haunt of English travellers. But in the eighteenth century it had been more a land of curios and connoisseurs; now it was the home of great traditions and exalted hopes, framed in scenes of corresponding magnificence. There Byron and Shelley first found their true selves, found in that environment their poetic genius doubled at a stroke. Under their lead English poetry first fully rose from a realism often petty, always didactic, to the supreme heights of true romance ; but a romance definitely dissociated from superstition and reaction, linked as in the Greek War of Independence with the classical traditions of reason, self-government, and freedom. Byron had already given the signal for that alliance in the first cantos of *Childe Harold;* he confirmed it by the inspiration of Ravenna and the example of Missolonghi.

In Keats the spirit of Hellenism, considered as the kingdom of man wedded to nature, reigns without a rival. Probably he was indebted to Byron for an emancipation so complete that no trace of a struggle with supernaturalist beliefs has been left in his works. Yet, so far as Shelley and Keats follow any poetic tradition, the predecessor with whom they can best be connected is not Byron, but Southey. In *Queen Mab* the formal imitation of *Thalaba* is quite obvious; and the influence of Southey's general method and style still prevails through *Alastor*, the *Revolt of Islam*, and *Prometheus Unbound*. With Keats the dependence becomes much less visible; still the idea of choosing vast mythological subjects for poetic treatment would hardly have occurred to him, even after Spenser's example, had not the Laureate led the way in his now forgotten epics.

It is remarkable to what an extent the great literary productivity of the Regency seems connected with the diversion into poetry and fiction of genius, which in other circumstances might have been applied to practical life. Scott had in him the making of a soldier-statesman like Wellington; within the limitations assigned by fate to his ambition, he cared chiefly for making himself a great landed proprietor. Byron, never a true literary artist, might well have become another Fox; indeed, the impression made on Brougham, who cut up his juvenile verses in the *Edinburgh*, was that the young lord "had better give up poetry and apply his talents, which were considerable, to better account." At Oxford Shelley devoted himself to physical science, and, after his expulsion,

to political agitation ; while his tragic death was connected with a very businesslike scheme for establishing steam-communication between Genoa and Leghorn. Keats "impressed all his school-fellows with a conviction of his future greatness, 'but rather in a military or some such active sphere of life than in the peaceful arena of literature.'"[1] Finally Landor, who for convenience may be included in the list, is called by De Quincey "a spirit built by nature to animate a leader in storms, a martyr, a national reformer, an arch-rebel, whom the accidents of education have turned into a contemplative recluse."[2]

There seems, then, some reason for connecting the literary splendour of the Regency and the first years of George IV. with the political stagnation and general reactionariness of the period. So long as the old King remained in power there were hopes that his successor would inaugurate a more Liberal system. The Regent's Ministers were more opposed to all reform than his father's had been, and the victory over Napoleon seemed to give Toryism a new lease of life. Then the progressists transferred their allegiance to the Princess Charlotte, and with her death in 1817 all hope expired. But Liberty, that "eternal spirit of the chainless mind," is, as Byron sang, "brightest in dungeons"; and the ideals that replace her possession burn most intensely in the darkest night. English literature has produced few greater works than some that appeared from 1814 to 1822 (the year when Canning took the helm), more especially during the last five

[1] Lord Houghton, *Life and Letters of Keats*, pp. 5–6.
[2] De Quincey, *Works*, vol. viii., p. 286.

years of the period—that is, the quinquennium following the Princess Charlotte's death. Jane Austen, finding her pen once more, adds three other masterpieces to the three left so long unpublished. Scott writes the most and the best of his novels. Byron, Shelley, Keats produce all that puts them in the first rank of poets. Note also that the very best of Byron's and Shelley's work—the fourth Canto of *Childe Harold*, *Manfred*, *Cain*, the *Vision of Judgment*, and the first Cantos of *Don Juan*, of the one, the *Cenci* and the great lyrics of the other—belong to 1818–1822; as also do Keats's most perfect things. I may add that Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, containing his finest extant literary criticism, appeared in 1817; and that the most brilliant of Lamb's and Hazlitt's essays belong also to the first decade of the Peace.

Among those who form this galaxy of genius some were not revolutionists. Still it seems likely that for them also the stagnation and gloom of politics gave an unwonted interest and zest to pure literature, such as it never afterwards possessed.

It may be urged that, apart from any political revival, the tragic deaths of Keats, Shelley, and Byron, followed by Scott's no less tragic bankruptcy, sufficiently account for the rapid literary decline of the twenties. And this would be true were those catastrophes just what they are commonly held to be, so many deplorable accidents. But, except in the case of Keats, they are something more, they are the revenges of reality on genius estranged from its service. What has been said of the somewhat similar fatalities so numerous at this

time among the statesmen also applies in some degree to the poets, gifted as these were with the same pushing, speculative, experimental temper. All might have said of themselves, with the same confidence as Shelley, "I always go on until I am stopped, and I never am stopped."[1] They were stopped by something still more imperious than themselves—by the physical and social forces to which their wills were not adjusted.

With the disappearance of her great poets from the scene we reach a turning-point in the intellectual history of England which, both from its importance and from the wealth of material to be discussed, makes it advisable to begin a new chapter.

[1] "Hasty, peremptory, and intolerant of contradiction" is the character Scott gives of himself under the person of Colonel Mannering. (*Guy Mannering*, chap. xvii.)

Chapter V.

DE REPUBLICA

With the eclipse of imaginative idealism involved in the dawn of a new political system, English literature becomes possessed by another idealism of a more practical kind, fed on the lessons of history and directed towards the reformation of government. The names that first engage our attention belong to historians who were also politicians—Hallam, Macaulay, Carlyle. Let us glance at their respective attitudes towards the great interests of the age.

Hallam's *Constitutional History* maintains the old Whig point of view against both Tories and Radicals. Macaulay, then an advanced Liberal, in reviewing it, as before in his Essay on Milton, vindicates the revolutionary Cromwellian side, anticipating Carlyle by twenty years. Earlier still he had passionately defended Athenian democracy against Mitford, here equally anticipating Grote. He prophesies the honour that will be paid to Machiavelli in a liberated Italy. Shelley, whose genius he could scarcely have appreciated, is extolled in the Essay on Bunyan as potentially the greatest of modern poets, nominally for qualities of which he showed no trace, but really, we must suppose, from sympathy with his political and religious theories.

Carlyle had no aptitude for literary criticism, nor any love of artistic beauty for its own sake; as a judge of poetry he can compare even less than Macaulay with Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt. Yet many of his best years were devoted to doing thoroughly what William Taylor had done imperfectly—to making German literature known in England. What he appreciated was, as Goethe observed, its intellectual and moral substance rather than its form; what one may call, using a more modern term, the application of ideas to life, the desire to remove obsolete institutions, combined with the fullest recognition of their value in past ages, and of the necessity for replacing them with something more solid than a simple negation. Whether Carlyle ever saw into the genial pedantry of German life, the systematic schooling and drill of it all, interspersed with so much frolicsome enjoyment, is not clear; but he did much to remove the prevalent English conception of the Germans, as mystical dreamers or romantic sentimentalists, inherited from the first revolutionary period.

Carlyle had convinced himself early in life that the religious beliefs of his countrymen were what he called superstition. But it would seem that his attitude in this respect owed nothing to German thought; it was determined by the tradition of eighteenth-century Rationalism, by reading Voltaire and Gibbon. If anything, Germany taught him to revere the religious beliefs of the past as symbols of an eternal, indefinable reality. Thus to the outer world he appeared as a mystic, only a few intimate friends being permitted to know what abysmal negations his cloudy phraseology

concealed. Coleridge held, at bottom, much the same views, but with an ever-increasing tendency to pass off the dogma and ritual of Anglicanism, which Carlyle hated and despised, as their adequate expression. On the other hand, he had made himself acquainted, when a young man at Göttingen, with some important results of German Biblical criticism most subversive of Anglican orthodoxy as then understood ; and these he communicated to his friends in conversation, or jotted them down in the margins of his favourite English seventeenth-century divines.

Long before the great poet's opinions were made known, Herbert Marsh, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, had translated the work of Michaelis, a Göttingen professor, on the Gospels, adopting, with some formal reservations, the principles of an exegesis really incompatible with the dogma of Scriptural infallibility. Napoleon's Continental blockade seems to have been more effective in keeping German ideas out of England than in keeping English goods out of Germany ; but with the return of peace intellectual intercourse was resumed, and English students once more went to receive instruction at Göttingen from professors who had the recommendation of being fellow-subjects of King George. There the veteran rationalist Eichhorn still taught, and he gave them his opinion of some Biblical legends in language of unmistakable significance. In 1825 young Thirlwall, afterwards Bishop of St. David's, translated Schleiermacher's *Introduction to St. Luke*, with a Preface from his own pen implying that the inspiration of the Gospels, whatever else it meant,

certainly did not guarantee their historical accuracy.

Soon afterwards Thirlwall, with the co-operation of Julius Hare, the future Archdeacon, translated Niebuhr's Roman History ; and at the same time Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer,* another work of disintegrating criticism, began to attract the attention of English scholars. From their connection with such universally interesting subjects the researches of Niebuhr and Wolf were sure to command attention in this country ; while their method of using popular ballad-poetry as a key to the origin of ancient history and literature brought them into living contact with the fashionable romanticism of the day.

The two great German critics were well aware that their methods might be applied with no less success to Hebrew tradition than to Homer and Livy ; but they left the application to be made by others. An English poet and scholar, afterwards, as Dean Milman, the picturesque historian of Latin Christianity, without any intention of discrediting the early Biblical narratives, retold them, in what he called a *History of the Jews,* in a style of such rhetorical romanticism as to give the impression that he regarded them as standing on the same level with other Oriental traditions, besides altogether refusing to make the divine authority responsible for the savage deeds of ancient Israel. Religious opinion was not ripe for such treatment ; the book raised a storm ; and the series in which it was issued had to be discontinued.

During the period covered by this and the

preceding chapter English physical science has no great discoveries to show. The old stars continue to shine, but with a greatly diminished lustre ; the new stars are still far below their meridian splendour. This interval of obscurity may be accidental ; it may also be connected in some way, not yet understood, first with the unparalleled development of imaginative literature during the Regency, then with the wave of religious excitement marked by Edward Irving's preaching, or finally with the new devotion to political philosophy, critical or constructive, from which we started, and to which we must now return.

All the political thought of the time worth remembering is contained in the writings of three Benthamites—James Mill, Ricardo, and John Austin. For intellectual power and for inspiring genius the first place among these belongs to Mill ; but the greatest single contribution to positive knowledge, and that which was also of greatest practical importance, belongs to Ricardo. His position also clearly indicates the distinction between the philosophical and the popular Radicalism of the age.

Popular Radicalism found its ablest representative in Cobbett. This incomparable journalist has already been mentioned in connection with the revived interest in Paine's freethought writings. But his chief importance is, of course, purely political. Persistently devoted to the poor, and at the same time courting notoriety for himself, he carried on an implacable war against the Government during the Regency and after, not particularly affected, as would seem, by Canning's advent

to power. A steady advocate of Catholic Emancipation and of Free Trade in corn—less perhaps from any enthusiasm for those measures than because the high Tories hated them—he looked on the heavy load of taxation under which England reeled as the chief if not the sole cause of her woes. If bread was dear, the burdens under which the land groaned were responsible for its high price. The remedy was Parliamentary Reform. Let all taxpayers have a share in the representation proportionate to their numbers, and an end will be put to that iniquitous system by which the industrious classes are pillaged in order that fundholders, jobbers, and sinecurists may flourish in idleness.

Cobbett did not stand alone in believing that taxes, as distinct from corn-duties, raised the price of bread, or at least somehow obliged the landlords and farmers to raise it. What overthrew this view was the theory of Rent, first discovered in 1777 by Dr. Anderson, then forgotten, and simultaneously rediscovered by Malthus and West in 1815. At once adopted by Ricardo, it has since become exclusively associated with his name, for the excellent reason that he alone seized its full implications and made it the foundation of a complete theory of exchange. The theory says that rent means the surplus yielded by any land over the worst land in cultivation, and that it tends to increase with the increasing pressure of population on the means of subsistence, involving as this does the putting of ever poorer soils under the plough, or, what comes to the same thing, the application of more capital with diminishing returns to the same soil. Hence it follows that rent goes entirely

into the pocket of the landlord, and amounts to a tax levied by him on the rest of the community; while the unrestricted importation of foreign corn tends to lower his rents by throwing the worst soils out of cultivation, and its exclusion to raise them by allowing the process of extending cultivation to go on. Therefore the landowner is more interested in Protection than the manufacturers are, his advantage being perpetual, while theirs is soon reduced to zero by the pressure of capital into the protected industries.

Ricardo also showed that, *cæteris paribus*, profits rise as the cost of labour falls, and that this falls when the labourer's food costs less. Hence dearer bread means higher wages and less profits: the landlord's gain is the capitalist's loss. If the labourers multiply up to the limit of subsistence, as Ricardo thought they would, Free Trade in corn only adds to their numbers, not to their wealth; if in any way the demand for work can be restricted, they reap the whole benefit of cheaper food. Thus Protection for agriculture never favours their interest, and may be directly opposed to it. The landlord then must expect to see his privileges threatened by a combination of capitalists and working-men.

Ricardo's principles were pregnant with a future agitation, undreamed of by himself, for putting an end to that monopoly of the land which enables its owners to enrich themselves at the expense of the community by taking advantage of the pressure of population on the means of subsistence. Economists might still defend the private ownership of land on grounds of expediency. But he who takes

that ground must surrender the right to describe land-nationalisation as robbery. And an appeal to expediency does not act on public opinion with anything like the same force as an appeal to justice.

Another principle of Ricardo's is that manufactured articles of which the supply can be increased without limit exchange for one another in the ratio of their cost of production, which in the last analysis is determined by the amount of labour they embody. And as the theory of rent has been used to justify land-nationalisation, so also the Ricardian theory of value has been used by socialistic economists to justify their demand that the whole produce of labour should belong to the wage-earners, by whose labour it has been created.

Finally, Ricardo has shown that by a self-adjusting machinery the precious metals, considered as instruments of exchange, tend to diffuse themselves over the whole trading world in such a way that the imports of any particular country must ultimately balance its exports. For the excess of imports, if any, being paid for in bullion, prices at home are lowered by the scarcity of money, and prices abroad are raised by its abundance, until the importing country is obliged by the resulting dearness of commodities in the rest of the world to contract its purchases; while at the same time other countries are induced by the increasing cheapness of its commodities to buy more of them, paying in bullion until the normal balance is restored. Thus, for all who could master Ricardo's theory of foreign exchanges, was dispelled the

illusion, suggested by a temporary excess of imports over exports, that the country was living on its capital, and incurring the same liability to ruin as an individual who finds himself in a similar predicament.

Ricardo wrote his *Political Economy* at the suggestion of James Mill, the managing head of the Utilitarian school, by all of whom its principles were immediately adopted. Mill himself had made a great reputation by his *History of British India*, which also belongs to the early years of the Peace. It contains a rather contemptuous appreciation of ancient Hindoo mythology and literature, which is an implicit protest of Hellenism against Oriental unreason, then as now the object of much romanticist infatuation. The author's marked admiration for the French adventurers who at one time disputed with us the empire of the Mogul seems to show that leaning to France so characteristic of Scotch rationalism. But the most distinct moral of the whole work is conveyed in its exhibition of the wrongs that can be inflicted on a helpless people by a small group of irresponsible and ill-informed rulers. James Mill repudiated the idea of conferring representative institutions on India, looking rather, as we must suppose, to the growth of an enlightened public opinion in England for a redress of her grievances. With England herself, however, the case was very different. Here the people were fit for a widely extended suffrage, and ought to get it as their only safeguard against the spoliation and oppression which government by a small minority entails.

According to James Mill, the object of government is "to secure to every man the greatest possible quantity of the produce of his labour"; and its justification is the admitted fact that the strong possess themselves of what belongs to the weak whenever they can do so with impunity. Now, granting this to be true of men in general, it must be true in particular of the men to whom government is confided. They will use their delegated authority to satisfy their appetites; and, in order to do this with safety to themselves, they will not cease to extend it until they have reduced the people under their dominion to a state of abject slavery. For this difficulty there is only one solution — the establishment of a representative democracy, with short Parliaments elected by popular constituencies. The stringent responsibilities of the governing minority will prevent them from abusing their power; an almost complete identity of their interest with the interest of the whole community will prevent the controlling majority from abusing *theirs*.

Mill's reasoning is *a priori*, and, like all *a priori* reasoning, it is based on a limited experience—in this instance the experience of old Greek city life as interpreted by Plato and Aristotle, with which his classical studies had long familiarised him, supplemented at a later period by the history of India. His absolute monarch is a Greek tyrant or a Nawab; his aristocracy an oligarchic Athenian club. A very slight extension of the same reasoning, or of the same reading, would have furnished him with equally strong arguments to the effect that an uncontrolled majority of poor voters would

use their power to plunder the rich minority, thereby bringing about the economic ruin of the community.

Macaulay, who wrote a crushing refutation of Mill's *Essay on Government*, did not fail to press this last consideration. On that occasion he only used it as an *argumentum ad hominem*. But subsequently, in his private criticism on Jefferson's legislation, and in his public attack on the People's Charter, he denounced universal suffrage as something that would infallibly lead to confiscation. Yet for those gloomy vaticinations he had none but *a priori* reasons to offer; and it was precisely for applying the *a priori* method to politics that he so severely condemned James Mill. At bottom, logical preferences had very little to do with the controversy. Mill hated the Whigs as obstructive moderates; and Macaulay attacked him with bitterness, both as an enemy of Sir James Mackintosh and as a Radical fanatic who was endangering the prospects of Whig reform by advocating an extreme democratic solution of the electoral problem. Their views differed less in reality than in appearance. In politics Macaulay was half a Benthamite, and in morals all a hedonist; while Mill would have been satisfied with a Reform Bill giving the franchise to every man with £100 a year.[1]

In philosophy the elder Mill stood at the farthest remove from that mediæval scholasticism with which he was rather invidiously identified by his young reviewer. His work on Mind, the most important contribution to British metaphysics since Brown's

[1] Denis le Marchant, *Memoir of Earl Spencer*, p. 420.

treatise *On Cause and Effect*, developes and strengthens the traditional empiricism of Locke and Hume by definitely grafting it on the psychological theory of Association. He thus furnished the Benthamites with a system of thought to pit against the revived and Germanised Platonism which Coleridge had recently recommended to Lord Liverpool as the appropriate philosophy of Toryism.[1] And no doubt Mill's *Analysis* went far to undermine the Anglican dogmatism which Coleridge ostensibly supported in the *Friend*. Yet its interest is more didactic than speculative. Mill's object is to show how the very nature of mind, rightly understood, reveals an unlimited capacity for receiving new modifications and impulses from the teacher's art. Consciousness consists of trains of impressions and ideas whose course is determined by the relative frequency with which their external excitements are presented in contiguity with one another, and the ardour of emotion under which their union is sealed. Thus he who has unravelled and reconstructed the network of Contiguous Association holds in his hands all the threads of which true belief and right action consist. And at the same stroke the utilitarian critic of traditional dogmas claiming a natural or mystical self-evidence, is enabled to strip them of their glamour by an analysis of the casual experiences and passions under which they were formed.

A programme of reform stood ready, involving a considerable amount of new legislation; and it

[1] Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, vol. ii., pp. 300 *sqq*.

was agreed that, as a preliminary, a large popular element must be introduced into the government of England. But what exactly government and legislation meant had not yet been clearly explained. This office was performed by John Austin, next to Mill and Ricardo the most powerful Benthamite thinker of the period. In a course of lectures delivered at University College, London, in 1828 and the following years, he clearly distinguished positive law, as the command of a superior enforced by penalties, from the moral law, which is a matter of individual conscience or opinion, and from laws of nature, which are laws only in a metaphorical sense. In this way such notions as divine right and natural right were quietly and respectfully, but completely eliminated from the province of jurisprudence, while the undivided authority of the State found itself exalted to a position of autocratism before unknown. According to Austin, in every independent community positive law, which is the only real law, emanates from a power acknowledging no superior and subject to no external restraint. Governments fall into two fundamental classes according as this power is exercised by one or by more than one person. What we call a limited monarchy is really an aristocracy where one of the aristocrats holds a position of peculiar prominence and dignity. But all government, whether in the hands of one or of many, is essentially absolute, since there can be no legal restraint on that which is the sole source of law, and which cannot be resisted except at the cost of splitting the community into two by civil war. Nor is this fundamental absoluteness interfered with by the

current division into the legislative, the executive, and the judicial powers. All three are concerned in making and enforcing the laws, and all are but different organs and creatures of the same ubiquitous, omnipotent authority.

Austin gives the name of "Sovereignty" to this ultimate power of issuing unquestionable orders, enforced by penalties fixed and dealt out at the pleasure of its holders; and the persons holding it he calls "the Sovereign." Thus the emotions of awe and reverence traditionally associated with a personal ruler are transferred at a stroke to the impersonal body of which the titular king constituted at that time a part of continually diminishing importance.

The idea of Sovereignty was not new, being in fact revived from the political philosophy of Hobbes. But in practice it was associated, as Hobbes meant that it should be associated, with the institution of a hereditary despotism; and Locke, as the theorist of Constitutional Government, had set against it the idea of an indefeasible social contract, whereby each individual surrendered only so much of his natural rights as was needed to protect the much greater portion still reserved as his inviolable possession. The novelty was to convert that armed and irresistible champion whom Hobbes had imaged in the frontispiece of his *Leviathan* into an instrument of innovating and liberal legislation.

In defining the notion of Sovereignty, Austin professed to be merely analysing the fundamental conditions of all civilised government as experience exhibits them in actual operation, disencumbered of the fictions under which they are habitually

concealed; nor, indeed, with his discursive, dilatory, over-scrupulous intellectual habits, was he the man to set up irresponsible autocracy as an ideal where it did not already exist. But he had begun life as a soldier; and it may well be that familiarity with the rules of military discipline led him to reflect on their ultimate source and sanction. A commanding officer can have no other authority than what he receives from the civil government, which must therefore possess an even more peremptory claim on the obedience of its subjects than belongs to an agent clothed with merely delegated rights.

It has been said that the only ruler exactly answering to the description of Austin's Sovereign was the tyrant of a Greek city-state. He might have answered that before the powers of government could be seized and abused by a great criminal they must have already existed and been employed for more tolerable ends. To have a giant's strength is not necessarily to use it like a giant.

Definitions are often, if not always, postulates. A point of view is a practical direction, and the more so the more one-sided it is. Mackintosh had said that government was organised liberty. In practice this ideal worked out as organised license and impotence. The reformers could unpack their hearts with words and fall a-cursing like very drabs, but they could hardly put a single good measure on the Statute-book. What England wanted was not more liberty—except in religion—but better government; or, rather, the creation of a new machinery for bringing the inherent powers of government into play. Such a machinery was first supplied by Parliamentary Reform.

Chapter VI.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

"England," said Disraeli, "does not love coalitions." If she does not love them, she had, under the unreformed Parliament, very frequently to put up with them. It was no easy matter to get and keep together a ministerial majority when there could be no appeal to a coherent body of opinion in the country; accordingly, the head of the Government often had, in the common phrase, to strengthen his position by giving his opponents a share of office. Such bargains involved a certain sacrifice of principle in one of the parties concerned, and most frequently in both; nor were the qualities most in demand a sure guarantee of administrative efficiency. Eloquence and readiness in debate secured more than their fair share in the distribution of prizes, on account of the weight carried by those gifts in a sovereign assembly whose members were free to indulge their personal predilections irrespective of any responsibility to their electors or to the country at large. It has been supposed that the decline in Parliamentary oratory after the Reform Act corresponded to a decline in the ability of the speakers, due to the fact that young men of genius had not the same facilities for entering on a political career when the number of pocket or purchasable boroughs at the disposal of the party chiefs was so reduced as to be no longer available for the purpose

of introducing every desirable candidate for office into public life. It is not clear, however, that Parliamentary ability, as measured by more permanent standards, has declined at all; and the decline in eloquence is amply accounted for by another cause. There has not been the same supply, for the good reason that there has not been the same demand. Eloquence has not the same value in a House where party-leaders, at the head of solid majorities, are engaged in pushing useful measures through as in a House where it matters less what Bills are carried than what applause is won.

Whatever its advantages as a means for introducing young men to public life, the system of Parliamentary patronage had the unquestionable drawback of exposing their political integrity to serious temptations—to the temptation, in the first instance, of enlisting under the banner of the magnate who offered them a seat, and to the temptation afterwards of deserting to the side of the Minister who could make them independent of his support. Even with an assured Parliamentary position, a statesman who stood outside the aristocratic ring was obliged, in default of popular support, to make his way by more or less discreditable intrigues, or by unworthy concessions to royal demands.

I have shown in the earlier chapters of this work to what the power of the Crown amounted, and to what impotence it reduced the machinery of government, whether considered as an instrument of order or of progress.[1] The titular Sovereign, so far from

[1] *Supra*, pp. 4, 53, 74, 76, and 78.